

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey, England
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2874 PRIVATE

W. F. COX MM.

58TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

18TH MAY, 1919

William Francis COX

William Francis Cox was born at Battersea, Surrey, England on 24th December, 1884 to parents William & Mary Ann Cox (nee Hulse).

The 1891 England Census recorded William F. Cox as a 6 year old, Scholar, living with his mother & brother at their grandfather's house at 40 Clarence Rd, Kentish Town, St. Pancras, London, England. His mother was listed as Mary Ann Cox (Housekeeper, aged 27, born Lambeth, Surrey) & his brother was listed as George A. E. Cox (aged 1, born St. Pancras, London). The head of the house was John Hulse – William's widower Grandfather (Printer's Overseer, aged 49, born Southwark, Surrey). Also listed in the household were four of John Hulse's children – Mary Ann Cox's siblings – John I. Cox (Compositor Printer, aged 29, born Southwark, Surrey) then Mary Ann Cox, William C. Hulse (Carver, aged 24, born St. Martins, London), Amelia M. Hulse (Bookfolder, aged 19, born St. Martins, London) & Charlotte C. Hulse (Bookfolder, aged 15, born Lambeth, Surrey).

William Cox, father of William Francis Cox, died 1898.

The 1901 England Census recorded William F. Cox as a 16 year old Carpenter's Apprentice boarding with Walter Lee (Carpenter & Joiner, aged 28) & his family – Annie M. Lee (aged 30); Marjory M. Lee (aged 2) & Walter J. Lee (aged 1).

William Francis Cox married Mary Ann Donohoe on 6th August, 1906 at Catholic Church of St. John the Evangelist, Duncan Terrace, Islington, London, England. William Cox was listed as a 21 year old Joiner from 15 Elmore Street. His father was listed as William Cox (deceased) – Licensed Victualler. Mary Ann Donohoe was listed as a 22 year old, living at 2 Portugal Road, Woking. Her father was listed as David Donohoe, General Labourer. They had the following children – William Francis Cox (born 13th April, 1907 - Shalford, Guilford, Surrey, England); Winifred Frances Cox (born 22nd February, 1909 – Woking, Surrey, England); Sydney David Cox (born August, 1913 – Woking, Surrey, England) & Arthur C. Cox (born 1920 – March quarter; death registered 1920 – March quarter)

According to information provided by his wife for the Roll of Honour – William Cox came to Australia when he was 27 years old.

William Francis Cox was a 31 year old, married, Carpenter & Joiner from Mark Lodge, Normandy Road, Fairfield, Sydney, New South Wales when he enlisted on 7th September, 1916 at Victoria Barracks, R.A.S.G. (Royal Agricultural Show Grounds), Sydney, New South Wales with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Church of England & his next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Mary Ann Cox, 12 School Road, Woking, Surrey, England.

Private William Francis Cox was posted to Camp at Royal Australian Show Grounds. He was transferred to Dubbo Depot Battalion, NSW on 10th September, 1916 then transferred to "B" Company, Depot Battalion at Bathurst, NSW on 22nd September, 1916. Private Cox was transferred to 7th Reinforcements of 58th Battalion on 29th September, 1916 & on 7th October, 1916 he was transferred to Liverpool Camp, Sydney, NSW.

Private William Francis Cox, Service number 2874, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Afric* (A19) on 3rd November, 1916 with the 58th Infantry Battalion, 7th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 9th January, 1917.

Private William Francis Cox had been written up for Crime on 22nd November, 1916 while on Troopship HMAT *Afric* (A19) – on 21st November, 1916 "*Disobedience of orders ie. Smoking between decks.*" He was awarded 24 hours Detention & a total forfeiture of 1 days' pay.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private William Francis Cox was marched in to 15th Training Battalion (No. 7 Camp) at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 10th January, 1917 (as listed on Casualty Form – Active Service, however the Purport form recorded he was marched into No. 4 Command Depot Wareham from Perham Downs.)

Private William Francis Cox proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone on 20th March, 1917 from 15th Training Battalion. He was marched in to 5th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 21st March, 1917. Private Cox was marched out from 5th A.D.B.D. on 23rd March, 1917 & taken on strength of 58th Battalion in the Field on 26th March, 1917.

Private William Francis Cox was on Furlough to England on 5th February, 1918 & rejoined 58th Battalion in France from Leave on 20th February, 1918.

Private William Francis Cox was recommended for the Military Medal on 13th April, 1918, along with Private William Edward Deforest, 3380, 58th Battalion & Private John Stokes, 3645A, 58th Battalion. Action for which commended: *“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On 5th April, 1918, East of VAIRE SOUS CORBIE, these men were detailed to protect the left flank of a Machine Gun Post which had been placed so as to enfilade VAIRE, about 300 yards in front of our position at VAIRE up the canal(?) towards BOUZENCOURT. They took up a position against a _____ about 200 yards to the left of the gun. They had to give warning to the gun of the approach of an enemy party and cover the retirement (?) of the gun if necessary. About midday 25 or 30 of the enemy appeared on the left bank. Private _____ was sent back to warn the gun. The other men worked along the ditch to the right rear of the enemy and opened fire upon them. Two men dropped – 1 killed and 1 wounded. The enemy ran back about 30 yards to another bank where the Officer in charge tried to rally them. Without hesitation these men rushed across to the first bank toward the enemy with bayonets fixed, firing as they ran. As the enemy retired they were kept under rapid fire. The following Casualties were inflicted. – 1 Officer and 5 other ranks killed and 2 badly wounded were brought in. About 10 or 12 were hit but managed to escape. Our casualties were nil. The information gained from the killed and wounded was of great value.*

On 7.4.1918 these men were members of a patrol which penetrated through the low timbered country along the South side of the Canal and into a farmhouse on the outskirts of BOUZENCOURT. They again displayed great courage and dash.”

The following report was completed:

“No. 2874 Private W. F. COX, duly sworn, states:

On 5th of April, 1918 East of Vaire Sous Corbie I was one of the party of one N.C.O. Cpl Sayers & four other ranks. Our orders were to protect the left flank of a machine Gun post by holding a position further up the canal towards Bouzencourt. About midday a party of 30 of the enemy came up on our left about 200X away, lined a bank, & tried to mount a M.G. Cpl Sayers then told me & Pte Stokes to keep up rapid fire, whilst he & De Forest moved round to the right flank of the enemy party. When Cpl Sayers & De Forest reached their position & opened fire the enemy commenced to retire. We also then moved up to that flank. The enemy in the meantime had rallied on a position along the bank further back & led by their officer opened fire on us. Cpl Sayers then gave the word to charge & jumping up we rushed forward firing as we went. The enemy remained firing at us until the officer & three others were killed. They then ran away taking with them their machine gun with them, but leaving behind their ammunition & patent machine gun condenser. We occupied the position that the enemy had left & continued to fire on them as they retreated & several were seen to fall. Two of our officers then came up & attended searching the enemy dead for identification.

W. F. Cox Pte No. 2874

Sworn before me, this 15th day of April, 1918.

Witness

Lieut & Adjt, 58BN AIF.”

Private William Francis Cox was awarded the Military Medal on 16th July, 1918. (*The London Gazette* – 16 July, 1918) (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* – 27 November, 1918)

Military Medal

The Military Medal (MM) was a military decoration awarded to personnel of the British Army and other arms of the armed forces, and to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land. The award was established in 1916, with retrospective application to 1914, and was awarded to other ranks for "acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire". (*Wikipedia*)



Military Medal (MM)

58th Battalion

The 58th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 17 February 1916 as part of the expansion of the AIF. Roughly half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 6th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 6th, the 58th was predominantly composed of men from Victoria. The battalion became part of the 15th Brigade of the 5th Australian Division.

Having only arrived in France on 23 June, the 58th became embroiled in its first major battle on the Western Front at Fromelles on 19 July. The battle was a disaster. The 58th had the dual role of providing carrying parties and a reserve force. The reserve force (approximately half of the battalion) was ordered to attack late in the battle and was virtually annihilated by machine-gun fire; as a whole, the 58th suffered casualties equal to almost a third of its strength. Despite the grievous losses in its battalions, the 5th Division continued to man the front in the Fromelles sector for a further two months.

Early in 1917 the 58th battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, but it was spared from the assault. It did, however, defend gains made during the second battle of Bullecourt, between 9 and 12 May. Later in the year, the AIF's focus of operations switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium. The 58th's major battle here was at Polygon Wood on 26 September.

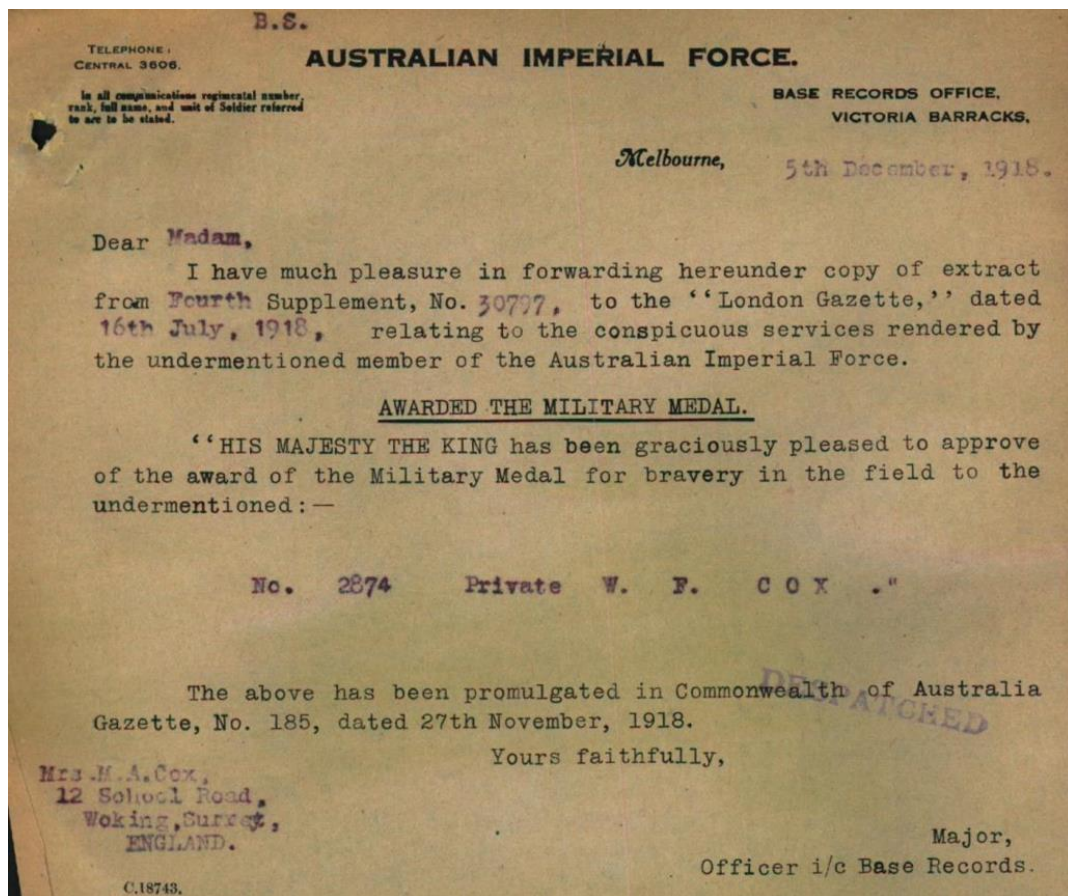
With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie; the 58th Battalion was the 15th Brigade's reserve during its now legendary counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April. When the Allies launched their own offensive around Amiens on 8 August, the 58th Battalion was amongst the units in action, although its role in the subsequent advance was limited. The battalion was involved in the fighting to secure Peronne at the beginning of September and entered its last major battle of the war on 29 September 1918. This operation was mounted by the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions, in co-operation with American forces, to break through the formidable German defences along the St Quentin Canal.

The battalion withdrew to rest on 2 October 1918 and was still doing so when the war ended. Weakened by the progressive return of troops to Australia, the battalion ceased to exist as such when it merged with the 59th Battalion on 24 March 1919.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Francis Cox was on Leave from France to UK from 28th November, 1918 to 12th December, 1918. He rejoined his Unit on 18th December, 1918.

Base Records forwarded to Mrs M. A. Cox, 12 School Road, Woking, Surrey, England, on 5th December, 1918 a "copy of extract from Fourth Supplement, No. 30797, to the "London Gazette" dated 16th July, 1918, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by the undermentioned member of the Australian Imperial Force....."



Private William Francis Cox was on Leave from France to UK from 13th March, 1919 to 27th March, 1919. His Leave was extended from 21st March, 1919 to 4th April, 1919.

Private William Francis Cox was granted Leave for Non Military Employment for 6 months from 21st March, 1919 to 21st September, 1919 with full military pay. Reason: Instruction in Shop Fitting & Air tight case making. Attending: Charles Spreckley, Phoenix Place Gray's Inn Rd, London.

Private William Francis Cox was granted Leave with pay only from 21st March, 1919 to 21st September, 1919.

Private William Francis Cox died on 18th May, 1919 at Woking, Surrey, England. His N.M.E. (Non Military Employment) Leave was cancelled on 18th May, 1919.

A Court of Enquiry (no. 25465) was held & the cause of death was recorded as "Run over by Railway Train (Suicide whilst Insane)."

A Telegram from Graves Registration Branch to S/Sergeant Pitt, dated 20th May, 1919 reads: "Late 2874 Private Cox, W.F. "M.M." 58th Bn. The above-named is reported to have been run over and killed by a train on the railway line at Woking on Sunday night 18th inst. Following are correct particulars. No telegraphic notification will be received...." (The Telegram continues with details of Private Cox's date of Attestation, age, religion & next of kin details)

A death for William F. Cox, aged 35, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of Guildford, Surrey, England.

Newspaper item – *The Daily Herald*, London, England – 19 May, 1919:

DEAD SOLDIER MYSTERY

When a train from Clapham Junction to Salisbury pulled up at Woking yesterday the front of the engine was found to be covered with blood. Later the body of an Australian soldier, named Cox, whose wife lives at Woking, was found on the main line.

Newspaper item – *The Globe*, London, England – 19 May, 1919:

WOKING RAILWAY TRAGEDY

AUSTRALIAN EX-SOLDIER UNDER ENGINE

(From Our Own Correspondent)

Woking, Monday – As the result of signs of a tragedy on the front of a troop train engine that pulled up at Woking last evening, a search was made along the track, and two miles away the mutilated body of an Australian soldier was found.

Inquiries revealed that the man, named Cox, was demobilised, and on work furlough. His wife is living in Woking.

It is said that the authorities have discovered a witness who saw deceased deliberately dash from the embankment and throw himself at the front of the train, which was travelling at a speed of 55 miles. As he was seen on the New Zealand Golf Course earlier in the day, it is possible, however, that he was taking a short cut home.

Private William Francis Cox was buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 183554

From the burial report of Private William Francis Cox - *Coffin was good Elm, brass fittings. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag, and conveyed to the graveside, surmounted by several beautiful wreaths sent from:- "Wife & Children" Mother & Daughter, Aunt Francis, Mr & Mrs Fay & Son, Uncle Dick & Son "Sydney" Mrs Erwood & Son, Freddis & Kitten, Liz, Eva and Children. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside, and Chap. McEvoy, of the A.I.F. Headquarters, London officiated. The grave will be turfed and an oak cross erected by the A.I.F. London, who were represented at the funeral.*

Names of Relatives & Friends present at the Funeral – Mother, Mrs Day, Mrs Cox, Mrs Covey, Mr & Mrs Larkin, Mrs Wild, Mrs Burn, and Master Cox.

A slip of paper in the Service Record file has the following information; "*Buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery Plot 4 Row 1 Grave 3.*" [In other cases of soldiers researched - Base Records wrote to the next of kin of the deceased soldier to advise that the site of their deceased soldier's grave had been officially registered as Plot _ Row _ Grave _ in Brookwood Military Cemetery. The following phrase was also added to some letters: "*While the actual place of burial remains unchanged the previous registration allotted thereto has been altered to conform with the uniform layout of this Cemetery.*"]

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – IV. I. 3. Private W. F. Cox now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private William Francis Cox requested in his Will dated 7th June, 1917 that all his personal estate be bequeathed to his wife – Mary Ann Cox, 12 School Road, Woking, Surrey, England.

Thomas Beech, Normanby Road, Fairfield, wrote to Base Records on 7th July, 1919 requesting to know if "*.....Pte William Francis Cox, M.M. reported accidentally killed in England 18/5/19 in the 466th Casualty list, was number 2874 58th Batt. The reason I inquire is, I have his personal effects in my care. I want to know in view of having to send them to his wife in England. Also could you inform me of the nature of his death.*"

Base Records replied to Mr T. Beech, Normanby Road, Fairfield, Sydney, NSW on 14th July, 1919 advising that “...No. 2874 Private W. F. Cox, M.M., 58th Battalion, was killed by a railway train at Woking, Surrey, on 18.5.19.” The letter continued with “With reference to deceased’s pre-military effects, where the next-of-kin reside outside of Australia and their circumstances are such that they are unable to incur the expense of transport, this Department will arrange for the despatch of same within the following limitations. The articles forwarded must all be of a personal nature or sentimental value, such as a Bible, or Prayer-book, religious emblems, photos, jewellery, Military Badges of rank or Decorations etc and must be packed within the limit of weight and size prescribed by the Post Master General’s Department for Parcels Post, i.e. not exceeding 11 lbs in weight and 3 ft. 6 ins in length.....”

An urgent letter was sent from Acting Assistant Commissioner for Pensions, Department of the Treasury, Melbourne, Victoria on 29th July, 1919 regarding 2874 Private William Francis Cox, M.M., 58th Battalion. The letter stated “the late soldier’s widow, who resides in England, is now claiming war pensions for herself and three children, but before the claims can be determined it is necessary to decide whether the soldier’s death may reasonably be considered to have resulted from his employment in connection with warlike operations. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will kindly cause me to be furnished with copies of any reports or documents in possession of your department which throw any light on the circumstance surrounded the soldier’s death. It might perhaps be more convenient for you to let me have your Departmental file in connection with the matter, if you have no objection to that course. The file would be returned to you promptly. As the widow is said to be destitute, I should be obliged if the desired information could be supplied within a day or two.”

Base Records replied to the Assistant Commissioner for Pensions, Department of the Treasury, on 30th July, 1919 advising “...no information other than that quoted by you therein has been received regarding the report of death of the late No. 2874, Private W. F. Cox, M.M., 58th Battalion. It is anticipated that Proceedings of an Enquiry will come to hand in due course. Sufficient time has hardly elapsed for their receipt.”

Private William Francis Cox was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Cox’s widow – Mrs M. A. Cox, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued in England in October, 1922).

Communications sent from Base Records, Melbourne, Australia in May, 1923 to Mrs M. A. Cox, 12 School Rd, Woking, Surrey, England, were returned to Base Records in June, 1923 marked “Return to Sender – Gone Away.”

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Francis Cox – service number 2874, of 58th Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed. He was awarded the Military Medal.

Private W. F. Cox is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 165.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(52 pages of Private William Francis Cox's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Newspaper Notices

OUR WAR LOSSES

THE 466th AUSTRALIAN CASUALTY LIST

ACCIDENTALLY KILLED

Pte W. F. Cox (England), p.r.w., at Gundagai

(The Farmer and Settler, Sydney, NSW – 25 June, 1919)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Private W. F. Cox, M.M. does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 from World War 2.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918.

Second row: 6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918; 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



Australian War Graves *(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)*

Photo of Private W. F. Cox, M.M.'s Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

