

Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing
Enquiry Bureau files, 1914-18 War
1DRL/0428

**2138 Private
Frederick Thomas
Branch**

19th Battalion



0510306F

21357
Brough
19
11 K
23.12.16
Large Street
Portland
New South Wales
RECEIVED 29.5.17
AUG 1917
S.O.
The Secretary

British Red Cross Soc.
Dear Sir:

Reading in
the paper that you
send photographs
etc of soldiers graves.
I am writing you
as my only brother.
He was killed in
France on December
23rd 1916. His name
was (2240) Private Fred
J. Branch 4th Rgt 5th
Division 5-3rd Battalion
A. I. En.

2
We understand he
was placed in the
19th Battalion in
France. If you
could send us a
photo of his grave
where he is buried
you would be
doing a very great
kindness to his
brokenhearted
sisters & Parents.
I might mention that
my brother was
killed by a piece of shell
through his heart, so
there would be no
difficulty about Burial.

Thanking you in
anticipation

I am.

Yrs truly
Ethie M. Simpson

RECEIVED
17 AUG 1917
CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE

Mrs H. C. Simpson
Park Street
Portland
N. S. Wales.
Australia.

Barro

26th Sept. 1917

19th AUSTRALIANS

BRANCH, P.O. 2128 A

Branch F.T.

R. 23.12.16 Det. D/B.

I knew Pte. Fred T. Branch of A Co. He came from the same part of N.S.W. as I - the North Coast. I knew both him and his people before I joined up. I was with him when he was killed instantly by a shell at Ginchic about the 23rd Dec. 1916. I saw him buried outside Huddle Trench. We held the ground. There was to be a cross put on the grave. I could point out the spot.

Informant: Pte. B. Hart, 2172
19th Australians, B Co., 6th Pltn.,
Australian Camp, Noumea.

NM

S

19th A. I. F.

F. T. BRANCH, 2138.

Killed 23.12.16. Details D & B.

At Swiss Trench near Flers I saw him killed by shrapnel. He was in the supports at the time. I know no more.

Reference: Pte. R. E. Rance, 2228.

No.12 General, Rouen. 17.3.17.

FS.

Havre

13th March, 1917.

19th AUSTRALIANS

BRANCH, F.T. 2138,

K. 23.12.16. Det. D/B

He was in A Co., 3rd platoon. He was buried at Needle Trench near Flers. I was there when he was killed. We took them in from the top of the trench and buried them in Needle Trench where we were. We put a cross over the grave with the names of those buried in it: there were 5 altogether.

Informant: L/Cpl. J.R. Walker, 2232
19th Australians, A Co., 3rd Pltn.
H. S. Warilda

PGP

A.I.F. 19.

BRANCH. F.T. 2138.

X/Decr. 23rd. 1916.

Freddy Branch was killed two days before Xmas, at Needle Trench, to the right of Fiers. He had been out with a guard at a jump 30 yards to the rear of the trench. They came in. Just as they reached the trench, a H.E. shell hit the parapet and killed him and 4 other men. I saw Branch's body. It was riddled with pieces of shell. It was buried the same morning just to the rear of the spot where he met his death. I saw the burial. I knew him quite well. He was a very quiet fine living little man.

Reference: Pte. W. Parker, 19744, A. Coy,
No. 2 A.D.B.D.

Staples.

7.4.17.

SA. 5

A.I.F.
9th. Batt.

BRANCH,
Pte. F.T. 2108.

"Killed Dec. 23/16."

I saw him killed by a piece of shell the size of your fist, which went right through his neck and killed him almost at once, and saw him dead, at Needle Trench which ~~I also~~ was somewhere about Albert and Gendecourt. and He was buried just out of the trench and I saw his grave with a little wooden cross over it. I knew him well as we came over together from Australia as Reinforcements to the 6th. Battalion and were transferred to the 19th. I was in camp with him at Bathurst. I think he came from somewhere on the North Coast and I think he was a dairyman. Six others were killed and 2 wounded by the same shell.

Reference.

~~Sert. by letter from~~ H.W. Ashcroft, 2127a,
19th. Batt.

London. 24.4.17.

F. Alison,
11/4/17.

Harfield. 2108.
11.4.17. (S)

19th Australian Imperial Force

Branch, F. T. 2138,
A Coy. *Frederick Thomas*
(K. 23/12/16. Dets D & B).

" Branch was one of a party of whom four or five were killed by a single shell about the Dec. 23, at Needle trench near Ginchy. I did not actually see the casualty. Branch and the others were buried together in the vicinity of Needle Trench."

Eye Witness -

Description

Informant :- Cpl. McIndoe, 1962,
A Coy. 4th Pltn. 19 Aus. Imp Force,
Ward 5 A Beaufort War Hospt.

Home address :-
32, Marlborough Street,
Mount Eden,
Auckland,

10/3/17.
Anthony Finn.

N.Z.

19th Battalion 18. Dec 23/16 Branch F. F.
2138

I saw him killed by a piece of shell the
size of your fist ^{which went right through his neck & killed him almost at once} and saw him dead, at
Needle Trench & which was somewhere
about Albert and Endeavour. He was
buried just out of the Trench and I saw
his grave with a little wooden cross over
it. I knew him well as we came over together
from Australia as Reinforcements to the
53rd Batt. and were transferred to the 19th.
I was in camp with him at Bathurst. I
think he came from somewhere on the North
Coast and I think he was a dairyman.
6 others were killed and 2 wounded by
the same shell.

H. W. Ashcroft 2127a
19th Batt.

W. Alison 11/4/17

Maelfield W. 8

Where was he W.
Has his death been recorded?

5
2

September 14th, 1917.

Mrs. H.G. Simpson,
Park Street,
Portland, N.S. Wales.

Dear Madam,

In reply to your letter about your brother

No 2138 not 2240.
Pte. Fredk. Thomas Branch,
19th Bttn late 58rd Bttn,
A.I.F.

"Killed in Action 23.12.16"

and your request for a photograph of his grave, we are sending his particulars on to the Graves Registration Department. It will do all it can to locate the grave at Heale Trench near Cinchy and will forward the photo to your brother's next of kin either direct or through our Sydney Red Cross Enquiry Bureau.

It may however, be some time before it can be sent,
With our sincere sympathy to his parents ^{sister} and yourself in your great loss.

Yours faithfully,

SECRETARY.

per A.M.W.B.