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

1797 Lance Corporal Frank Leslie Bell

14th Battalion



0320806J

14th Batt. A.I.F.

Bell.F.L. L.Cpl. NO.1797.
A.Coy.

Killed April 11th 1917. Bat. D.F.

I saw him killed by a shell, about 11-15 on the morning of the 11th. We were in the Hindenburg lines at the time. There would be no hope of him being buried as we had to retire from the trenches. I knew him well we enlisted together, and had been right through with him. He came over with the 2nd reinf of the 29th batt. He left on 29th Dec 1915 on the Transport Demosthenes. He came from Queensland.

Description. Age. 22. Height. 5-9. Complexion. Fair. Slight Built.

Witness. Sgt. Deacon. J.M. NO.1700. A.Coy. 14th Batt.

Taken at
4th T.B.Codford.
11-10-17.
F.G.H.

S.Whitmee.
NO.4.Command Depot
Codford.

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P.1

[redacted]

A.I.F. 14.A.

BELL L/Cpl.F.L. 1797.

K. 11.4.17.

I saw him hit by M.G. fire in the stomach at Bullecourt, just as he was getting into the German front line on 11th.April. I did not think he could get over it. He was just conscious when last I saw him, but could not speak. I was wounded about ¾ hour later and he was still lying in the trench when I left. Our Co. had to retire at this point a few hours later and my mates told me he had to be left there. He belonged to 1 Pl. A. Co. with me. I knew him very well. He came from some part of Victoria. He used to talk a lot about dairy farming and I think had something to do with that in civil life.

3A.

References: Pte. J.W. Phillips. 110. A.Co.
26 Gen.Hpl.

Staples.
26.10.17.

Havre 18th January 1918.

14th A.I.F. A.Co. Bell L/Cpl F.L. 1797.

Y. 11th April 1917. Bet B/B.

My Battn took the enemy's first line trench in front of Bullecourt April 11th, going over as day was breaking. It was taken in about an hour. A few of us only got there.

I saw Corporal Bell killed outright by M.G. bullet in the head, just as he had got through the wire. Hand to hand fighting went on for about 6 hours. The trench was lost about midday. No dead were brought out. About a month later, the 2nd Australian Division took this ground.

Corporal Bell was a Queensland man. He joined the Battn in Egypt after they came from Gallipoli.

Inf:- Corpl H. Burns No.5664.
14th A.I.F. A.Co. IV Bltn (fr.1 Bltn).
H.S. 'Grantully Castle'.

RC.

Postcard
8/9/17.

Sept. 6th 1917
C/o. Church Army Hut
No. 7 Camp
Over seas. T. B
Perham Downs

Dear. Sirs

Would you be so kind as to give me information concerning my brother Lpl. F. L. Bell. No 1797. A Coy 10th Battallion reported officially killed on April 11th 1917 at Bullecourt. if he was burried and where. as I have word about two months back from the battallion that he was not burried. also that the information I had was very unsatisfactory as. some have said that no trace of him could be found other told me he was wounded and taken prisoner. Also. could you please give me information of Pte. F. E. Colthrup. Dcoy. 26. battallion his number I am not certain, either 5318 or 5338. somewhere there about. as I would like to know of whereabouts. he was wound in May or April.

Yours Sincerely

Pte. O. H. G. Bell
No 5299.
Dcoy 26 batt

October 26th, 1917.

No 5299 Pte.O.H.G.Bell,
26th Battalion,
A.I.F., B.E.F.

Dear Sir,

In answer to your inquiry for

No 1797 L/Cpl.F.L.Bell,
14th Battalion,
A.I.F.

we deeply regret to inform you of an unofficial report given by a man of his unit when in No 4 Command Depot, Codford.

Informant - No 1700 Sgt.J.H.Deacon, stated that he saw your brother killed instantly by a shell about 11.15. a.m. on April 11th, when they were in the Hindenburg Line, which they were forced to evacuate and consequently he fears there is little hope of his having been buried.

Sgt. Deacon was with your brother from the time he enlisted and knew him well, describing him as 22 years of age, 5ft 8 inches, in height, with a fair complexion.

We are continuing our inquiries for details of his death and as soon as we receive further news of him we shall

advise you.

Assuring you of our sincere sympathy and trusting that it will be some consolation to know that his death was instant-eous.

Yours faithfully,

V.D

SECRETARY.

LAW.

November 6th, 1917.

No 6299 Pte.O.H.G.Bell,
26th Battalion,
A.I.F., B.E.F.

Dear Sir,

We deeply regret to inform you of another unofficial report about your brother No 1997 L/Cpl.F.L.Bell,
14th Battalion,
A.I.F.

informant being No 110 Pte.J.W.Phillips, who was in the 26th General Hospital, B.E.F., He reported that he saw your brother wounded very badly in the stomach by machine gun fire just as he was getting into the German front line trench at Bullecourt on April 11th, and although conscious he was unable to speak when he last saw him, and he feared that he could not live.

Informant was himself wounded ½ of an hour later and your brother was still lying there in the trench. The Coy was forced to retire a few Hours later and his friends told him that he had to be left there.

Pte.Phillips, says that your brother whom he knew well in his platoon used to talk a great deal about dairy farming.

We deeply regret the distressing character of this report and trust that he did not live to suffer much pain.

Further inquiries are being made and you may rest assured that we shall advise you immediately on receipt of any details.

Assuring you of our sincere sympathy.

Yours faithfully,

LAW

SECRETARY.

January 31st, 1918.

5299 Pte.C.H.G.Bell,
26th Infantry Battalion,
Australian Imperial Force,
B. E. F.

Dear Sir,

We regret to inform you of further unofficial information about the death of your brother.

No 1797 L/Cpl. F.L.BELL, 14th Battalion, A.I.F.

and informant being No 1664 Cpl.H.Burns, who was interviewed on an hospital ship at Harve.

He stated that his battalion took the enemy's front line trench in front of Bullecourt on April 11th, after an hour's fight which began at daybreak, only a few of them succeeded in reaching the trench. He saw your brother killed outright by a machine gun bullet which wounded him in the head just as he had got through the wire. There was hand to hand fighting for about 6 hours but the trench was lost about midday and they were forced to retire without bringing out those who had been killed.

Should we obtain further news of your brother's death we shall advise you and at the same time we are forwarding all this unofficial

evidence to our office in Sydney who are enquiring on behalf of people in New South Wales.

With good wishes.

Yours faithfully,

SECRETARY.