

Lee, Gerald Roy

ASC 1905

Cemetery or memorial details: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, France

War Grave Register notes: Lee, Sgt Roy, 4454. 26th Bn. 3rd May, 1917. Son of William and Florence Lee, of Zante, The Avenue, Birrell St, Waverley, Born at Kelso, NSW.



Note, from original document below, that Gerald was brother of #1979 Lance Corporal Gordon Scott Lee M.M. 2nd Bn (ASC 1905-9).

Also his sister Doris Linda, a Staff Nurse, served from 29/10/15 and returned to Australia 29/3/1919.

Note also the historical notes in the biographical details below:

The great great grandfather of Roy Lee came to NS W in 1788 in Imperial Service and his son William was one of the first 13 settlers in the Bathurst district and founder of the family known as the Bathurst Lees.

University Junior Examinations.

LIST OF PASSES IN BATHURST.

The lists of passes at the University Junior Examinations were posted yesterday.

All Saints College— **Allan Darvall Barton**, 2 B, 4 O, 6O, 8 B, 9 B, 10 O, 13 B ; **Gerald Roy Lee**

Comment [T1]:

Description of Roy Lee on Enlistment.

FIELD SERVICE 59789 Army Form B. 2090a

REPORT of Death of a Soldier to be forwarded to the War Office with the least possible delay after receipt of notification of death on Army Form B. 215 or Army Form A. 36, or from other official documentary sources

REGIMENT OR CORPS 26th Battalion A.I.F. Squadron, Troop, Battery or Company 11th Reinforcements

Regimental No. 4 4 5 4 Rank Temporary Sergeant

Surname LEE Christian Name Roy

Died (Date 3rd May 1917 Place France)

Cause of Death* Killed in Action

Nature and Date of Report Court of Enquiry dated 8th December 1917.

By whom made Commanding Officer 26th Battalion A.I.F.

26th Battalion

In early 1917, the 26th Battalion joined the follow-up of the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line and attacked at Warlencourt (1-2 March) and Lagincourt (26 March). For his valorous actions at Lagincourt, Captain Percy Cherry was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. On **3 May**, the Battalion was also involved in the second attempt to breach the Hindenburg Line defences around Bullecourt. Later that year the focus of the AIF's operations switched to Belgium. There, the 26th battalion fought in the battle of Menin Road on 20 September, and participated in the capture of Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October.

Extract from A.W.M. Notes

Lee was thus killed on the first day of the "Second Bullecourt" battle. Below are a few copies from the wider correspondence resulting from his sister's attempts to find, through the Red Cross, the circumstances of her brother's death? Here there was confusion as to which "Lee" was

actually the casualty? This went on for some months as he was killed
3/5/17 but with Doris still unclear 9/2/18!

26th Battn.
A.I.F.

Lee.
Cpl. R.G. 4454

"Killed in Action"

I have been afraid there was no hope about my brother being
alive for a long time, as I have heard from Captain Lloyd of
the 26th Battn. who was a friend of my brothers and I met two
men who were wounded in the same charge and they all told me
that there was no hope. The only thing that is peculiar, their
story in no way corresponds with this man's - and the descrip-
tion is not very exact as he was a very slim man anything but
stout.

Letter from:-

Doris L.Lee
No.1 A.A.Hpl.
Harefield.

9.2.18.

London.
14.2.18.

S.

26th Bn
A.I.F. Coy.

Lee
Cpl. R. 4454

"Wounded and Missing 3.5.17."

I saw him with his Unit 18.9.17. and he was then quite well, and was a Gas N.C.O. attached to 10th Bn Hqtrs France. I know him quite well. I was in the same tent as he was, and he was the only man of that name in the Coy. He came from Ballina N.S.Wales. He was a man of fair complexion, height about 5'8" fairly thick set, clean shaven, age about 22 years. I believe he had been wounded on this date, but is now with his Unit in France.

Witness:- Pte. W. Marquess 6280
26th Batt. C. Coy., 10th Pltn.
3rd A.A. Hospital,
Dartford.

"At Bullecourt on March 3rd the night before the charge we were out on a carrying party. The enemy was shelling us heavily, and Lee got hit and instantly killed. He belonged to D. Coy, No. XIII Pltn."

Eye-witness: Yes

Description: A Queenslander, about 5'10", stout, medium colouring, clean-shaven

Informant: Col I.W. Dooling, 1946,
26th A. I. F., D. Coy, XVI Pltn,
5th Southern General Hospital,
Milton Section, Portsmouth

Home address:
c/o Mrs. Jones,
Port Cygnet,
Tasmania.

A.I.F.,
26th BATTALION - "A" Company.

LEE, T/Sergeant
R.C. No. 4454

"Killed 3/5/1917"

Informant described Lee as about 5'8", medium build, rather dark complexion, aged about 23/4. Informant states that they both belonged to "A" Company, Lee being in No.4 Platoon and informant in No.3.

On 3/5/17 the Battalion was in action at Bullecourt. They hopped over at daylight. That afternoon informant saw Lee lying dead at a Dressing Station well back from the spot where they had hopped over. He had apparently been brought out wounded and died at the Dressing Station. Informant had no doubt that Lee was buried, although he could give me no particulars. He had seen Lee earlier in the day.

According to informant Lee was a very popular chap.

Informant:- No. 6099, Private J.T. Lavery,
"A" Company - 26th Battalion.

Private address:- 3 Darlington Road, DARLINGTON.
W.R.G.

Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY 13/5/19.

SYDNEY BUREAU.

26th A. I. F.

Lee, Cpl R. 4454

(W & M May 3/17)

"Cpl Lee is with the Battn and is working as an Instructor in the Brigade Gas School at Renexure."

Eye-witness:

Description: He is from Queensland

Informant: Sgt J. Whitinoe 4656, *Whitinoe*
26th A. I. F.,
2nd Birmingham War Hospital
Northfield.

Home address:
Burketown,
N. Queensland.

A.I.F. 26

LEE, Cpl.R.G 4454 *P.1*

W & M May 3rd.1917.

The Corporal R.Lee with this number, is with the battalion still, and is Gas N.C.O. I saw him last week, and we have had a stunt since then, but I don't think he went over himself. He may have been wounded on May the 3rd, that I cannot say, but he is certainly not missing.

Informant: Cpl. O'Brien. 139.
On leave,
BOULOGNE. 25.9.17.

26th Battn
A.I.F.

"Wounded and Missing 3.5.17.

Any later report?

No later report.

Cert. by A.I.F HdQtrs. 3.9.17.

London.
10.9.17.

Sept. 20th, 1917.

Capt. G. Bond M.C.
26th Battalion. A.I.F.
B. E. F.

Dear Sir,

We have been asked by the sister of 4454 Cpl. Roy Gerald Lee 26th Battn. to make all possible enquiries concerning him, as he has been reported wounded and missing since 3.5.17.

We hesitate to trouble you in the matter but feel ourselves obliged to do so as we are anxious to allay her anxiety as soon as possible even if it be to give her definite news of his death.

Miss Lee tells us that you had very kindly suggested writing to Sgt. Paton and Pte. Woods, both of the 26th Battn., as they were special friends of Cpl. Lee and might possibly know something of him and what happened on May 3rd. If you were able to find time to do that we fear your letters have miscarried and we should be most grateful if you could interview these men with a view to obtaining some news of Cpl. Lee's fate.

With apologies for troubling you and thanking you in anticipation,

November 5th, 1917.

The Adjutant,
26th Australian Infantry Bttn,
A.I.F., B.E.F.

Dear Sir,

We are making enquiries on behalf of our Sydney Office about 4154 Cpl.R.G.Lee, 26th Battalion, who was officially reported Wounded and Missing 7.5.17. We have received numerous unofficial reports stating "L/Cpl.G.Lee" is with his unit, a gas corporal, that he was reported Missing in May but has since rejoined on 26th October. Head Quarters here had no later report than Missing 3.5.17.

We will be glad if you would let us know whether 4154 R.G. Lee is still posted as Missing on your battalion records, and, if so could give us the particulars of the Cpl.Lee in the gas section with whom our informants are confusing him.

With apologies for troubling you.

Sister Lee,
Croydon War Hospital,
Croydon.

January 11th, 1918.

Re 4154 ROY GERALD LEE, (CPL) 26th Battalion, A.I.F.

Dear Madam,

We deeply regret to inform you that the above soldier who was previously reported Wounded and Missing is now reported Killed in Action 3.5.17.

We are making further enquiries in the hope of learning full details of his death and will immediately forward to you any information we receive.

Assuring you of our sincere sympathy in your loss.

Letter dated 24/4/24 over 5 years after the war:

In reply to your communication of recent date relative to the manner of perpetuating the memory of your son, the late No.4454 Sergeant R. Lee, 26th Battalion, I have to inform you that in the case of those members of the Australian Imperial Force whose graves remain unidentified it is the intention of the Imperial War Graves Commission to specially commemorate their sacrifice by means of permanent memorials to the missing which will be erected in certain defined battle areas throughout France and Belgium and engraved with the name and regimental description of the soldiers concerned.

The original suggestion was to provide separate headstones in the military cemeteries nearest to where the soldier fell, but this was found to be impracticable of accomplishment and the above course was therefore adopted in preference.

It is not known at this office at present ^{what} form these memorials will take, but it is certain they will be impressive and imposing in design in keeping with the ideals underlying the work of the Graves Commission.

It is suggested your friends on arrival in England should enquire at the Graves Section, Australia House, Strand, London, where the latest information regarding the activities of the Commission is available and where advice may also be obtained facilitating their proposed pilgrimage in the Western Front.

Yours faithfully,

W. Lee,
"Tarengo",
Bennett Street,
BONDI, N.S.W.

Captain.
Officer i/c Base Records.

Father: William Lee b: 1855 in Kelso, NSW, *Birth:* 1855 in Kelso, NSW, *Death:* 20 FEB 1929 in Molong.

Mother: Florence Australia McPhillamy b: 1855 in Bathurst.

Married: 3 Jun 1879 in Kelso, NSW. Children:

1. William H Lee b: 1881 in Bathurst, NSW.
2. Gladys Hope Lee b: 1884 in East Macquarie, NSW.
3. Doris L Lee b: 1886 in East Macquarie, NSW.
4. Gerald Roy Lee b: 1888 in East Macquarie, NSW.
5. Gordon Scott Lee b: 1893 in Bathurst.
6. Lorna Hazel Lee b: 27 OCT 1894 in Bathurst.

Gerald Roy Lee, who was on the staff of the Bank of Australasia, Peak Hill, in 1907, was killed in action in France.

Digger – Bullecourt, France. What happened here?

The First Battle of Bullecourt

The First Battle of Bullecourt, 11 April 1917, was an Australian attack on German trenches east of the village of Bullecourt. The plan was to advance some three kilometers north, taking the village of Hendecourt, two kilometers north east of Bullecourt. Operations of this kind were usually supported by a prior artillery bombardment of the German trenches. However at Bullecourt the Australian 4th Division attacked without artillery support, in an attempt to surprise the Germans, but with the assistance of a dozen tanks. In spite of the failure of most of the tanks to reach the German line, the Australian infantry advanced northwards, with Bullecourt on their left flank, and seized two lines of German trenches. There they were halted by increasing German resistance. Let down a second time by the failure of their own artillery to fire on the German counterattacks, the Australians, having held the enemy trenches for several hours, were driven back to their starting line with the loss of over 3000 men. Poorly planned and hastily executed, the first battle of Bullecourt resulted in disaster.

The Second Battle of Bullecourt

Three weeks after the first battle of Bullecourt the Australian 2nd Division, now with the British 62nd Division attacking on their left towards Bullecourt itself, assaulted over the same ground where the Australians had met defeat on 11 April. This time the Australian infantry attacked without tanks but was well supported by artillery. On the first day of the battle, 7 May, one Australian brigade on the right flank was unable to reach the German first line, and the British obtained only a foothold on the southern edge of Bullecourt, but the main Australian attack was successful in capturing the same German trenches the Australian 4th Division had been ejected from on 11 April. The battle continued for two weeks, the Australians and British committing four more divisions (the Australian 1st and 5th Divisions, and the 7th and 58th British Divisions). The Germans, also reinforced, made numerous unsuccessful counterattacks. By 17 May the Germans admitted defeat by ceasing attempts to recover their lost ground. Of 150,000 men from both sides who fought at Second Bullecourt, some 18,000 British and Australians, and 11,000 Germans, were killed or wounded in battle.