

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 15649
Name: Leslie Robert STIRLING
Nickname: Les



Medals and Decorations

British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 27 Mar 1916
KIA: 21 Oct 1917

Les was born at Sturt (SA) on 7 Apr 1890 to Alfred Stirling and Mary Ann Stirling (nee Parsons) of Warratta. He was the third of 12 children, 7 boys and 5 girls. His father was a blacksmith working on Warratta Vale Station at the time of his birth. In 1907 the family moved to Poonindee and his father opened a blacksmith shop.

Les attended school at Warratta before taking employ as a packer with the South Australian Railways.

On 10 Sep 1913 he married Esther Elizabeth Evans of Louth Bay. They had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy, Robert Bruce Stirling, now aged 96, still lives in Tumby.

Les enlisted in the Army on 21 Mar 1916. He completed his basic training at Mitcham (SA) and was posted to the Army Medical Corps General Reinforcement Group. On 23 Oct 1916 he embarked on the "*Port Melbourne*" bound for Devonport (UK), arriving on 23 Dec 1916. He spent Christmas of that year at the Australian base on the Salisbury Plains (UK) before being drafted to 4th Division, arriving in Calais (France) on 4 Jan 1917; he then went to Etaples (France), where all of the new arrivals (40 reinforcements in total) undertook further training, including live firing exercises and gas training – all undertaken in the extreme cold and wet of winter.

On 22 Jan 1917, Les was posted to 4th Field Ambulance (C Section) based at Becordel (France). In early Feb he was detached to 12th Field Ambulance, his task being to transport wounded from the Regimental Aid Post (RAP) to the railhead: this was his first exposure to front line casualties.

On 25 Feb 1917 he was again detached, this time to 3rd Field Ambulance. He returned to his parent unit in early May at Bapaume (France)

On 13 May 1917 the 4th Field Ambulance began its movement forward, firstly to Le Doulieu, then Diev Galie, then Steenwerk and finally reaching Steenvoorte on the French/Belgium border on 20 Sep 1917. On 10 Oct, C Section moved to Abeele and entrained for Ypres to support the third battle of Wipers (Ypres) in the closing months of 1917. This battle is considered by many as one of the most costly battles of WW1. There were 38,000 Australian casualties in eight weeks!

On 21 Oct 1917, during this battle at Ypres, Les was killed in action (KIA). The 4th Field Ambulance was supporting forward troops with casualty evacuation when Les, 3 other stretcher bearers and the wounded soldier they were carrying, were struck by an enemy artillery shell: they all perished

He was buried behind the allied lines on 22 Oct 1917. Later his remains were reinterred in the Lijssenthock War Cemetery, near Poperinge (Belgium).



British War Medal Victory Medal



Lijssenthock War Cemetery, Belgium

