



No 3241 Herbert Biggs KIA 4th October 1917

In June 2018 Mr Geoffrey Fenn of Leicestershire, England, wrote to us:

"I read that your band is coming to England and Leicester. Could you let me know the date and venue you will be playing at and also if you will be performing The Silent Anzac. My great uncle Herbert Biggs emigrated to Australia in 1914. He worked in Romsey, I assume on a farm and then enlisted in the 7th Battalion AIF. In the fighting in the Ypres area he was killed and his body was never found. I understand that his name is on the Menin Gate. Perhaps you could pay my respects when you visit the Menin Gate. If you find anymore information about Herbert Biggs I would be grateful."

In response to Mr Fenn's request we searched the missing persons red cross files at the Australian War Memorial and WW1 service records at the National Archives of Australia. We found a number of eye-witness accounts of Herbert Biggs last moments. In particular No 6731 Pte H. A Chapman was with Biggs when they were both hit by the same shell. Chapman reported the details of the action in a letter (see his report below).

As part of his report Chapman said that he had promised to look up Biggs' family in England and tell them what had happened to Biggs. However, when Chapman, himself wounded, got to hospital he had lost everything including the address of Biggs' family.

Over one hundred years later In November 2018 we travelled to Leicestershire and met with Mr Geoffrey Fenn, Herbert Biggs' great nephew. There we were privileged to be able to fulfill the promise made by Biggs' mate 100 years ago to "drop my people a line" and passed on to his family the eye witness accounts of Biggs' last action. Lest We Forget.

7th Battn.
A.I.F.

BIGGS
Herbert Alfred 3241

"Killed in Action 4-10-17"

Re 3241 Pte.H.A.Biggs, 7th Battn. I can give you the truth because I was wounded when he was killed with the same shell. He was in charge of the Lewis Gun and team on the 4-10-17. We were moving up to hop over when a shell came over and landed right at our feet as we were walking along. It threw me yards away and of course I was knocked senseless. When I came round I saw one man of our team and also heard him calling out. I went to him and he said - "Where is Herb?", that is what we call him. I went straight to where I was hit and I found Herbert Biggs lying on his back. I spoke to him and got no reply. I put my hand on his chest and shook him but no move. I then started back to where I had left my wounded mate and I met another one of the team wounded also. He said - "Is that you chapie? that is me I said, what is left of me". He then said, "Where is Herb and Reid, Nunn and Needham?". I said poor old Biggs is killed. I said come on up to Reid. He said to me, are you hit?. I said no. I then tied up my two mates' wounds and I said stay there and I will go and have another look at Herb, and if there is any life in him I will carry him out.' With this I got up, went straight to Herb. I had another look at him, He was hit through the stomach. The shells were then landing all round me. I went straight back to my two wounded mates and started out. We got about 100 yards away when we thought of his watch. My two wounded mates wanted me to go back, but it was only madness as the was shelling very heavy, and as I was hit in 6 places, and blood all over me, as I never had any wounds dressed. I remember no more until I came to my senses in the dressing station. Herbert Biggs said to me on the night of the 2-10-17, "I am going to get knocked this time". Of course we all laughed at him and said he was dreaming. Herbert was a man about 23 or 24, and about 5'6". He was an Englishman, he came to Australia some time before war broke out. He had a brother in the Imperial Army. He was trying to find him a couple of days before we went into the line. He gave me his people's address, they are here in England somewhere. He said if I get killed and you come through drop my people a line, I said alright, but when I got back to hospital I had lost everything. He had only been back a short time from leave to England. He was one of the best, he was liked by every man who knew him. I would be pleased to see any of his people or hear from any of them at any time. I am trying to get up to London this week.

Letter from:- Chapman. Pte.H.C. 6731
M.G.Battn. late
7th Battn.,
B.Coy. 3 Camp,
Parkhouse,
SALISBURY PLAIN.
21-8-18



War Memorial, Romsey, Victoria, Australia