



FRANK BALL

Frank Orman Ball

Corporal, №19616, Left Section, 29th Battery, 8th Field Artillery Brigade. Son of Charles and Eliza 'Lylie' Ball of the Post Office of Port Adelaide. Born 18 March 1896 at Smithfield, South Australia.

Frank was a 19-year-old clerk with the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) when he enlisted on 4 August 1915 at Keswick, South Australia. He was 5 ft 10¼ in and 147 lbs with a fair complexion, blue eyes and dark brown hair. His religious denomination was Church of England. More than four years

later, his discharge certificate noted that his eyes were grey, his hair fair and his height was 6 ft.

He served in the Senior Cadets and Australian Citizens' Forces 28th Engineers Signallers before joining the AIF. After enlisting, he trained as a Private in the artillery and signals at Mitcham, South Australia, and Maribyrnong, Victoria. He was made Gunner on 16 November 1915, posted to the AIF Signals School (Maribyrnong) on 31 January 1916, to the Field Artillery Reinforcements on 2 March 1916 and then, on 1 April 1916, to the newly formed 29th Battery of the 8th Field Artillery Brigade.

Frank left Port Melbourne aboard the *HMAT Medic* (A7) on 20 May 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth, England, on 18 July 1916. The Battery underwent training at various camps and schools on Salisbury Plain at Wyke Regis, Weymouth and Larkhill. Frank was promoted to temporary Bombardier on 24 November 1916.

The 29th Battery proceeded to France on 30 December 1916 as part of the 3rd Division AIF. Frank saw active service along the French-Belgian border at or near Armentières, Houplines, Bailleul, Ploegsteert Wood, Messines, Warneton, Zonnebeke, Steenwerck, Ypres and Passchendaele. He was mentioned in dispatches after action near Armentières: "*Bbdr. Ball F.O.: on 19 Feby 1917 when acting as telephonist to F.O.O. [Forward Observation Officer] in Front Line Trench, he stuck to his post during a heavy retaliation of shell fire by the enemy, many of the shells falling within a few yards of him. By so doing, he enabled the fire of his Battery to be kept up.*"

His rank of Bombardier was confirmed upon his promotion to temporary Corporal after the death from wounds of Corporal Charles Stanley Robinson at Ploegsteert Wood on 15 June 1917. The promotion to Corporal was confirmed later that day.

Frank was among seven Battery staff gassed as they sheltered overnight in a dugout at Hooge Crater on the Ypres-Menin Road, Belgium, 24 September 1917, in the Battle of Passchendaele. A gas shell hit the dugout. The 6th Field Ambulance took the seven to a dressing station, which also was shelled, so they were sent on to the next station and then another before reaching the 3rd Canadian Casual Clearing Station by rail in open trucks. From there, an ambulance train took them to the United States 9th General Hospital, Rouen. Frank was blinded for several days. Besides Frank, the seven gassed included Reg Mason and Ern Collett, both of whom died, Norm Martin and A.P. Chauney.

On 9 October 1917, Frank was evacuated by the '*Western Australian*' down the River Seine to Le Havre and then to England and the City of London Military Hospital, Clapton. He also was a patient at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford, and a convalescent camp at No. 4 Command Depot at Hurdcott, Salisbury Plain, before a posting to the Artillery Signals School at Heytesbury, Wiltshire.

Two offences were recorded against Frank in March 1918, when he was based at Hurdcott Camp, Salisbury Plain. The first was on 16 March when he was charged by Military Police in Wilton with neglecting to obey orders for the "dress" award. According to Frank in a letter to his mother, he had failed to have the chinstrap of his slouch hat in place. He was admonished by Lt. Col. D.S. Wanliss [sic]. Then, on 23 March, he was charged with being Absent Without Leave for two days from 10pm 19 March to 8.45pm 21 March. The same Lt. Col. Wanliss dismissed the charge. While the charge was dismissed on 26 March after the Colonel had sought verification from a doctor of Frank's claim that he was ill and unable to return from leave. While on charge, Frank was under open arrest at the Hurdcott Camp but that didn't stop him travelling into Salisbury for weekends.

Frank returned to the Battery on the Somme on 18 June 1918. Of those gassed, only Frank returned to action. The Battery was a part of the first deployment of Australian troops as one force in some of the most decisive battles of the war. The Battery saw active service and was 'parked' variously at or near Villers Bretonneux, Vaux-sur-Somme, Cerisy, Hamel, Susan Wood, Pozieres, Fouilloy, Mericourt, Clery-sur-Somme, Curlu, Vaux Wood, Ceylon Wood, Bray-sur-Somme, Hem, St Quentin, Peronne, Hargicourt, Bony, the Hindenburg Line, Hamelet Templeau le Guerard, St Quentin Canal, Bellicourt, Wiancourt, Brancourt, Le Cateau, Proqartwood, St Martin Riviere, St Loupplet, Basene and La Vallee Mulatre. They were out of the line at Brancourt when the Armistice was signed.

Following the Armistice, the 29th Battery stayed in France and Belgium until May 1919 because of the shortage of ships to repatriate the AIF. Frank and the rest of the battery were billeted with local families in Brancourt, Hautmont, Lille, Thuillies, Cousolre, Lobbes, Anderleus and Charleroi.

Frank returned to England from Le Havre to Southampton on the *S.S. Aberdonian* on 7 May 1919. He was based at Parkhouse, Codford and Sutton Veny and travelled widely through Scotland, England and Ireland before returning home. Some of his travelling was in the company of his cousin, Roy McPherson, also in England with the AIF and a younger brother of Allan McPherson, with whom Frank and another friend, Stan Whiting, had enlisted in 1915.

Frank left England from Avonmouth, near Bristol, on 23 July 1919 aboard the *S.S. Suevic*, arriving back in Australia on 6 September 1919. He was discharged from the AIF on 23 October 1919 after four years and 81 days of service, three years and 111 days of which was abroad. He was paid £587/13/4¹ for his four years of war service.

After a reunion with his mother and father at Port Lincoln, to where Charles had been appointed Postmaster shortly before the end of the war, Frank returned to work at the Bank of New South Wales.

¹ Worth about \$45,665 in 2017 Australian dollars, according to the Reserve Bank of Australia inflation calculator.

Frank and Eleanor (Ella) Annie Martin, whom he met after the war, married on 9 July 1924 at the Baptist Church, Semaphore. Frank worked in Adelaide, regional Victoria including Boort and Benalla and then in metropolitan Melbourne at the Preston Branch. He and Ella lived in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern. Their first child, Pamela Joy, was born in Malvern on 3 September 1926. Frank and Ella moved back to South Australia in 1928.

They went farming at Maryvale, near Bugle Ranges in the Adelaide Hills of South Australia, and a son, Peter Orman, was born on 18 September 1929 at Wakefield Hospital, Adelaide.

Ella died suddenly on 16 December 1931. One of Frank's older sisters, Ida, came to Maryvale to help raise the children. Frank, Ida, Pam and Peter moved to Woongarra, near Milang, in 1935, from where Frank and Ida retired to Adare Heights, Victor Harbor, in 1959.

Frank died on 22 April 1984 at Victor Harbor.



MOTHER

Eliza Jane Ball, nee Jenkins, known as Lilie (pronounced 'lie-li')
Photograph c1885.

Wife of Charles Ball and mother of Hilda Lilie, Ida Margaret, Charles Samuel, George Ley **CHECK LYLE OR LEY**, Laura Irene (Rene), Frank Orman and Norman Gow.

Born 25 April 1866 at Birkenhead, South Australia. Married Charles Ball on 16 February 1887 at Christ Church, North Adelaide. Died on 20 December 1941 at home at 25 Willsden Street, Walkerville, South Australia.



FATHER

Charles Ball. Photograph c1910

Born 20 August 1863, at Port Adelaide to William and Margaret (nee Bailey) Ball. After being educated at Mr Cater's and Grote Street Schools, Charles joined the staff of the General Post Office, Adelaide, about 1876.

He married Eliza Jane Jenkins on 16 February 1887 at Christ Church, North Adelaide. They had seven children – Hilda Lilie, Ida Margaret, Charles Samuel, George Ley, Laura Irene (Rene), Frank Orman and Norman Gow.

Charles was postmaster at various South Australian centres, including Salisbury, Gawler Railway, Smithfield Railway, Gladstone, Port Lincoln and Port Adelaide. He was prominent in amateur dramatics. When he was at Gladstone, a rail carriage was put on the train to take actors and patrons to Laura to stage a show and hitched on again to take them home.

Before Federation in 1901, Charles was for nine years the railway and telegraph stationmaster at Smithfield. He and Eliza were stationed at Port Adelaide for most of the war and were transferred to Port Lincoln shortly before it ended. Charles returned to Port Adelaide as Postmaster during the 1920s.

Charles retired in August 1928 at the age of 65 years and with failing health because of pernicious anaemia, a condition that contributed to his death on 7 February 1930 at home at 25 Willsden Street, Walkerville, South Australia.



RENE

Laura Irene Ball, sister of Frank, known as Rene.

Rene trained with the Australian Army Nursing Service and was preparing to leave for overseas service when the Armistice was signed. She nursed at Torrens Park Hospital for returned soldiers, the former Barr Smith family home, now Scotch College. She was before this, in 1916, a nurse in Duncan Ward of the infectious diseases block of the Adelaide Children's Hospital in North Adelaide.

Born 20 July 1894, married William Smith of Smithfield, had two children, Gordon and Helen, and died 19 September 1980.

OS BOSLEY

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Private, №3148, 43rd Battalion Australian Infantry, carpenter who enlisted at Gawler on 4 April 1917, killed in action on 6 April 1918. Aged 23 years. Buried at Heilly Station Cemetery Mericourt-L'Abbe, France. Born at Gawler and attended Gawler School. Husband of Mrs R.E.Turner of 44 Ethel Street, Forestville, South Australia.