

Driver Frank Douglas or Septimus Armstrong[©]
Regimental number: 147
12th Brigade , Field Artillery, Australian Imperial Force

born: about 1884 – died: 25 June 1916

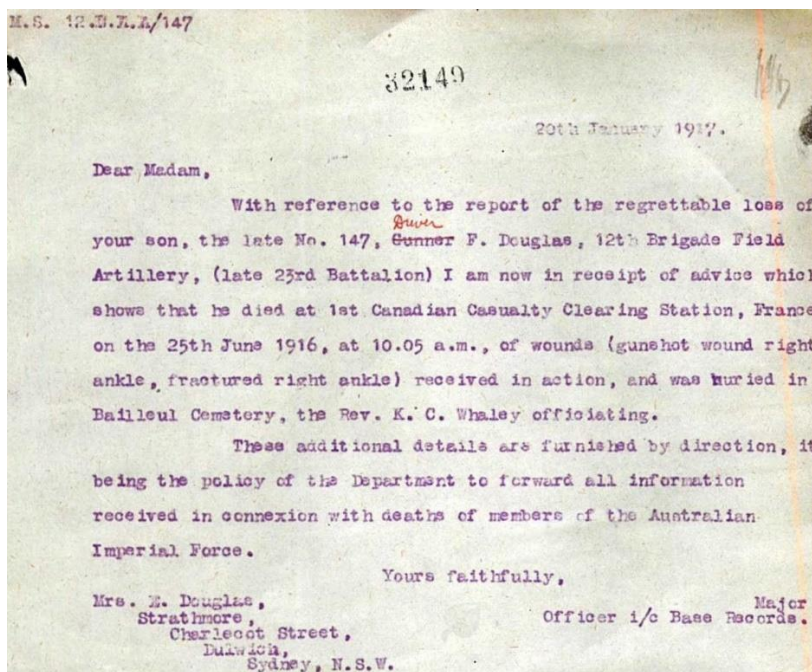
Driver Frank Douglas was born Septimus Armstrong in about 1884 in the Parish of Jika Jika in Fitzroy, in the country of Bourke, New South Wales, Australia.¹ He was the son of Francis and Elizabeth Armstrong and had at least one sibling, Lewis (born in 1881).²

He enlisted as a private in the Australian Imperial Force under the assumed name of Frank Douglas on 25 January 1915 in Wodonga, Victoria, at age of 31.³ He was 5' 8½" tall, had a fair complexion, grey eyes and brown hair and was unmarried. He was a cycle mechanic. He was with the 6th Infantry Brigade of the 22 Infantry Battalion⁴ when he sailed on His Majesty's Australian Transport *Ulysses* from Melbourne on 8 May 1915, heading to the Middle East.

While in Egypt, he was injured and admitted to the 1st Australian Hospital, Cairo, on 18 December 1915. He was discharged to duty the following month. The same month, in Heliopolis, Egypt, he transferred from the 23rd Battalion to the 8th Light Horse Regiment. In March of that year, he transferred to the 3rd Light Horse Reserve Regiment and then in April to the 4th Divisional Artillery and was taken on strength by the 47th Battery.

The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) served first in Gallipoli and Egypt and then began to leave Egypt to join the Western Front in March 1916.⁵ On 2 June 1916 Frank left Alexandria to join the British Expeditionary Force in France, arriving in Marseilles on 9/10 June.

He did not last long on the Western Front. He was wounded on 24 June 1916 and admitted to the 7th Field Ambulance with multiple shell wounds. He "died at 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, France on the 25th June 1916, at 10.05 a.m., of wounds (gunshot wound right ankle, fractured right ankle) received in action, and was buried in Bailleul Cemetery, the Rev. K. C. Whaley officiating."⁶ He was buried in Plot II, Row E, Grave 156.

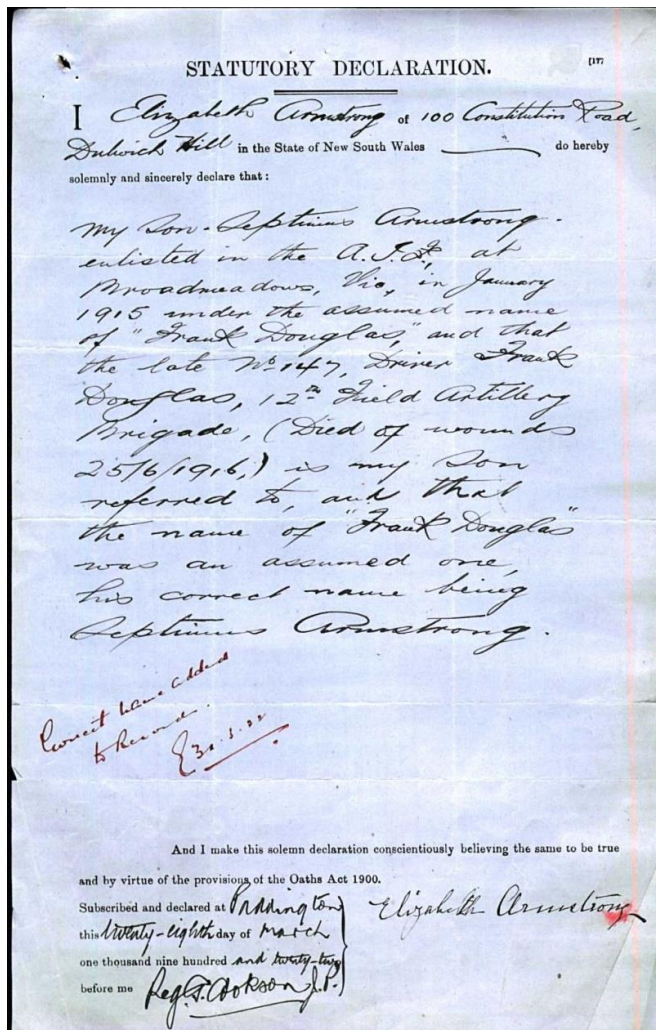


Letter providing details of Frank's death
Source: "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Frank Douglas [Septimus Armstrong]

Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several casualty clearing stations, including No. 1 Canadian CCS, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth

burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918; they occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when soldiers' remains were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.⁷

Rev. Whaley informed Frank's mother of his death in a letter dated 28 June 1916. Unfortunately, there was also a letter sent to his mother, dated 10 July 1916, indicating that Frank had been wounded but that "[i]t is not stated as being serious."⁸ Details of his death were provided in a letter sent in January 1917.



Statutory declaration about Frank's assumed name
Source: "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914-1920,"
Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Frank Douglas [Septimus Armstrong]

1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹¹

When he enlisted, his mother, Elizabeth Armstrong, was living at Strathmore, Charlescot Street, Dulwich, Sydney. Even though his mother was receiving his pension, in November 1920 a parcel sent to her at the Charlescot Street address, providing her with Frank's effects, was not claimed. Since the army could not find her new address, it turned to the newspapers to call for the next of kin to apply to receive his personal effects. In March 1921, Elizabeth wrote from 100 Constitution Road, Dulwich Hill, near Sydney, to claim his effects. His effects included "2 Purses, Electric Torch, Wrist Watch and Strap, Stylo Pen, Knife, Mirror in Case (damage), Photos, French Book, Note Book, [and] Cotton Bag."⁹

In July 1922, his mother wrote to the army enquiring about Frank's medals and, in September, she authorized Lewis Armstrong to collect a memorial plaque. At the same time, his mother notified the army that Frank had enlisted under the assumed name of Frank Douglas, but that his real name was Septimus Armstrong. To formalize this claim, his mother had to sign a Statutory Declaration in order that his records include "Stated to be Septimus Armstrong."¹⁰ The army specified that his headstone would include his correct name and the name under which he served.

William was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹¹

¹ "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Frank Douglas [Septimus Armstrong]. Unless otherwise specified, all information about William's military career comes from this source.

² "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Lewis Armstrong, Registration Number: 6747

³ "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Frank Douglas [Septimus Armstrong]

⁴ "First World War Embarkation Rolls," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/people/rolls/R1912164/>; accessed 10 November 2016) entry for Frank Douglas

⁵ Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1069749/>; accessed 26 September 2016), Volumes III, VII and VIII

⁶ "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 6 October 2016), entry for Frank Douglas [Septimus Armstrong]

⁷ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.