

PRIVATE WILFRED BARTLETT DIDCOTE

1617, 17th Battalion, Australian Infantry, Australian Imperial Force

Died aged 20 on 27 August 1915

Remembered with honour on the *Lone Pine Memorial, Turkey*; 58

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Lone Pine Memorial, Turkey



Australian 1914-15 Star



Australian Infantry, A.I.F.

WILFRED BARTLETT DIDCOTE was born in Tewkesbury in 1895, the youngest son of Thomas and Mary Letitia (formerly Price). Thomas was a waterman, born in Apperley, whilst Mary came from Twyning. In 1901 Wilfred was living in Jeynes Row with his mother, three brothers (of whom two were to die later in the war) and a sister. Thomas and Mary had a total of 11 children, only six of whom were still alive in 1911. Wilfred was a pupil at the Abbey Schools after which he worked as an errand boy for two years for J.W. Tysoe, Grocer, and then for Thomas Walker. In 1913 Wilfred decided to sail to Australia to join his older brother, Harry Fifield, who had emigrated three years earlier in 1910. Wilfred, an 18-year-old labourer, left London on 9 October 1913 on the *SS Beltana* (P&O Line), bound for Sydney.

Always following Harry, Wilfred enlisted in the A.I.F. on 22 April 1915 at Liverpool, New South Wales. His occupation was described as station hand; his forename on the papers was given originally as William, which was later corrected. Wilfred joined the same unit in which Harry had enlisted two months earlier, the 17th Battalion, formed in New South Wales in February 1915. It embarked on *HMAT (His Majesty's Australian Transport) Themistocles* for Egypt as part of the 2nd Australian Division.

After training in Egypt, the battalion sailed for Gallipoli, landing at Anzac Cove on 20 August 1915. Almost immediately, the Battalion took part in the *Battle of Hill 60* (21-29 August 1915), the last major assault of the campaign. Attacking on 21 August, the men were fresh and healthy, in stark contrast to the veterans, but they were inexperienced and ill-equipped. Attacking

with bayonet only, they suffered 383 casualties. Reported 'missing', there was confusion because his brother Harry was in the same battalion.

Private Wilfred Bartlett Didcote was killed on 27 August 1915, as confirmed by a Court of Enquiry. Red Cross enquiries elicited that: '*Pte. Didcote was killed in the famous charge at Hill 60, towards Suvla. The Turkish trenches were taken and held, but it is believed that Pte. Didcote did not reach the enemy trenches, but fell in the advance. The intervening ground was covered with low scrub which caught fire from the bursting Turkish shells, so that it was impossible to recover the discs or recognise the bodies. It is to be hoped that the knowledge that Pte. Didcote fell in one of the most gallant and historic charges which has taken place in this war will be of comfort to his friends*'. Wilfred's body was never recovered and his name is commemorated on the *Lone Pine Memorial* on the Gallipoli peninsula. He was awarded the Australian '1914-1915 Star' as well as the British *Victory* and *War Medals*.

Wilfred's mother received a pension of 40s. (£2) fortnightly from 23 October 1917 – not from the date of his death. Originally thought by the *Register* to be the second son lost, he was in fact the first of the three. **Corporal Albert J. Didcote** [†] was killed on 8 October 1915 at Loos, followed by **Sergeant Harry F. Didcote** [†] on 12 January 1918 at Ypres, the brother that Wilfred had followed to Australia. In addition, his father died in 1915 at the age of 62.



**Mrs. Didcote, who had lost three sons
in the war, inaugurated the
Tewkesbury War Memorial in 1922**