

Garfield CURTIS

Gunner 69726, 113th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

Died May 28th 1918, aged 21

Memorial in Franvillers Communal Cemetery Extension, Franvillers, France

Garfield Curtis was born in 1898 at St Martins Parish, Looe. He was the son of Richard Curtis, who became the local coastguard in Port Isaac in the years immediately before war broke out. In the 1911 census Richard (38) and his wife Lily (39) were living in the Coastguard Station at Par with Garfield (13) and his sister Gladys, also 13 and presumably his twin.

Garfield enlisted at Fort Brockhurst in Gosport and was in the 113th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. The Heavy Batteries were mainly equipped with 60 pounder (5 inch) guns, and were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, store, roads and railways behind enemy lines. As such, they were prime targets for the German artillery's retaliation.

Garfield was killed on May 28th 1918 and is buried in in the Franvillers Communal Cemetery Extension about five miles north east of Amiens on the Somme, close to where he was killed. An idea of the activity in this part of the line in late May can be obtained from the war diaries of the 43rd Australian Infantry Battalion, who were on the front line a few miles south of Franvillers, at Bois l'Abbe a mile west of Villers Bretonneux.



60 pounder guns of the Heavy Battery along a dusty road in Northern France

Their war diary shows the period May 21st to 24th was very quiet, although our artillery was very active each night. On May 25th 6,000 mustard gas shells fell on their section of the line between 8pm and 11pm, and between 3am and 6am the following morning 9000 mustard gas shells fell. Casualties from the gas continued up to May 27th, totalling four officers and 200 other ranks.



Australian Troops near Villers Bretonneux enjoying a quiet moment May 1918

Original
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
OR
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.
(Erase heading not required.)

HEAD-QUARTERS
31 MAY 1918
43rd INFANTRY
BATTALION A.I.F.

Army Form C. 2118. 9

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
In The Line Bois l'Abbe 62nd Div 9.3	24.5.18		Day cool and quiet with slight increase in artill fire: our artill was very active at night. An attack expected in morning.	
	25.5.18		Day again cool with normal activity. From 8 to 11 PM about 6000 Mustard gas shells fell on brigade front causing casualties.	
	26.5.18		At 3 AM Gas concentration again put down and by 6 AM 9000 shells fell on brigade sector. Heavy casualties resulted. Intermittent gas shelling continued until 11 AM with several small gas shells during afternoon. Casualties continued to come in up to midday of 27th by which time our casualties amounted to A Coy 2 off 660 B Coy 10 off 500 C Coy 14 off 200 D Coy 20 off 2000 in all. These were very largely eye cases caused by the after effects of gas saturated in the ground & clothes.	B&R

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Army Form C. 2118. 10

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
In The Line Bois l'Abbe 62nd Div 9.3	27.5.1918		Gas casualties continued to come in - day sunny - quiet with observation good. D Coy temporarily split up between A+B+C making 3 platoons in each of A+B with 4 platoons in C Coy.	B&R
	28.5.1918		Day spent in preparation for relief. Quiet with bright sun - gas still noticeable in parts but casualties ceased. At 9:30 PM relief platoons moved forward and relieved 41st Batt. Relief was quiet except along AMIENS-VILLERS BRETONNEUX Rd where harassing fire was maintained by enemy. Strength with unit 35 off 557 OR.	B&R
LINE VILLERS BRETONNEUX D 200 9.0.50	29.5.1918		Relief was complete by 1:30 AM. Dispositions C Coy Left & A Coy Right F.L. Coy. B. Coy Support. Flanks. 42nd Batt Left - 3rd Zouaves Reg (French) night. Opposed to 9th I.R. 108th Division Prussians. Day spent in settling down - day quiet observation good. enemy very still by day.	B&R

In Memory of
Gunner
Garfield Curtis

69726, 113th Heavy Bty., Royal Garrison Artillery who died on 28 May 1918 Age 21

Son of Mrs. Curtis, of 110, Par Green, Cornwall.

Remembered with Honour
Franvillers Communal Cemetery Extension



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Sources

Heavy Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery: <http://www.1914-1918.net/heavy-battery-index.htm>
43rd Australian Infantry Battalion War Diaries: <http://203.6.144.30/collection/RCDIG1000608/>