Private Francis Blencowe (XC 1900–1902)

Service Number: 5343
Rank: Private
Unit: 59th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of death: 31 October 1916
Place of death: France
Cause of death: Killed in action in the field
Place of burial: No known grave
Place of association: Neerim, Australia
Commemoration details: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France

From “The Xaverian” 1916, p. 39

“Francis Blencowe (1900).—A cutting sent us runs thus: “Killed in action in France, Francis Thomas, beloved and only son of F. W. and C. M. Blencowe; aged 31 years.” We have been wondering if this is the Francis Blencowe at Xavier 1900–’02, and as the name uncommon, concluded that it is. Our sincerest sympathy to his parents in their sad loss.”

From “The Xaverian” 1917, p. 55

“Francis Blencowe.—A letter to Neerim brought us sad confirmation of our suspicion that the death notice of one Francis Blencowe was that of a quiet Gippsland boy here from 1900–’02. He was killed instantaneously by a bursting shell, and thus passed from his regiment to his reward one of whom his commander wrote: “It is such characters as his that enable me to carry on smoothly.” Our deepest sympathy to his father and mother thus deprived of their own loved son, as also to the wife and his children to mourn his loss. Rest to him, and comfort and consolation to them.”

This is the Australian National Memorial in France near Villers-Bretonneux. A walk through the headstones of the Villers-Bretonneux Cemetery leads to where two flags – French and Australian – mark the boundary between the cemetery and the land on which the memorial is situated.

On the panels around the walls are the names of 10,856 Australians who died in France in the fighting there between March 1916 and November 1918. None of them has a known grave.