Frank Allen Dixon was born in March 1894 at Castlemaine, Victoria, the son of Henry and Kate Dixon. Frank grew up at 18 Aberdeen St, Auburn although he spent much time in Wandin where his uncle and aunty, James and Edith Wilkin, owned an orchard and he often went to stay with them there and helped out.

After finishing school he went to work as a clerk in a government office and before joining the AIF he served for two years in the militia with the 48th (Kooyong) Battalion. On the first of May 1915 he walked into the recruiting office at the Melbourne Town Hall and enlisted in the AIF. His medical records show he was five feet, nine inches tall, had light brown hair and brown eyes. He was engaged at the time of enlisting.

In June he was at the army’s training camp at Seymour where he was allotted to the 8th reinforcements of the 7th Battalion, his regimental number was 2575. His experience in the militia must have helped him because soon after he was promoted to Lance Corporal. On August 26th, 1915 he left with his unit from Port Melbourne aboard the HMAT Anchises and a month later they landed in Egypt.

In November 1915 he went with his unit from Alexandria in Egypt to Mudros Island in preparation for being landed at Gallipoli. However when he arrived at Mudros he contracted mumps and was sent to hospital and by the time he’d recovered from this a month later the military authorities had decided to evacuate the troops from the Gallipoli Peninsula and as a result he never landed there.

In December 1915 he was sent to Lemnos Island and a month later was back in camp at Egypt. During this time the AIF was reorganised and Frank was transferred to the 59th Battalion and promoted to the rank of Corporal. In June 1916 the 59th Battalion was sent to France arriving in the Fleurbaix area and in early July he was promoted again to Lance Sergeant.

One soldier who served with him, Private A E Crockett, later wrote of Frank: ‘He was the Corporal of the section I was in and we were good pals, he was a fine fellow and was just made Sargeant about a week before he was killed’.

The 59th Battalion weren’t in France very long when they were sent to Fromelles. On July 19th, 1916 they were ordered to attack. A Lieutenant Hackworthy later recalled that he said goodbye to Frank just before he went over the top and that was the last that was ever seen of him. He was listed as missing soon after; he was aged just twenty-two years old. Sadly on the same day his cousin, Private E F Wilkin of the 29th Battalion, was also killed in action.

Not long after his parents received a telegram saying he had been reported missing. This was the first of many frustrations for his family. In the coming months none of Frank’s items were returned to the family, even after numerous enquiries to the authorities. Secondly a court of enquiry was held into his death and although no witness could be found, the court ruled he had been ‘killed in action’.

However the authorities failed to inform the family of this and the first they heard about it was when it was published in the Argus newspaper that Frank was now ‘killed in action’.
Then the worst of all. In February 1917 the family were informed by the YMCA that Frank was being held as a prisoner of war in the Hotel de La Paix in Leysin, Switzerland. The family and his fiancée all wrote letters to him however three months later the military authorities confirmed that this report was false and that he had in fact been killed in action at Fromelles the year before.

Frank Dixon has no known grave but he is listed on the Australian Cemetery Memorial to the missing at V.C. Corner in Fromelles, France.

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