

William James SPENCER



Pre-enlistment:

- William Spencer was born on 25 September 1887 in Cooma, NSW. He was born William James Bottom to William and Catherine Bottom
- He was educated at Public and Grammar Schools
- At some point Will moved on his own to Townsville and worked there for Cummins and Campbell Ltd. Newspapers later reported that "he was very popular among his comrades while in the north."
- He lived at Flinders Street, Townsville, as a single man
- He changed his surname by deed poll to SPECER from BOTTOM prior to enlisting, the only one of his siblings to use his mother's maiden name rather than the family name of Bottom.
- His next of kin was listed as his mother, Mrs C Bottom, Bradley Street of Cooma, NSW

Military Records

- Service Number: 4900
- William Spencer enlisted on 13 September 1915, as a Private in Townsville, with 15th Infantry Battalion 15th Reinforcement
- On 28 March 1916 he embarked with his Unit from Brisbane, on board HMAT A73 Commonwealth, aged 28 years. He was not fit for active service until October 1916, when he finally joined his battalion on the Western Front.
- Spencer proved an able soldier and was quickly promoted to Lance Corporal. He spent the bitterly cold winter of 1916 and 1917 with his battalion. In early February a party of around 220 men from the 15th Battalion attacked a German position on the Somme. Spencer was wounded in the right thigh and had to be evacuated to England for treatment. It took six months before he was fit enough to return to his battalion.
- On 5 October 1917 he was promoted Second Lieutenant, and then on 7 May 1918 he was promoted Lieutenant
- Early the following year he wrote to his parents to say, "The weather here can be described by no other word than 'rotten'; snow one day, rain the next, and mud and cold winds galore, but I do not think we shall have to put up with such things much longer, as I have an idea that peace is close at hand."
- Shortly after he wrote that letter, the Germans launched their Spring Offensive. The 15th Battalion was part of the force rushed in to try to contain German forces near Hébuterne. By July the German operations had slowed so much that the commanding officer of the Australian Corps, Lieutenant General John Monash, could begin to think offensively.
- His war service was on the Western Front
- Lieutenant William James SPENCER was killed in action on 4 July 1918 near Hamel, France, aged 30 years

Cemetery &/or Memorial

- Cemetery: Villers Bretonneux Military Cemetery (Plot II, Row C, Grave No. 8), Fouilloy, France under the words "His the noble sacrifice – ours the sacred loss."
- Memorials: Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour Panel number 77
- Baulkham Hills William Thompson Masonic School War Memorial
- Commemorated in St Paul's Anglican Church, Cooma
- City of Townsville WW1 Honour Roll

Honours & Awards

- British War Medal
- Victory Medal

Rifle Shooting

- William Spencer was a member of the Townsville Rifle Club

ACWM Commemoration Service

Reference Links

- <https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=284410>
- <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/62144>
- www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2694930
- Information for Roll of Honour, Bruce Scott