

<b>COLLECTION TITLE</b>	Papers of Robert Alexander Little
<b>COLLECTION IDENTIFIER</b>	MSS 182
<b>INCLUSIVE DATE(S)</b>	1915 to 1986
<b>EXTENT</b>	1 box
<b>CREATOR</b>	Little, Robert Alexander, 1895-1918.
<b>RELATED ENTITIES</b>	Little, Robert Alexander, 1895-1918. Royal Air Force (UK), Squadron 1 Royal Air Force (UK), Squadron 8 Royal Air Force (UK), Squadron 3 Royal Air Force (UK), Squadron 203
<b>RELATED COLLECTIONS</b>	Papers of Robert Alexander Little
<b>ACCESS POINTS</b>	Air pilots, Military

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Robert Alexander Little was born on 19 July 1895 at Hawthorn, Melbourne. He was educated at Scotch College and later joined the family business as a commercial traveller, living with his parents at Windsor. Rejected with hundreds of others for the four vacancies at Point Cook Military Flying School, and realising that it would take years before he could be trained in Australia, Little sailed for England on RMS Malwa in July 1915. At his own expense he paid for his flying training at Hendon, where he gained his civilian flying certificate on 27 October 1915.

On the 14 January 1916, he entered the Royal Naval Air Service as a Temporary Probationary Flight Sub-lieutenant, and posted to the Royal Naval Air Service Flying School at Eastchurch. His 2nd posting was at the Naval War Station Flight, Dover, Kent, prior to being posted to No. 1 Wing at Dunkirk, France in June 1916. The Admiralty created the R.N.A.S. squadrons for service on the Western Front, and in October 1916, Little was transferred to the new No. 8 Naval Fighter Squadron, which was equipped with Sopwith Pups. On 1 November, he scored his first aerial victory and by March 1917, he was credited with shooting down nine enemy aircraft. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in April 1917.

Little was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Bar, the Distinguished Service Cross and 2 Bars and the French Croix de Guerre with star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. In December 1917, he was mentioned in despatches and was promoted to Flight Commander in January 1918. In early August 1917, he was posted to Walmer on the Kent coast for a period of rest. In October he was attached to the Dover station, and in March 1918, he declined a desk job and volunteered to return to France where as Flight Commander with No. 3 Naval Fighter Squadron, flying a Sopwith Camel. On the 1 April 1918, the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service were merged to form the Royal Air Force. Little was promoted to Captain in the 203 Squadron Royal Air Force.

Little died at the age of 22 on the night of 27 May 1918, when he went up alone from Ezil le Hamel to intercept enemy bombers in the dark. He was fatally wounded in the groin and safely crash-landed his plane near Norviz, where he was found next morning. He was buried in the village cemetery at Norviz and subsequently in Wavans British Cemetery, France. Little is credited with destroying forty-seven enemy aircraft. He was survived by his wife and son.

#### References:

*The diggers : makers of the Australian military tradition : lives from the Australian dictionary of biography*, selected and condensed by Chris Coulthard-Clark (1993), p. 223-225  
*Heroic Australian air stories*, by Terry Gwynn-Jones (1981), p. 12-34

#### SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection includes typescript notes, photocopies of biographical and military material and photographs collected by Mrs F. Vera Brettell relating to the life of Captain Robert Alexander Little who served with the Royal Naval Air Service in Squadrons 1, 8 and 3, and with the Royal Air Force in Squadron 203 during World War I.

## ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

The collection is available for research.

## SOURCE OF ACQUISITION

Donated by Mrs F. Vera Brettell in 1988.

## RELATED ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

### Separated Material

Further papers of Robert Alexander Little are held by the Australian War Memorial.

## EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF ORIGINALS

Special Collections, UNSW Canberra

Collection Contents

### Papers of Robert Alexander Little (MSS 182)

1915 to 1986 (Inclusive date(s))

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#### Folio 1 (MSS 182.B1)

##### Box-folder 1 (MSS 182.B1.1)

Typescript notes, photocopies of biographical and military material relating to the life of Captain Robert Alexander Little, 1915-1986

Typescript notes and photocopies of articles relating to Captain R.A. Little including:  
Photocopy of article entitled 'Captain R.A. Little - an appreciation', by R. Collishaw; published in *Military aircraft of Australia, 1909-1918*, p 178

Notes on Little's schooling and photocopy of a photograph of Scotch College

Notes on Little's first job and photocopy of a photograph of the *Centreway* building

Photocopy of the program of an Evening Concert held on RMS *Malwa*

Notes and photocopy of Little's Aviator's Certificate, 1915

Notes and photocopy of 'Record of service of the late Captain Robert Alexander Little DSO DSC'

Notes and copy of report by Little entitled 'In the field', 30/12/16

Notes and copy of report from Third Army, by W.W. Lewis, 8/4/17

Notes on German Aviatik aircraft captured by Little; photocopy of a letter to Mrs Little from Friedrich Neumuller, together with a cutting

Notes re nickname given to Little by fellow airmen, together with a photocopy of the story the name was taken from

Notes and photocopies of two portraits of Little

Notes and photocopies of Little's grave cross and headstone, and details relating to where he is buried

Notes and *London gazette* citations for Little, 1917

Notes and photocopy of Sopwith Pup N5182

Notes and photocopy of article entitled 'Sopwith Pup', by Neil Williams, 1973

Notes and photocopy of article entitled 'Parking ticket for a Pup', by Neil Williams, 1975

Notes photocopy of article entitled 'The saga of Sopwith Pup N 5182', by K.C.D. Cyrien; published in *Sport aviation*, May 1975, pp 48-59

Notes and photocopies of Sopwith Triplane N5493

Notes and photocopies of a leaflet re Diamond Jubilee commemoration, 1976, and article relating to Neil Williams entitled 'Top aerobattist killed', by Macarthur Job; published in *Aircraft*, January 1978, p 16

Notes and photocopies of the Diamond Jubilee commemoration, including published notes on Little, 23/10/1976

Notes and photocopy of 'The Scotch College and its War Memorial', c1920

Notes and photocopy of 'R.N.A.S. in honour of brave airmen : Walmer Aerodrome memorial', c1920

Notes and photocopy of a cutting from *The Canberra times*, 6 February 1981

List of articles and books published in Australia relating to R.A. Little, [1988]  
Photocopy of cutting entitled 'Record-holder', by Neil Jillett  
Photocopy of cutting entitled 'Our unknown ace of aces : Australia forgot to remember its greatest fighter pilot', by Steve Kendall; published *Australasian post*, October 29, 1964, pp 6-7  
Notes and photocopy listing Captain R.A. Little's record of combats  
Notes and photocopy of article entitled 'Robert Alexander Little : a personal memoir as told to Douglass Whetton by Reginald Rhys Soar, late Naval Eight', published in *Cross and cockade journal*, [1970s], 3 p.  
Notes and photocopy of article entitled 'Robert Alexander Little', published in *Aces and aircraft of World War I*, by Christopher Campbell (1984), pp 61-63  
Photocopy of an article entitled '1917', pp 71-74  
Notes and photocopy of a letter signed by Sopwith, 1974, and a photocopy of Certificate of Airworthiness after restoration  
Notes and photocopies of ownership details of Sopwith Pup N5182  
Notes and photocopies of photographs of Sopwith Pup N5182  
Notes and photocopies on Sopwith Triplane N5493  
Photocopy extracts from 'Royal Air Force Museum guide'  
Notes and photocopies relating to Royal Air Force Museums, Hendon and London  
Notes and photocopies of an article entitled 'Prelude to an Air Force'; published in *The history of the Royal Air Force*, 1984  
Notes and photocopies of an articles published in *Air extra*  
Note and photocopy of memorial received by Little's widow from Buckingham Palace  
Notes and photocopies relating to Little's name and why it is entered in the Book of Remembrance at St Clement Danes, Church of the Royal Air Force, Strand, London  
Notes and pamphlet on the Victorian Shrine of Remembrance entitled 'short history of the Shrine of Remembrance'  
Notes on Little's medals at the Australian War Memorial; Scotch College Medal; street name in Scullin, ACT  
Notes on *Naval eight : a history of No.8 Squadron R.N.A.S. (afterwards No.208 Squadron R.A.F.) from its formation in 1916 until the Armistice in 1918*, by E.G. Johnstone, 1972  
Notes relating to books written by J.M. Bruce on technical information relating to World War One aircraft  
Notes on the accommodation block for cadets named after Little at the Australian Defence Force Academy

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## **Box 2 Photographs (MSS 182.B2)**

### **Box-folder 2 (MSS 182.B2.2)**

Two photographs

Including:

Sopwith Pup N5182

Cadet accommodation block plaque named after Captain Robert Alexander Little at the Australian Defence Force Academy

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