

CHISHOLM, W. L.

William Leslie Chisholm was the youngest in a large family born to bootmaker Robert Chisholm and his wife Annie. They initially lived at 55 Neill Street, Carlton and then moved to Moonee Ponds. William Leslie and his older brother Alexander George attended Lee Street State School No 1252 in North Carlton and are listed on the School's World War I Honour Board. He became a highly talented singer and actor, performing at first for the troops in France and Belgium, and after the war in England and America.

AIF Project Entry

William Leslie CHISHOLM

Regimental number	13088
Place of birth	Carlton, Victoria
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Clerk
Address	128 Park Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria.
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	23
Next of kin	Father, Robert Chisholm 128 Park Street, Moonee Ponds, Victoria.
Enlistment date	29 November 1915
Rank on enlistment	Driver
Unit name	Auxiliary Mechanical Transport Company 1, Section 3.
AWM Embarkation Roll number	25/113/1
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A34 <i>Persic</i> on 22 December 1916.
Rank from Nominal Roll	Private
Unit from Nominal Roll	4th Division Headquarters
Fate	Effective abroad (still overseas).

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Chisholm's fate as 'effective abroad, still overseas', reveals nothing of his career as a highly talented singer and actor. Upon arrival in France, he was initially attached to the 2nd Australian Divisional Supply Column but in early 1918 he was transferred to the 4th Divisional Concert Party, otherwise known as the 'Smart Set'.

The 'Smart Set' performed a series of highly popular concerts for troops stationed in France and Belgium. As a baritone, Chisholm also featured as a female impersonator in a number of performances.

Group Portrait of the 'Smart Set'.



Description

Group portrait of the 'Smart Set', 4th Divisional Concert Party. The ladies are camouflaged Diggers. Back row, left to right (standing): Private (Pte) Crossley; Pte Rowe; Corporal (Cpl) Stevens; Pte Jackson; Lance Corporal (L Cpl) Castles; Driver (Dvr) Felton; Dvr Barkell.

Middle row (sitting on chairs): Pte Holt (lady); Cpl Dawe; Captain Leake; Cpl Kirby; *Dvr Chisholm* (lady).

Front row (sitting on mat): Dvr Ferrant; L Cpl Howitt; Staff Sergeant MacLeod.

After the War, Chisholm stayed in the UK and studied at Royal Academy of Music in London. He used the stage name 'Robert Chisholm' and went on to have an international career in music and acting, starring in many West End and Broadway productions and several Hollywood films. He died of a heart attack in South Yarra, in 1960, aged 66.

NAA: B2455 CHISHOLM W L SERN 13088.

NAA: B2455 CHISHOLM G A SERN 5608.

For further details on Robert Chisholm's stellar career, see:

'Forgotten Star' <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/forgotten-star>

Australian War Memorial 22 January 2016. Accessed on line 4 October 2023.

van Straten, Frank, 'Robert Chisholm - a forgotten Australian star', Asra Conference 2007, Melbourne: Art of Studio: Session Five, recorded 15 August 2007 - 17 August 2007, National Film and Sound Archive.