057

## Clark, Percy Allan

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### A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country



Plaque M99A in Kings Park

**Rail employment information**

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|---|---|
| Employer: | Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways |
| Branch: | Locomotive |
| Designation: | Fireman |

Rail employment notes: Born 21/6/1893. Joined WAGR 30/10/1911 aged 18 as Cleaner, Collie.
("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise employed at a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder. In this case Mr Clark appears to have complete the training to be a fireman, although enlisted before being appointed a fireman.)

Granted leave to join AIF 21/8/1914 (Service No.416). Killed in action 30/10/1917.

**Military service information:**

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|---|---|
| Conflict: | First World War 1914-1918 |
| Service: | Australian Imperial Force (AIF) |
| Military unit: | 11th Australian Infantry Battalion |
| Service number: | 416 |
| Date of death: | 30 October 1917 |
| Place of death: | Belgium |
| Age: | 23 |
| Rank: | Private |

Burial/memorialisation: Tyne Cot Cemetery, Passchendaele, Flanders, Belgium

Percy Allan Clark was in the first wave of enlistments in the AIF having signed up on 10 September 1914 at Blackboy Hill Camp. He underwent his basic military training at that same camp. On enlistment he declared that his mother Esther Clark was to be his Next of Kin as his father was deceased and that he had some previous military experience with six months service with the West Australian Infantry Regiment. Following his rudimentary training he was assigned to the 11th Battalion with the regimental number 416.

The Battalion departed Fremantle on 31 October 1914 aboard HMAT *Ascanius* and joined into the first convoy which had earlier departed from Albany with a substantial Naval escort to provide cover against the German Light Cruiser *Embden* which was thought to roaming the Indian Ocean. *Ascanius* suffered minor damage in a collision with Shropshire and was required to enter Aden for repairs before proceeding up the Red Sea. Suez was reached on 5 December 1914 and the troops disembarked the following day and established camp at Mena with other elements of the 3rd Brigade. Training continued in Egypt until 2 March 1915 when the Battalion moved by rail to Alexandria, boarded HMT *Suffolk* and sailed for Mudros on Lemnos Island. There was a delay of 7 weeks while the troops practiced the use of scrambling nets and maintained fitness with route marches on the Island.


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On 25 April 1915 11th Battalion as part of the 3rd Brigade landed at Anzac Cove, where they suffered considerable casualties. Private Clark participated is all 11 Battalion actions on Gallipoli until 10 September 1915 when he reported sick with a fever. He was evacuated to hospital on Malta where he remained until the end of the Gallipoli campaign when he re-joined 11 Bn in Alexandria. He reported sick again with dysentery on 11 January 1916 and the original plan was to return him to Australia but he recovered sufficiently to again take his place in the Battalion. On 29 March 1916 he sailed from Alexandria and landed at Marseilles on 5 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. After further training to familiarize the Battalion with conditions on the Western Front they joined the Battle for Pozieres where he was wounded and evacuated to the UK.

Hospital treatment, furlough and military detention kept him in England until 10 October 1917. His conduct sheet in the UK shows a Court Martial on 1 December 1916 where he was found guilty and awarded a sentence of 90 days imprisonment. The finding was confirmed but the sentence reduced to 30 days with the loss of 72 days pay. He went AWOL again between 13 February and 19 Feb 1917 resulting in 168 hours detention and the loss of 30 days pay. On 18 March 1917 he was sentenced to 168 hours detention and the loss of 23 days pay. For a minor offense on 3 May 1917 he was awarded 3 days Confined to Barracks (CB). Pte Clark absented himself again between 09 and 15 Jun 1917 for which he received a sentence of 10 days Field Punishment and the loss of 16 days pay. There were no further military offenses and he departed England through the Port of Southampton on 10 October 1917 and was taken on strength of 11Bn on 16 October 1917.

He was Killed in Action near Zonnebeke on 30 October 1917 and buried at Decoy Wood. An eye witness, 526 Cunningham, reported that he was struck in the head by a shell fragment and died instantly. His remains were recovered by the Imperial War Graves Commission after the War and relocated to Tyne Cot Cemetery.

**Additional/personal information:**

Percy Clark was born at Broken Hill in New South Wales but his family must have moved to WA when he was a child as he attended school at Hamel (near Harvey).

> CLARK.—Killed in action in France on October 30, 1917, Private P. Clark (Bluey), dearly beloved youngest son of the late W.Clark, of Hamel, and Mrs. E. Clark, of 97 Stone-street, West Perth, aged 23 years. —Inserted by his mother, sister, sister-in-law, and brothers, Gladys, Ruby, Stanley (on active service), and Will., and friend, Florrie. *The West Australian* 28/11/1917p1

His family paid for an inscription on his gravestone which reads: “In Loving Memory of our Dear Brother. Gladys, Stanley and Will”. His mother Esther Clark received a military pension but she died on 1 Oct 1919, aged 55 and is buried at Karrakatta Cemetery. With the death of Esther Clark his Next of Kin became his eldest brother William Clark. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These medals were issued to William Clark along with other memorabilia. His initial death certificate issued at HQ in France (Form B 2090A) records his surname incorrectly as Clarke. This was later amended to read Clark. Private Clark has a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M99A) which was dedicated by a niece in 2013.

The other brother, Stanley Roy Clark, was also a locomotive fireman and enlisted as soldier 1008 in the 3rd Australian Light Railway Operating Company. He returned to Australia at the end of the war.

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans’ Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------


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