Clarke, Reginald Charles

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



Plaque in Kings Park (see text)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Labourer
Rail employment notes:	Labourer, Geraldton, Ways & Works Branch.

Mr Clarke's career details have not been located, however the Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and also structures: stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc.

11th Battalion AIF.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	766
Date of death:	11 May 1915
Place of death:	Gallipoli, Dardanelles, Turkey
Age:	26
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Lone Pine Cemetery, Gallipoli Peninsula, Canakkale Province, Turkey

He commenced his enlistment at Geraldton and was formally attested at Blackboy Hill Camp on 17 August 1914, where he nominated his mother as his Next of Kin as he said his father was deceased. (This was not true, as explained below) He had 18 months previous service in the West Australian Infantry Regiment as a member of the militia. On enlistment he was assigned to 11 Battalion AIF with the regimental number 766. He underwent rudimentary military training prior to departing Australia from Fremantle on 2 November 1914 aboard A11 HMAT *Ascanius*. The Battalion underwent further training following their arrival in Egypt and then shipped to Lemnos. Pte Clarke made his Will prior to engaging in active service, leaving his entire estate to his mother. He was one of the first to land at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. He survived the Landing and the subsequent battles in early May 1915. On 11 May 1915 he was one of three fatal casualties on an otherwise quiet day. He was most likely the victim of a Turkish sniper. Private Clarke was buried in a marked grave at Brown's Dip but his grave site was moved to the Lone Pine Cemetery in 1925 when it became evident that Brown's Dip was subjected to flash flooding.

Additional/personal information:

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Reginald Charles Clarke was born at Sutton Forrest, NSW to Alice Agnes Clarke and Joseph John Clarke. His name was spelled "Clark" in NSW records (NSW BDM 17037/1889), and on his WAGR records, however the family later spelled it "Clarke". His mother gave his occupation as a miner when she completed his Honour Card for the Australian War Memorial, however it appears he was working as a labourer for the WAGR before enlisting. Mrs Clarke paid for a personal inscription on his headstone which reads "Sadly Missed By His Loving Mother".

As often happened in war, it was some time before confirmation of his death reached the family:

> Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Clarke and Family, of Geraldton, tender their heartfelt THANKS for telegrams, letters, and personal messages of sympathy sent them on the death of their beloved son and brother. R.C. Clarke, killed in action at the Dardanelles. *The West Australian* 15/7/1915p1

More detailed notices were published on the first anniversary of his death:

> CLARKE.— In loving memory of my dear son, Reginald Charles; killed in action at Gallipoli, 10th May; 1915, aged 26 years. Also brother of Private J. G. Clarke, now on active service, Mrs J M Clarke , Geraldton; and Mrs. E. K. Powel, Perth. … — Inserted by his loving mother, Alice A Clarke, Yalgoo.
>
> CLARKE.— In memory of my loving brother Reginald Charles, who was killed at Gallipoli, on May 10th; 1915 He did his duty.— Inserted by his sister and brother-in-law, Ivy and Jim Clarke.
> Both *Geraldton Guardian* 9/5/1916p2

It is not known why Reginald Clarke stated when enlisting that his father was dead, although he did die a few months later:

> CLARKE.-On November 14, 1915 (suddenly), at his late residence, Coffee Palace, Geraldton, Joseph John, dearly beloved husband of Alice, and loving father of the late Reginald Charles, killed at the Dardanelles, and George, now at the front; also Ivy and Sylvia, and loving brother of Mrs, E.H.Wight, Grosvenor-road, . North. Perth, formerly of Moss Vale, N.S.W., age 47 years. *Western Mail* 19/11/1915p31

Private Clarke's brother 3039 Pte Joseph George Clarke of 51 Bn was also Killed in Action, on 3 September 1916 at Moquet Farm in France. Both brothers were entitled to receive the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. All service medals were issued to Mrs Clarke. Mrs Clarke was likely eligible for a war pension however there is no documentation in the files available.



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----------