059

Clayton, William

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



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 12/4/1893. Joined WAGR 14/10/1912 aged 19 as Cleaner, Northam. ("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.)

Transferred to Merredin 23/12/1912, Northam 19/12/1913, Kalgoorlie 24/1/1914, Albany 16/7/1914 and to Kalgoorlie 29/11/1914. Granted leave to join AIF 1/3/1915 (Service No.33). Killed in action 4/8/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	33
Date of death:	4 August 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	23
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Wallace Clayton enlisted in the AIF at Kalgoorlie on 1 March 1915. He nominated his father George William Clayton as his Next of Kin and declared his mother to be deceased. He had some military experience in Senior Cadets. From notes in his Red Cross File it seems that he was sometimes employed as a bugler in a non-official manner. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 33. The Battalion departed Australia from Fremantle aboard HMAT *Ascanius* on 12 July 1915.

Shortly after arrival in Egypt the Bn departed Alexandria for Mudros on 4 September 1915. Pte Clayton saw service on Gallipoli and then returned to Egypt aboard HMT *Ansonia* on 10 January 1916. Following a rest period in Egypt the Bn sailed from Alexandria on 16 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 21 Mar 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. After a period in the quiet sector of the frontline the Battalion moved to participate in the Battle for Pozieres. In early August 1916 Private Clayton was temporarily attached to 7th Light Trench Mortar Battalion although this is not reflected in his personal file. He was engaged in carrying ammunition for the mortars when he was killed by shell fire. Witness 759 Foster, 7 LTMB records that his body was moved to a vacant support trench. The body was most likely covered over by subsequent shell fire. His remains were

never recovered and 28 Battalion recorded him initially as Wounded in Action but some months later this was amended to Killed in Action on 4 August 1916. Pte Clayton is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Soldiers killed in France are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Wallace Clayton was born in Albany, one of ten children registered to George William and Henrietta Clayton.

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His father (his NOK) died in 1933, aged 81 years and was buried at Albany (Memorial Cemetery). The family erected a memorial to Pte Clayton in the Albany Memorial Cemetery over an empty compartment – a nominal 'burial' but a display of their appreciation and somewhere accessible where they go remember him.

Private Clayton's younger brother Ernest served as 409 in 28 Bn from 19 March 1915 and returned to Australia on 28 February 1919. Note: The CWGC records show his age incorrectly, as 33 years.

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----------