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Shelley, Roland Parker

A West Australian railway employee killed after volunteering for military service for their country



Lieutenant Shelley's gravestone in France. Courtesy R.Parker

Rail employment information

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

Rail employment notes: Born 15/1/1891. Joined WAGR 13/9/1909 aged 18 as Cleaner, Midland Junction. ("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 Perth 4/7/1910 and promoted to Fireman 1/7/1911.

Granted leave to join AIF 13/5/1915. Killed in action 4/7/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	2nd Australian Machine Gun Battalion
Service number:	1088
Date of death:	4 July 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	27
Rank at time of death:	Lieutenant

Burial/memorialisation: Longeau British Cemetery, Picardie, France

Roland Parker Shelley enlisted in 28th Battalion AIF in 1915. He was allotted the regimental number 1088. His personal file is not available remotely, however from the Unit history it is known that training took place at Blackboy Hill Camp and at Rockingham.

The Battalion and reinforcements paraded through the streets of Perth on 2 June 1915. The first party of 978 soldiers boarded HMAT *Ascanius* and departed for Egypt on 9 June 1915. The second party boarded A31 *Boonah* on 12 July 1915. The entire Battalion and reinforcements concentrated in Egypt for a short period of training before departing for Gallipoli. The Battalion together with 2 Companies of 27 Battalion crossed to Mudros aboard *Ivernia* then trans-shipped to *Sarina* for the run into Gallipoli.

Private Shelley was promoted several times, eventually being commissioned and finally to Lieutenant. There is fine photograph of him on his page on the AWM website (AWM Number P07021.001) demonstrating a tailored officer's service dress with the rank of Second Lieutenant. He transferred to machine guns and as 28 Battalion was part of the Second Division he served in 2 Machine Gun Battalion. He held the rank of Lieutenant when he was Killed in Action in an assault on Villers-

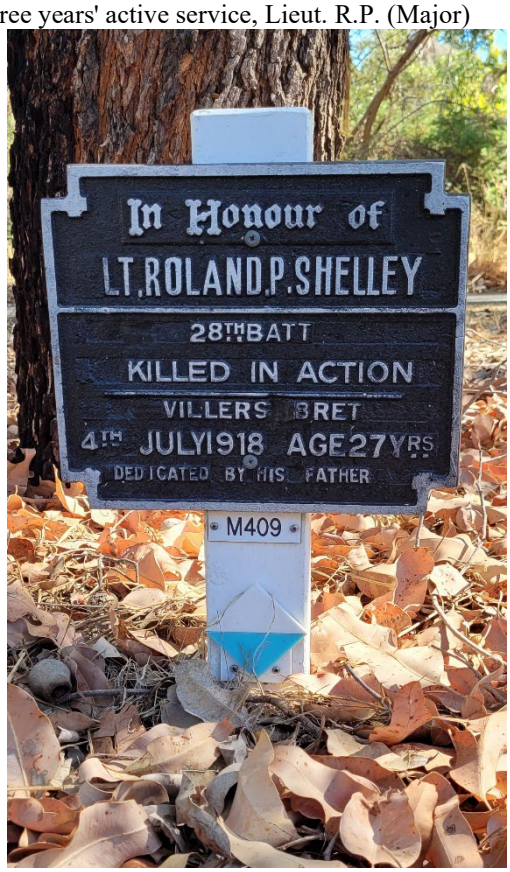
Bretonneux on 4 July 1918. His Red Cross File has various accounts of the manner of his death but it was most likely a bullet wound to the head. His fellow officers are recorded as writing to his parents, including Captain McLennon, Lt Everitt and Lt Stapleton. His body was buried in the Blangy-Tronville community cemetery but following the Armistice was moved to the Longeau British Cemetery, Picardie.

Additional/personal information:

Roland Shelley was born in Victoria, a son of Arthur George and Mary Clarissa (nee Walker) Shelley, his birth registered as in the Kerang district and he was the last of at least 7 children. (Vic BDM 4380/1891 et al.).

Sometime after 1891 the family moved to WA – as did many families after the 1890s gold finds. They appear to have been here by 1899 when his sister Hilda married Louis Brown in Subiaco. Roland was single when he enlisted although family notices indicate he had a close female friend:

> SHELLEY.—Killed in action in France on July 4, 1918, Lieut. R. P. Shelley (Major), only son of Mr. A. G. Shelley, of Gosnells, and brother of Mrs. L. G. Brown, Mrs. G. A. Griffiths, and Mrs. E. Baxter, Gosnells, and Mrs. H. W. England, Perenjori; aged 27 years.
>
> SHELLEY.—Killed in action on July 4, 1918, after three years' active service, Lieut. R.P. (Major) Shelley, dearly-loved friend of Miss Lou. Bentley, Mount Lawley.
> Both *The West Australian* 17/7/1918p1



Roland's mother had died in 1912. (MCB).

Military historian Dr Michael Galvin comments "The studio photo is really interesting. The fact that he is in a service dress uniform (in very smart condition) complete with Sam Browne and his insignia of rank suggest that the photo was taken in the UK after a commissioning course or a machine gun officers course."

Lieutenant Shelley has a Kings Park memorial plaque (M 409) dedicated by his father. That plaque records that he was a member of 28 Bn and the colour patch on the support is the "blue and white diamond" of 28 Bn. As he served on Gallipoli and some time on the Western Front with 28 Battalion, whereas the MG Battalion only came into existence in April 1918, his father thought 28 Battalion was where he would prefer to be acknowledged.

Further information

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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