

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



2614 PRIVATE

W. GILBERT

32ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

24TH DECEMBER, 1916 Age 27

HAVE MERCY UPON HIM LORD

AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT

SHINE UPON HIM

Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte W Gilbert is located in Front Row

Grave Plot # 4 of Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery

William Gilbert was born in Launceston, Tasmania in 1888, to parents John and Florence Gilbert. He was a married labourer, aged 27 years & 9 months, from Tavastock Street, Adelaide, South Australia when he enlisted on 3rd January, 1916 with the 8th Infantry Brigade of the 32nd Infantry Battalion, 5th Reinforcements of the Australian Army. His service number was 2614 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Eileen Gilbert of St Bernard's Road, Magill, South Australia.

Pte W Gilbert embarked from Adelaide on the HMAT *Shropshire (A9)* on 25th March, 1916.

Pte Gilbert was admitted to 3rd Australian General Hospital, Abbassia, Cairo, Egypt on 10th June, 1916, suffering from "cardiac mild". He was transferred & then discharged from Convalescent Depot at Montazah, Alexandria, Egypt.

On 17th July, 1916 Pte Gilbert was charged with being AWL – absent without leave, drunkenness & not in possession of a pass. He forfeited 2 days pay.

On 22nd August, 1916 Pte Gilbert was taken on strength to 8th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire, England. At the end of October, 1916 Pte Gilbert was again AWL – absent without leave & forfeited 6 days pay.

Pte William Gilbert died at the Military Hospital at Fovant, on 24th December, 1916 at 5.50 a.m., aged 28 years, from internal injuries received from a motor-car accident. A death for a William Gilbert was registered in the December quarter, 1916 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire. (Fovant was a parish in the district of Wilton).

Pte Gilbert was buried at Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery on 26th December, 1916

An Inquest was held into Pte Gilbert's death on 29th December, 1916 at Fovant. (*see below*)

Private W Gilbert is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 120.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Pte W Gilbert was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll (December, 1921) & Memorial Plaque were sent to Pte Gilbert's wife – Mrs Eileen Gilbert (September, 1922) Alberton, South Australia.

Pte W Gilbert is remembered on the National War Memorial on North Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia (Panel 5, column 4).



(Photo from Wikipedia – by Bilby)

Pte W Gilbert is also remembered on the Honour Boards on North Terrace, Adelaide Railway Station (Column 8).



(63 pages of Pte W Gilbert's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives

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South Wiltshire Coroner's Inquest into Pte William Gilbert's Death

– held at 11.30 a.m. on 29th December, 1916 at Fovant

The Coroner for South Wilts (Mr F H Trethowan) held an inquest at Fovant Military Hospital, on Tuesday, concerning the death of an Australian soldier - Private William Gilbert, who was stationed at Hurdcott.

Private Joseph Mayfield said that on the night of Saturday, December 23rd, he was walking with Gilbert from Barford to Hurdcott Camp at about 9.20 p.m. He heard a car coming behind them and caught hold of Gilbert's arm to pull him nearer to the side of the road. Gilbert seemed to slip and pull away, and he thought that that slip was the cause of the accident. It was very dark and he could not see what happened, but he did not think the driver of the car was to blame. Gilbert seemed sober when he came out of the public house. The road was very narrow at the point.

Answering an officer connected with Gilbert's regiment, witness estimated the speed of the car at from eight to nine miles an hour. It had lights and he heard the horn sound. Gilbert was about three feet from the near side of the road. The car stopped after the accident.

Sergeant Clyde Watson said he was in the car and he was sitting just behind the driver. As the car approached the soldiers, Gilbert was in the centre of the road. The other man tried to get him over to the side but he pulled away. From his actions, witness thought he was intoxicated, because he seemed to struggle. The car was then just on him and the mud-guard apparently threw him over, and the front wheel passed over him. The car was travelling at about seven or eight miles an hour, and was pulled up in its own length. Another car was stopped and took the man to hospital.

Replying to the Foreman, witness said he did not think Gilbert was trying to attract the driver's attention, or to commit suicide.

Questioned by the officer, he said the man seemed to stagger from the near side to the centre of the road. The driver was not driving carelessly.

Signaller MacGill, another passenger in the car corroborated.

Tom Whatley, of Shaftesbury, the driver, said the man lurched across the road and he could not avoid hitting him.

Captain Huntley, RAMC, stationed at Fovant Military Hospital, said that Gilbert was in a state of collapse when admitted and died next morning. Something had passed over his body, and death was due to internal injury and shock.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death."

Extract published with kind permission from [Salisbury Inquests](#)

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OUR FALLEN HEROES – The Australians- Biographical

The Late Pte W Gilbert

Pte William Gilbert of Semaphore, whose death through a motor accident in England on December 24, was recently announced, was 29 years of age. He left Adelaide for the front on March 24 last. Prior to enlistment he was employed at the Islington Workshops. He was greatly esteemed among his friends. The deceased was the only son of Mrs Charles Bett, of St Bernard's Road, Magill.



(The Register, Adelaide, South Australia & The Advertiser, Adelaide – Wednesday 17th January, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone at Compton Chamberlayne Cemetery. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Pte Gilbert does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte W Gilbert 's Headstone at Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery



Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey