

# Durrington War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



6314 PRIVATE

**R. CLAREY** *Served as* **R. CAREY**

26TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

23RD APRIL, 1917 Age 43

*Oh For A Touch  
Of A Vanished Hand  
& A Sound Of A Voice  
So Still*

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte R. Carey / Clarey is located in Grave Plot # 234  
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

## Robert CLAREY served as CAREY

Robert Clarey was born at Ipswich, Queensland around 1874 to parents George and Emma Bowman Clarey.

Robert Clarey married Esther Stokes in 1896 in Queensland. A birth was registered in 1896 for Jane Marie Clarey – parents Robert & Hester Stokes. A death was registered in 1897 for Jane Marie Clarey – parents Robert & Esther Clarey. A birth was registered in 1899 for Lillian May Clarey – parents Robert & Hester Stokes. A death was registered in 1899 for Lillian May Clarey – parents Robert & Esther Clarey. A birth was registered in 1903 for William Bowmont Clarey – parents Robert & Hester Stokes. A birth was registered in 1906 for Emma Clarey – parents Robert & Esther Clarey. A death was registered in 1906 for Emma Clarey – parents Robert & Esther Clarey. The births & deaths were all registered in Queensland. (A birth was registered in 1907 for a John Clarey – parents Robert Clarey & Lilly Murtagh – not sure if this is connected. No further births show up to 1914.)

Robert Clarey stated he was Robert Carey, a 35 year old, married, Miner with 3 children from Wandoo Street, Valley, Brisbane, Queensland when he enlisted at Brisbane on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1916 with the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 6314 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Esther Carey, Wandoo Street, Valley, Brisbane, Queensland. Robert stated on his Attestation Papers that he had previously been rejected for service on the grounds of medically unfit.

Pte Robert Carey was recorded as being absent without leave from 11.30 p.m. on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1916 to 3.30 p.m. on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1916 – total of 40 hours whilst at Fraser's Hill Camp. He was awarded a forfeiture of 2 days pay due to his absence. His Conduct Sheet states "Admonished".

Pte Robert Carey embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Demosthenes* (A64) on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Pte Robert Carey was marched in to 7<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Rollestone, Wiltshire on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1917.

Pte Robert Carey was admitted sick – influenza to Fargo Military Hospital on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1917 & was discharged on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1917.

Pte Robert Carey was admitted to Fargo Military Hospital with a wound to head – seriously ill on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1917.

Pte Robert Carey died at 9.25 p.m. on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1917 at Fargo Military Hospital of a compound fracture of skull (accidental).

A Coroner's Court was held on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1917 at Fargo Military Hospital. Pte Carey died from injuries received during bombing instructions. Lieut. Boyle & E. M. Nolan gave evidence. Pte Carey was admitted to Fargo Military Hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1917 suffering from a wound over left ear, fracture of skull & laceration of brain substance. He was operated on but died the same night. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death. Coroner – Mr Trethowan.

A death for Robert Carey, aged 35, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Pte Robert Carey was buried in Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – plot number 234 on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1917. From the burial report of Pte Robert Carey - *Coffin was Elm with black furniture. Military Funeral held.*

A letter from Base Records dated 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 to Mrs E. Carey states "his death, which occurred on 23.4.17, was caused by an accidental bomb explosion."

Private R. Clarey is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 107.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

R. Clarey is also remembered on Windsor War Memorial located on corner of Lutwyche Road & Robland Street, Windsor, Queensland.



(Photos by Shirley & Trevor McIvor)

A War Pension was granted to Esther Clarey, widow of late Pte Robert Carey, in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1917. A pension was also granted for William Bowman Clarey, youngest son of late Pte Robert Carey in the sum of £1 per fortnight from 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1917.

Notification was received in 1920 at Army Base Records from Mrs Esther Clarey that her late husband's correct name was Robert Clarey. His records were amended to show "Stated to be Clarey, Robert."

Pte Robert Carey was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Carey's widow – Mrs Esther Clarey (July, 1922 & June, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Robert Clarey (served as Carey) – service number 6314 as being 43 years old & served with 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of George and Emma Bowman Clarey; husband of Esther Clarey of Commercial Rd, Bulimba, Brisbane, Queensland. Born at Ipswich, Queensland.

(43 pages of Pte Robert Carey'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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## Newspaper Reports

### **ROLL OF HONOUR – 295TH AND 296TH CASUALTY LISTS**

DIED - OTHER CAUSES

R. Carey, Valley, of illness

*(The Mercury, Hobart, Tasmania 14 May, 1917)*

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### **PERSONAL NOTES**

Mrs. Clarey, Wandoo-street, Valley, Brisbane, has received letters of condolences on the death of her husband, Private Robert Clarey, in England, as the result of an unfortunate accident. In a letter from Rolleston camp, Salisbury Plain, Private J. V. W. Hopper writes :- "I am going to try and write you a few lines about the sad accident that poor Bob met with. He was going through a course of bomb throwing, and the instructor was showing them how they light fuses. There was a box of high explosives on the table in front of him, and a spark flew into it and set the whole lot off, and poor Bob was the most unlucky of the lot in the room. It happened about 10 o'clock in the morning, and he died about 9 o'clock the same night. He was hit in the back of the head, and they tried to get out whatever was there, but the operation was unsuccessful. He never regained consciousness. I got a terrible shock, and have not got over it yet. At times I cannot believe it is true. We have been together since we left, and were in the same hut. He often used to say he would be back in the Valley again. He had a very decent funeral, the firing party of 12 men being taken out of his unit. I can tell you he had stiff luck, for he should have been on leave, but as he had only come out of the hospital the day before they told him he would have to go with the next lot." Private Hopper further states that the deceased soldier was in hospital two weeks with a very bad cold, the weather having been very cold when they arrived in England. He concludes : "Well, Mrs. Clarey, this soldiering is up to putty. I will be going to France on the 19th of this month, and will send you a post card before I go." In a joint letter 20 of the friends of the late Private Clarey write : "We, the undersigned, cobbors of your late husband, desire to express in a simple way our heartfelt sympathy for the great loss you have sustained in his death. Speaking as one of his tent mates (says the first signatory, Arthur Rayner), and I am sure that I am speaking for the rest of his mates, I can say he was one of the best friends that a soldier ever had, and I am sure that if there is one place more than another in which a fellow needs a good mate, it is in the army, I am certain that Bob, as he was known throughout the unit, was absolutely one of the best. Little did we think as we bade him good-bye when we went on leave that it was the last farewell, for it was on the Monday morning (the day of our return) that he

met his death. As I know most people like to know how their loved ones died I would like to say that as far as I know he suffered no pain. Immediately after the accident he lapsed into unconsciousness, from which he rallied for a little while, only to fall into his last long sleep about 9.30 on the night of April 23. With loving hands we laid him to rest two days later in the little cemetery at Durrington. His day's work was done-his life's race was finished. He died in the cause of the country he loved. Although no cannon's roar sounded his death knell, yet he died a true soldier's death, and of him it can be said a 'Greater love hath - no man than this, that he lay down his life for friends.

(The Brisbane Courier, Queensland Tuesday 7 August, 1917)

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

CLAREY – In loving memory of my dear Husband and our Father, Pte Robert Clarey, who was accidentally killed in England, April 23rd, 1917.

Just a token of remembrance,  
And memory fond and true;  
Whatever else we fail to do  
We will always remember you.

Inserted by his loving Wife and Children.

(The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, Queensland Saturday 23 April, 1938)

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## **ROLL OF HONOUR**

CLAREY - – In loving memory of my dear Husband and our Father, Private Robert Clarey, who was accidentally killed in England, April 23rd, 1917.

Thought remain of days now passed,  
Years have gone, but memories last;  
Remembrance is the golden chain  
That binds till we meet again.

Inserted by his loving Wife and Family.

(The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, Queensland Saturday 22 April, 1939)

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## ROLL OF HONOUR

CLAREY - – In loving memory of my dear Husband and our Father, Private Robert Clarey, who was accidentally killed in England, April 23rd, 1917.

Just a token of remembrance  
And memory fond and true,  
Whatever else I fail to do,  
I will always remember you.

Inserted by his loving Wife and Family.

(The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, Queensland Thursday 23 April, 1942)

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### 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 Durrington War Graves 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 R. Clarey served as R. Carey does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Oh For A Touch Of A Vanished Hand & A Sound Of A Voice So Still*

Photo of Pte R. Clarey served as R. Carey's Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo © Ian King - with permission)