

**Compton Chamberlayne
War Graves Cemetery,
Wiltshire, England**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



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

William GILBERT

William Gilbert was born in Launceston, Tasmania in 1888 to parents John and Florence Gilbert.

William Gilbert married Hannah Eileen Smith in 1910 in Tasmania.

Private William Gilbert was a 27 year old, married, Labourer from Tavastock Street, Adelaide, South Australia when he enlisted on 3rd January, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). 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.

Private William Gilbert was posted to "B" Company, 2nd Depot Battalion on 6th January, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 5th Reinforcements of 32nd Battalion on 16th January, 1916.

Private William Gilbert embarked from Adelaide, South Australia on the HMAT *Shropshire (A9)* on 25th March, 1916 with the 8th Infantry Brigade of the 32nd Infantry Battalion, 5th Reinforcements.

32nd Battalion

The 32nd Battalion was raised as part of the 8th Brigade at Mitcham, on the outskirts of Adelaide, on 9 August 1915. Only two companies were raised from South Australian enlistees - another two were formed in Western Australia and joined the battalion at the end of September. The battalion sailed from Adelaide on 18 November 1915.

The 8th Brigade joined the newly raised 5th Australian Division in Egypt, and proceeded to France, destined for the Western Front, in June 1916. The 32nd Battalion fought its first major battle at Fromelles on 19 July 1916, having only entered the front-line trenches 3 days previously. The attack was a disastrous introduction to battle for the 32nd - it suffered 718 casualties, almost 75 per cent of the battalion's total strength, but closer to 90 per cent of its actual fighting strength. Although it still spent periods in the front line, the 32nd played no major offensive role for the rest of the year.

(Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Gilbert was admitted to 2nd Australian Stationary Hospital at Tel-el-Kebir on 9th June, 1916. He was transferred to 3rd Australian General Hospital, Abbassia, Cairo, Egypt on 10th June, 1916, suffering from "cardiac mild". Private Gilbert was transferred & admitted to Convalescent Depot at Montazah, Alexandria, Egypt on 24th June, 1916 & discharged on 17th July, 1916.

Private Gilbert was written up on 17th July, 1916 charged with drunkenness, being A.W.L. (absent without leave) from 09.00 on 16th July, 1916 to 09.00 on 17th July, 1916 & not in possession of a pass. He was awarded 24 hours Field Punishment No. 2 & forfeited 2 days' pay.

Private William Gilbert was marched in to 5th Divisional Depot at Tel-el-Kebir on 20th July, 1916.

Private William Gilbert was taken on strength of 8th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire, England on 22nd August, 1916.

Private William Gilbert was written up for an offence on 31st October, 1916 while posted at Codford AWL (absent without leave) from midnight on 29th October, 1916 to 6.30 am on 31st October, 1916. He forfeited a total of 10 days' pay.

Private William Gilbert was admitted to Military Hospital, Fovant, Wiltshire on 24th December, 1916 with contusion.

Private William Gilbert died at the Military Hospital at Fovant, at 5.50 a.m. on 24th December, 1916, 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.

Private William Gilbert was buried at in Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England on 26th December, 1916 – Front Row, Grave Plot #4.

An Inquest was held into Private William Gilbert's death on 29th December, 1916 at Fovant.

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, R.A.M.C., 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](#))

Private William 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.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Gilbert – service number 2614, aged 27, of 32nd Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of John and Florence Bott Gilbert; husband of H. E. Gilbert, of Alfred St., Port Adelaide.

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

Private W. Gilbert is remembered on the National Soldiers Memorial in Adelaide. The Adelaide National War Memorial commemorates those from South Australia that served in the First World War. The names of those that died are listed inside the Memorial, which is located on the corner of North Terrace & Kintore Avenue, Adelaide. (Panel 5, column 4).



National War Memorial – Adelaide *(Photos by Bilby)*

W. Gilbert is remembered on the Islington Railway Workshops Honour Roll, located at Railway Workshops Entrance, Churchill Road, Kilburn, South Australia.



Islington Railway Workshops Honour Roll



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



Adelaide Railway Station Honour Boards

(63 pages of Private William 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



Newspaper Reports

LATE PTE W. GILBERT

Mrs W. Gilbert, of Coppin Street, Sephamore, has been officially notified that her husband, Pte W. Gilbert, was killed on December 24, in a motor accident in England.

(The Register, Adelaide, South Australia – Tuesday 9th January, 1917)

The ROLL OF HONOUR

262nd Casualty List

South Australia

Died – Cause Not Stated

2614 Pte W. Gilbert, Adelaide (Dec. 24).

(The Advertiser, Adelaide – Friday 12th January, 1917)

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)

Private W. Gilbert does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

***HAVE MERCY UPON HIM LORD
AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT
SHINE UPON HIM***

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England

Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery contains 34 Commonwealth War Graves all from World War 1. Of these 28 are of Australian Soldiers.



(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)



Compton Chamberlayne War Graves *(Photo from CWGC)*



Left & right of Cemetery with central Plinth (Photos courtesy of Andrew Stacey 2012)



Photo taken from back of Cemetery looking towards the Entrance (Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)

Photo of Private W. Gilbert's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone at Compton Chamberlayne War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Andrew Stacey)



(Photo taken c March, 1919)

Graves of Australian soldiers in the cemetery at Compton-Chamberlyne, each marked by a cross.

Back row, left to right: 55821 Private (Pte) Alfred Alwin Dreckow, 32nd Battalion (Bn), died 19 October 1918; 3712 Pte Thomas Cass, 10th Bn, died 17 August 1918; 3764 Pte William Joseph Arnold, 31st Bn, died 2 July 1918; Captain Roy Allan Sillar, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 30 June 1918; 1993A Pte Sydney Ross, 18th Bn, died 31 May 1918.

Front row: 1666 Sergeant Percy Robert Knowles, 9th Australian Light TM Battery, died 30 January 1918; 1995 Pte Thomas James Skipper, 51st Bn, died Fovant Military Hospital 7 January 1918; 687 Pte John Thomas Wehrmann, 32nd Bn, died 3 November 1917; 3462 Pte William Joseph Park, 60th Bn, died 23rd September 1917; 1725 Pte William Ernest Riley, 60th Bn, died 22 May 1917.

Compton Chamberlayne War Grave Locations



British Soldier



Irish Soldier



Australian Soldier

Front Row	Grave		Middle Row	Grave		Back Row	Grave
<i>Public</i>	1		Oliver	1			1
<i>Public</i>	2		Knowles	2		<i>Public</i>	2
	Haywood	3		Skipper	3		Turner
	Gilbert	4		Wehrmann	4		Evans
	Le Tisser	5		Park	5		Dreckow
	Jones	6		Riley	6		Cass
	Cook	7		Turnbull	7		Arnold
	Pairman	8		White	8		Sillar
		9		Howard	9		Ross
	Norris	10		Tull	10		Finn
	Lintott	11		Snell	11		McCarthy
	Redman	12		Ferrow	12		Trengove
<i>Public</i>			<i>Public</i>				13
<i>Public</i>			<i>Public</i>				14
<i>Public</i>						Walsh	15
							16
						Hooper	17
							18
						Larkin	19