

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



694 2ND AIR MECH.

W. D. SLOANE

AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS

21ST AUGUST, 1917 Age 27

For Thou Hast Made Him

Most Blessed For Ever

PS. XXI.6

William Douglas SLOANE

William Douglas Sloane was born at Mulwala, New South Wales on 4th June, 1890 to parents James and Amy Elizabeth Sloane (nee Robertson).

William Douglas Sloane attended Geelong College, Geelong, Victoria from 1904 to 1909 & later attended the Working Man's College, Melbourne, Victoria. His father stated for information provided for the Roll of Honour that William Sloane was a Sergeant in Senior Cadets at Geelong College, Victoria.

William Douglas Sloane was a 26 year old, single, Motor Engineer from Mulwala, NSW when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 2nd October, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 694 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr J. Sloane, of Mulwala, NSW.

Private William Douglas Sloane was posted to 2nd Australian Flying Squadron for recruit training on 9th October, 1916.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ulysses (A38)* on 25th October, 1916 with the 2nd Australian Flying Squadron "B" Flight & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 28th December, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was on Command to Scottish School of Fitters for 1 month's for a course of Instruction from 9th January, 1917 from No 69 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was marched in to No 69 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps on 7th February, 1917 from Scottish School of Fitters.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was on Command at No 48 R.S. (Reserve Squadron) at Waddington from 10th February, 1917.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was marched in to No 69 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps on 24th February, 1917 from No. 47 R.S., Waddington.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was on Command at Armament School, R.F.C. (Royal Flying Corps), Perivale, West Ealing from 17th July, 1917. He was marched in to No 69 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps on 31st July, 1917 from School of Armament R.F.C. Perivale from a Course of Instruction on Synchronised Gears.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane proceeded overseas to France from South Carlton, Lincoln on 19th August, 1917.

69 Squadron

In the first week of August 1917, 69 Squadron was declared mobilised. After their climatisation in France, not all the pilots were able to return to the Squadron. Lieutenant G I L Murray was shot down and wounded while with 53 Squadron at Bailleul. Lieutenant H F Taylor crashed badly in 5 Squadron at Acq, and Lieutenant F C Baxter crashed with 16 Squadron at Camblain l'Abbe. In addition, Lieutenant Roy Trout, who had been sent on temporary duty as an R.E.8 ferry pilot, was killed when delivering an R.E.8 (A3772) from Coventry to Lympe on 27 July.

69 Squadron was now equipped with "about twenty brand new R.E.8s" and was ready to move to France. The first section to depart South Carlton, on 17 August, were the motor transport personnel of 69 Squadron: this group comprised 73 mechanics and 57 MT vehicles, and embarked from Portsmouth on the 20th.

69 Squadron became the first Australian squadron to deploy to France, with the aircraft departing South Carlton four days later. In the back seat of the R.E.8s for the transit trip to France, it was decided the observer would be replaced by a groundcrew member: They are taking the engine fitters because they can start the engine & fix the machine if anything should go wrong... There will be eighteen machines in the air together & no doubt there will be some excitement when we start & it will be the largest flock of planes seen in this part of England for some time.

The R.E.8s departed South Carlton on the morning of 21 August, with their first leg planned to take them from Lincolnshire to Lympe, the Channel staging base in Kent. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Shapira's R.E.8 (B3421) experienced an engine problem and diverted to Biggin Hill aerodrome, in Kent. Having rectified the problem, the R.E.8 departed.

Lieutenant Wilkinson RFC, who was based at Biggin Hill, gave the following eye witness report: "He got off the ground perfectly and flew straight into the wind to get his proper height; having reached a height of some 600 feet, he turned to get his course. Almost immediately his machine started to spin slowly in flat circles, then the nose dropped and she went down in a spinning nose dive to earth."

The aircraft crashed and burst instantaneously into flames. The crew were killed on impact; dying with Lieutenant Shapira was the backseat occupant, engine rigger 2 A/M Douglas Sloane. It was an unnecessary tragedy as, in retrospect, there had been no need to hurry and catch the Squadron at Lympe, as the R.E.8s had just been held there for the next fortnight. RFC Headquarters was not yet ready to receive the new squadron, so this and bad weather detained the Australians in Kent until 9 September 1917.

(Information from ADF Serials Telegraph News – Volume 8; Issue 4; Spring 2018)

Second Lieutenant Francis Cunningham Shapira, pilot, & Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane, passenger, in an R.E.8. Serial number B3421, having previously diverted to Biggin Hill Aerodrome, Kent, England with engine trouble, departed on 21st August, 1917. The Casualty Card from R.A.F. Museum Story vault recorded nature & cause of the accident as: "*Pilot after taking off from forced landing turned down wind at 700 ft. & got into a spin from which he did not recover.*" A Court of Inquiry found "*Engine running satisfactorily – not due to any breakage of any structural part. Engine running at moment of impact with ground – did not catch fire in air – at 700 ft machine got into a spin & pilot was unable to recover before hitting ground.*"

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane died at 2.15 pm on 21st August, 1917 at Biggin Hill, Westerham, England as a result of an aeroplane accident. Second Lieutenant Francis Cunningham Shapira also died in the accident.

A death for William D. Sloane, aged 27, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Bromley, Kent, England.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was buried at 1.30 pm on 25th August, 1917 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Plot number XI.D.15 (Plot number 11, Row D, Grave 15) and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane - *Coffin was good polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a public funeral with full Military Honours. Pipers Band, Firing Party of 40, 3 Buglers and coffin was borne to the graveside by members of the Headquarters Staff A.I.F. London. Chaplain Rev. W. Floyd-Shannon, conducted the service at the graveside. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside by the Buglers of the South African Regiment. A number of wreaths were placed on the coffin. An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. Deceased met his death through the aeroplane nose diving and catching fire, the Lieut and Mechanic being pinned to the ground, and unable to extricate themselves from the ruins. An Inquest was held at Biggin Hill on 23rd August, 1917, when the Coroner's Jury returned the following verdict: - "Killed through an aeroplane nose diving to earth, and by Misadventure." Captain Edward represented the Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London.*

Names of relatives & friends present at the Funeral – Dr Gordon, 54 Sheen Road, Richmond (Cousin).

Second Lieutenant Francis Cunningham Shapira was buried at 1.30 pm on 25th August, 1917 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Plot number XI. C. 3 (Plot number 11, Row C, Grave 3) and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Mr James Sloane, father of the late Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane, wrote to Colonel J. C. Hawker, 3rd Military District, Melbourne on 3rd September, 1917. The letter reads: "*694 Private W. D. Sloane, Flying Corps – Deceased. I have yours of the 31st August stating that the cause of death was – Aeroplane accident. We will take it as a great kindness if you do not communicate any further particulars by letter to us. When posting the death please*

say accidentally killed. I am afraid of the affect any further explanation may have on my wife – who is delicate. All her children (3) joined the A.I.F.”

A letter was sent to Mr James Sloane, father of the late Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane, from Base Records on 21st June regarding the funeral. This is an extract of the letter: *“With reference to the report of the regrettable loss of your son, the late No. 694 2nd A.M. W.D. Sloane, 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, I am now in receipt of advice which shows that he died at Biggin Hill, Westerham, on 21/8/17, and was buried at Brookwood Cemetery, Brookwood, consecrated ground, section – Australian Military Burial Ground, grave No. 179, 688 on 25/8/17.”* The letter goes on to explain the funeral details & continues with: *“Deceased met his death through the aeroplane nose diving and catching fire, the Lieut. and Mechanic being pinned to the ground, and unable to extricate themselves from the ruins. An inquest was held at Biggin Hill on 23/8/17, when the Coroner’s Jury returned the following verdict:- “Killed through an aeroplane nose diving to earth, and my Misadventure.” Captain Edward represented the Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London. These additional details are furnished by direction, it being the policy of the Department to forward all information received in connexion with death of members of the Australian Imperial Force.”*

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Air Mechanic Class II William Douglas Sloane contains a report given by Lieutenant Wilkinson, R.F.C., Biggin Hill, Kent, England who witnessed the accident of Air Mechanic W. D. Sloane:

Dear Sir,

We are requested by your uncle, the Rev. Hume Robertson, to send you an account of the death of your brother No. 694 Air/Mechanic W. D. Sloane, 69th Squadron A.F.C., which occurred under such tragic circumstances on 21.8.17 and we regret to inform you of the following report given by Lt. Wilkinson, R.F.C., Biggin Hill, Kent, who witnessed the accident.

He writes -

The O.C. has handed your letter over to me to answer. He considers it a matter requiring more personal details than he could supply, and I was the last to speak to them and one of the first on the scene of the accident. Their machine landed on the Aerodrome about 12.10pm on August 21st, last. Lieut. Shapira was the pilot and 2/AM Sloane, the gunner observer. They were on their way from South Carlton, Lincs. to France via Lypne. They were a little off their course and having had some slight engine trouble, came down on sighting our Aerodrome, to have this remedied and to find their actual position. Their engine was put right and petrol tanks refilled by our mechanics. Meanwhile Lieut. Shapira came to lunch with us and Sloane went to the men's dining hut for his. Shortly after lunch, having got full details of their course, they climbed aboard and their engine was "run up" for them. They expressed themselves entirely satisfied and it was indeed running perfectly. Just before they left, a message came through from the Air Board, to the effect that if Lieut. Shapira thought the weather conditions were not good enough, he was not to start. This message I delivered to him while he was in his machine with the engine running. The weather was perfectly fit for flying and he just smiled and said, "That's alright cheer oh", and proceeded to get away.

He got off the ground perfectly and flew straight into the wind to get his proper height; having reached a height of some 600 feet, he turned to get on his course. Almost immediately his machine started to spin slowly in flat circles, then the nose dropped and she went down in a spinning nose dive to earth. We heard the crash and saw a cloud of smoke ascend from behind a clump of trees, and heard the popping of cartridges. Immediately an ambulance and a light tender proceeded to the spot, and believe me, we lost no time in getting there, but we were unable to do anything for them. The machine was blazing from end to end, and it was impossible to approach her. A man who was working in the field in which she fell, had tried, he told us, to drag them out with a long handled hay rake, but it was soon obvious that they were dead, and he gave up the attempt. The Doctor who reached the spot shortly after we did, gave it as his opinion that their death was instantaneous. We got the fire out and took the bodies along to our Aerodrome, where they were placed in a hut and a Guard mounted. An inquest was held, the verdict being accidental death when flying. No one knows, of course, what caused the machine to spin, but it seems to be the general opinion here that it was due to an error of judgement as to the right amount of bank required. We sent wires to all the British addresses amongst their personal effects, advising them of the accident, and the place and date of funeral. These were all contained in a note book belonging to Lt. Shapira, which together with all the personal belongings of them both, handed over to the Australian Administrative Hdqtrs. The latter also undertook all arrangements for the funeral, and would be able to give all details as to place, etc. May I offer on behalf of all officers here, our sympathy with the relatives in their loss."

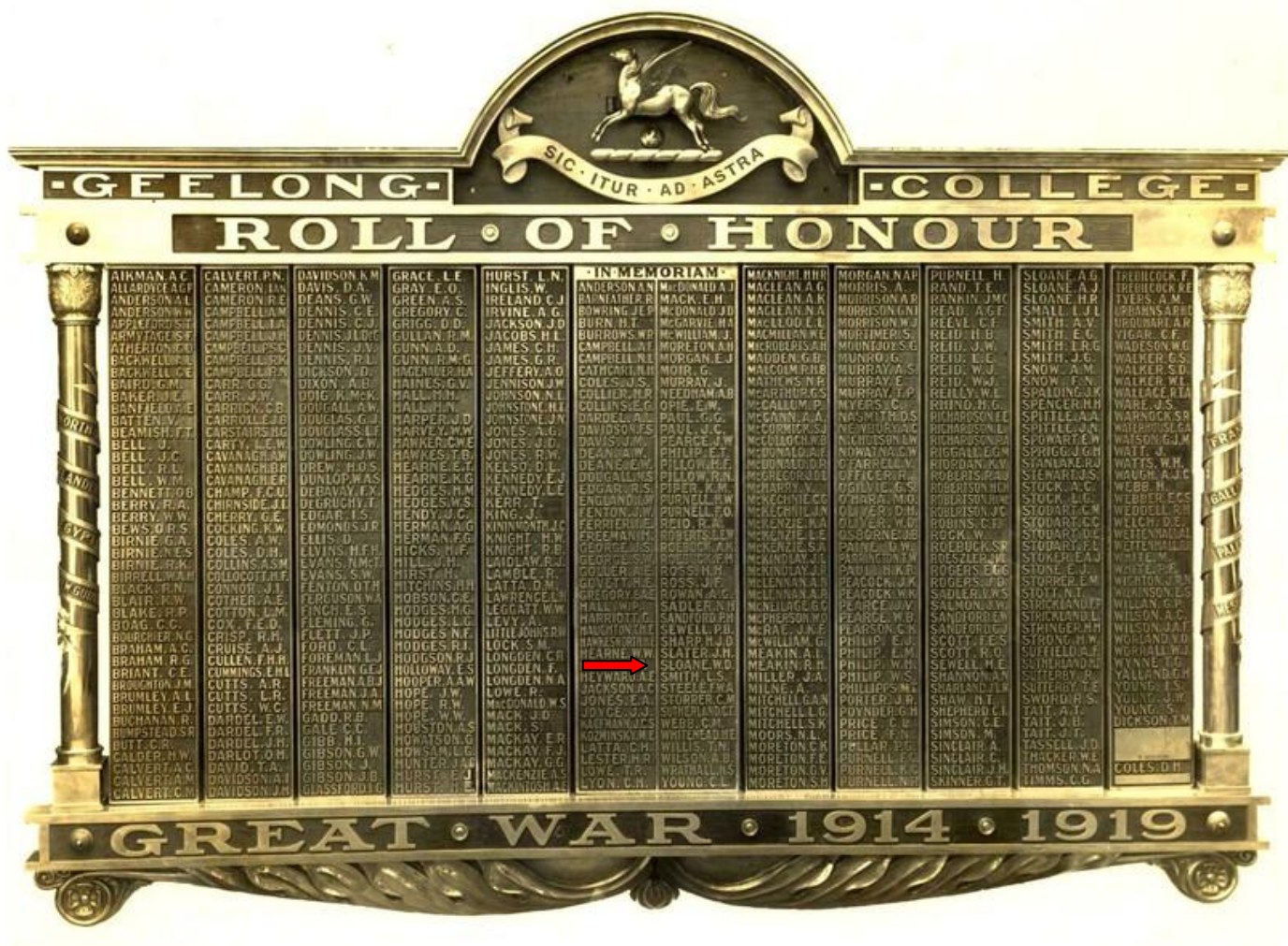
Trusting that it will be some slight comfort to know that his death must have been instantaneous, and assuring you of our very sincere sympathy in your great loss. Yours faithfully, V. D. Secretary.

2nd Air Mechanic W. D. Sloane chose not to make a Will – as dated 12th June, 1917.

Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Air Mechanic 2nd Class Sloane's father – Mr J. Sloane, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent December, 1921 & Plaque sent September, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane – service number 694, aged 27, of 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps. He was the son of James and Amy Elizabeth Sloane. Native of Mulwala, New South Wales.

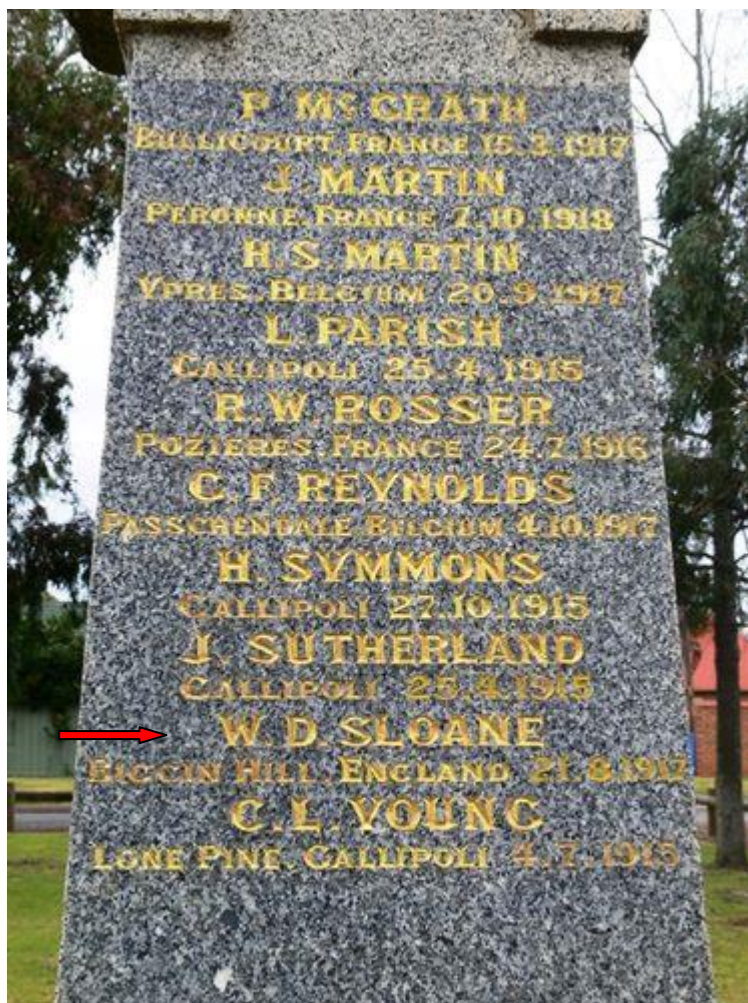
W. D. Sloane is remembered on the Geelong College Roll of Honour, located in Norman Morrison Memorial Hall, of Geelong College, Talbot Street, Newtown, Victoria.



W. D. Sloane is remembered on the Mulwala War Memorial, located in Lonsdale Park, Old Mill Road & Melbourne Street, Mulwala, NSW.



Mulwala War Memorial (Photo from Monument Australia – Graeme Saunders)



W. D. Sloane is remembered on the Corowa First and Second World Wars Memorial Clock, located in the Corowa Town Centre – Honour Avenue & Sanger Street, Corowa, NSW.



Corowa First and Second World Wars Memorial Clock

(Photos from War Memorials Register NSW)



W. D. Sloane is remembered on the Yarrowonga War Memorial, located on Belmore & Piper Streets, Yarrowonga, Victoria.



Yarrowonga War Memorial (Photo from Monument Australia)



W. D. Sloane is remembered on the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Honour Roll, located in St. Andrew's Uniting Church, Tom & Piper Streets, Yarrowonga, Victoria.

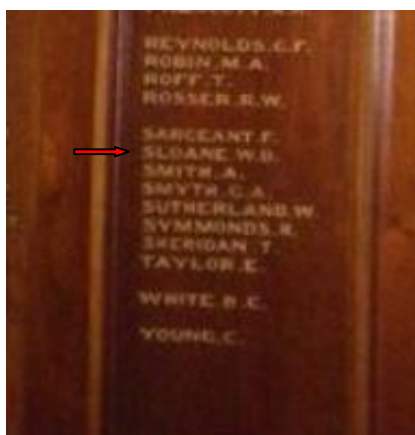


St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Honour Roll (Photo from Monument Australia – Chris McLaughlin)

W. D. Sloane is remembered on the Yarrowonga Honour Roll, located in Yarrowonga Town Hall, Belmore & Orr Streets, Yarrowonga, Victoria.



Yarrowonga Honour Roll (Photo from Monument Australia – Chris McLaughlin)



Air Mechanic Class II W. D. Sloane is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 187.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(41 pages of Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Air Mechanic 2nd Class William Douglas Sloane

Newspaper Notices

NEWS OF GEELONG AND DISTRICT SOLDIERS

Air-Mechanic W. D. Sloane, an old Geelong Collegian, is now at the Scottish School of Fitters in Edinburgh. His cousin, Driver Alex. Sloane, son of Mr and Mrs James Sloane, is at the Front, and well.

(Geelong Advertiser, Victoria – 4 April, 1917)

DIED ON SERVICE

SLOANE – On the 21st August, 1917, in England, William Douglas, of the 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, dearly beloved youngest son of James and Amy Sloane, of Mulwala Station, Mulwala, NSW and brother of Alex. (A.I.F.) and Hume (A.I.F.)

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 28 August, 1917)

DIED ON SERVICE

SLOANE – In England (killed when flying), William Douglas, of the 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, dearly beloved youngest son of James and Amy Sloane, of Mulwala Station, Mulwala, N.S.W., and brother of Alex. (A.I.F.) and Hume (A.I.F.)

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 1 September, 1917)

WAR CASUALTIES

DIED ON SERVICE

Air-mechanic W. D. Sloane, youngest son of Mr and Mrs J. Sloane, of Mulwala Station, near Berrigan, has died while on active service in England. Two brothers are on active service.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 3 September, 1917)

ROLL OF HONOR

Died on Service

When it was announced in the "Standard" last week that William Douglas Sloane, youngest son of Mr and Mrs J. Sloane, of Mulwala Station, had died in England on active service, particulars were not to hand. Since then, however, Mr Sloane has been advised by cable that his son (who belonged to the 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps) was killed when flying. This young man had a genius for mechanics, and designed and built an aeroplane of his own at Mulwala Station. Being ambitious to become an airman, he joined the Australian Flying Corps and proceeded to England. Unhappily his career as an airman has been tragically brief.

(Benalla Standard, Victoria – 7 September, 1917)

DIED ON SERVICE

SLOANE – In England (killed when flying), William Douglas, of the 69th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, dearly beloved youngest son of James and Amy Sloane, of Mulwala Station, Mulwala, NSW and brother of Alex. (A.I.F.) and Hume (A.I.F.)

(*The Australasian*, Melbourne, Victoria – 8 September, 1917) & (*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 1 September, 1917)

THE 338TH CASUALTY LIST

DIED RESULT OF ACCIDENT

Private W. D. Sloane, Mulwala

(*The Mildura Cultivator*, Victoria – 19 September, 1917)

DEATH OF AUSTRALIAN AIRMAN

Funeral of Airman William Douglas Sloane, of Mulwala, who was accidentally killed in England while flying to France.

The following is a description of this soldier's funeral, written by Dr. Gordon, a relative, who was present. It is pleasing to know that, while the people of Britain appreciate the living Australian soldiers, they show respect to the remains of those who die doing their duty to the Empire :—

My dear _____, I have just returned from the funeral of poor William Douglas Sloane. I rang up the headquarters of the Australian Forces this morning, and got all particulars from them. I am glad to be able to tell you that all arrangements were carried out very beautifully and most impressively.

A special train left the Necropolis Station, Westminster-road, at 11.45, carrying the bodies of three Australian soldiers—the officer who was killed with Sloane, an engineer, and Sloane. A few friends were with the officer; two nurses who had looked after the engineer accompanied him on his last journey, while I was the only one who could be present to pay the last respects to Sloane.

We arrived at Brookwood Cemetery at about one o'clock, and marched to the graves. The cortege was headed by a firing party of fifty South African Scottish; then came six pipers, who played dirges in slow time, and then came the coffins, each drawn by the companions of the deceased and followed by the mourners. The ceremony was carried out by Colonel the Reverend Shannon. He read the service impressively, and in the midst an aeroplane flew over us, but whether by design or accident I am unable to say.

On Sloane's coffin, on a brass plate, was written: "William Douglas Sloane, 2nd Air Mechanic, died 21st August, 1917; aged 27 years." He was buried among comrades of the A.I.P., and close by other colonial troops who have died in England.

After the ceremony, the firing party fired three volleys over the graves, and between each volley the pipers played a short lament. The firing party then presented arms, while the buglers played the Last Post. This was the end of the ceremony. I forgot to say that, of course, the coffin was draped with the Australian flag.

The situation is very beautiful, amongst pines and heather, about 17 miles from London.

In Airman W. D. Sloane's last letter he mentioned that he had been appointed to have charge of the battleplane "Riverina" (Australia, No. 21), and was to fly that machine at the front in France.

A comrade, when writing to his father in Melbourne, asked that these particulars should be conveyed to the parents of the deceased soldier :—

" I am writing this on the train on the way to the place where we embark. All the machines bar one arrived safely. The machine piloted by Lieutenant Shapira and D. (Tod) Sloane met with a mishap, which proved fatal to the two boys. Engine trouble, resulting in a nose dive, with a crash, which caused the loss of both lives of esteemed members of our Flight Squadron. Poor old Tod, The boys feel very sad about his death, and the news came through so suddenly—only about six hours after we boys had shaken hands with them and waved them off."

(Tungamah and Lake Rowan Express and St. James Gazette, Victoria – 25 October, 1917) &

(The Corowa Free Press, NSW – 30 October, 1917) & (The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, NSW – 2 November, 1917) &

(Young Witness, NSW – 20 November, 1917)

AIRMAN KILLED

Mr T. G. Sloane, of Moorilla, Grenfell road, has received word that his nephew, Airman William Douglas Sloane, of Mulwala (Vic.) had been killed in England whilst flying to France. The deceased had been appointed to have charge of the battle place "Riverina" and was to fly that machine on the western front.

(Young Witness, NSW – 16 November, 1917) & (The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser, NSW – 23 November, 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. 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)

2nd Air Mechanic W. D. Sloane does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

For Thou Hast Made Him Most Blessed For Ever

PS. XXI. 6

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 from World War 2.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918. Second row: 6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918; 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photo by Magicfingers)



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Photo of 2nd Air Mechanic W. D. Sloane's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright)



