

Clarence was born in Geurie, NSW, on 24th August 1893, the son of Thomas Timbrell Collier and Sarah Jane Collier, nee Lyons. He went to school at Geurie Public School, Dubbo High School and Fort Street in Sydney before attending Sydney University where he completed his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1913, but was unable to practice Law at the time because of his age, he was not 21 when he completed his degree.

T the time of joining G Company, AN&MEF on 11th August 1914, he was a Law Clerk and single and he gave his father at Percy St Wellington, NSW, as his next of kin.

He was promoted to corporal on 18th August and reduced back to private following a Court Martial before returning from Rabaul and being discharged, term expired, on 4th March 1915 having completed 206 days service.



2nd Lt Clarence Timbrell Collier.

On 26th August 1915 he joined the AIF as part of the 9th Reinforcements for the 18th Battalion, service number 3550. He was granted a Commission as 2nd Lt on 1st December 1915 before sailing for Egypt aboard the RUNIC, departing Sydney on 20th Jan 1916.

In a letter to his mother and father dated 25th Jan 1916 he stated of the RUNIC – “this ship is nothing like the BERRIMA – she hasn’t the available deck space and is lacking in decent on deck generally altho’ the troop decks are well ventilated and the food excellent”

In a further letter to his father from Heliopolis, dated 1st March 1916 he stated – “The camp here is on the edge of the desert and route marches and manoeuvres in desert and open warfare are the main principles of training.

I’ve ascertained that the withdrawal from Gallipoli was no “fake” but a very well planned and executed piece of work”

In other letters he vented his frustration at being left behind with the 5th Training Battalion and being assigned picquet work when the rest of the men from the RUNIC went to the front. At one stage he offered to resign his commission and go as a sergeant to the front. This was not permitted.

On 2nd May at Ismailia he was transferred to the 53rd Battalion and travel with them to Marseilles in June 1916.

Clarence was killed at Fromelles on 20th July 1917. For some time he was reported as missing and in that period he was promoted Lieutenant, a promotion that was subsequently cancelled when his death prior to this date was confirmed. The confusion arose as he was once thought to have been taken prisoner and several witnesses stated they had seen him later.

Private Henry Seemor, regimental number 2907, who had come over with Clarence as part of the 9th Reinforcements, reported as follows: -

“At Fleurbaix on 19th July Informant and Collier were together in a charge at about 40 yards distance from our parapet. There was a muddy creek, waist deep in slush and Collier and Informant were lying side by side alongside this creek until a further advance was ordered. After going a few yards Collier was hit and fell. Informant saw him fall and two days later passed the spot again and noticed that Collier’s body was still there. Death must have been instantaneous.

Collier was young, auburn complexion, medium height, rather stout build.”

In a letter dated 16th May 1917 the Chaplain, Australian Expeditionary Forces wrote – “This officer, with many of his men, fell in a desperate charge on the German trenches on July 19th, 1916. This occurred in the North of France. The German position was carried, but the Germans turned the course of the river and flooded their old trenches which compelled the Australians to retire. Some fifteen hundred dead had to be left behind unburied, and, subsequently, as the bodies were not recovered, they were reported as “missing”. Some four hundred prisoners were taken by the Germans on the occasion, but the Lieutenant’s name does not appear in the list supplied so we must reluctantly come to the decision that he was one of those who fell in nobly doing his duty,”

He was presumed dead and it was not until 2011 that Germany was able to confirm his death as they had his dog tags following the discovery of a mass grave near the site of the Fromelles battle. His body was never recovered.

Clarence is remembered at VC Corner, Australian Cemetery and Memorial, Fromelles and on Panel 156 at the Australian War Memorial Canberra.