

Today we remember and pay tribute to William Johnstone McCloskey.

William McCloskey was born in 1893, the second of eight children born to John and Mary Jane McCloskey, in Northcote, Melbourne. Known as 'Billie' to his family and friends, McCloskey grew up in North Fitzroy, and attended the Clifton Hill State School.

He later took on an apprenticeship with William Detmond Limited, a stationary company, where McCloskey trained as a bookbinder.

From a young age, McCloskey took an interest in the military.

He joined the voluntary senior cadets in 1909, and later served as a sergeant in the 63rd Infantry Battalion, East Melbourne, a citizen militia unit.

William McCloskey enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force on the 17th of August 1914, just after the beginning of the war, and soon joined the 6th Infantry Battalion, one of the first Australian units to be raised at the beginning of the conflict.

He was one of four McCloskey brothers to serve for Australia during the First World War, including his brother Henry, who was awarded a Military Cross in France in 1916.

William McCloskey and the 6th Infantry Battalion embarked from Melbourne on the 19th of October 1914, and after a brief stopover in Albany, Western Australia, sailed to Egypt for continued training.

On the 25th of April 1915 McCloskey and the 6th Battalion took part in the Allied landing on Gallipoli. They were among the second wave of troops to land on the peninsula and were involved in the heavy fighting as Australian and New Zealand troops attempted to push back Ottoman defences and hold onto their beachhead in what would become known as Anzac Cove. Days after his arrival on Gallipoli, McCloskey was promoted from the rank of Lance Corporal to Sergeant.

In May 1915 McCloskey and the 6th Infantry Battalion took part in the large battle of Krithia, and then spent the next few weeks holding the allied position at Anzac Cove.

In August 1915, they took part in the Battle of Lone Pine. In this bloody battle Allied troops attacked a series of well-defended Turkish trenches protected by thick pine logs overhead.

Troops fought in close quarter, often with bayonets in the dark covered trenches, or were exposed to the heavy machine-gun and artillery fire on the ground above.

The 6th Battalion took part in several attacks over the course of the battle, on several occasions having to be withdrawn from the front line trenches for a confused reorganisation amidst enemy artillery fire, and with paths blocked by the many wounded being evacuated from the fight.

At some point during the days of heavy fighting William McCloskey received a gunshot wound to his kidney. He was evacuated to the hospital ship *Delta*, but on the 8th of August died of his wounds.

He was 21 years old.

He was buried at sea in the Mediterranean and his name is listed on the Lone Pine Memorial, on Gallipoli, which records the name of nearly 5,000 Australian and New Zealand casualties of the Gallipoli campaign who have no known grave.

During the five days fighting at Lone Pine the Australians suffered almost 2,300 casualties, while the enemy suffered somewhere between five and seven thousand. To the Ottomans it was known as *Kanli Sirt*, meaning “Bloody Ridge”.

William McCloskey is listed on the Roll of Honour on my right, among almost 62,000 Australians who died while serving in the First World War.

His photograph is displayed today beside the Pool of Reflection.

This is but one of the many stories of service and sacrifice told here at the Australian War Memorial. We now remember Sergeant William Johnstone McCloskey, who gave his life for us, for our freedoms, and in the hope of a better world.