



In Memory of
Sergeant
ALEXANDER GRAY

1681, 42nd Battery, 11th Field Artillery Brigade (AFAB)

who died age 29
on 2nd October 1917

Agnes and John Stewart Connolly Gray of
Mountford Road, New Farm, Queensland

Remembered with Honour

LIJSSENTHOUK MILITARY CEMETERY, BELGIUM



SERGEANT
ALEXANDER GRAY
 11th Field Artillery Brigade
 SERVICE NUMBER: 1681



Alexander Gray attended Toowoomba Grammar School in 1903 and 1904, graduating at the age of sixteen. He was a Brisbane boy, the son of Agnes and John Stewart Connolly Gray of Mountford Road, New farm. He attended the Brisbane Normal (State) School for his primary education before he came to Toowoomba. When he enlisted in Brisbane on 26 August 1914, he stated his occupation as stockman; his father described him as a farmer. The family business was T. & W. Gray, Boot and Shoe Importers, George Street, Brisbane.

Just three weeks after the declaration of war, Alexander had his medical in Brisbane. He took the oath and agreed to serve for the duration of the war plus four months. His file states that he was 5'11" tall and weighed 175 pounds. He had a fair complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. He was a Presbyterian.

Alexander trained for the artillery in Brisbane and departed for overseas service a month after his induction. As part of the First Contingent he

embarked on troopship A22 Rangatira in Brisbane. His rank was Driver in 7th Battery, 3rd Field Artillery Brigade (3rd AFAB). He served on the Gallipoli Peninsula for most of the campaign and seemed to avoid the dangers of enemy fire and disease that struck down so many of his mates. After the Evacuation (of Gallipoli) in December 1915 Alexander continued training in Egypt and soon became part of the major reorganisation of the AIF for service on the Western Front (France) and Palestine and Egypt. Alexander was destined for France and was transferred to a newly-created unit – 4th Division Artillery. His specific posting was to 42nd Battery of the 11th AFAB (Australian Field Artillery Brigade).

By the time he reached France Alexander had been twice promoted and served henceforth as a sergeant. His service on the Western Front lasted about a year and a half. He was clearly a steady and reliable soldier; there were no disciplinary issues and apart from a bout in hospital for dental work, his time at the front was interrupted only by some leave in England. He participated in several major actions: the horrors of Pozieres and Mouquet Farm in 1916, the bloody battles at Bullecourt in spring of 1917 and the successful offensive at Messines in June 1917.

In mid-September 1917, he returned from Blighty leave (London) and found his battery in the mud of Flanders, outside the city of Ypres in Belgium. The battle raging here is often referred to simply as Passchendaele. It was one of the fiercest of the Great War. It is infamous among

the Australian gunners as their deadliest battle. The men had to work their guns from exposed positions subject to German “counter-battery” fire to support waves of infantry going “over the top”. Alexander became one of 38 000 Australian casualties in the autumn of 1917 at Ypres. On 1 October he was wounded by fragments of an enemy shell that landed on his battery’s position. He suffered extensive shrapnel wounds, described as “SW Rt leg, Rt arm, head and abdomen.” He was evacuated to a casualty clearing station where he died the following day.

Alexander was aged 29 when he died. He was buried in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery (grave XXV.E.20A) about 10 kilometres west of Ypres. In the early 1920s both his parents signed for his medals and mementoes from the government. There appears to have been little contact between the family and Toowoomba after the war, hence his omission from the Toowoomba Mothers’ Memorial and the TGS Roll of Honour. Finally, Alexander’s sacrifice is remembered and honoured in the city where he spent important years of his life.

Postscript. Alexander’s younger brother John Leslie Gray, who did not attend TGS, also served in the AIF. He survived and returned to Australia in May 1918. He became a Captain in 49th Battalion, accorded ‘Mention in Dispatches’ for courageous actions in March 1917. (*Awarded, and promulgated, 'London Gazette', second Supplement, No. 30107 1 June 1917; 'Commonwealth Gazette' No. 169 4 October 1917. Recommendation date: 2 March 1917*).

External Links:

[National Archives of Australia](#)

[Military Records](#)

[Commonwealth War Graves](#)

[Commission](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honor Roll](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 1914-18 war 11th Field Artillery BDE Oct 1917](#)



Alexander Gray, date and location unknown



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E00697

11th Field Artillery Brigade near Bailleul – AWM



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E00698

11th Field Artillery Brigade taking a short respite - AWM