

John Steen Clare Collum

Private John Collum
19th Battalion, AIF
Service Number: 4680

Born: 1890, Cooma, NSW

Died: 28 February 1917, Malt Trench, France

John Steen Clare Collum was born on 23 May 1890 at Cooma, the eldest son of Robert and Eliza Collum. The family moved to the York estate in about 1894 and Collum completed his schooling at the Penrith Superior School. After leaving school, he was employed at the Penrith Locomotive Sheds. On 7 June 1910, Collum began employment as a cleaner at the sheds and on 25 July 1911 he was appointed a fuelman. Two of Collum's brothers, Forbes (Wes) was in France and Fletcher was in Egypt during the war. They had also experienced the Gallipoli campaign. They returned to Australia in December 1918. Having failed to obtain enlistment in the Light Horse on several occasions, Collum enlisted on 11 January 1916 and was allocated to the 12th Reinforcements, 19th Battalion. He left Australia on 14 April 1916 aboard *HMAT Ceramic* and arrived in Egypt on 19 May 1916. He left Alexandria aboard *RMS Megantic* arriving in Plymouth on 7 June 1916. After training with the 5th Training Battalion in England, Collum arrived in France on 9 September and was taken on strength with the 19th Battalion on 26 September 1916 when the battalion was just completing operations in the Pozieres area. On 28 October 1916, Collum suffering from syphilis, was admitted to the 39th Casualty Clearing Station. He rejoined his unit on 9 January 1917. He was again hospitalised from 17 to 27 January.

Collum was killed in action on 28 February 1917. According to Private Frost, Collum was alongside him on a light machine gun (B Company) when he saw Collum shot dead through the heart. He gave the location as Malt Trench, which had just been taken in a bombing raid near Le Barque. This was corroborated by Sergeant Wain who stated that Collum had been shot by a sniper in Malt Trench (Wariencourt) and his death was instantaneous. He was buried near the trench, about 200 yards off the Bapaume Road. Wain had seen the grave. It had a cross over it erected by the men of the 19th Battalion. Collum was described in the *Nepean Times* (24 March 1917) as '... of fine stalwart physique, a typical Australian, and reliable to the last cartridge and after'. On 19 May 1917 at the Nepean Picture Theatre, High Street, Penrith an unveiling took place of photographs of five fallen: Corporal Le Sueur, Privates J W Syme, Reg Cheesman, Robert Paxton, and John Collum. The Penrith District Band played 'an appropriate musical programme'. The photographs afterwards were hung in the School of Arts in Penrith.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Villers-Bretonneux, France
- Honour Roll, Jamisontown United Church
- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School
- Honour Roll, Methodist Church, Penrith

Sources:

- [National Archives of Australia](#) B2455: COLLUM J S C
- [Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Inquiry Files](#) 0780101
- Australian War Memorial First World War Nominal Roll
- [Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour](#)

- Penrith City Library Biography files

TROVE:

- [Nepean Times 24 March 1917, pg. 4, Col. 2](#)
- [Nepean Times 12 May 1917, pg. 3, Col. 5](#)
- [Nepean Times 20 October 1917 pg. 3 Col. 5](#)