

**Private William Charles Gibson®**  
**Regimental number: 2142**  
**19th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force**

**born: 1889–died: 25 May 1916**

Private William Charles Gibson was born in Marrickville, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, in 1889.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of James Pattison Gibson and Janet Gibson<sup>2</sup> and had at least three siblings:<sup>3</sup> Archibald Knox (born in 1887),<sup>4</sup> Charlotte (born in 1892)<sup>5</sup> and David Thomas Carlyle (born in 1895).<sup>6</sup> His family lived at 58 Premier Street in Marrickville, which is just south of Sydney.<sup>7</sup>

William enlisted in the 4th Reinforcement of the 19th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) (regimental number 2142) on 1 August 1915 in Liverpool, New South Wales, at the age of 26.<sup>8</sup> He was 5' 11" tall and had a dark complexion, blue eyes and dark hair. He was a bricklayer and had apprenticed to his father for four years.

It is not known when William left Australia—his battalion left in late June 1915<sup>9</sup>—but, on 8 January 1916, he reported for duty with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Tel-el-Kabir, a town north of Cairo, Egypt, that was a training centre for Australian troops.<sup>10</sup> It was from there that the Australian troops left for the Gallipoli landings in the Dardanelles. His battalion had taken part in this campaign and then returned to Egypt in December 1915.<sup>11</sup> However, William arrived too late to participate in the campaign and was probably engaged in training with his battalion in Egypt in early 1916.

After only a few months in Egypt, William and his battalion joined the British Expeditionary Force heading to France. On 25 March 1916 he disembarked in Marseilles and, from there, travelled north. It was only two months later that he was fatally wounded. He received a shell wound to his flank that penetrated his abdomen and was taken to the 7th Australian Field Ambulance and from there to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. He died at the clearing station on 25 May at 6:40 p.m. and was buried the same day in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 109). His time in military service had been short—less than one year.

Bailleul was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 CCCS but also No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.<sup>12</sup>

Two months after his death, his personal effects—a comb, pipe, toothbrush, cotton bag and French book—were sent to his father. After the war, William's father had the following inscription placed on his grave:

DUTY NOBLY DONE

William's two brothers, Archibald and David, also served in the Great War. Archibald, a plumber, enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force just shortly before William<sup>13</sup> and, like his brother, served in the 19th Battalion (regimental number 2141).<sup>14</sup> Archibald sailed from Sydney in September 1915, heading for Egypt. His brother William may have been with him. However, the two brothers were almost certainly together when they both disembarked in Marseilles, France, on 25 March 1916 to join the Western Front.

Archibald was wounded in action in November 1916 and was shipped back to England with a severe gunshot wound to his back. However, he rejoined his unit in February 1917. Although he

would continue to spend a lot of time in hospitals, he rose quickly through the ranks. He was promoted to lance corporal in April 1917, to corporal in July and then to lance sergeant in October. Archibald was wounded in a gas attack in Belgium in November 1917; he was hospitalized in Etaples but returned to his unit in late December. He was wounded a second time: in March 1918, he received a shrapnel wound to his right arm and hand and was, once again, sent back to England. Five months later he rejoined his unit in France and a month afterward was promoted to sergeant. He stayed in France until after the end of the war and then, from March to September 1919, was on leave and working for John Train & Taylor, a major firm of building contractors in Glasgow, Scotland.<sup>15</sup>

Archibald had an illustrious military career—not only did he rise to the rank of sergeant, but he was awarded the Military Medal in October 1919. The citation says:

After the attack on Mt St QUINTON near PERRONE on 31st August 1918, L/Sgt GIBSON showed exceptional gallantry. The objective having been reached, he patrolled between three detached posts under intense enemy machine gun and rifle fire [sic] continually for 24 hours with utter disregard for his own personal safety having to crawl over entirely exposed ground in full view of the enemy. His example of courage coolness and endurance was a great incentive to the few men under his command who held their positions with great confidence and was largely responsible for them beating off determined counter attacks.<sup>16</sup>

About the time he was awarded the medal, he returned to Australia and in March 1920 was discharged from the army.

When William's brother David enlisted, he had been an apprentice tailor for five years and was also serving as a squadron sergeant major on the instructional staff of the militia.<sup>17</sup> He enlisted in the 20th Battalion in February 1917—nine months after the death of his brother. In July 1917, he sailed from Sydney to Liverpool, England, and in November he was on the Front in France. In August 1918, he received a severe gunshot wound to his eye and was shipped back to England. He was in Westham, England, at the time of the Armistice. Perhaps he was too anxious to leave the military because, at noon on 19 November 1918, he went absent without leave, returning only at 22 hours on 21 November. For this he was severely reprimanded and lost three days pay. He returned to Australia in December 1918 and was discharged in February 1919. He married Irene M. A. Moore in 1924.<sup>18</sup>

All three brothers were awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). Archibald and William, who enlisted early in the war, were also awarded the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).

After the war, William's father, a builder, moved to 275 Marrickville Road, still in Marrickville, and then in June 1927 moved to "Gowan Brae," Olive Street, in Earlwood, NSW.<sup>19</sup> He later moved to 97 Thompson Street in Earlwood.<sup>20</sup> William's mother died in 1933<sup>21</sup> and his father in 1945,<sup>22</sup> both in Marrickville.

William's sister may have married Arthur L. S. Jennings in 1920 in Marrickville.<sup>23</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for William C Gibson, Registration Number: 7247
- <sup>2</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2019), entry for Gibson, William Charles, Service No: 2142
- <sup>3</sup> There appear to be other children listed in Janet Gibson's obituary ("Australia, Newspaper Vital Notices, 1831–2001," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for Janet Gibson) but the quality of the image is poor and the names could not be read, nor could the records be found.
- <sup>4</sup> "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for Archibald K Gibson, Registration Number: 6200
- <sup>5</sup> "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for Charlotte Gibson, Registration Number: 22100
- <sup>6</sup> "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for David T C Gibson, Registration Number: 24110
- <sup>7</sup> "First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914–1920," *National Archives of Australia* (<http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/series-info/b2455/>: accessed 25 January 2019) entry for William Charles Gibson, Series number: B2455, Barcode: 5033376
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Unless otherwise noted, all information about William's service comes from this source.
- <sup>9</sup> "19th Australian Infantry Battalion," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51459>: accessed 22 February 2019)
- <sup>10</sup> "Tell El Kebir," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell\\_El\\_Kebir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_El_Kebir): accessed 22 February 2019)
- <sup>11</sup> "19th Australian Infantry Battalion," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51459>: accessed 22 February 2019)
- <sup>12</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)
- <sup>13</sup> William may have, in fact, enlisted immediately after his brother, because their service file numbers are sequential, although there is a difference in their enlistment dates.
- <sup>14</sup> "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 27 October 2019), entry for Archibald Knox Gibson. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Archibald's service comes from this source.
- <sup>15</sup> "John Train & Taylor," *Mackintosh Architecture, University of Glasgow* (<https://www.mackintosh-architecture.gla.ac.uk/catalogue/name/?nid=Train|Tay>: accessed 22 February 2019)
- <sup>16</sup> "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 27 October 2019), entry for Archibald Knox Gibson
- <sup>17</sup> "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 27 October 2019), entry for David Thomas Carlyle Gibson. Unless otherwise noted, all information about David's service comes from this source.
- <sup>18</sup> "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 8 November 2019), entry for David T C Gibson
- <sup>19</sup> "First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914–1920," *National Archives of Australia* (<http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/series-info/b2455/>: accessed 25 January 2019), entry for William Charles Gibson
- <sup>20</sup> "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Pattison Gibson
- <sup>21</sup> "Australia, Newspaper Vital Notices, 1831–2001," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 February 2019), entry for Janet Gibson
- <sup>22</sup> "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Pattison Gibson
- <sup>23</sup> "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Charlotte Gibson