

CAPTAIN CHAPLAIN WILLIAM JOHN GRAY
3rd Tunnelling Company



Photo: Sydney Morning Herald
January 18, 1924

William John Gray was born in Sydney, NSW on January 1, 1887 the son of William and Elizabeth Gray. His military experience was in 6th Regiment Australian Rifles in 1904-1905. He was a 30 year old Presbyterian Minister when he enlisted for service abroad with the Chaplains' Department early in December, 1917.

His Application for a Commission in the A.I.F. was granted as a 4th Class Chaplain. An Attestation Form was signed on December 7, 1917 which shows him unmarried, 30 years and 11 months of age and named his father, William Gray and holder of his Will, residing at Bridge Street, Hornsby, NSW as next of kin. Presbyterian was his religion.

On December 19, 1917 the Chaplain embarked with reinforcements from Sydney, NSW on transport HMAT A38 *Ulysses*. The voyage terminated in Suez, Egypt on January 16, 1918 and troops were entrained to Alexandria departing on January 22.

Embarkation from Egypt aboard *Abassieh* began a six day voyage on January 29 to Taranto, Italy arriving on February 4 and three days later travelled overland by train to Cherbourg, France detraining on February 14, 1918. The following day crossed by ship to Southampton, England.

Captain Chaplain Gray reported to London Headquarters on February 21, 1918 and was attached for duty with the Engineers Training Depot at Brightlingsea, England.

Proceeded overseas via Southampton to France on May 21 and marched in to the Australian General Base Depot at Havre for attachment to duty.

A few weeks later on June 8 was admitted to 2 General Hospital, Havre sick with a NYD (not yet diagnosed) illness. The hospital ship *Guildford Castle* evacuated him to England on June 24 and the following day admitted to the 3 London General Hospital suffering from Bronchitis.

The Military Board granted one month's convalescence until August 5, 1918 then consented to sedentary employment only till August 19, 1918 then was declared fit for general service. Several days later reported for duty on August 23 at the 3rd Aust. Auxiliary Hospital.

Proceeded overseas via Southampton to France on September 19, 1918 the Chaplain returned to A.G.B.D. at Havre.

On October 10, 1918 Captain Chaplain Gray was attached to the 3rd Aust. Tunnelling Company.

The Chaplain remained with the company after the Armistice until he proceeded on leave to the United Kingdom on January 9 and was struck off strength on March 15, 1919.

In Glasgow, Scotland he was admitted to the York Hill Hospital on March 17, 1919 diagnosed with Polypus Bladder (Polyp or Tumour). Discharged to Headquarters on March 24, 1919 and two days later was granted leave until recalled to return to Australia.

On April 11, 1919 was admitted to the 3 London General Hospital as a result of the Medical Section Board and was discharged to Headquarters on May 13, 1919.

At the Parkhead United Free Church in Glasgow, Chaplain Gray married Jessie Dodd Craig, a 30 year old dressmaker on May 15, 1919. His next of kin changed to his wife Mrs Jessie D. Gray whose address was 145 Finlay Drive, Dennistown, Glasgow, Scotland.

A period of Non Military Employment took place from June 18 until September 30, 1919 being granted leave with pay and subsistence for the period. Tuition for Ecclesiastical Study was at the Free Church College in Glasgow University, Glasgow. A further 7 days leave was granted until October 7, 1919 also with pay and subsistence. The course was reported to have been of benefit and useful experience gained from it.

Following his period of N.M.E. he marched out of D.A.A.G. in preparation for return to Australia.

On November 4, 1919 his father signed a card for Base Records after receiving notice of his son's Commission.

Chaplain Gray embarked with his wife on the ship *Marathon* on November 7, 1919. On the same day his next-of-kin in Australia were sent advice of his return.

His Appointment was terminated on April 1, 1920 in the 2nd Military District.

On November 18, 1920 he advised his address was The Manse, Auburn, NSW.

For service to his country Captain Chaplain William J. Gray was awarded with the British War Medal (80315) and the Victory Medal (76212).

The following news item appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Thursday January 18, 1924:

<p style="text-align:center">L.O.I. NEW GRAND MASTER</p> <p>The Rev W.J. Gray, of the Auburn Presbyterian Church, was elected Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Institution of New South Wales for the current year, at the annual meeting of that organisation.</p> <p>The Rev. W.J. Gray, who has been associated with the Loyal Orange Institution for a great many years, and who occupied the office of Grand chaplain for several years, saw service as a chaplain with the A.I.F., being attached to the Tunnelling Company, with the rank of captain.</p> <p>An Australian by birth, he was educated at St Andrew's College, and holds a B.A. degree. He accepted a call to the Auburn Presbyterian Church upon his return from the war. He was minister of the Presbyterian Church at Waratah, Newcastle for several years.</p>

These medals were returned on May 1, 1924 to Victoria Barracks (2 M.D.) who forwarded them to Base Records May 6, 1924.

On October 17, 1939 Reverend Gray requested a Statement of Service to replace his lost Discharge Form and mentioned the number of his general service medal. A reply was forwarded to him on November 1, 1939.

A Statement of his Service was sent to the Repatriation Department on August 5, 1940 and August 10, 1944.

Reverend William J. Gray died on June 5, 1957 aged 70 years. He was cremated at Springvale Crematorium, Victoria two days later.

A letter from the Funeral Director dated December 5, 1957 requested confirmation that he was a returned soldier, there being some confusion about his status since receiving a £25 grant from the Repatriation Department. Base Records replied on December 20, 1957 confirming he was a classified returned soldier.

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