

Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing  
Enquiry Bureau files, 1914-18 War  
1DRL/0428

**553A Lance Corporal  
John Leslie Klaassen**

**41st Battalion**



1530103D

1st Batt. A.I.F.

Klaassen, Pte. NO. 553. J.L

Killed June 3rd 1917. Det. D.B.

This man was killed in the subsidiary line near Hennessey's Chateau, Ploeg Steert Wood, Messines. He was taken out of the lines and buried in the cemetery there, I could not say if any cross was erected. I knew him well in the coy. He came from South Brisbane.

Witness. Lieut. Robertson. J.H.

Taken at  
NO.4.C.D.Codford.  
8-10-17.  
S.W.

S.Whitmee.  
NO.4.Command Depot.  
Codford.

B

41st A. I. F.

<sup>S</sup>  
Klaassen, Pte 553,  
B. Coy

(K. 3.6.17. Det D & B)

"Pte Klaassen was killed by a shell at Wharneton on the 3rd June/17. "

Eye-witness: Yes

Description: About 5' 7 or 8", fairish, medium build

Informant: S. E. Duley, 2119,  
41st A. I. F., B. Coy, 5 Pltn,  
Norfolk War Hospital,  
Norwich.

Home address:  
1 Gibbons Rd.,  
Newhaven, Sussex.

14th Oct. 1917.  
Edgar Rice.

B

41st A.I.F.

Klaassen. 553. J.L

K. June 3/17.

"Klaassen was killed by shell fire opposite Messines, and probably buried near Hyde Park Corner, just at the rear of Ploegsteert Wood. I have written to his relatives."

Eye-witness:-- No, told by men in my company.  
Description:--

Informant:-- Lt. C.H. Butler,  
41st Batt. A.I.F.  
3rd London Gen. Hos.  
Wandsworth.

Home address:-- Kilooy House,  
Kilcoy,  
Queensland.

15th October 1917.  
W.R. Manning.

B

Havre

15th Oct. 1917.

41st AUSTRALIANS

KLAASSEN, 553 J.L

K. 3.6.17. Ret. D/B.

He was in the 6th platoon, B Co. His name was John, and was a Brisbane man, and worked on the railway. He was a single man and was killed at Messines in the support trench by a shell in the with two others. He was probably buried in Plugstreet Cemetery.

Informant: Pte. H.J. Ayre, 369  
41st Australians, B Co.,  
H. 3. Panama.

B

RES

41st Batt. A.I.F.

Klaasen. Pte. NO.533.  
5th Plat. B.Coy.

Killed June 3rd 1917. Det. D.B.

I saw him killed by a shell there were three killed by the same shell, This happened about 3pm on the 3rd. We were in the support lines at Messines at the time. He was buried in Ploeg Steert Wood by the Batt Pioneers, A cross was erected bearing his name, number, and batt. I Knew him well in civilian life, He came from Brisbane, He worked on the railway department at Woolagabat.

Description. Age. 23. Height. 5-2. Complexion. Dark. Well Built.

Witness. Sgt Weeks.W.S. NO.550. B.Coy. 41st batt.

Taken at  
NO.3.C.D.Hurdcott.  
18-10-17.  
F.G.E.

S.Whitmee.  
NO.4.Command Depot  
Codford.

B

41st A.I.F.

J. H. KLAASSEN, 553A

K. 3.6.17. Det. D & B.

In the subsidiary trenches before Messines early in June I saw a shell burst over a bay, two bays from me. I heard there was a casualty and went along inside of 5 minutes. I found Klaasen had been killed instantly. He was badly injured in the legs and his face burned by the explosion. I know he was buried in Ploegsteert Wood by Chaplain Ellis. It is in a military cemetery. I have not seen the grave but others have told me. We called him Mackie. His No. is about 500 age about 21, short and nuggety, dark, he took care of his dress and always looked decent. He came with the original Bn. as I did, on the Demosthenes leaving Brisbane May 16, 1916. He was a very fine chap, always in good spirits and cheerful and very well liked by his mates. His two best mates Pte. Donaldson and L/Cpl. Shields were killed with him by the same shell. Klaasen was a L/Cpl.

Reference: C. H. Moxon, 360.

No. 11 Con. Camp Busby Nr. Rouen. 23.10.17.

FRP.

B

41st Batt.A.I.F.

Klaassen<sup>S</sup> L.Cpl. 553.<sup>A</sup>  
B Co. 6 Pl.

K. June 3/17 Det D & B.

"I saw Jack Klaassen killed, at the foot of Messines Ridge.  
A shell burst in a bay of our trench, and killed him and 3  
others."

Eye-witness: Yes.

Description: Dark, medium height.

Informant: Lce.Cpl Patrick Cooney, 408  
41st Batt A.I.F. B Co 6 Pl.  
Alexandra Hos. Cosham.

Home address: Townsville, Queensland.

23.10.17.  
H.G.Webb.

B

41/ A.I.F.

Klaassen<sup>S</sup> L/Cpl. 553.<sup>A</sup>

K. June 3/17.

"I saw Klaassen buried in the cemetery at  
Ploegsteert Wood."

Eye-witness: Saw him buried.

Description: 'Jack'.

Informant: Pte. N.F.Chardon, 406.,  
41/ A.I.F. B Co. 5 Plt.,  
Colchester Military Hospital.

Home address:

Oct 24/17.  
C.J.Stebbing.

B

Have

26th October. 1917.

41st AUSTRALIANS

J.L. <sup>S</sup> KLAASSEN, 553 A

K. June 3rd. 1917. Det. D/B.

I knew Pt. Klaassen of B.Co., VI.Pltn. 7. He was a transfer from the 31st Battalion to the 41st. I saw him killed by shell at Plugstreet Wood on June 3rd, 1917. I saw his body being carried out by the Battalion Pioneers for burial. He would be buried in one of three Military Cemeteries in the vicinity.

Informant: Pt. F. King, 456

41st Australians, B.Co., V.Pltn.

Australian Camp, Ronelles.

RDE.

B cl

41 Australian I.F.

J. L. Klaassen. 553.A

K. June 3/17 Det D/B

"I know that Jack Klaassen (41.B.VI?) was killed instantaneously by shell fire, about June 3 - 5, at Ploegsteert Wood, while we were holding the Support line, in the afternoon. (There were two others killed by the same shell in the same bay.) L/C W. Shields (41.B.VI) and Pte Ronaldson (41.B.VI) were both with him at the time, and could give more particulars. He was buried in Ploegsteert cemetery. I have not seen his grave."

Eye-witness: No, Inf. was in the trench and knew all about it at the time, see above.

Description: Out about eleven months, single I believe. I can give no particulars as to home etc.

Informant: Pte Charles Hanlon, 439,  
41 Australian I.F. B Co. V Pl.,  
3rd Southern Gen.Hos.  
Cowley Section, Oxford.

Home address: Church St, Townsville,  
Queensland.

27 Oct 1917.

Hilda M. Pickard Cambridge.



FRANCE

41st BATT. A.I.F.

KLAASEN. J. 1553.

K. June 3rd. 1917. Det.

We used to call him Jack and he was in B. Coy. I cannot give you any details of his death but he was buried up in Ploegsteert in the cemetery behind the Charing Cross dressing station. I have seen his grave there.

WSI

Ref ---Pte W.G. Duncan. 625.  
No 16 Gen. Hospital

Le Treport. Oct 29th. 1917

B  
6d  
Suff

41 A.I.F.

Klaasen. J.L. 553.

(K. June 3/17)  
det D/B.

"This man was killed by shell when we were holding the front line at hill 63 ("the only way") on June 5th 1917. I saw his body carried away in a blanket. Two of this man's comrades were killed at the same time. I saw their bodies also, their names were L/Cpl: Shields and Pte. Donaldson. I do not know where he was buried."

Eye-witness:

Description:

Informant: Cpl: H.M. Picot. 497.

41 A.I.F.

Bath Hospital. Ward 7.

Home address: King's Road,  
2.11.17. Guernsey. Isle of Wight.  
J.W. Whimster.

B  
Gd  
Suff

41st A.I.F.

Klaasen J.L. 553a,  
B. Coy.

(K. June 3/17 Det D/B)

"Klaasen and Shields were both killed in Ploegsteert on 3rd June 1917. Their bodies were buried down past where I was and they were both buried near each other in the cemetery just behind Charing Cross Dressing Station. I have seen their graves which are properly marked. I knew them both well. Klaasen was a short dark man. Shields was a short fair man with a crooked nose".

Eye-witness: Yes

Description:

Informant: L/Cpl. Wm. Duncan 625,  
41st A.I.F., C. Coy.,  
Rasecourse Hospt.,

Home address: Cheltenham.  
Ravenswood,  
Townsville, Queensland, Australia.

8.11.17,  
M.C. Davidson.

B  
Gd  
Suff

41st A.I.F.

Klaasen J.L. 553a,  
B. Coy.

(K. June 3/17 Det D/B)

"Klaasen and Shields were both killed in Ploegsteert on 3.6.17. They were buried near each other in the cemetery behind Charing Cross Dressing Station. I have seen their graves which are properly marked. I knew them both well. Klaasen was short and dark. Shields was short and fair with a bent nose. He had been a boxer".

Eye-witness:

Description:

Informant: Pte. H. Cottell 607,  
41st A.I.F., C. Coy.,  
2nd Southern General Hospt.,  
Cheltenham.

Home address:  
Ahearne Hermit Park,  
Louisville,  
Queensland,  
Australia.

9.11.17,  
N.C. Davidson.

Bd B  
6d B  
8d B

41st A.I.F.

Klaasen J.L. 553A.

(K. June 3/17 Det D/B)

"I was told by Klaasen's mates that he was killed instantaneously. (I cannot be sure of the name of any one of them) I can't remember the date, but it was at Messines, Ploegsteert, when we were holding the line".

Eye-witness: No, no name remembered.

Description: Short, dark, in Co. B. He used to be in the 31st Batt.

Informant: Pte. G.M. Smith 981,  
41st A.I.F., D. Coy., XV Plt.,  
Graylingwell Hospt.,

Home address: Chichester.  
Australian Convalescent Home,  
Dartford.

Nov. 5/17,  
K.E. Jones.

B 8<sup>a</sup>  
8<sup>off</sup>

41st Battrn.  
A.I.F.

Klaassen.  
J. L. 553a

Shields.  
L/Cpl. W.D. 512

"Killed 3.6.17"

Shields was a New Zealander and was the abest boxer on the boat, had held the Ligh Weight Amateur Championship N.Z. He was killed by same shell as Klaassen (B.Coy.) 553a (about whom I have already given information) Klaassen was from South Brisbane. He, Shields, is buried at Ploegsteert Wood I believe, but the Padre Capt. Chaplain Mills (O.P.D.) would be able to supply full particulars. They were killed near the "Only Way" Alfred Donaldson 41st Battrn. from Goodna Q. was killed by the same shell.

Witness:-

W.J. Ayre 369  
41st Battrn B.Coy.

London.  
19.11.17,

N.Z.B.R.C.S.

*Not written to P.I.*

41st A.I.F.

Klaassen Pte. J.L. 553a,  
D. Company.

(K. June 3/17)

"Klaassen was blown up by shell fire near Hill 63, holding the line, between June 3-6. He was buried at the back of the line near where it occurred".

Eye-witness: No, told by Lt. Price, D. Coy.

Description: I do not know him and therefore cannot describe him.

Informant: Lt. G.H. Robinson,  
41st A.I.F.,  
3rd London General Hospt.,  
Wandsworth.

Nov. 22/17,  
W. Arnold Davies.

cc  
B. Luff

41st Bata  
A.I.F.

KLAASON

555

"Killed June 3rd 1917"

The report given by Egan 8.10.17. is correct. I saw him killed and R. Jean told me he was buried respectfully in the cemetery Hyac Park corner.

Witness:- Beattie 1407

Wara 21. Harefield

D.P. Dickson  
London.  
17.10.17.

B

41st Bata  
A.I.F.

KLAASEN

I. 555

"Killed June 3rd 1917"

Killed at left of Bloegstreet at a trench called the "Only Way" communication trench killed by shell with two others. I saw him killed it was more like concussion I saw him taken away to bury. He was in same Coy., and Platoon as me came from Brisbane.

Witness:- Egan Wara 32. Harefield

London.  
17.10.18.

B

A.I.F. 41.

X. 3.6.17.

KIAASH. 553. J.L.

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We were holding the line at Ploegstreet Wood before the attack at Messines, when he was killed by a shell outright. I saw it happen. I do not know the exact place where he was buried but it was in one of the Australian Cemeteries at Ploegstreet.

BH.

Reference: Pte.H.F. Chardon. 406.  
7 Can.Gen.Hpl.

Staples.  
6.10.17.

B