12

Batchelor, John

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Joined WAGR 7/11/1912 as Repairer, Katanning. Transferred in same role to Tambellup 17/4/1913, to Katanning 21/4/1913 and to Wagin 17/11/1914.
("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge. The WAGR Annual report for 1914/15 showed they employed 882 Repairers at 8 shillings per day, with many at very small settlements or tent camps.)

Granted leave to join AIF 13/1/1915 (Service No.1675). Killed in action at Gallipoli 14/10/1915

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial force
Military unit:	16th Battalion.
Service number:	1675
Date of death:	14 October 1915
Place of death:	Gallipoli, Dardanelles, Turkey
Age:	21
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Cairo War Memorial Cemetery

John Batchelor aged 21 enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill on 14 January 1915 and assigned to 3rd Reinforcement to 16th Battalion with regimental number 1675. His basic training at Blackboy Hill camp was exceedingly short before he departed from Fremantle aboard HMAT *Itonus* on 22 February 1915. On arrival in Egypt his reinforcement party spent little time before moving to Gallipoli. He was taken on strength of 16 Battalion, in the field, on 8 May 1915.

The Battalion had just experienced their heaviest casualties of the entire War at "Bloody Angle" and 171 men had been killed in the previous week leaving the Battalion with just 9 officers and 298 other ranks from the original Battalion and the 1st and 2nd reinforcements. For the next 9 weeks the Battalion worked on fatigues, mostly at Reserve Gully. On 30 June 1915 Private Batchelor was struck in the head by a bullet, most likely a semi-spent round. Following treatment on Gallipoli he was evacuated to 2 Stationary Hospital on Lemnos and later to Egypt. He was discharged from medical care then returned to Base Details at Zeitoun.

He reported sick and was admitted to 1 Australian General Hospital with "old wound behind ear" and was admitted. He was posted as dangerously ill on 12 October 1915 and died on 14 October 1915. The cause of death was certified to be a cerebral abscess.

Private Batchelor was buried in the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

Private Batchelor had been born in Preston, Lancashire UK and his mother still resided there. On enlistment he stated that he had served for 3½ months in the North Lancashire Territorials but had resigned to migrate to WA. He nominated his brother (A Batchelor) of Broome Hill as his Next of kin but in his will, he bequeathed his property to his mother.

Further information

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans' Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------