Boswell, John Henry

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:	Tramways
Designation:	Conductor

Rail employment notes: Born 16/8/1890. Joined Tramways 20 April 1914 aged 23 as Student Conductor, Perth. Promoted to Conductor, Perth 1 May 1914. Granted leave to join AIF 26/7/1915 (Service No.891). Killed in action 30/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	32nd Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	891
Date of death:	20 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	26
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	No known grave; Remembered on VC Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial, Fromelles, Lille, Nord Pas de Calais, France.

John Henry Boswell enlisted in the AIF on 7 July 1915 at Blackboy Hill Camp where he was kitted out and assigned the regimental number 891 for service in C Company of 32 Battalion which was being formed jointly between West Australia (C and D companies) and South Australia (A and B companies). He had no previous military experience and nominated his father Henry James Boswell as his Next of kin. He sailed from Fremantle aboard SS *Indarra* for Adelaide. The Battalion concentrated at Mitcham Camp with additional training at the Morphettville racecourse. The Battalion departed from Port Adelaide on 18 November 1915 on A2 HMAT *Geelong* and disembarked at Suez on 16 December 1915. In Egypt training continued at an individual and formation level. The next move was to France aboard HMT *Transylvania* on 17 June 1916 and disembarking Marseilles 23 June 1916 to join the BEF. Training and some frontline experience followed in the Armentieres sector before they were flung into the Battle of Fromelles in which they sustained massive casualties. In that Battle Private Boswell was posted Missing in action although there were confusing reports of him being in hospital or taken as a Prisoner of war. An eye witness report from 936 Pte Gibbons stated that he had definitely been killed in the assault. His death was confirmed when the German VI Corps forwarded his identity disc collected from a body on the battlefield. On 24 February 1917 his classification was changed from MIA to KIA 20 July 1917. (The identity disc was later forwarded to his NOK). His remains were never recovered, all efforts being abandoned in 1926. He has no known grave and is remembered on the VC Corner Memorial at Fromelles.

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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*

Additional/personal information:

John Boswell was born in Stanley, Victoria and appears to have come to WA on his own, his parents remaining in Victoria.

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These medals and other memorabilia were later forwarded to his father.

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).

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

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

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