Burley, Charles Ernest

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:	Locomotive
Designation:	Blacksmith's Striker

Rail employment notes: Born 26/1/1888. Joined WAGR 3/4/1912 aged 24 as Striker, Midland Workshops.
In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Granted leave to join AIF 18/12/1915 (Service No.940). Killed in action 29/11/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	3rd Australian Tunnelling Company
Service number:	940
Date of death:	29 November 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	29
Rank:	Sapper
Burial/memorialisation:	Hersin Communal Cemetery Extension, Hersin-Coupigny, Lens, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Charles Burley enlisted in the AIF on 9 December 1915 and allocated regimental number 940. He was transferred to NSW for training before embarking on HMAT *Ulysses* (A38) from Sydney on 20 February 1916. In Europe the mining group was reorganised and Burley was allocated to the 3rd Tunnelling Company.

According to Wikipedia:

"The 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company was one of the tunnelling companies of the Royal Australian Engineers during World War I. The tunnelling units were occupied in offensive and defensive mining involving the placing and maintaining of mines under enemy lines, as well as other underground work such as the construction of deep dugouts for troop accommodation, the digging of subways, saps (a narrow trench dug to approach enemy trenches), cable trenches and underground chambers for signals and medical services… In April 1917, the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company moved to northern France where it took over the Hill 70 – Copse – Double Crassier area of Loos, together with Hulluch to the north."

Charles Burley was killed in action by shellfire on 29 November 1917 in France.

 © Rail Heritage WA

Additional/personal information:

Charles Ernest Burley was born in Ballarat, Victoria, a son of Joseph Walter and Isabel (nee Gibson) Burley (Vic BDM 390/1888). Six siblings were also born in Victoria between 1879 and 1892. It appears Charles then moved to WA, where his marriage to Elizabeth Salloway was registered in 1909. The couple then had at least three children.

> BURLEY.—On November 29, killed in action, Private Charles Ernest Burley, dearly loved husband of Bessie and loving father of Bell, Cyril, and Gwen, of Adelaide, South Australia, and fond brother of J. L. Burley and Mrs. E. Wyllie, Perth, and Fred, Arthur, and Miriam, New South Wales, and nephew of Mrs. R. Harrison of Collie, aged 29 years. His duty nobly done. Eastern States papers please copy. *The West Australian* 14/12/1917p1

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----------

 © Rail Heritage WA