042

Butchers, William

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: Born 27/3/1886. Joined WAGR 26/2/1914 aged 27 as Repairer, Cambray. ("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.)
Cambray was a siding on the railway line to Nannup.

Granted leave to join AIF 11/10/1915 (Service No.4449). Killed in action 5/1/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict: First World War 1914-1918

Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4449
Date of death:	5 January 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	31
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: AIF Burial Ground, Flers, Picardie, France

William Butchers enlisted in the AIF on 14 October 1915 at Blackboy Hill Camp where he also underwent his basic training. He nominated his sister, Eva Pullen, resident in the UK as his Next of Kin. He had no previous military experience. Following basic training he was assigned to 14th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with regimental number 4449. The reinforcement party departed Australia from the Port of Fremantle aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* on 12 February 1916 and disembarked at Suez on 10 March 1916. After a short period in Egypt 14th/11 Battalion departed Alexandria on 29 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 4 April 1916 where they joined the British Expeditionary Force. Private Butchers passed through 1 ADBD before being taken on strength of 11 Battalion on 16 June 1916 as a member of B Company. Subsequently, he was Killed in Action in the region of Bapaume on 5 January 1917 and buried on the battlefield with a marked grave. After the War his remains were identified by the War Graves Registration Unit and relocated to the AIF Burial Ground at Flers.

Additional/personal information:

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William had been born at Beckenham, UK and migrated to Australia at the age of 25 years. Prior to migration he had been employed as an under-footman. It appears he migrated on his own, as there were no notices in WA papers from family, however workmates inserted a tribute:

> BUTCHERS.-A tribute to the memory of Private W. Butchers (Billy), killed in action in France on January 5, 1917.
> In the dawn of a splendid manhood, When the tide of life ran high, With courage and hope in his bearing, He gave us his last good-bye. Inserted by his mates, P. Murphy, J.Roberts, B. Engelbretsen, and N. Abbey, Cambray. *The West Australian* 18/5/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These campaign medals and other memorabilia were issued to his sister directly from Australia House, London.

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----------