052

Chaloner, Theophilus

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

Chaloner had emigrated from England but enlisted and was shipped back there to fight, dying in Belgium and tragically leaving his young widow with a baby daughter he probably never saw.



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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 16 April 1891. Joined WAGR 17 November 1910 aged 19 as Cleaner, Wagin. Transferred to Katanning 3/3/1911 and Wagin 13/9/1911. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise employed at a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder.)

Promoted to Fireman, Wagin 22/12/1912 and transferred to Narrogin 10/8/1914 and to Tambellup 16/8/1914. Granted leave to join AIF 20/5/1916 (Service No.5817). Killed in action 4/10/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	27th Battalion.
Service number:	5817
Date of death:	4 October 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	26
Rank:	Lance Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Theophilus Chaloner was a Fireman in the WAGR when he enlisted in the AIF on 26 May 1916 at the age of 25 years and was allocated to 16th Reinforcements to 27 Battalion with the regimental number 5817. Private Chaloner nominated his wife Olive to be his Next of Kin. He departed Australia aboard A16 HMAT *Port Melbourne* on 30 October 1916 with the Voyage Only rank of Lance Corporal and disembarked at Devonport UK on 28 December 1916. He marched into 7 Training Bn the following day. His training was interrupted by 7 days in hospital with laryngitis before he departed to join the British Expeditionary Force aboard *Invicta* on 8 February 1917. He passed through 2 ADBD for a short period before being taken on strength of 27 Battalion, in the field.

On 24 September 1917 he was appointed a Lance Corporal. He fought through the actions at Polygon Wood but was Killed in Action at Broodseinde Ridge in Belgium on 4 October 1917. His remains were never identified and he is remembered on the Menin Gate, Ypres Belgium.

Additional/personal information:

Theophilus Chaloner was born in Birmingham UK to Thomas and Nancy Chaloner. He attended school in Birmingham but then migrated to Western Australia. While working in the Great Southern (Plantagenet region) he married Olive Schumann in 1916 (BDM 26/1916).

> CHALONER.—Killed in action on October 4, 1917, Private Phill Chaloner, dearly loved husband of O. Chaloner and father of little Phyllis, Albany.
> You are always in our thoughts, dear Phill, And thinking of the past, We picture you in memory Just as we saw you last. —Inserted by father and mother, sisters and brothers-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. J. Schumann, Jack, Annie, Minnie, Bella, and friend Jack. The west Australian 8/11/1917p1

The birth of an Olive P. Chaloner is recorded by BDM in the Plantagenet region in 1917 which appears to be the "little Phyllis" mentioned in the notice. It seems unlikely that the child was born before her father left Australia, never to return.

He had made his Will on 12 June 1917 nominating his wife as his sole beneficiary. For his service he was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and these medals were issued to Olive Chaloner. His widow was granted a military pension of 40/- per fortnight effective from 24 Dec 1917. Olive Chaloner subsequently married George Slee (BDM PER 508/1930).

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----------