056

Chisnall, 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:	Tramways
Designation:	Motorman

Rail employment notes: Born 8/10/1879. Joined Tramways 1/7/1913 aged 33 as Conductor, Perth. Promoted to Motorman, Perth 12/12/1913.

As Mr Chisnall joined the WAGR&T on 1/7/1913, it is very likely that he was working for one of the private tramway companies which were taken over by the state government on that date.
(The tramways of Perth and adjoining suburbs were compulsorily purchased by the WA Government in 1913 and were placed in the management and responsibility of the WA Government Railways. The records of employees, including the honour roll after the war, reflected this combined operation.)

'Motorman' is the traditional term for the driver of a tram.

Granted leave to join AIF 4/1/1916 (Service No.9993). Killed in action at Polygon Wood, Belgium 14/9/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	13th Australian Field Ambulance
Service number:	9993
Date of death:	14 September 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	40 (see notes)
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Road South Military Cemetery, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

William Chisnall was born in Bolton (UK) and migrated to Australia when he was 33 years of age. He enlisted in the AIF on 10 January 1916 and was allocated to 16th/1 Stationary Hospital with the regimental number 9993. His wife Mary became his Next of Kin and he declared that he had no previous military experience. Private Chisnall departed Australia on 31 March 1916 aboard A9 HMAT *Shropshire* and disembarked in England where he was absorbed into AAMC Details. He made a Will with his wife as sole beneficiary. Pte Chisnall departed England aboard *Invicta* through Folkestone on 21 August 1916 and was absorbed into 2 ADBD Medical Details (BEF) before he was taken-on-strength of 13 Field Ambulance on 13 September 1916 and remained with that Unit until 16 October 1916 when he was detached for duty with 11 Field Artillery Brigade. He was twice Wounded in action but remained on duty both times. He was Wounded in action again on 14 September 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres (Polygon Wood) and carried from the battlefield to 13 Field Ambulance but was declared to be dead on arrival so his classification was Killed in action. Private

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Chisnall was buried the same day in the Menin Road South Military Cemetery which was close by the Field Ambulance location. The Cemetery lies some 2 Km East of Ypres (Ieper) town.

Additional/personal information:

William Chisnall was born in Bolton in Lancashire (UK) to Richard and Mary Chisnall. He worked there as a cotton spinner but migrated to Australia with his wife Mary Ellen and sons Albert and Frank, when he was 33 years of age.

His wife recorded (post-war) that he was 40 when he died, however the AWM list him as 39, based on what he gave when he enlisted. His WAGR record indicates 37, but it was not uncommon for men to mis-quote their age when applying for a job.

Family notices in the newspaper did not appear until the anniversary of his death, which often indicated that the family did not receive official advice of the death for a period of time.

> CHISNALL.—In loving memory of Private W.Chisnall, who was killed in action somewhere in France, September 14, 1917. How many wear a smile upon their face, Although their hearts may hold an empty place. None know the heights or depths of their regrets, But God remembers when the world forgets. Inserted by his wife and sons, Albert and Frank, Victoria Park. *The West Australian* 14/9/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow together with other memorabilia. Mary Ellen Chisnall was granted a military pension of 40/- per fortnight and their son Frank Chisnall received 20/- per fortnight both with effect from 26 Nov 1917. Elder son Albert was presumably judged too old to receive a pension. Pte Chisnall's headstone bears the inscription: "Greater love than this he gave his life for his friend".

In the Second War, son Albert Chisnall enlisted in the Australian Army (WX10582), and survived to be discharged as a Lieutenant in 1945. The younger son Frank Chisnall enlisted in the RAAF (Service number 5782) on 9 January 1940 and served until 02 Mar 46. His final Unit was Central Flying School with the rank of F/Sgt.

Mrs Mary Chisnall died in 1955, his son Frank in 1969 and elder son Albert died in 1980 aged 79, all being buried at Karrakatta..

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----------

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