085

Dillon, John Joseph

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:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 20/12/1885. Joined WAGR 17/11/1903 aged 17 as Cleaner, Northam. ("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.)

Transferred to Kalgoorlie 4/9/1905, to Midland Junction 16/1/1910 and Kalgoorlie 4/7/1910. Promoted to Fireman 20/3/1911 and transferred to Midland Junction 1/12/1913, Kalgoorlie 23/5/1914, Malcolm 16/6/1915 and Kalgoorlie 25/10/1915.

Granted leave to join AIF 29/11/1915 (Service No.3822). Killed in action 3/9/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3822
Date of death:	3 September 1916
Place of death:	Moquet farm, France
Age:	31
Rank:	Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Aveluy Wood Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart, Picardie, France

John Joseph Dillon enlisted in the AIF on 2 December 1915. On enlistment he nominated his mother Mrs Bridget Dillon as his Next of Kin as his father had recently died on 23 November 1915. He stated that he had no previous military experience but there is a single folio in his file reporting that a member with the name Dillon and regimental number 238 had been discharged from the Depot at Blackboy Hill Camp on 20 Dec 1914 having been enlisted on16 Nov 1914. The reason for discharge was "attempting to strike an NCO". There are no other papers in respect of this person and it cannot be stated with certainty that is this subject. He completed his basic military training and was allocated to 9th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 3822. Pte Dillon departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 12 February 1916 aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* and disembarked at Suez on 10 March 1916.

In Egypt he was transferred to the newly formed 51 Battalion on 2 April 1916. Training continued until 51 Bn departed Alexandria on 5 June 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Private Dillon was promoted to Corporal on 21 July 1916. In the Battle for Moquet Farm he was posted as Missing in Action on 3 September 1916 but a later Court of

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Enquiry altered this to Killed in Action on that same date. His Red Cross File contains just a single reference from 596 Sgt C Smith who reported seeing him dead in the trench on 03 Sep 1916.

Additional/personal information:

John Dillon was born at Picton in south-west WA, a son of Thomas and Theresa (nee Coonan) Dillon (BDM 28147/1885). He had at least eight siblings born to this couple between 1876 and 1890.

It appears there was a delay of about 8 months before the Army court confirmed that he should be regarded as killed in action:

> DILLON .—Killed in action, somewhere in France, September 3, 1916, Jack, dearly beloved son of Mrs. Dillon, 198 Piccadilly-street, Kalgoorlie. R.I.P. *Kalgoorlie Miner* 14/5/1917p4

Most of his family and friends then chose to wait until the anniversary to place their notices.

> DILLON.In sad and loving memory of my dear brother Corporal J.Dillon, 51st Battalion, who was killed in action on September 3, 1916, at Monquet Farm, France. -Inserted by his loving brother, Ted.
>
> DILLON.--In sad but loving memory of my dear brother, Corporal J. Dillon, 51st Battalion, who was killed in action on September 3, 1916, at Mouquet Farm, France. R.I.P. -Inserted by his loving sister and brother-in-law, N. and J. Ryan, Mount Lawley. Both *The West Australian* 3/9/1917p1
>
> DILLON. — In loving memory of our dear brother, Corporal J. Dillon, 51st Battalion, who was killed in action 3rd September, 1916. R.I.P. —Inserted by his sister and brother-in-law, J. and V. Clark.
>
> DILLON. — In fond memory of J.J. (Jack) Dillon, 51st Battalion, A.I.F., killed in action 3rd September, 1916, beloved son of Mrs. Dillon, Piccadilly-street, Kalgoorlie, and brother of Jim and Ted. R.I.P. Both *Kalgoorlie Miner* 3/9/1917p4

His body was found later, in 1923, after which he was exhumed and buried at Aveluy Wood Cemetery ("Lancashire Dump") Mesnil-Martinsart 5 Km N of Albert. The two identity discs used to identify his remains were forwarded to his mother. For his services he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother together with other military memorabilia. Mrs Dillon received a pension of 40/- per fortnight with effect from 23 Jul 1917 and this was progressively increased until she died on 10 Dec 1938 at the age of 87 years.

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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