087

Dobson, George James

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:	Striker

Rail employment notes: Born 4/6/1875. Joined WAGR 7/1/1901 aged 25 as Blacksmith's Striker, Fremantle Workshops. Transferred to Midland Workshops 5/1/1905.

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 called 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.
These workshops were originally at Fremantle, mostly in very cramped are east of the station, until the Midland workshops were built and activities transferred in sections from 1904.

Enlisted in 44th Battalion AIF 14/2/1916 (Service No.1640). Died of wounds 2/8/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict: First World War 1914-1918

Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	44th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	1640
Date of death:	2 August 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	42
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Boulogne, Nord Pas de Calais, France

George James Dobson enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 06 Feb 1916. On enlistment he nominated his wife Emily Dobson as his Next of Kin and declared that he had 5 years military service in the Militia in Victoria. His basic military training was conducted at the Claremont showgrounds and surrounding district with some training at Blackboy Hill Camp. On completion of his training he was posted to 1st Reinforcements to 44 Battalion with the regimental number 1640. While in Perth Private Dobson made his Will on 16 May 1916 in which he nominated his wife as his sole beneficiary. The Bn and 1st reinforcements departed Australia from Fremantle on 6 June 1916 aboard A29 HMAT *Suevic* and disembarked at Plymouth on 21 July 1916 for continuation training on Salisbury Plains.

Private Dobson was formally taken-on-strength of 44 Bn from 1st/44 Bn on 15 Oct 1916. He crossed to France to join the BEF, departing from Southampton on 25 Nov 1916 and landing at Le Havre then moving to the 'nursery sector' of the frontline neat Armentieres. Pte Dobson became ill and was admitted to hospital on 06 Jan 1917, passing through a number of medical units before re-joining the Bn on 14 Apr 1917. He was temporarily attached to 11 Light Trench Mortar Battery on 17 July 1917

but the records do not show how long that attachment lasted – soldiers were often posted to Mortar batteries for a trial period and he was likely still on temporary posting at time of death.. During the Third Battle of Ypres Pte Dobson was seriously Wounded in Action on 31 July 1917 and entered the medical evacuation chain to be finally admitted to 83 General Hospital where he Died of Wounds on 2 August 1917. The medical report showed that he had suffered serious wounds to his face and jaw. His medical condition was felt to be hopeless and death occurred the day after admission. Pte Dobson was buried in the Boulogne Eastern Cemetery with the Rev Gadge officiating.

Additional/personal information:

George Dobson was born in Victoria and grew up attending school there. However he moved to WA and was married to Emily Elizabeth Pascoe in Fremantle in 1902 (BDM). Emily Pascoe had also been born in Victoria.

> DOBSON.-Died of wounds at 83rd Casualty Station France (late 44th Battalion), George, dearly loved husband of Emily Dobson, West Guildford. One of the best that God could send, A noble life, a noble end. My hero. Dearly loved and deeply mourned. -Inserted by his-loving wife, E. Dobson.
>
> DOBSON-.Somewhere in France, died of wounds on August 2, 1917, George, the dearly beloved brother of Jack (Ways and Works, West Midland), brother-in-law of Kitty, and uncle of Will (Water Supply Department, Perth), Enid, Jack, Rita, and Nellie. He died a hero in the strife, He gave his best, his all, his life Both *The West Australian* 14/8/1917p1

His widow paid for an inscription on his gravestone which reads: Dearly Loved Husband of Emily Dobson of Guildford WA. 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. A military pension of 40/- per fortnight was paid from 08 Oct 1917 and Mrs Dobson also received a death benefit from the WA Society of Railway Employees.

Emily Dobson returned to Victoria and died there in 1944 aged 72. (Vic BDM)

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----------