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Dobson, Thomas

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Guard

Rail employment notes: Born 2/3/1885. Joined WAGR 1/9/1904 aged 19 as Junior Porter, Geraldton. ("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR – some had specific roles such as a receiving goods porter, some were general hands while some learnt safe-working and could assist with signals, etc. Geraldton, a junction station and terminus of some passenger trains, probably had several porters. A Junior Porter was under 21 and so paid less.)

Transferred to Day Dawn 2/1/1905 and appointed Goods Porter, Day Dawn 19/12/1905. Transferred to Mt Magnet 4/3/1907 and Geraldton 28/9/1909. Promoted to Shunter, Geraldton 4/6/1910 and Head Shunter, Perth Goods 24/7/1911. Transferred to Guard, Kalgoorlie 4/3/1912 and Merredin 27/3/1912.

Granted leave to join AIF 1/11/1915 (Service No.12280). Killed in action 3/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	1st Australian Divisional Ammunition Column
Service number:	12280
Date of death:	3 July 1916
Place of death:	Fleurbaix, France
Age:	31
Rank:	Gunner

Burial/memorialisation: Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix, Bethune, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Thomas Dobson enlisted on 16 October 1915. He recorded then that he lived in Charles Street Perth, he was 20 years old, and for his next of kin he nominated his mother Mrs E. Dobson of Middle Brighton in Victoria.

He was allocated to 14th Reinforcement to 2nd Field Artillery Brigade with the regimental number 12280. Training took place in WA then in Victoria, after which he embarked on 28 January 1916 from Melbourne on HMAT *Thermistocles*.

He was later transferred to the 1st Australian Divisional Ammunition Column after a reorganisation of the AIF forces. The 1st Division Ammunition Column belonged to the 1st Division Artillery and its specific role was the provision of ammunition forward to the gun positions. Artillery guns were a major part of the war in Europe and keeping the guns supplied with ammunition was a constant task.

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The 1st Division fought all around the Somme area throughout 1916 including the battels around Feurbaix. Private Dobson was killed in action on 3 July 1916. His body was recovered and buried in the Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

Thomas Peacock Dobson was born in South Yarra in Victoria in 1885, a son of Joseph Dobson and Elizabeth Millar Dobson (nee Peacock) and attended school before leaving Victoria. Two younger siblings were born also in Victoria. His birth registration included the middle name "Peacock" which was his mother's family name but it appears he did not use that with either the WAGR or the AIF. (Vic BDM 13666/1885 et al.) His father died, probably in 1896.

It appears Thomas then travelled to WA, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, but his mother and sister stayed in Victoria.

> DOBSON—Killed in action in France 3rd July, Gunner Thomas Peacock Dobson, late of Perth, Western Australia, eldest son of Elizabeth Dobson, "Leven," Hampton-street, Brighton. *The Age* (Melbourne) 18/7/1916p1
>
> DOBSON.—On July 3, killed in action, Gunner Tom Dobson, beloved son of Mrs. E. Dobson, Brighton, Victoria, and esteemed friend of E. C. Dance and family, 161 Charles-street, Perth. *The West Australian* 5/8/1916p1
>
> DOBSON.-killed in action somewhere in France; in July 116, Tom Dobson (Dobbo) late guard WA.G.R. Merredin. … -Inserted by Mr. and Mrs. Raphael and family, Merredin. *The West Australian* 6/7/1917p1

Thomas'younger brother William Joseph Dobson also volunteered, in Victoria, and was allocated to 3rd Light Horse Brigade, 3rd Signal Troop with the regimental number 587. He returned safely to Australia in 1919.

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----------