Dunstan, Sydney Albert

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



Plaque In May Drive, Kings Park

Rail employment information

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

Rail employment notes: Born 16/11/1891. Joined WAGR 12/8/1910 aged 18 as Cleaner, Geraldton.
("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 Cue 14/9/1910 and to Kalgoorlie 31/5/1911. Promoted to Fireman, Kalgoorlie 1/7/1912 and transferred to Fremantle 24/12/1913.

Granted leave to join AIF 4/3/1915 (Service No.270). Killed in action 3/11/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	270
Date of death:	3 November 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	24
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Sydney Albert Dunstan enlisted in the AIF on 3 March 1915. On enlistment the army insisted that his father was taken to be his Next of kin because he was alive, although he had not been connected to the family in any way for more than 8 years. Sydney declared that he had no previous military experience. He received his basic military training at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was allocated to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 270. The Bn departed Australia on 9 June 1915 aboard A11 HMAT *Ascanius* which berthed in Egypt on 2 July 1915. Initial accommodation was at the Citadel while training continued until 3 September 1915 when it was moved by rail to Alexandria and boarded SS *Ivernia* for movement to Gallipoli via Lemnos.

Pte Dunstan was Wounded in action with a shrapnel wound to the abdomen on 3 October 1915. He entered the medical evacuation chain through 7 Fd Amb, then 16 CCS before being evacuated to England by HMHS *Assaye* where he was admitted to St Marks Hospital, Chelsea. Pte Dunstan departed England from Weymouth and re-joined 28 Bn at Moascar, Egypt on 6 March 1916. The Bn departed Alexandria on 16 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 21 March 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Following action in the Battle for Pozieres the Bn entered the fighting in

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the Flers sector. Private Dunstan was posted as Missing in action sometime between 3 and 6 November 1916. A Court of Enquiry held on 26 July 1917 determined that he had been Killed in action on 3 November 1916. His remains were later recovered from the battlefield and interned at the Warlencourt British Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

Sydney Dunstan was born in Sydney NSW but the family moved west when he was young and he attended school in Boulder WA before joining the WAGR.

> DUNSTAN. —Killed in action (previously reported missing), between November 3 and 6, Private Sydney Albert Dunstan, B Company, 28th Battalion, late Loco. Department, Fremantle, only son of Mrs. H. M. Dunstan, 267 Newcastle-street; aged 25 years on November 16.
> He rose responsive to his country's call, And gave for her his best his life, his all.
> —Inserted by his sorrowing mother and sisters and. brother-in-law

> DUNSTAN. —Killed in action (previously reported missing), between November 3 and 6, Private Sydney Albert Dunstan, B Company, 28th Battalion, late Loco Department, Fremantle. He was one of the best. Inserted by his sincere friend Jim. Both *The West Australian* 23/8/1917p1

His headstone bears the inscription: Pro Patria. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal together with other memorabilia. At the time of distribution of campaign medals, it was discovered that his father was a permanent resident in the Kew Hospital for the Insane. Army Records made enquiries if John Dunstan was a suitable person to receive the campaign medals. The reply from the Hospital showed that John Dunstan had been a resident of that Hospital but that he died on 24 June 1919. Pte Dunstan's mother Harriett Matilda Dunstan was then declared to be his Next of kin. Mrs Harriett Dunstan died on 27 October 1920 at the age of 54 years and was buried at Karrakatta cemetery. Pte Dunstan had no brothers and his eldest sister Vivette, now Mrs Vivette Gentry, became his Next of kin and she received the memorabilia.

Private Dunstan has a memorial plaque (M279) in Kings Park which was dedicated by his mother on 3 August 1919, which was the first ceremony of dedication of plaques in Kings Park – this has since become an annual honour ceremony.

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----------