Elkington, Albert Ernest*

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:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 13/1/1894. Joined WAGR 6/1/1913 aged 18 as Cleaner, Midland Junction. Transferred to Kalgoorlie 12/6/1913, Perth 30/12/1913, Bunbury 6/3/1914, Perth 16/6/1914, Kalgoorlie 13/11/1914, Fremantle 26/4/1915 and Midland Junction 24/12/1915.
("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.)

Granted leave to join AIF 26/7/1916 (Service No.6755). Killed in action 23/8/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Battalion.
Service number:	6755
Date of death:	23 August 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	24
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, Picardie, France

Albert Ernest Elkington presented for enlistment in the AIF with his younger brother Edwin Harold Elkington on 1 August 1916 at the Drill Hall Perth. The brothers nominated their father William Henry Elkington as their NOK and neither had previous military experience. Their training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and they were provisionally allocated to 22nd Reinforcements to 11 Battalion. Edwin Elkington was found to be permanently medically unfit for service and was discharged on 6 March 1917. Albert completed training and was allocated the regimental number 6755 in 22nd Reinforcements to 11 Battalion. The reinforcements departed Fremantle aboard A8 HMAT *Argyllshire* on 9 November 1916 and disembarked at Devonport on 10 January 1917.

Private Elkington campaigned through until 19 March 1918 when he suffered from gassing and was evacuated to the UK and admitted to the Horton War Hospital before being transferred to 3 AAH before returning to France. On 23 August 1918 he was Killed in action by a high explosive shell while sheltering in a dugout. He was buried by the Pioneers of 1 Division some 200 yards from where he died and site marked. This later became to be known as Proyart Military Cemetery. In the post war period, the Graves Registration Unit concentrated the burials in these smaller cemeteries to Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres so that is where Private Elkington was finally buried.

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Additional/personal information:

Albert Ernest Elkington was born in Charters Towers, Queensland, 13 January 1894, a son of William Henry and Sarah Ann (nee Stream) Elkington. (Qld BDM registration 1894/C/6027). He appears to have moved to WA with his father and other family members, as did many families after the WA gold finds – they were in Boulder (near Kalgoorlie) by 1899 when younger brother Leslie Norman was born. Ernest then attended Boulder State School and Christian Brothers College, Kalgoorlie.

*There is some uncertainty over his exact name. The Queensland birth registration shows "Albert Ernest" and that is the name in his army papers. However the WAGR recorded him as E.A.Elkington. His father gives conflicting versions, referring to his son as "Ern" and "E.A." in death notices but then later as "Albert Ernest" in the details returned to AWM after the war.

> ELKINGTON.—Killed in action, August 23, 1918, somewhere in France, Ern, dearly beloved son of W. and S. A. Elkington 57 Howard-street, Fremantle, late of East Cannington.
> *The West Australian* 19/9/1918p1

> ELKINGTON.— Private E. A. Elkington, killed in action, August 23rd, 1918, somewhere in France, dearly beloved son of W. H. Elkington, late of Kalgurli gold mine. *Kalgoorlie Miner* 10/10/1918p4

His family paid for an inscription on his grave stone which reads: "He Was all That's Good and Noble in a Soldier and a Man". Pte Elkington had another brother who saw active service. He was 7293 Pte Leslie Norman Elkington 28 Bn (03 Jul 1917 to 12 Jul 1919). Pte Elkington's father, his Next of kin, passed away on 17 February 1924, aged 69 years, while his mother died in 1941.

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----------