104

Fawcett, Matthew Harry

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Plumber

Rail employment notes: Plumber, Ways & Works Branch, Bunbury. 2nd Pioneers AIF (Service No.4330). Died of wounds 13/6/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion
Service number:	4330
Date of death:	13 June 1918
Age:	44
Place of death:	Near Heilly, France

Burial/memorialisation: Querrieu British Cemetery, Querrieu, Picardie, France

Matthew Harry Fawcett, a trained plumber, enlisted in the AIF at Bunbury on 24 April 1917. He had 7 years previous military experience but the Unit is not recorded. He underwent some military training at Blackboy Hill Camp and Melbourne before being allocated to 12th Reinforcements to 2nd Pioneer Battalion with the regimental number 4330.

He departed Australia through the Port of Melbourne aboard HMAT *Aeneas* on 30 October 1917 and disembarked at Devonport UK on 27 December 1917 where he marched into the Pioneer Training Battalion that same day.

On 26 April 1917 he departed the UK through Folkestone to join the British Expeditionary Force at AIBD and then to be taken on strength of 2 Pioneer Battalion on 6 May 1917 in the field. In the early hours of 13 June 1918 his dugout was struck by a high explosive shell in the line near Heilly, France. Private Fawcett suffered multiple wounds and was evacuated to 5 Field Ambulance and then to the Casualty Clearing Station but was dead on arrival at the CCS. His death was recorded as 'Died of wounds' and he was buried in the Querrieu British Cemetery which lies 10 Km NE of Amiens. An eye witness account of his death was provided by 2164 Stone, 2nd Pioneer Battalion.

Additional/personal information:

Matthew Fawcett was born in North Fitzroy, Victoria.

Records indicate that Matthew Henry Fawcett married Lizzie Behan in 1899 in Perth but that then they lived in Bunbury while producing several children: Cyril Matthew Fawcett (recorded in 1900),

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Lawrence Frederick Behan Fawcett (1902) and Edna May Isobel Fawcett (1903). The death of the last child, and only daughter, unfortunately is also recorded in 1903. It appears there was another son, because when the father was killed in 1918, the family notice (*Western Mail* 26/7/1918p9) read

> FAWCETT.—On June 13, somewhere in France, Mathew Henry (Harry), dearly-beloved husband of Lizzie, father of Cyril, Laurie, and Ken., late of Bunbury and W.A.G.R.

When Matthew Fawcett enlisted, he quoted his wife Lizzie Fawcett as his Next of kin. Subsequent to his death there was correspondence from the AMP Society and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees with whom he held policies. For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife together with other memorabilia. In 1918 the family were living in Perth but neither Lizzie Fawcett or her sons are found again in WA BDM records and it seems they moved interstate.

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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