Foster, Thomas Charles

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:	Fitter

Rail employment notes: Born 14/10/1870 in Knightsbridge, England. Joined WAGR 31/5/1897 aged 26 as Fitter, Perth. Fitters normally required an apprenticeship of 3-4 years but it is not known where Foster learnt his trade.

Transferred to Fremantle 14/12/1898, Perth 8/4/1899, Albany 13/4/1899, Northam 16/2/1901, Fremantle 13/1/1902 and Midland Junction 4/1/1904.
Enlisted in AMC Transport Corps. 14/5/1915 (Service No.2201). Died of pneumonia at Tidworth Military Hospital, England 22/6/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	Australian Army Medical Corps
Service number:	2201
Date of death:	22 June 1916
Place of death:	England
Age:	46
Rank:	Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Tidworth Military Cemetery, Tidworth, Wiltshire, England, United Kingdom

Thomas Charles Foster enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps (2201) at Perth for Hospital Ship Transport duties. He enlisted on 12 May 1915 and departed Australia through Fremantle just 12 days later aboard RMS *Mooltan*. On his enlistment papers Cpl Foster declared that he had served in the Medical Staff Corps of NSW for 8 years and Railway Ambulance Corps of NSW and WA. The use of the terms Medical Staff Corps suggests that service was pre-Federation. Because of his previous service he was appointed directly as a corporal. The Royal Mail Steamers were used to carry mail and general cargo between Australia and the UK and sometimes carried passengers. On this voyage the passengers were staff bound for hospital ship duties, reinforcements for 1 AGH in Egypt and the compliment of 3 AGH who were redirected to Mudros after the ship berthed in Plymouth on 27 June 1915. [The *Mooltan* was sunk in the Mediterranean by a German torpedo in 1917.]

After landing in Egypt Cpl Foster was posted to A70 HMAT *Ballarat* on 5 July 1915 for a voyage Suez to Melbourne. He re-embarked at Sydney on A61 HMAT *Kanowa* for the return journey to Egypt. His next duty period began in Alexandria on 28 May 1916 when he left for the UK on HMT *Corsican*. He reported sick on 13 June 1916 and was admitted to Tidworth Military Hospital where

he died of Pneumonia on 22 June 1916. His death is classified as Died of Disease. Burial took place in Tidworth Military Cemetery on 24 June 1916.

Additional/personal information:

He had been enlisted in Perth but his records show that he was born in Fulham, UK, but had spent a considerable number of years in NSW, where he married Mary Scott (NSW BDM 6999/1895). His wife thought he had come to Australia when aged 'about 14' (i.e. about 1884) so he may have done his apprenticeship in NSW.

His widow, Mary, later remarried a Dr Mattei and they lived at Potts Point, NSW.

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----------