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Gray, Andrew

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 3/2/1896. Joined WAGR 8/7/1912 aged 16 as Junior Labourer, Midland Workshops.
In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Transferred to Cleaner, Northam 21/3/1914 and to Midland Junction 13/7/1914.

("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 17/7/1915 (Service No.2784). Killed in action 22/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2784
Date of death:	22 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	20
Rank:	Lance Corporal

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

Andrew Gray, aged 19 years, enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill Camp on 5 July 1915 with signed permission of both parents. He was born in Dundee Scotland, his date of arrival in Australia was not stated but he had 2 years' service in Senior Cadets and one year in the 88th Regiment of Militia in WA. He nominated his mother as his Next of Kin but between enlistment and departure for overseas service he married Pilbarra Virginia May Hodges who, as Mrs Gray, then became his Next of Kin. Their marriage recorded as BDM Perth 575/1915.

His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 9th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 2784. He departed Australia on 5 October 1915 aboard A20 HMAT *Hororata*. On arrival in Egypt he was taken on strength of 11 Bn on 7 January 1916. His training in Egypt was interrupted by an admission to hospital for 36 days for treatment of Gonorrhoea. The Battalion departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* on 29 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 5 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Gray

was appointed a Lance Corporal on 7 June 1916. In the battle for Pozieres he vanished sometime between 22 July and 25 July 1916. He was recorded as Killed in Action and the date selected for memorial purposes was 22 July 1916. His remains were never recovered, he has no known grave, and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Soldiers killed in France are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Andrew Gray was born in Scotland and came to WA when a boy.

It often took some time for relatives to be officially notified of a soldier's death, especially when his remains were not found for burial, so it was not uncommon for the first family notices to appear only on the anniversary:

> GRAY.- In loving memory of Private Andrew Gray, age 20 and 5 months, late cleaner W.A.G.R., killed in action at Pozieres between July 22 and 25, 1916, brother of Bob (on active service), and Mrs. Cherry, and brother-in-law of Arthur (on active service), and beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Gray, Midland Junction. *The West Australian* 21/7/1917p1
>
> GRAY.-In loving memory of my dear husband. Corporal Andrew Gray, of the 9/llth Battalion. A.I.F., killed in action in France July 22, 1916. -Inserted by his loving wife May. *Sunday Times* (Perth) 22/7/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. His wife received the campaign medals and memorabilia except for the Victory Medal. The file records that the Victory Medal remained unclaimed. Mrs P V M Gray married again to a Samuel Sawyer (BDM Perth 704/1923). Samuel Sawyer had served as 5801 Sawyer in 1 Division Ammunition Column, 05 Jul 1915 to 27 Sep 1918. After her second marriage nothing more is known of his wife.

L/Cpl Gray has a memorial tablet in Kings Park, M371, which was dedicated by his parents.

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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