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Hammer, Harold James

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Porter

Rail employment notes: Born 4/10/1895. Joined WAGR 29/8/1912 aged 16 as Junior Porter, Northam. Transferred to Kellerberrin 2/6/1914, East Northam 24/9/1914 and Spencers Brook 27/10/1914.

("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR – some had specific roles such as a receiving goods porter, some were general hands while some learnt safe-working and could assist with signals, etc. Midland, a busy junction station and terminus of some passenger trains, had multiple porters, some of whom were under 21 so classed as "Junior Porter", and paid less.)

Granted leave to join AIF 28/10/1915 (Service No.4519). Killed in action 9/8/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4519
Date of death:	10 August 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	22
Rank:	Private

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

Harold James Hammer enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill Camp on 16 Oct 1915. He nominated his father The Reverend C H Hammer as his Next OF Kin. Pte Hammer had experience in the Senior Cadets and for 2 years in 88th Infantry Regiment of Militia (WA voluntary forces). His basic training was at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was allotted to 14th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 4519. He embarked to leave Australia from the Port of Fremantle aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* on 12 February 1916 and disembarked at Suez on 10 March 1916.

His time in Egypt was short as he departed from Alexandria on 29 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 04 Apr 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Hammer passed through 1 ADBD before being taken on strength of 11 Bn in the field. Following service in the trenches at Pozieres and Moquet Farm he developed Trench Feet which required hospital treatment between 10 Nov 1916 and 23 Nov 1916. Following recovery, he was posted to 1 ADBD where he remained until 17 April 1917 when he re-joined his Battalion. Pte Hammer had UK leave from 14 Sep 1917 to 24 Sep 1917. He was Wounded in Action on 3 June 1918 but remained on duty. In the action at Lihons on 9 August 1918 he was Killed in Action and buried close to where he fell. After the War the Graves Registration Unit moved his remains to Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres.

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Additional/personal information:

Harold James Hammer was born in 1895 Geelong in Victoria, a son of Rev. Charles Henry & Jane (nee Williams) Hammer, and one of 5 children. The family then moved to WA, as did many Victorians after the gold finds of the 1890s. Harold's mother died in 1914, at which time the Rev. Charles Hammer was based in Dongara.

> HAMMER.—Harold James, dearly beloved son of Rev. C. H. Hammer, and brother of Jean, Will., Charles, and Samuel; killed in action, August 9, somewhere in France. Inserted by his sorrowing sister, Jean. *The West Australian* 5/9/1918p1

> HAMMER – Killed in action, August 10, 1918, Harold James, aged 22 years and 10 months, the dearly beloved youngest son of the Rev. C. H. Hammer, Wesley Manse, Wagin, and brother of Trooper C. H., on active service; William, of Midland Junction; Samuel, of Northam; Jean, of Midland Junction. After two and a half years of active service. His duty nobly done. *The West Australian* 7/9/1918p1

His parents paid for an inscription on his headstone which reads: "His Duty Nobly Done". For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father along with other memorabilia. His sister became involved in the administration of his estate which included a policy with the MLC. Pte Hammer's father and NOK died on 26 Dec 1937 at the age of 74 years and was buried in the Karrakatta cemetery.

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----------