Harms, 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:	Locomotive
Designation:	Boilermaker's Assistant

Rail employment notes: Records of Charles Harms' early career have not been found, but he was employed as a Boilermaker's Assistant at Midland Workshops when he volunteered to join the army. 28th Battalion AIF (Service No.5019). Killed in action 20/9/1917.



"W A Easter egg for the Kaiser" reads the central sign, as no fewer than 40 railway men are farewelled at the Midland Workshops on19/4/1916, including Private Harms. Collection P.M.Rogers

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion.

Service number: 5019

Date of death: 20 September 1917

Place of death: Belgium

Age: 40

Rank at time of death: Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Belgium

Charley (Charles) Harms enlisted in the AIF on 6 March 1916. On enlistment he declared his wife Phoebe to be his Next of kin and stated that he had 12 months militia service in Victoria. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was posted to 13th Reinforcements to 28th Battalion with the regimental number 5019. He departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A48 HMAT *Seang* on 18 July 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth UK on 9 September 1916 and marched into 7 Training Battalion the following day. After further training in England he departed for France on 2 November 1916 aboard SS *Henrietta* to join the British Expeditionary Force by joining 2nd Australian Divisional base Depot. On 4 November 1916 he was admitted to hospital for isolation and then management of influenza until 23 December 1916 when he was taken on strength of 28th Battalion, in the field. Pte Harms presented to 16 Field Ambulance with trench feet and rheumatism on 29 January 1917. He then progressed through 45 CCS and 10 GH before being evacuated to England on 10 February 1917. In the UK he progressed through a number of hospitals and convalescent units before re-joining 28 Bn in Belgium on 25 June 1917. Pte Harms made his Will on 15 July 1917 in which he left his estate to his "wife and children". During the Third Battle of Ypres (at Battle of Menin Rd) he was Killed in action. An eye witness to his death 6342A Pte Intognoli reported that he was killed instantly by shrapnel while acting as a stretcher bearer. His body was never recovered and he is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres (now Ieper).

Additional/personal information:

Charles Harms is thought to have been born in Victoria but was in WA by 1903 when he married Phoebe Reeves (BDM 1155/1903)

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife along with other memorabilia. Military pensions were paid to his widow at 40/- per fortnight, son Richard 20/-, daughter Phoebe 15/-, son Henry 10/-, son John 10/- and son Thomas 10/- all to date from 10 Dec 1917. Mrs Phoebe Harms died on 22 Jun 1970 aged 93 years and was buried in Karrakatta Cemetery.

> HARMS.—Killed in action somewhere in France, September 20, 1917, Private Charles Harms, dearly loved husband of Phoebe Harms, and father of Mrs. J. Golding, Charlie, Phoebe, Harry, Fred, Tom, of 29 Brighton street, Leederville.
>
> A hero who will ever be His country's boast and pride; He shouldered his gun in honour's cause, And in the battle died. —Inserted by his loving wife and family. *The West Australian* 17/10/1917p1

Further information 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----------