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Hart, Joseph

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: Repairer

Rail employment notes: Born 25/3/1887. Joined WAGR 8/6/1914 aged 27 as Platelayer, Dumbleyung. Transferred to Repairer, Condinup 2/10/1914.

("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge. The WAGR Annual report for 1914/15 showed they employed 882 Repairers at 8 shillings per day, with many at very small settlements or tent camps.)
Condinup was a small siding east of Boyup Brook, later renamed Asplin.

Granted leave to join AIF 19/3/1916 (Service No.1931). Killed in action 5/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	1931
Date of death:	5 April 1918
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	31
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Joseph Hart enlisted in the AIF on 21 February 1916. On enlistment he nominated his father, resident in England as his Next Of Kin. He had no previous military experience, had been born in England and migrated to Australia at the age of 26 years. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and on completion he was posted to 3rd Reinforcements to 51 Battalion with the regimental number 1931.

He sailed from Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard A48 *Seang Bee* on 20 July 1916 and disembarked at Plymouth on 9 September 1916 where he marched into 13 Trg Bn. Pte Hart departed England aboard *Princess Henrietta* on 28 November 1916 through Folkestone. In France he joined the British Expeditionary Force at 4 ADBD before he was taken-on-strength of 51 Battalion on 15 December 1916. Near Noreuil on 02 Apr 1917 Pte Hart was Wounded In Action suffering Gunshot wound to his back and left arm, he was evacuated to 4 Fd Amb and then to 9 GH before being evacuated to England by HMHS *Panama* and being admitted to hospital on 25 April 1917. His recovery was slow and it was not until 29 November 1917 that he was fit enough to re-join 51 Bn, in the field.

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Private Hart was Killed In Action on 5 April 1918 and his body was buried on the battlefield. In 1924 his remains were found and identified by the identity disc. His remains were then buried in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery and the disc forwarded to his Next Of Kin.

The Australian War memorial and cemetery at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Soldiers killed in France whose bodies were available for burial 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.



Additional/personal information:

Joseph Hart was born in Swinton in Lancashire, England about 1887, a son of Charles Hart but moved to Australia in 1913 when aged 26. He came from a military family – his father wrote "His grandfathers and great uncles served in the army and navy; all his uncles served in the army; all his brothers have served in the army during the war, one in the AIF".

It often took some time for official notice to be received, particularly when the body has been lost, so notices are often delayed. Although Joseph's father remained in England, it appears some other family members came to WA:

> HART.—A tribute to the memory of our sincere friend, Joe Hart, killed in action somewhere in France, April 7, 1918, second son of Mr. and Mrs. C. Hart, of Oldham, Lancashire, England. One of the best, manly, unselfish, and brave. Inserted by his loving friends, Eunice, Harry and Jack Worthington. *The West Australian* 30/7/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia.

Pte Thomas Hart, the brother of Joseph Hart, served in 11 Bn AIF with the regimental number 186 between 17 Aug 1914 and 11 Dec 1917.

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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