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Heasman, Frederick

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 10/8/1890. Joined WAGR 9/1/1915 aged 24 as Repairer, Maryvale.

"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.

(Maryvale was a siding on the former railway to Nannup.)

Granted leave to join AIF 27/2/1915 (Service No.291). Killed in action 26/9/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	13th Australian Machine Gun Company
Service number:	291
Date of death:	26 September 1917
Place of death:	Zonnebeke, Belgium
Age:	27
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Frederick Heasman enlisted in the AIF on 3 May 1915. On enlistment he nominated his brother Gilbert Heasman as his Next Of Kin and declared that he had no previous military experience. He had been born in Sussex and migrated to Australia at the age of 23 years. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was allocated to B Coy 28 Battalion with the regimental number 291. The Bn departed Australia from Fremantle on 09 Jun 1915 aboard A11 HMAT Ascanius and disembarked in Egypt on 02 Jul 1915 where it was billeted at the Citadel. On 04 Sep 1915 the Bn departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* for Mudros where it transferred to SS *Sarnia* and landed at Gallipoli on 10 September 1915. Pte Heasman reported sick with diarrhoea at 7 Fd Amb on 20 October 1915 and was evacuated to St Andrews Hospital Malta which he reached on 27 October 1915. Following partial recovery, he departed Malta for Alexandria aboard HMHS *Nevasa.* A medical board held at Alexandria determined that he should be returned to Australia "for change" and he departed Egypt aboard A73 HMAT *Commonwealth* on 21 January 1916 which berthed at Fremantle on 22 February 1916.

A medical board held at 8 GH Fremantle on 4 July 1916 determined that he was now fit to return to duty and he departed Fremantle on 18 July 1916 as a member of 3rd/4 MG Coy. (Following Gallipoli,

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the machine gunners from individual Battalions were grouped into Companies under Brigade command instead of being directed by Battalion commanders.) Pte Heasman disembarked in England on 9 September 1916 and trained as a machine gunner. On 9 April 1917 he was taken-on-strength of 7 MG Coy as a reinforcement and departed England for France from Folkestone to join the British Expeditionary Force. In France he joined the AMGBD and then on 6 May 1917 he was taken-on-strength of 13 Machine Gun Company, in the field. Pte Heasman completed his Will on 13 Sep 1917 nominating his mother as his sole beneficiary.

He was Killed in Action on 26 September 1917. An eye witness report by 3840 Pte W S Harrison 13 MG Coy stated that he was killed in the company of a Cpl Dyer by a shell burst at Zonnebeke. Both were buried on the battlefield. Pte Heasman's remains were never recovered and he is remembered on the Menin Gate at Ypres (now Ieper).

Additional/personal information:

Frederick Heasman was born in Sussex in England, but came to WA when he was 23 years of age. It appears that at least 2 brothers emigrated with him, but not his parents.

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father, Cedric Heasman, resident in England. An application for a War Pension for his mother (in England) was rejected on the grounds that she was of adequate means of support. Private Heasman had two brothers who served in the AIF. They were Lieutenant Albert Heasman MM, 16 Bn 21 Sep 1914 to 16 Jun 1919 and 2145 Lance Corporal Gilbert Heasman MM, 11 Bn 12 Apr 1915 to 28 Feb 1919.

The Cpl mentioned as being killed with Pte Heasman was identified as 2842 Cpl G Dyer. He is also on the Menin Gate Memorial meaning that his remains were likewise never recovered/identified.

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----------