139

Hellmrich, John Matheson

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:	Apprentice, Carriage and Wagon Builder

Rail employment notes: Born 26/11/1895. Joined WAGR 10/4/1912 aged 16 as Junior Labourer, Midland Workshops. Transferred to Apprentice Car & Wagon Builder 6/1/1913.

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.

Granted leave to join AIF 28/6/1915 (Service No.4528). Died of wounds 4/4/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4528
Date of death:	4 April 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	21
Rank:	Lance Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Pozieres British Cemetery Ovillers-La Boisselle, Pozieres, Picardie, France

John Matheson Hellmrich enlisted in the AIF on 23 Jun 1915. On enlistment he nominated his mother Hester as his NOK as his father was serving overseas in the AIF. Pte Hellmrich trialled for 10 LHR but was not selected as a trooper. In addition to his basic training he attended a course of instruction as a signaller. At the time of enlistment, he was a serving member of 13 Fd Coy, Australian Engineers. Pte Hellmrich was assigned to 14th Reinforcements to 11 Battlion with the regimental number 4528. He departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 12 Feb 1916 aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* and disembarked at Suez on 10 Mar 1916.

Private Hellmrich was transferred to the newly created 51 Battalion on 19 Apr 1916 and continued training at an individual and formation level until 5 Jun 1916 when he departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. The Battalion moved quickly into action at Pozieres where he was Wounded in Action on 16 August 1916. Pte Hellmrich was evacuated to 6 GH at Rouen and then to England where he was admitted to 1st London General Hospital on 18 August 1916. Following recovery and convalescence he re-joined 51 Bn on 7 January 1917 and then appointed Lance Corporal on 11 January 1917.

© Rail Heritage WA

He was Wounded in action again near Bullecort on 2 April 1917 and Died of Wounds on 4 April 1917 at 3 Casualty Clearing Station. L/Cpl Hellmrich was buried at Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovillers-La Boisselle.

Additional/personal information:

John Mathieson Hellmrich was born in 1895 at Ridge Hill (just outside Midland), a son of John Matheison and Hester (nee Weaire) Hellmrich. He came from a large family:

> HELLMRICH.-Died of wounds in France, April 4, 1917. Lance-Corporal J. M. (Syd.) Hellmrich, 51st Battalion, 21 years and 5 months. Loved by all who knew him. -Inserted by his sorrowing father, mother, grandparents, brothers, and sisters. *The West Australian* 28/4/1917p1

His father was proud of the family's service – in answer to the standard question about other biographical details he wrote:

"Three members from his home all enlisted in 915, the deceased, his father and his brother-in-law, not a bad record for one family", and "He had 3 mates who travelled to school together for years, and they all gave their lives – names A.Bacon, H.Harris and J Tarrant"

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and other memorabilia which were issued to his father, who having returned from active service, replaced his mother as his Next of kin. Mrs Hester Hellmrich received a military pension of 14/- per fortnight effective from 19 Jun 1917. His parents paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: "Loved by All."

The father of L/Cpl Hellmrich who served as 1874 Tpr J Hellmrich 10 LHR, 31 Aug 1915 to 24 Jan 1917, died on 31 Jul 1928 at the age of 57 years and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery. Mrs Hester Hellmrich died on 31 Jul 1933 and was buried in the same compartment as her husband.

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----------