Hodgson, Harold

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:	Car Builder

Rail employment notes: Born 22 May 1885. Joined WAGR 5 July 1911 aged 25 as Car Builder, Midland Workshops. (The WAGR's main workshops, a very large establishment, were at Midland, then called Midland Junction). Granted leave to join AIF 4 March 1916. Died of illness in England 5/2/1919.



Titled "Loco shops send off to Soldiers April 19th 1916" this photo shows the fervour of the time for recruiting. Of these 40 men on the raised balcony, ten of them including Harold Hodgson paid the ultimate price and lost their lives. Whatever their job, from car builders to boilermaker's assistants, they joined a range of WA men volunteering to fight. Workers and management had gone to considerable lengths for the occasion with tree branches, band, flags and the name-bearing banner, while a central shield added a whimsical note with "Loco shops W.A. Easter egg for the Kaiser". P. Rogers collection.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	Australian Details Army Service Corps
Service number:	5732
Date of death:	5 February 1919

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Place of death: Fovant Military Hospital, England

Age: 33

Rank: Private

Burial/memorialisation: Holy Ascension Churchyard, Settle, North Yorkshire, England

Harold Hodgson aged 30 years enlisted in the AIF on15 March 1916 and joined 18th Reinforcements to 16th Battalion before departing from Fremantle aboard A 48 HMAT *Seang Bee* on 18 July 1916. He disembarked at Plymouth, England on 9 September 1916 and marched into 4 Training Battalion on 10 September 1916 where he was allotted to Australian Army Service Corps (AASC) Details on the same day. He remained on 'Details' for the rest of his military service – the records give little information, but most likely his carriage and wagon building skills would have been employed building wagons for the military as many wagons were being destroyed in the fighting in France.

He reported sick and was admitted to Fovant Military Hospital in Wiltshire on 1 February 1919 suffering from influenza and died of the complication of pneumonia on 5 February 1919. There was a pandemic of 'Spanish Flu' spreading worldwide at the time. Following his death his family requested burial in the churchyard of Settle and this was approved. The funeral was conducted on 8 February 1919 in accordance with full military honours, the last post was sounded, his coffin was draped with the Union Jack, representatives of AIF HQ London were in attendance.

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*

Additional/personal information:

Harold Hodgson had originated from the village of Settle, Yorkshire where he attended school. He trained as a joiner before emigrating to Australia at the age of 25 years where he would have used his skills in the job of car builder. On enlistment he quoted his next of kin as his father, in Settle, so family remained in England. In his will he left his entire estate to Miss Sylvia Williams, Tenth Avenue Maylands WA - this is explained by a notice in *The West Australian* 13/2/1919p1:

> HODGSON.—In England, of influenza, Harold, the dearly beloved fiancé of Sylvia Williams, Tenth-avenue, Maylands. (By cable).

Their marriage was never to be, and his fiancé and his family in England presumably never met. Sylvia Williams died aged 80 years in 1971 (BDM Per 1069/71).

As he had not crossed to France or Belgium his service medal entitlement was the British War Medal only.

His gravestone provided by the Imperial War Graves Commission carries the additions: "*Also Nellie Hodgson 25 Dec 1912 age 29 and Samuel Hodgson 1916 age 81".* (The use of a war grave as a family group grave is very rare - the additional words were charged to the family at 3½d per letter).

A plaque has been dedicated to Harold Hodgson in Kings Park, WA, however the place and date of death shown there appear to have been confused with another soldier. The dates above are confirmed by the Australian War Memorial, military records, and newspaper family notices.

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----------