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Laidler, William Matthew

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Guard

Rail employment notes: Born 4/4/1888. Joined WAGR 23/9/1910 aged 22 as Porter, Collie. ("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR – some had specific roles such as a receiving goods porter, some were general hands while some learnt safe-working and could assist with signals, et. Collie, a busy junction station with tracks to several coal mines, would have had multiple porters)

Promoted to Shunter, Collie 24/4/1911 and transferred to Midland Junction 15/5/1911. Promoted to Head Shunter 23/11/1912 and transferred to Guard, Northam 3/3/1914 and York 16/11/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 5/11/1915 (Service No.4543). Died of wounds 21/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4543
Date of death:	21 July 1916
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	28
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery Extension, Warloy-Baillon, Picardie, France

William Matthew Laidler enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 3 November 1915 and commenced military training at Blackboy Hill Military Camp. On enlistment he nominated his father James Matthew Laidler of Maryborough Victoria as his Next Of Kin. He had no previous military experience prior to enlistment. Once his basic training was complete, he was assigned to 14th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 4543 and embarked aboard A28 HMAT Miltiades on 12 Feb 1916 at the Port of Fremantle. He disembarked Suez on 10 March 1916 and remained in Egypt for a short time before departing Alexandria on 29 March 1916 and landing at Marseilles on 4 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Laidler had further training at 1 ADBD between 08 Apr 1916 and 25 May 1916. On marching out of 1 ADBD he was immediately taken on strength of 11 Battalion from 14th Reinforcements.

He was Wounded In Action, suffering Gunshot wounds to the neck and a fractured skull on 21 July 1916. Pte Laidler was evacuated to 1st /2nd South Midland Field Ambulance where he died that same day. Classified as Died of Wounds. Private Laidler was buried in the Warloy-Baillow Communal

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Cemetery Extension with the Rev Maude-Roxby officiating. The cemetery lies some 21 Km NE of Amiens.

Additional/personal information:

William Laidler was born and schooled in Maryborough in Victoria, a son of James Matthew and Georgina (nee Rose) Laidler (Vic BDM 13204/1888). He moved to WA, as did many Victorians after the 1890s gold finds, but his parents remained in Maryborough. It appears he also had two sisters:

> LAIDLER.— Died of wounds in France on July 21, 1916, Private William M. Laidler, only son of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Laidler, editor "Maryborough Advertiser," and brother of Mrs. J. C. Chisholm and Mrs. A. E. Wallace, late of Meekatharra and Garden Gully, aged 28 years; late Western Australian Railway Department.

For his service he was entitled to receive the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were sent to his father along with other military memorabilia. In the post war period, the family enquired why he was not awarded the 1914-1915 Star as he had enlisted in 1915. Army records sent a courteous reply stating that he had not reached a declared area of operations prior to 31 Dec 1915 and was therefore ineligible for the Star.

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----------