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Manners, Thomas James

A West Australian railway or tramway 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:	Tramways
Designation:	Conductor

Rail employment notes: Born 17/7/1889. Joined Tramways 16/6/1914 aged 24 as Student, Perth. Appointed to Conductor, Perth 27/6/1914.
(The tramways of Perth and adjoining suburbs were compulsorily purchased by the WA Government in 1913 and were placed in the management and responsibility of the WA Government Railways. The records of employees, including the honour roll after the war, reflected this combined operation.)

Granted leave to join AIF 22/12/1915 (Service No.5392). Killed in action 4/10/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	16th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	5392
Date of death:	4 October 1916
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	27
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Chester Farm Cemetery, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Thomas James Manners enlisted in 16 Battalion with the regimental number 5392 and his brother enlisted at the same time (1 February 1916) and was allocated the number 5394. (There was no soldier with the number 5393.) After completion of basic training both brothers departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard HMAT *Aeneas* on 17 April 1916 as members of 17th Reinforcements to 16th Battalion. Thomas had no previous military experience and his wife Lilly was his Next of Kin.

After arrival in Egypt the reinforcements underwent a short period of training before sailing from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ionian* on 7 June 1916. On 14 June 1916 they disembarked at Marseilles to join the British Expeditionary Force and Private Thomas Manners was taken on strength of 16 Battalion on 21 July 1916. The Battalion moved to the front at Pozieres where he became a victim of shell shock on 8 August 1916. He was evacuated to a Rest Station then to 44 CCS and finally by Ambulance Train to a Convalescent Depot at Boulogne which he reached on 18 August 1916. Following recovery from shell shock he was transferred to a depot on 7 September 1916 and from there to rejoin 16 Battalion on 29 September 1916.

On 4 October 1916 the Battalion was holding a front at Spoilbank when the German forces mounted a local raid preceded by an artillery barrage. The raid was beaten off but 7 men were killed, Private

Manners being amongst them. The bodies of those killed were buried at Chester Farm Cemetery 5 Km South of Ypres approximating to Zillebeke.

Additional/personal information:

Thomas Manners was born in California (both parents English) and was educated at the Cathedral School of Durham (UK). He had arrived in Australia at the age of 20 and married Lilly (Patterson) in 1913 (BDM 414/1913). No children are known. At the time of his enlistment he was employed as a tram conductor.

No details of any pension payable to his widow are on file. Lilly Manners remarried in 1925 to a Percy Eastoe, BDM 505/1925. Thomas' brother returned to Australia as a Company Quartermaster Sergeant decorated with a Military Medal.

On the AWM website at the entry for Thomas Manners there is an interesting photo of Thomas Manners' grave marker, which appears to have been taken at Chester Farm cemetery. The soldier standing next to it is believed to be a comrade, 2686 Pte J F Aarons 16 Bn.

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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