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Manning, Leonard Vincent

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country

The tragedy of war – less than 5 months from volunteering to being killed on his first day in battle and becoming just a name on a memorial wall.



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Painter, West Midland

Rail employment notes: Born 19/3/1879. Joined WAGR 7/9/1909 aged 30 as Painter, West Midland. (It appears he was actually 31 at this time, born 1878) Transferred to Northam 8/1/1910.

The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures so a painter would have been involved when building and/or maintaining stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc. West Midland was the location of the branch's workshops, west of the main Midland workshops.

Granted leave to join AIF 27/2/1916 (Service No.4487). Killed in action 29/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4487
Date of death:	29 July 1916
Place of death:	Pozieres, France
Age:	38
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Leonard Vincent Manning enlisted in the AIF on 6 March 1916 at Blackboy Hill Camp. He nominated his sister Ethel Thomson resident in Victoria as his Next of kin and stated that he had military experience of 3 months as a cadet when he lived in Victoria. On 14 March 1916 he was allocated to 11th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 4487. His basic military training at Blackboy Hill was exceedingly short as he departed Australia from Fremantle on 31 March 1916 aboard HMAT *Shropshire* on 31 March 1916.

On arrival in Egypt he transferred to HMT *Scotian* and departed Alexandria on 10 May 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 18 May 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. He underwent training until 28 July 1916 when he was taken-on-strength by 28 Battalion. That same day the Battalion commenced a night attack on Pozieres Ridge. Private Manning was posted Missing in action on 29 July 1916. A court of enquiry held on 4 January 1917 determined that he was Killed in action

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on 29 July 1916. His remains were never found and he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Later Red Cross investigations failed to reveal any eye witnesses to his death but 3143 Private Hind of 28 Bn reported that he was wounded and moved into a shell hole for protection. The officer who moved Private Manning into the shell hole was Lieutenant W R Moore, his brother-in-law, who was himself Killed in action on 3 November 1916.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Leonard Manning was born in Portland in western Victoria, the third of three children of Edward and Mary Jane (nee Wilson) Manning. (Vic BDM 10910/1878) It appears that Leonard later moved to WA, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, although the rest of his family stayed in Victoria.

For his service Pte Manning was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Both his parents were dead and his sister, his nominated next of kin, identified a living brother Edward Manning. Under the laws at the time a male relative took precedence so the campaign medals and other memorabilia were then issued to Edward Manning.

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----------