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Masters, Reginald William

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 Fitter

Rail employment notes: Born 4/11/1897. Joined WAGR 3/1/1912 aged 14 as Cadet, Midland Junction. Transferred to Apprentice Fitter, Midland Workshops 20/7/1914. The WA Government Railways' workshops at Midland were a very large operation, and were also a major trainer of apprentices in many trades.
Granted leave to join AIF 7/4/1916 (Service No.2437). Killed in action 26/8/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	43rd Battalion.
Service number:	2437
Date of death:	26 August 1918
Place of death: P	France
Age:	20
Rank:	Lance Corporal

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

Reginald William Masters was 18 when he enlisted in the AIF on 10 April 1916 and commenced training at Blackboy Hill camp. He had some previous military training of 4 years part time a cadet under the compulsory scheme. He was allotted to 4th Reinforcements to 43 Battalionn. On 8 July 1916 he was selected to attend Number Five NCO school at Belmont and remained there until 8 August 1916. There is, however, no course report on file. When his basic training was completed, he departed Australia aboard A16 HMAT *Port Melbourne* on 30 October 1916 and disembarked at Devonport UK on 28 December 1916. The following day he marched into 11 Training Bn and from there he crossed into France to join the British Expeditionary Force through 3 ADBD.

His Brigade was heavily involved in the Battles for Messines Ridge and later Broodseinde Ridge. He was now variously reported as either a Corporal or Lance Corporal. On 11 Oct 1917 he was Wounded In Action and passed through 11 Fd Amb, 3 CCS and 24 General Hospital before being evacuated to the UK. Further treatment was at Southern General Hospital (Birmingham) and Number 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital (Harefield) before rejoining 43 Battalion on 3 December 1917. On the Western Front he was twice exposed to War Gases but recovered. He attended Gas Schools between 20 and 26 Jan 1918 and again between 29 June 1918 and 5 July 1918. (see comments below on photograph P03552.002). He was granted leave to Paris between 01 and 09 Mar 1918 and later to the UK from 17 Mar 1918 to 08Apr 1918. On 04 Jul 1918 his rank was stated to be T/Cpl (Temporary Corporal). He was Killed in Action on 26 August 1918. His Red Cross File has a number of

descriptions of what happened but the strongest possibility seems to be that he died from a bullet wound either to the head or chest but whatever the cause he seems to have died virtually straight away. The area was listed as West of Haricourt (now Heubecourt-Haricourt) and his burial was in a shell hole along with soldiers by the names of Rose, Thatcher and Thomas.

Additional/personal information:

The Masters family lost two sons in the war, which unfortunately was not uncommon:

> MASTERS.—Killed in action, on August 25, 1918, Reginald William, aged 20 years, the dearly beloved youngest son of Mr. and Mrs.C. Masters, York-road, Greenmount, brother of Leslie Ronald, who was killed in action on January 26, 1918, after two years' active service. *The West Australian* 9/9/1918p1

The Graves Registration Unit clearly located that shell hole/grave as Thatcher (number 592) and Thomas (number 591) were identified and relocated to Assevillers New British Cemetery. That cemetery holds 800 burials of whom 593 are identified and of these 98 are Australians. It is a reasonable assumption that the remains of Masters and Rose were recovered from the same grave, could not be positively identified and are amongst the unidentified in Assevillers New British Cemetery. Thatcher and Thomas are buried side by side in Plot 8 Row G graves 9 and 10. Grave 8 is that of an unidentified Australian soldier. The identification was that there were colour patches and Australian shoulder titles. The remains were recovered in 1922 from the same map reference so it is almost certain that the body is that of either 560 L/Cpl R C Rose or 2437 L/Cpl R C Masters. Both are now remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

He is present in a group photograph displayed on the AWM. The photo shows a mix of Australian, British and New Zealand soldiers and was taken at Tidworth, Wiltshire with their instructor. L/Cpl Masters is second from the right in the rear row. This was typical of the type of photos taken at the end of an Army course.

L/Cpl Masters had an elder brother, born 1888, Leslie Ronald Masters, a member of 11th Battalion who had been Killed in Action in France on 26 January 1918 and is buried at Messines Ridge British Cemetery.

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----------