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Maxwell, Thomas

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Labourer, Fernbrook, Ways & Works Branch*. (Fernbrook was a small station on the railway from Brunswick to Collie – it was originally named Lunenburg after the nearby river but was renamed at the beginning of 1917 as German names had become undesirable) 16th Battalion, later 46th Battalion AIF. Killed in action 28/9/1917 aged 30.

*Thomas Maxwell's record has not survived in the WAGR records of individual employees now held by the SRO. His name, branch and designation are from an Honour Roll of WAGR employees published in the WAGR 1919 Annual report.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	46th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3176 (previously 2638)
Date of death:	28 September 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	30
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Thomas Maxwell originally enlisted on 24 September 1914 at Collie and commenced training at Blackboy Hill Camp where it was indicated that he would serve in 16 Battalion but no regimental number was assigned. He hardly had time to get a number as he was discharged on 29 September 1914 (no explanation on his conduct sheet) after just 5 days.

He next appears with the 7th reinforcement to 11 Battalion against his name but at some later date this is amended to 8th/11 Bn. With regimental number 2638, he left Fremantle on A68 HMAT *Anchises* on 2 September 1915 and disembarked Suez 1 October 1915. Private Maxwell marched into 3 Brigade Training Battalion on 4 October 1915. He was admitted to hospital for a short period for VD treatment and then taken on strength of 11 Battalion on 6 March 1916. Declared to be unsuitable to be a soldier and to be returned to Australia for discharge on the authority of the GOC. Departed Suez 19 March 1916 aboard SS *Demosthenes* and upon reaching Fremantle was discharged from the AIF on 12 April 1916.

At the age of 30 years he re-enlisted on 27 November 1916 under his own name and honestly stated that he had been previously discharged from the AIF. The available records do not clarify why he was twice discharged before finally being accepted. As the war continued and more recruits were sought, the army eased some requirements, both physical and character, but whether this was the reason is not known. When he enlisted in 1915 he gave his occupation as "mill hand" which would have meant in a privately-owned timber mill, which job he presumably lost on enlistment, but on his final enlistment he had found work with the government railways.

He was taken into the 18th Reinforcement to 46 Battalion and left on 29 December 1916 on A34 HMAT *Persic* from Fremantle and disembarked at Devonport on 14 March 1917. After training in the UK, he left for France on 19 June 1917 to join the British Expeditionary Force. He was taken on strength of 46 Battalion on 10 July 1917. During the Third Battle of Ypres he was Killed in action on 28 September 1917. His remains were never recovered, he has no known grave, and is remembered on the Menin Gate.

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:

Thomas Maxwell's widow, Lily Maxwell, recorded that he had been born in Glasgow, Scotland but came to WA when aged 24. Her notice in the *Western Mail* 26/10/1917p19 showed they had at least four children

> MAXWELL.-Killed in action in France on September 28. 1917, Private Thomas Maxwell, dearly beloved husband of Lily Maxwell, and father of Patricia, Annie, Florence, and baby Thomas, of Maude-street, Victoria Park East (late of Worsley Mill), third son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Maxwell, Barr Head-road, Glasgow, Scotland.- Deeply mourned,

Military pensions were paid to his wife Lily (40/- per fortnight), elder daughters Patricia and Anne both at 17/6 per fortnight, daughter Florence and son Thomas both 10/- per fortnight. For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow together with other memorabilia. As a consequence of that first return and discharge the Military Board determined he was not eligible for the 1914-15 Star.

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).

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, and WAGR Roll of Honour transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------