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Mead, Ernest James

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



Corporal Mead is remembered on the Peace memorial at the former Midland workshops. Anne Murray

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Wood Machinist

Rail employment notes: Born 2/3/1889. Joined WAGR 18/1/1916 aged 26 as Wood Machinist, Midland Workshops.

In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Granted leave to join AIF 17/6/1916 (Service No.2696A). Killed in action 24/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict: First World War 1914-1918

Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2696A
Date of death:	24 April 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	29
Rank:	Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Ernest James Mead enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 19 Jun 1916. He nominated his wife Mrs Nena May Mead as his NOK. He had no previous military experience. His basic military training was as a recruit at Blackboy Hill camp from 16 Jun 1916 to 22 Jul 1916 when he was assigned to 6th Reinforcements to 51 Battalion with the regimental number 2696.

He departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 10 October 1916 aboard A23 HMAT *Suffolk* and disembarked at Plymouth on 02 December 1916 where he marched into 13 Trg Bn that same day. On 29 December 1916 he departed England aboard the *Princess Victoria* to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Mead was taken-on-strength 51 Battalion, in the field, on 01 Jan 1917 and was appointed to be a Lance Corporal on 23 April 1917. For some reason which is not stated in his record his regimental number was amended to 2696A. He reverted to the rank of Pte following an episode of drunkenness but his rank was restored on 01 Oct 1917. L/Cpl Mead was granted UK leave between 18 Jan 1918 and 05 Feb 1918. He was promoted to the rank of Corporal on 20 April 1918.

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In the Battle for Villers-Bretonneux he was Killed in Action on 24 April 1918. His body was buried on the battlefield in a marked grave. After the Armistice his remains were recovered and buried in Adelaide Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux.





The Adelaide Cemetery is located on the west edge of the village of Villers-Bretonneux. Like all CWGC cemeteries, it is very well maintained and easily accessible. Photographed in 2012.

Additional/personal information:

Ernest Mead married Nena M Dow in 1909 in the Perth district (BDM 335/1909). Ernest had been born in York in 1889, a son of John Henry Mead and Margaretta Alice mead (nee Farrington) and had at least six siblings. His wife was also a West Australian, born in Geraldton in 1887. As far as can be found, the couple did not have any children.

> MEAD.-In loving memory of our dear brother-in-law, Corporal E. J. Mead killed in action on April 24, 1918, somewhere in France. His duty nobly done. -Inserted by his loving brother and sister-in-law, H and M. Dow.
>
> MEAD.-In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Ern Mead killed in action on April 24, 1918, somewhere in France. -Inserted by Harry and Ada Randall, and family.
> All *The West Australian* 13/5/1918p1
> MEAD.-Killed in action on. April 24, 1918, Ernest James, dearly beloved husband of Nena Mead aged 29 years. Sadly missed, deeply mourned.
>
> MEAD.--In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Lance-Corporal E. J. Mead, killed in action on April 24, somewhere in France. -Inserted by his sorrowing mother, brother, and sisters, M. A. Mead
> Both *The West Australian* 14/5/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and other memorabilia. His wife signed for the British War Medal and the Memorial Plaque but it is not certain whether she ever received the Victory Medal as numerous pieces of correspondence on the matter are shown as unclaimed. Army Records Office have annotated his attestation form alongside the name of the NOK the words “untraceable”. On 4 March 1917 the then Pte Mead had made a short Will in his paybook in which he made his wife his sole beneficiary. Cpl Mead also held an assurance policy with the MLC Company as there is correspondence with that Company on his file. The personal file holds no documentation in respect of any military pension which might have been payable to his widow. There is a memorial plaque to Cpl Mead in Kings Park (M2696A) which was dedicated by his mother.

An elder brother of Cpl Mead served as 2554A Sergeant H A C Mead 51 Battalion, enlisted 02 June 1915 and was Killed in Action on 18 Aug 1916. Ends

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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