Meadows, Harry Charles

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:	Painter

Rail employment notes: Painter, Midland Workshops. 28th Battalion AIF (Service No.5639). Killed in action 26/3/1917 aged 40.

In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief mechanical Engineer's branch, included the mechanical workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) so a painter would have been involved in painting locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed though for repairs.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Battalion.
Service number:	5639
Date of death:	26 March 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	40
Rank:	Private

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

Harry Charles Meadows was a mature age enlistment into the AIF on 10 April 1916. On enlistment his wife became his Next of kin and he stated that he had 2 years previous military service in the Essex Territorials. He commenced his recruit training in 61 Depot Company at Blackboy Hill Camp. On 5 May 1916 he was allocated as a Private to 15th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 5629. Pte Meadows departed Australia on 22 September 1916 aboard A52 HMAT *Surada* and disembarked at Plymouth on 21 Nov 1916. He remained for just one month before departing England aboard HMT *Princess Clementine* on 21 December 1916 through Folkestone to join the British Expeditionary Force. He was taken-on-strength of 28 Bn on 18 January 1917. Some of his records refer to him as a machine gunner but given his movement details this must have been as a member of a Lewis Gun party and not on the Vickers Machine Gun. His Red Cross file contains a reference to him being a stretcher bearer. There are conflicting reports of how he died but the most likely version is that he was buried by an explosive shell which fell as one of a salvo of three. The action was being fought at Lagnicourt. All casualties were buried where they fell. Pte Meadows was recorded as Killed in action on 26 March 1917 but his remains were never identified; he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial

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Additional/personal information:

Harry Charles Meadows was the son of William Meadows. Harry was born in Halstead, Essex, England and married to Celia Meadows before emigrating to Western Australia. The couple had two children but the births are not recorded in WA so the children may have come from the UK also.

> MEADOWS.— On March 26, 1917, killed in action in France, Private Harry Meadows, of the Machine Gun Section, 28th Battalion (late of Bayswater). His duty nobly done. —Inserted by his loving wife and children.
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> MEADOWS.-.On March 26, 1917, killed in action in France, Private Harry Meadows, of the Machine Gun Section, 28th Battalion (late of Bayswater). He gave his life, his all, In answer to his country's call. -Inserted by Private. I. Parker (on active service), and Mrs. Parker, Copley-street, Bayswater.
> Both *The West Australian* 18/4/1917p1

Private Meadows had made a simple Will in which he nominated his wife as his sole beneficiary. In the post war period, his widow moved to England and resided in Birmingham. For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow through the London office. His widow received a pension of 40/- per fortnight, a son whose name is not recorded 20/- and the youngest son Charles William Meadows 15/- all to date from 12 June 1917. Mrs Meadows also apparently received a benefit from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees of which Pte Meadows had been a member prior to enlistment. There are no continuing records after his widow and two sons returned to England.

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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