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McLachlan, Thomas Henry

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:	Lifter

Rail employment notes: Lifter, 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.

11th Battalion AIF (Service No.3878). Killed in action 30/5/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	3878
Date of death:	30 May 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	40
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix, Bethune, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Thomas Henry McLachlan enlisted in the AIF at Perth on 30 Aug 1915. He nominated his wife Mrs Maud Alice McLachlan as his Next of kin and declared that he had no previous military experience. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 12th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 3878.

Private McLachlan departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 22 November 1915 aboard RMS *Mongolia*. On arrival in Egypt, he joined the pool of reinforcements before being taken-on-strength of 11 Battalion on 17 March 1916. The Battalion sailed from Alexandria on 29 March 1916 on HMT *Corsican* and disembarked at Marseilles on 5 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

The Battalion moved to Northern France and entered the front lines for the first time. On 30 May 1916 the trenches were subjected to intense shelling followed by a strong German raid in which 11 Battalion suffered a considerable number of casualties and Private McLachlan was Killed in action near Armentieres. He was buried in the Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery at Fleurbaix with the Reverend W K Douglas officiating.

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Among the casualties that day from his battalion were several other WAGR employees including Theodore Spice, Leslie Hill and Clarence Tilley.

Additional/personal information:

Thomas was born in Victoria, a son of Son of James and Isabella (nee Diamond) McLachlan, and appears to have had 4 siblings. (Vic BDM 18732/1876 et al)

He moved to WA, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, He was in WA by 1909 when he married Maud Alice Kingerley and the couple had at least four children. (BDM 25/1909 et al.)

> McLACHLAN.—On May 30, Thomas Henry McLachlan, of Hamilton-street, Bayswater, and late of Loco Workshops, killed in action, beloved husband of Maude A. McLachlan, and loving father of Myrtle, Jean, Tommy, and baby Maudie. Deeply regretted. *The West Australian* 24/6/1916p1

The birth of the baby Maude was only registered in 1915 so she may never have seen her father.

His will was made in his paybook and he named his wife as his sole beneficiary. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were all issued to his widow.

His widow moved to Victoria, advising that her address after 9 September 1916 was Snake Gully, Victoria, presumably for extended family to help with her 4 young children. Military pensions were paid to his widow (until re-marriage) at £2 per fortnight, daughter Myrtle £1 per fortnight, daughter Jean 15/- per fortnight, son Thomas 10/- per fortnight and daughter Maud 10/- per fortnight all to commence on 31 Jul 1916.

In 1921 Mrs McLachlan remarried in Victoria to James Quilliam.

His widow paid for an inscription on his gravestone in France which reads: “Our Hero, Ever Remembered By Loving Wife and Four Children”.

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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