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Menzies, Robert

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:	Apprentice Fitter

Rail employment notes: Born 16/3/1895. Joined WAGR 14/6/1911 aged 16 as Apprentice Fitter, West Midland.
The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures including signalling and interlocking so fitters and other metal workers were needed at their main workshops which were to the west of Midland.

Granted leave to join AIF 17/8/1915 (Service No.2719). Killed in action 3/9/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2719
Date of death:	3 September 1916
Place of death:	Moquet Farm, France
Age:	22
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Pozieres British Cemetery Ovillers-La Boisselle, Pozieres, Picardie, France

Robert Menzies was a serving member of the 88th Regiment (volunteer militia) when he enlisted in the AIF at the Perth drill hall on 18 Aug 1915. On enlistment he appointed his father Adam Menzies to be his Next Of Kin. Pte Menzies was born in New Zealand and brought to Australia at the age of 4 years. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 6th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 2719. He departed Australia from Fremantle on 2 November 1915 aboard A38 HMAT *Ulysses* and disembarked in Egypt where he joined a pool of reinforcements as the AIF Divisions in Egypt were expanded from two to four. On 3 March 1916 he was taken-on-strength of the newly formed 51 Battalion from 6th/28 Bn.

The Battalion continued to train at the individual and formation level until 5 June 1916 when it sailed from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Menzies fought in the Battle for Pozieres and then joined the action at Moquet Farm where he was posted as Missing In Action on 3 September 1916.There was no eye witness report of his death but 4251 Pte Keith of 51 Battalion stated that he saw his body on the battlefield but as the Battalion was forced to withdraw it could not be buried. A Court of Enquiry held on 23 April 1917 determined that he was Killed In Action on 3 September 1916. In the post war period, the Graves Registration Unit recovered his remains and they were buried in Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovillers-La Boisselle.

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Additional/personal information:

Robert Menzies was born in New Zealand and brought to Australia at the age of 4 years. His parents were Adam and Emily Rosina (nee Long) Menzies, and they had more children from 1901 onwards in WA.

> MENZIES.—In sad and loving memory of our dearly loved son, Private R. Menzies (Jumbo), 5lst Battalion, killed in action September 4, 1916. Deeply mourned. —Inserted by his sorrowing parents and brother, W. Menzies, Nell and John. *The West Australian* 4/9/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His estate was the beneficiary of a death benefit from the Ancient Order of Foresters. Apparently, Mrs Menzies was awarded some payment in respect of his death and the fact that his father was incapacitated but details are not available online. Mrs Emily Menzies died on 02 Dec 1921 aged 51 years and her husband died on 28 Jan 1931 aged 79 years. They are buried in the same compartment at Karrakatta 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----------

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