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Midgley, Raymond William Dalton

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

Family tragedy compounded – Raymond Midgely's brother also enlisted and had been killed in action just 8 days earlier.



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Apprentice Car and Wagon Builder

Rail employment notes: Born 14/7/1895. Joined WAGR 22/4/1912 aged 16 as Apprentice Car & Wagon Builder, 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 10/8/1915 (Service No.2720). Killed in action 14/8/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2720
Date of death:	14 August 1916
Place of death:	Moquet farm, France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Courcelette British Cemetery, Picardie, France

Raymond William Midgley enlisted in the AIF on 16 Aug 1915 in Perth with the approval of both parents. On enlistment he nominated his father John Thomas Midgley as his NOK. He had 2 years experience in Senior Cadets and a further 2 years experience in 88th Infantry Regiment. He underwent basic military training at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was posted to 6th/28 Bn and departed for Egypt from the Port of Fremantle. In Egypt he joined the reinforcement pool for continuation training as a member of 7 Trg Bn. As the AIF Divisions were increased from two to four Pte Midgley was transferred from 6th/28 Bn to the newly formed 51 Bn. He continued training at an individual and formation level until 05 Jun 1916 when he sailed from Alexandria and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 Jun 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

The Battalion moved to the frontline at Pozieres and Moquet Farm where he was Killed In Action sometime between 14 August and 16 August 1916 but for official purposes his date of death was recorded as 14 August 1916. His original place of burial is not recorded but following the Armistice

his body was recovered and moved to Courcelette British Cemetery which lies 10 Km NE of Albert. His identity disc was recovered at the time and forwarded to his father.

Additional/personal information:

Raymond William Dalton Midgley was born in Windsor, New South Wales a son of John Thomas & Jane Barbara Midgley but then the family moved west and he attended school in Kalgoorlie.

Private Midgley's brother also served as 3524 Pte C H Midgley of 16 Bn, from 09 Aug 1915. These parents would suffer doubly, first hearing of the loss of their second son Charles:

> MIDGLEY.—Killed in action, in France, on August 6, 1916, Charles Herbert, dearly loved second son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Midgley, of Burswood, and brother of Frank (Kalgoorlie), Ray (on active service), Maisie, Lillie, and Elsie, aged 23 years. His duty done. *Western Mail* 15/9/1916p2

But more bad news followed and the family had to place another sad notice only 4 days later:

> MIDGLEY. —Killed in action between August 14 and 16, Raymond William, dearly-loved youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Midgley, of Burswood, and brother of Frank (Kalgoorlie), Charlie (killed in action, August 6), Maisie, Lillie, and Elsie; aged 21 years. *The West Australian* 19/9/1916p1

The family paid for an inscription on Raymond's gravestone which reads: "To Memory Ever Dear". There was some confusion over whether his gravestone should carry the Star of David but the issue was resolved by his mother and his gravestone carries a cross.

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 father, the Next of kin died on 31 Dec 1938, aged 77 years and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery. His mother, Jane Barbara Midgley, was buried in the same compartment in 1952.

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----------