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Millar, John William

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:	Accounts
Designation:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Clerk, Accounts Branch. 47th Battalion AIF. Killed in action 7/6/1917 aged 22.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	47th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	n/a (officer)
Date of death:	7 June 1917
Place of death:	Messines Ridge, Belgium
Age:	37
Rank:	Captain
Burial/memorialisation:	Grave not found; remembered on the Menin Gate, Ypres (now Ieper), Flanders, Belgium

John William Millar served for 5 years as an NCO in 88th Regiment of Infantry and qualified, by examination, for appointment as an officer on 21 Feb 1915 and was subsequently appointed as a Second Lieutenant (Militia). He later applied for an AIF commission and was appointed as a Second Lieutenant in 9th/11 Bn. He undertook further training at Blackboy Hill Camp with 11 Bn before departing Australia aboard A20 HMAT *Honorata* from Fremantle on 5 October 1915. On arrival in Egypt he was absorbed onto 11 Battalion but following the reorganization to create two additional divisions he was taken on strength of 47 Battalion on 13 April 1916. Training continued with his new Battalion until they departed Alexandria on 2 June 1916 aboard SS *Caledonian* and landed in Marseilles on 9 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. On 29 June 1916 he was promoted to Lieutenant. On 21 August 1916 he was appointed Temporary Captain but on that same day he was promoted to the rank of substantive Captain. These two movements were documented on different AIF Staff Lists. It seems that the substantive appointment overtook the temporary appointment and they were published on the same day. The Battalion was relatively inactive other than learning the skills of the Western Front over the terrible winter of 1916/1917. They then entered the major battles in Belgium in early 1917 concentrating on Messines Ridge. For bravery and leadership Captain Millar was mentioned in despatches (MID) in Haig's despatch of 09 April 1917. The MID was listed in the London Gazette of 05 Jun 1917. He was Killed in action on 7 June 1917 and reports show that he was in pursuit of a party of German soldiers (armed only with a revolver) when he died. His body

was never recovered, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Menin Gate, Ypres (now Ieper).

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*

Additional/personal information:

He married Ethel (Firth) in 1915 [BDM Per 625/1915] and she bore a son John Dean Millar on 16 June 1916. [BDM Per1075/1916] – Captain Millar no doubt learned of this in letters but would never see the boy. Following the death of Captain Millar both his wife and son received pensions. In 1921 Ethel Millar married Robert Fergie [BDM Per 431/ 1921]. Mrs Fergie died at the age of 76 years in 1971.

John William Millar has a memorial tablet (M521) in Kings Park which was dedicated by his son.

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).

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information added by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------

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