Minchin, Joseph 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:	Boilermaker's Assistant

Rail employment notes: Born 30/8/1881. Joined WA Government Railways 16/5/1911 aged 29 as Boilermaker's Assistant, 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 18/8/1915. Killed in action 2/4/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	(2864)
Date of death:	2 April 1917
Place of death:	Noreuil, France
Age:	35
Rank:	Second Lieutenant

Burial/memorialisation: HAC Cemetery, Ecoust St Mein, Arras, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Joseph Henry Minchin enlisted in the AIF on19 August 1915. On enlistment he nominated his wife Mrs Pearly Minchin as his Next Of Kin. He had significant previous military experience having served in the 1st Contingent of West Australian Mounted Infantry in the Anglo-Boer War with the regimental number 82, he enlisted again in the 6th Contingent as number 421 and also had 4 years' experience in the West Australian Infantry Regiment (Militia).

He served as a recruit at Blackboy Hill Camp between 23 August 1915 and 13 September 1915 before entering the Officer Training Course. He passed out of the Course with a satisfactory grade which allowed him to apply for an AIF Commission which he did on 24 Jan 1916 and he was appointed to be a Second Lieutenant. 2Lt Minchin then joined a group of recruits training for departure to England. He sailed on A5 HMAT *Aeneas* as one of two conducting officers of 2nd Reinforcements to 51 Battalion on 17 April 1916.

On arrival in England he marched into 13 Training Battalion and continued training. He was detached to the School of Musketry from 3 July to 28 July 1916 on trainee strength. He achieved a First-Class Pass on completion of the course following which he returned to 13 Trg Bn. On 11 January 1917 he departed England for France and joined the British Expeditionary Force when he entered 4 ADBD

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before being taken-on-strength of 51 Battalion, in the field, on 27 January 1917. He reported sick with mumps on 22 Feb 1917 and was under medical care until 10 March 1917 when he re-joined his Battalion.

The Battalion was committed to action at the Battle of Noreuil where he was Killed In Action on 2 April 1917. The 51 Battalion action at Noreuil was very costly, the total casualties at the first roll call came to 198 men killed, wounded or missing. Joseph Minchin's body was buried at the H A C Cemetery Ecoust-St. Mein.

Additional/personal information:

Joseph Minchin was born in 1881 in Middle Swan WA, the son of James and Charlotte (nee Hitchcock) Minchin. He attended local state school and served in the Volunteer Force in Guildford.

In 1913 he married Pearly Louisa McDonald (BDM Swan 12/1913) and they had two sons before he sailed to war:

> MINCHIN.-Killed in action, somewhere in France, on April 1, 1917, Lieutenant J. H.Minchin. 51st Battalion. dearly loved eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Minchin. Of Balkuling, late of Middle Swan, and loving husband of Pearl, and father of little Donald and Stuart Minchin, of Cottesloe. aged 35 years 7 months. He died for those he held most dear; He died to save the world from fear. *The West Australian* 14/4/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow along with other memorabilia. He would also have been entitled to medals for his service in the Boer War.

Mrs Minchin received a military pension of 40/- per fortnight, their sons Donald 20/- per fortnight and Stuart 15/- per fortnight. All effective from 10 Jun 1917. Benefits were paid to his widow by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees and under a policy with T and G Mutual Life Company. An inscription on his headstone was paid for, and reads: "His Duty Nobly Done". 2Lt Minchin has a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M640) which was dedicated by his widow.

Mrs Pearly Minchin re-married to James Procter (BDM Plantagenet 40/1926). She died on 11Nov 1961 at the age of 76 years.

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----------