Minett, William Henry

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

Such was the enthusiasm to fight for the "empire", that two brothers from this family enlisted, and were both killed in the same battle on the same day. Also, unfortunately, neither soldier's remains could be located after the war.



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

Rail employment information

Employer: Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways

Branch: Locomotive

Designation: Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 4/4/1892. Joined WAGR 12/9/1910 aged 18 as Cleaner, Bunbury. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise employed at a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder.)

Transferred to Bridgetown 28/9/1911 and promoted to Fireman 18/81912. Transferred to Wagin 13/11/1912, to Narrogin 11/5/1914, Bunbury 24/8/1914, Brunswick Junction 2/9/1914, Bunbury 8/9/1914 and Donnybrook 25/1/1915.

Granted leave to join AIF 26/4/1915 (Service No.1091). Killed in action 29/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict: First World War 1914-1918

Service: Australian Imperial Force (AIF)

Military unit: 28th Australian Infantry Battalion

Service number: 1091

Date of death: 29 July 1916

Place of death: France

Age: 22

Rank: Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

William Henry Minett enlisted in the AIF at Perth on 12 May 1915. On enlistment he nominated his father William Minett 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 allocated to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 1091. The Battalion departed Australia from Fremantle on 9 June 1915 aboard A11 HMAT *Ascanius* and disembarked in Egypt on 2 July 1915. Following training in Egypt the Bn boarded HMT *Ivernia* for Mudros on 4 September 1915 where it transferred to SS *Sarnia* and landed at Gallipoli on 10 Sep 1915. Pte Minett reported sick with influenza and jaundice on 31 Oct 1915 and was treated as an inpatient by 7 Fd Amb until 07 Nov 1915. He landed back in Alexandria from Mudros on SS *Ansonia* on 10 Jan 1916.

The Battalion then took on reinforcements and rested before departing from Alexandria on 16 March 1916 aboard A32 HMAT *Themistocles* and disembarked at Marseilles on 21 March 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. The Battalion was engaged in the Battle of Pozieres on 29 July 1916

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when Pte Minett was posted as Missing in action. An eye witness, 1509 Pte F Baker 28 Bn, reported seeing him lying seriously wounded in no man's land but there were no other reports. Pte Minett's remains were never found. A Court of Enquiry held on 04 Jan 1917 determined that he had been Killed in action on 29 July 1916. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Additional/personal information:

William Minett was born in the Waterloo district (Sydney) of New South Wales a son of William and Selena M (nee Beresford) Minett who had been married in the same Waterloo area in 1891.

The family had moved to WA by 1896 when Selena Mary Minett, the mother, died (WA BDM 767/1896). (A sister of Stanley and William Henry, Blanch Evelyn Minett, was also born in Fremantle in 1896 and it is possible the mother died in childbirth)

William Minett senior appears to have remarried – WA records show a William Minett married Elizabeth Reilly in the Peak Hill district in 1901and so the Mrs Minett mentioned in subsequent family notices is William's second wife.

> MINETT.--On July 29, killed in action at Pozieres, Private William. H. Minett, C Company, 28th Battalion, dearly loved son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Minett, and fond brother of Blanche, of Marlborough-street Mt Lawley; also of Signaller Stanley J.Minett, who was killed at Posieres on the same date. Age 24 years. Inserted by his loving parents and sister, late of Midland Junction.
> *The West Australian* 8/3/1917p1

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. As late as 1944 his sister Blanche wrote to Army Records seeking a copy of his Will.

Pte Minett's brother Stanley James Minett, also a railway employee, served as 3205 in 28 Bn and was also Killed in action on 29 July 1916 at Pozieres.

The step-mother Eliza Minett died on 22 August 1931 and is buried at Karrakatta cemetery. His father William died on 30 July 1935 aged 66 and was also buried at Karrakatta cemetery.

eFurther 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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