231

Murray, George

A West Australian railway employee who died 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:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 28/8/1887. Joined WAGR 28/9/1903 aged 16 as Call Boy, Midland Junction ("Call boy" in this case was the most junior position in the Locomotive branch, sent out regularly on foot or bicycle to call crews, whilst learning about locomotives and waiting to be appointed a cleaner, the next step up the ladder).

Appointed Cleaner 26/1/1906 and transferred to Kalgoorlie 19/3/1907, Bunbury 13/4/1908, Perth 11/8/1908, Bunbury 15/9/1908, Brunswick Junction 19/2/1910 and Northam 13/9/1910. Promoted to Fireman, Northam 19/5/1911 and transferred to Merredin 11/9/1911.

Granted leave to join AIF 9/8/1915 (Service No.2732). Died of illness 16/1/1917 and buried in Tidworth, England.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	13th Light Trench Mortar Battery, 51st Battalion
Service number:	2732
Date of death:	16 January 1917
Place of death:	Tidworth, England
Rank:	Private

Burial/commemoration: Tidworth Military cemetery, England

George Murray enlisted in the AIF on 17 August 1915, stating that he was 28 years old and that his next of kin was his mother Mrs Jane Austin of Bayswater. He was assigned to 6th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with regimental number 2732. After basic training at Blackboy Hill he embarked at Fremantle aboard HMAT *Ulysses* on 02 November 1915 for Egypt.

In Egypt he was transferred from 28 Battalion to the newly raised 51 Battalion. On 5 June 1916 he sailed aboard HMT *Ivernia* from Alexandria and joined the British Expeditionary Force through the Port of Marseilles on 12 June 1916. He was initially attached temporarily to 13 Light Trench Mortar Company, and then taken on strength of that unit. Private Murray was later evacuated to England for treatment of haemorrhoids at Southwark Military Hospital. While recovering from that hospital admission he was admitted to Tidworth Military Hospital seriously ill with pneumonia on 11 January 1917 and died on 16 January 1917.

Private Murray was buried in the Tidworth Military Cemetery in England.

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First War historian Dr Michael Galvin comments: “A Light Trench Mortar Battery consisted of around 80 men. They were not loved by the infantry who referred to them as “Shoot and Scoot” soldiers. A really good LTMB could get about 12 bombs into the air before the first one hit. By the time the 10th exploded the German Counter Battery fire would have zeroed in. The infantry would have taken cover as soon as the mortars fired and the LTMB men would be on their way out. It was very dangerous work.”

Additional/personal information:

George Murray’s mother wrote after the war that he was born in Fremantle, although this is not found in WA records, then attended Bayswater State School. His mother was Jane Murray, however it appears his father George Mason Murray had died when he was very young as his mother remarried to Edward Charles Austin in 1897 in Menzies in the Eastern Goldfields.

George was not married, and aged 30 when he died.

> MURRAY.—On January 16, 1917, at Indwith [sic] Hospital, England, of pneumonia, Private George (Pluger) Murray, 51st Battalion, served in Gallipoli and France, late of Western Australian Government Railways, at Bayswater, Bunbury, and Merredin, aged 29 years. He answered his country's call, His duty nobly done. *The West Australian* 23/1/1917p1

Sadly typical of the effect of the war on families, his mother recorded that he was a step-brother to Lieutenant Aubrey Sinclair who was killed in action in France in 1918 and also a nephew of Sergeant Hugh Murray who died on Malta from wounds incurred at Gallipoli in 1915. (AWM)

His family arranged for his gravestone to be engraved “One of Australia’s best tho’ lost to sight in memory ever dear”.

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----------