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Nelson, Harry

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



Villers-Bretonneux Australian memorial (see page 2)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Iron Moulder

Rail employment notes: Born 17/8/1883. Joined WAGR 4/11/1910 aged 27 as Iron Moulder, 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 25/9/1915 (Service No.3217). 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:	3217
Date of death:	29 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	33
Rank:	Private

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

Harry Nelson enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 29 July 1915. On enlistment he stated that his father was dead and that his mother Mrs Mary Nelson, resident in Scotland was his Next of kin (NOK). He had previous military experience of 3 years in the 1st Aberdeenshire Voluntary Artillery for 3 years. He was born in Scotland and had migrated to Australia at the age of 24 years. Pte Nelson made his Will on 26 November 1915 in which he nominated his mother as his sole beneficiary.

His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 7th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 3217 and then departed Fremantle aboard A7 HMAT *Medic* and disembarked in Egypt on16 Feb 1916. After brief further training in Egypt he departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Oriana* on 21 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 27 Mar 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

Pte Nelson was taken-on-strength of 28 Battalion, in the field, on 3 May 1916. At Pozieres he was reported Missing in action (MIA) on 29 July 1916 but a Court of Enquiry held on 04 Jan 1917 determined that he was Killed in action (KIA) on that date. His body was never found and he has no known grave so he is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Harry Nelson was born in Aberdeen in Scotland and had migrated to Australia at the age of 24 years. He stated that his father was dead but his mother Mrs Mary Nelson was living in Aberdeen. It appears that at least one other member of his family, a brother James Nelson, also emigrated to WA.

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother together with other memorabilia from Australia House London. Mrs Nelson was awarded a military pension of 40/- per fortnight effective from 09 Mar 1917 and death benefits from the Ancient Order of Foresters and the Federated Moulders Union of Australasia.

His Will was administered by his brother Mr James Nelson of Kalgoorlie as Trustee and Executor. His file contains a number of confusing references to him being a member of 51 Bn. They are incorrect he was never a member of any Unit other than 28 Bn AIF.

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----------

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