O'Connell, James Adolphus

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Detailed employee records for James O'Connell have not been found however the WAGR Honour Roll lists him as a Clerk at Narrogin and it appears he previously worked in Kalgoorlie.

Traffic Branch. Enlisted in 16th Battalion AIF 14/10/1916 (Service No7277.). Killed in action 27/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	5th Australian Machine Gun Battalion
Service number:	7277.
Date of death:	27 April 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	34
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Picardie, France

James Adolphus O'Connell from Narrogin enlisted in the AIF on 04 December 1916 at Blackboy Hill Camp. He declared his father Patrick O'Connell to be his Next of Kin. James had no previous military experience and after his basic training he was assigned to 24th Reinforcement to 16 Battalion with the regimental number 7277. He departed Australia through Fremantle aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* on 29 January 1917 and disembarked at Devonport UK on 27 March 1917, moving directly to 4 Training Battalion. At the Training Bn he was taken on strength of 5 Machine Gun Bn on 31 May 1917.

Following training as a machine gunner he departed the UK through Southampton on 7 September 1917 when he joined the British Expeditionary Force as a member of 25 MG Company, an element of 5 MG Bn. He was Killed in Action on 27 April 1918 in the vicinity of Villers-Bretonneux and was buried in Crucifix Corner Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

James' birth place is not known. He was the son of Patrick O'Connell who lived in Kalgoorlie when James enlisted and was probably there earlier as James' sister Mary married Patrick Tangney in Kalgoorlie in 1908 (BDM WA).At least two of James' brothers also enlisted:

O'CONNELL. —Killed in action on April 27, 1918, James Adolphus (Jimo), late of Kalgoorlie and Narrogin Railway Department, beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. O'Connell, of Kalgoorlie, and dear brother Joe (on active service), Frank (returned), Will (Broken Hill, NSW.), Mrs. P. J. Tangney, Cliff-street, Albany, and Tess. Requiescat in pace. Duty called, he gave his best, And left unto our Lord the rest. Deeply mourned. *The West Australian* 28/5/1918p1

His father died in 1920 and his mother became his Next of Kin. For his service he was entitled to receive the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. His service medals and other memorabilia were issued to his mother.

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----------