

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

Olive, George Henry

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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Traffic
Designation:	Assistant Station Master

Rail employment notes: Born 4/8/1890. Joined WAGR 1/1/1912 aged 21 as Repairer, Kununoppin. ("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge.) Transferred to Kellerberrin 26/8/1912.

Appointed Porter, East Northam 11/12/1913, a transfer to the Traffic Branch. Promoted to Night Station Master, Doodlakine 14/7/1914 and transferred to Assistant Station Master, Mundaring 8/7/1915. (When stations were busy enough to warrant more than one officer, the Station Master normally worked day shift 8am – 4pm and had overall responsibility, the Assistant Station Master worked 4pm-midnight and the Night Station master worked midninght-8am.)

Granted leave to join AIF 8/10/1915 (Service No.2091). Killed in action at Bullecourt 3/5/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	4th Heavy Trench Mortar Battery
Service number:	2091
Date of death:	3 May 1917
Place of death:	Bullecourt, France
Age:	26
Rank at time of death:	Bombardier
Burial/memorialisation:	Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Picardie, France

George Henry Olive enlisted in the AIF on 21 September 1915 in Perth. He chose to be a member of 10th Light Horse Regiment and was assigned the regimental number 2091. Basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill camp with the specialised training for the role of a Light Horseman being conducted in Training Regiments in Egypt. Trooper Olive had no previous military experience and he nominated his father, George Olive, as his Next of kin.

As a member of 14th Reinforcements for 10th Light Horse Regiment, he departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard A69 HMAT *Warilda* on 16 February 1916. On arrival in Egypt he marched into 3rd Light Horse Training Regiment as 10 LHR was an element of 3rd Light Horse Brigade. For reason or reasons unknown he ceased to be a Light Horseman on 7 April 1916 and was transferred to

4th Division Artillery Column and re-mustered from Trooper to Gunner and promoted to the rank of Acting Bombardier (A/Bdr).

Military historian Dr Mike Galvin comments ‘a most unusual path as a soldier - a light horseman who goes from the Brigade Training Unit in Egypt to Trench Mortars, and is promoted the same day to the rank of Acting Bombardier’.

He sailed from Alexandria on 6 June 1916 aboard HMT *Oriana* and disembarked at Marseilles 7 days later to join the British Expeditionary Force. His first posting in France was to the Trench Mortar School at Berthen between 16 September and 30 Sep 1916 following which he rejoined 4th DAC and remained with that Unit until he was taken on strength of 4th Heavy and Medium Trench Mortars on 15 Feb 1917. Bombardier Olive was Killed in action in the Bullecourt sector during the Battle of Arras on 3 May 1917. His body was never recovered and he has no known grave but is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Additional/personal information:

George Olive was born in Lara, Victoria, but the family must have moved to WA soon afterwards as he went to the Kellerberrin State School.

> OLIVE.-On May 3. 1917. killed in action, Bombardier George H. Olive, dearly loved eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. G. Olive and brother of Stan (on active service), and Ruby, aged 20 years 10 months. Greater love hath no man than this-that a man lay down his life for his friends. -Inserted by his sorrowing parents, brother and sister. Kellerberrin. *The West Australian* 24/5/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other military memorabilia. There is no pension documentation on his personal file but there is a Pension File held at National Archives (not available on line) which was closed off in 1952. His mother (Maria Lockwood Olive) died on 13 Apr 1952 at the age of 81. His father (George Olive) died 6 days later on 19 Apr 1952, aged 82 years.

Further information 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----------