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Podger, Samuel Thomas

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:	Shunter

Rail employment notes: Shunter, Fremantle Goods, Traffic Branch.

Enlisted in 28th Battalion AIF 29/11/1915 (Service No.3910). Killed in action 13/2/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3910
Date of death:	13 February 1917
Place of death:	Flers, France
Age:	25
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Bulls Road Cemetery, Flers, Picardie, France

Samuel Thomas Podger enlisted in the AIF on 29 November 1915. On enlistment he nominated his father Charles Podger as his Next Of Kin and declared that he had served for 3 years in the 11th Infantry (Militia). His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp and on completion he was assigned to 9th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion which departed Australia from Fremantle on 12 Feb 1916 aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* and disembarked at Suez on 10 Mar 1916.

In Egypt he entered 7 Training Bn with other reinforcements but on 2 April 1916 was taken-on-strength of the newly formed 51 Battalion from 9th/28 Bn. This Battalion trained in Egypt until 05 June 1916 when it sailed from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Podger was incapacitated suffering from a septic heel from 18 Aug 1916 until he re-joined 51 Bn on 25 Aug 1916.

He was Wounded in Action at Pozieres on 03 September 1916 when he was buried by the explosion of a high explosive shell. He was unconscious when dug out and transferred to 1 Canadian Field Ambulance and then via the evacuation chain to 3rd London General Hospital where his primary disability was recorded as shell shock. Pte Podger returned to France on 25 January 1917 and was held on the roll of 4 ADBD until 7 February 1917 when he re-joined 51 Battalion.

He was Killed In Action near Flers on 13 February 1917 and buried at the Bulls Road Cemetery with the Rev G Green officiating.

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Additional/personal information:

Samuel Podger was born in the Ballarat district in Victoria in 1891, a son of Charles and Annie (nee Blake or Lake) Podger. Several siblings were also born in Victoria but then the family moved to WA, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds. Their youngest children, Alice and Maud, were born in Fremantle in 1899 and 1902.

Unfortunately his mother died in 1910 (BDM 135/1910) leaving his father with a large family of young children. Charles remarried, to Jessie A Powell in 1914. This must have made complex family relationships since the eldest daughter Sarah had already married in 1909 and the second sister Annie married in 1914. Samuel may have already found a companion but we will never know:

> PODGER.-On February 13. 1917, killed in France, Private S. T. Podger. He is gone, but not forgotten, Never shall his memory fade, Sweetest thoughts will ever linger Around the battlefield where he is laid. -inserted by his loving friend, M. Byrant, The West Australian 19/3/1917p1

Because official confirmation of deaths often took some time, it was common for the family to place a notice on the first anniversary:

> Ceottesloe Beach.PODGER.- In sad and loving remembrance of Private Samuel Thomas Podger, 51st Battalion, late 9-28th, killed in action at Fleurs on February 13. 1917, dearly loved youngest son of Charles and the late Annie Podger, stepson of Jessie Podger, brother of Charles, Mrs. Sorrell. Mrs. Edgely, Elsie, and Alice, bother-in-law of Ruby Podger, W. Sorrell, and T. Edgely. A year has passed since that sad day. … - Inserted by his sorrowing father, step-mother, brothers. and sisters. *The West Australian* 13/2/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. Pte Podger had drawn his Will on 11 Feb 1916 while at Blackboy Hill in which he nominated his father as his sole beneficiary. He had a benefit due to estate from the WA Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees. His father (NOK) died on 23 Jun 1934 aged 72 years and was buried with his wife who had died in 1910. His stepmother lived until the age of 95, dying in 1968.

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----------