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Robertson, Lewis (or Louis) Alexander

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:	Locomotive
Designation:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 29/4/1895. Joined WAGR 2/9/1912 aged 17 as Junior Labourer, Midland Junction. Appointed to Cleaner, Perth 16/10/1913 and transferred to Chidlows Well 19/1/1914 and Midland Junction 2/4/1914.

("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise employed at a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder. Mr Robertson left for the war before achieving the upgrade.)

Granted leave to join AIF 2/8/1915 (Service No.3151). Killed in action at Pozieres 20/8/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3151
Date of death:	20 August 1916
Place of death:	Moquet Farm, France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

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

Lewis Alexander Robertson enlisted in the AIF on 09 Aug 1915. He nominated his mother Mrs Hannah Robertson as his next of kin (NOK). He had some military experience as a cadet in Fremantle Artillery. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill camp. His military training was cut short in order to fit into the shipping availability. He was allocated to 10th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 3151.

Pte Robertson departed Fremantle aboard A32 HMAT *Themistocles* on 13 Sep 1915. Following arrival in Egypt he was taken-on-strength 11 Bn on 7 January 1916. Training continued at an individual and unit level until 29 March 1916 when the unit departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* and disembarked at Marseilles on 5 April 1916. The unit moved to the Battle of Pozieres and then on to Moquet Farm.

Private Robertson was not seen or recorded between 20 and 23 August 1916. The Commanding Officer determined that he had been Killed in Action on 20 August 1916. His remains were never recovered, he has no known grave, and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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:

Lewis Robertson was named Louis Alexander LeLong when born - his mother Hannah Stenton had married to Emile Lelong. However Emile died in 1897 and in 1902 Hannah remarried, to John Robertson (BDM 741/1902). Hannah apparently bore two further children, John David in 1902 and Elsie in 1904. It seems the elder boys then took their step-father's surname, and in Louis's case he anglicised the spelling of Louis to Lewis, although his parents used Louis in a family notice:

> ROBERTSON.—Killed in action, in France, on or about August 20, Private Lou. A., second beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, Charles-street, South Fremantle, late of Bunbury, and Midland Junction; brother of Jacky and Fred, on active service; aged 21 years and 4 months.
> His duty nobly done. His King and country called him, He nobly answered duty's call; His friends, his home, his loved ones, He sacrificed them all. *The West Australian* 5/10/1916p1

There was further confusion in Australia when his death was initially reported as 20 July 1916 but a signed postcard dated 05 Aug 1916 and postmarked that same day was received! Army Records then corrected the date of death from 20 July 1916 to 20 August 1916. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to the second husband of Hannah Robertson together with the memorial plaque and scroll.

Pte Robertson's brother 2717 L/Cpl Emile Frederick LeLong/Robertson was also a railwayman and also served in 11 Battalion He was wounded in France and Died of Wounds in military hospital in England. The mother of the brothers Robertson died at the age of 81 years on 04 Dec 1954 and is buried in Fremantle Cemetery.

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----------