Slater, Harry Osborne

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:	Accounts
Designation:	Cadet

Rail employment notes: Born 9/8/1896. Joined WAGR 14/2/1911 aged 14 as Cadet, Perth. Granted leave to join AIF 22/11/1915. Died of wounds 2/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	16th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	7681
Date of death:	2 April 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	21
Rank:	Sergeant
Burial/memorialisation:	Doullens Communal Cemetery Extension No 1, Doullens, Picardie, France

Harry Osborne Slater had service in the Citizens Forces for over 2 years when he enrolled in the Australian Army Instructional Corps and was engaged as a drill instructor at Blackboy Hill Camp. He sought approval to transfer to the AIF after 6 months which was granted and he retained his substantive rank of Sergeant. (The Defence Act of 1903 did not allow members of the Australian permanent forces to serve overseas, hence the formation of the Australian Imperial Force separately to fight with the UK). He nominated his mother Mrs Euphemia Slater as his Next of kin.

Sergeant Slater was assigned to 26th reinforcements to 16 Battalion with the regimental number 7681 and departed Australia from Sydney aboard A7 HMAT *Medic* on 1 August 1917. At Halifax he transferred to SS *Orita* which docked at Liverpool on 3 October 1917. He marched into 4 Training Battalion that same day but was later transferred to 13 Training Battalion as a drill instructor. Because of his experience, he remained there until he departed the UK on 2 March 1918 through Southampton and was taken on strength of 16 Battalion on 8 March 1918. In front line action at Hebuterne he was Wounded in action by machine gun fire to the abdomen and groin on 1 April 1918. Sgt Slater Died of wounds in hospital on 2 April 1918 (there is confusion over which hospital). He was buried in the Doullens Communal Cemetery No 1 Extension.

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*

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Additional/personal information:

Harry Slater was born in Sydney NSW, but was brought to WA as a child, completing his schooling at Christian Brothers' school Perth.

His mother placed a notice in *The West Australian* 7/5/1918p1

> SLATER.-At Canadian Clearing Station, somewhere in France mortally wounded on April 2 1918, dying on same day, Sergeant Harry Osborne Slater, aged 21 years and 9 months, only son of Mrs. H. Slater, 16 Victoria-avenue, Perth, and loving brother of Alice and little Maisie. A noble son and brother.

His personal effects were lost at sea when the ship carrying them back to Australia was sunk by enemy action. For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Army records asked if his father was alive and the reply from his mother indicated that he had vanished some seven years before and the family neither knew nor cared where he was. The service medals and other memorabilia were issued in trust to his mother but she had to sign a declaration that she would return them should someone with a stronger claim emerge!

His family dedicated a memorial plaque (L349A) to his memory in Kings Park in 2015.

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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