Smith, Harry Albert

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Individual WAGR record has not been found but Harry Smith is recorded on a WAGR Honour Roll as a Labourer, Ways & Works Branch. Enlisted in 28th Battalion AIF 15/7/1915 (Service No.2023). Died of wounds 30/6/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Battalion.
Service number:	2023
Date of death:	30 June 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	26
Rank at time of death:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension Nord, France

Harry Albert Smith enlisted in the AIF on 15 July 1915 having made a number of previous attempts but being rejected earlier on the basis of having only one eye, the other being lost to trauma. This man had only one eye but significantly his visual acuity is never recorded. The examining doctor just records Hazel as colour alongside the eye question.

On enlistment he nominated his father Charles Smith as his Next of kin and declared that he had a total of 4 years militia service divided between artillery and infantry. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp where he was initially marked down to be a member of 9th/16 Bn but he was moved to 3rd/28 Bn on 24 August 1915 and allocated the regimental number 2023. Pte Smith departed Australia from Fremantle on 2 September 1915 aboard A68 HMAT *Anchises* and disembarked in Egypt. He crossed to Gallipoli and was taken-on-strength of 28 Bn on 12 Oct 1915. At that time, he made his Will in his paybook in which he nominated his mother, Agnes Smith, as his sole beneficiary. Following action on Gallipoli he returned to Egypt where 28 Bn took on reinforcements and conducted training. He departed Egypt from Alexandria aboard SS *Ansonia* on 10 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 16 March 1916 to join the BEF. On 6 June 1916 Pte

Smith was a member of a party led by Capt C M Foss which carried out the first trench raid on the German lines in France. On 22 June 1916 he was WIA suffering a gunshot wound to the chest and was evacuated initially to 7 Fd Amb and then to 2 CCS where he was graded as critically injured. Pte Smith died of wounds on 30 June 1916 and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension Nord.

Additional/personal information:

Harry Smith was born in Natimuk, Victoria but came to WA when young and attended school in Midland (then called Midland Junction).

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His family paid for an inscription on his gravestone which reads: "Earth Holds No Other Like to Thee or If It Doth, In Vain for Me".

He was a member of a large family, and not the only member to volunteer to serve overseas, as was often the case:

> SMITH:— Died of gunshot wounds in chest, on 30th June, at 2nd Australian Clearing Hospital, France, Private Harry A Smith, 28th Batt, aged 26 years, youngest son of Mr and Mrs C E Smith, Chapman Road, Geraldton; and brother of E R Smith, GWS, Southern Cross; and of Sapper A R Smith, Australian Engineers; Mrs W Menner, Dongarra; Mrs J M Beckwith, and Misses Violet and Ivy Smith, Geraldton: He died the death he wished. *The Geraldton Guardian* 18/7/1916p2

There is a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M413A) which was dedicated by his family in 2013.

Further information will 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----------