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Spice, Theodore Morley

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

Killed on a disastrous day for the AIF – including 3 men from the WAGR



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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Striker

Rail employment notes: Born 31/7/1887. Joined WAGR 28/12/1910 aged 23 as Labourer, West Midland. Transferred to Boilermaker's Assistant, Midland Workshops 16/10/1911 and to Striker 13/5/1912.
In this era, the "Way and Works" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Civil Engineer's branch, had a substantial workshop of its own to the west of the main Midland workshops. A Striker worked with a Blacksmith.

The Way and Works Branch was responsible for track and structures.

Granted leave to join AIF 26/8/1915 (Service No.3969). Killed in action 30/5/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3969
Date of death:	30 May 1916
Place of death:	Armentieres, France
Age:	28
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix, Bethune, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Theodore Morley Spice enlisted in the AIF on 30 August 1915 at Blackboy Hill Camp. On enlistment he stated his next of kin (NOK) to be his wife Flora Spice. He had one year of military experience in the Militia. His training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp and on 16 October 1915 he was allocated to 12th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 3969. He departed Australia from Fremantle on 22 November 1915 aboard RMS *Mongolia*.

On arrival in Egypt he entered 3 Training Bn before being taken on strength of 11 Battalion on 2 March 1916. The Battalion departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* on 29 March 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 05 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. He moved into the front line trenches near Armentieres shortly afterwards.

On 30 May 1916 the trenches were subjected to intense shelling followed by a strong German raid in which 11 Battalion suffered a considerable number of casualties including Private Spice who was

Killed in Action. He was buried that same day in the Rue-Petillon Military Cemetery at Fleurbaix with the Reverend W K Douglas of 12 Battalion officiating.

Among the casualties that same day from his battalion were several other WAGR employees including Thomas McLachlan, Leslie Hill and Clarence Tilley.

Additional/personal information:

Theodore Spice was born in Chittering Brook north of Midland, a son of Frederick Samuel Spice and Caroline (nee Morley) Spice. He appears to have had an elder brother and three sisters, but then both parents died in 1902 when Theodore was 15.

(WA BDM) In 1908 he married Flora I Emery and the couple had at least two daughters, born in 1909 and 1911 :

> SPICE.—On May 30, 1916, killed in action, Private Theo. Spice (late of Midland Junction), dearly beloved husband of Flora Spice, father of Isabelle and Doreen; son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Emery, Moran-street, Beaconsfield. He died for others. —Inserted by his loving wife and daughters and mother-in-law. The West Australian 24/6/1916p1
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> SPICE.-In loving memory of my beloved husband, Theo, of 13, 11th Battalion, - killed in action near Armentiers, May 30, 1916. I have lost my life's companion, All that I have left of him Is his photo on the wall. -Inserted by his wife and little ones.
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> SPICE.-In loving memory of my dear brother, Private Theo. Morley Spice, 11th Battalion, killed in action, France, May 30, 1916, second son of the late Fred. and C. Spice, of East Guildford; grandson of Henry and M. Morley, sen., of Chittering, and the late Robert and M. Spice, of Bindoon. Promoted to a better land. -Inserted by his loving sister, Florrie.
> Both *The West Australian* 30/5/1917p1

In the post war period, his family paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: “Husband of Mrs F Spice Father of Isabel and Doreen”. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow along with other memorabilia. Flora Spice received a military pension of 40/- per fortnight, Isabel 20/- and Doreen 15/- all to commence on 31 Jul 1916. Pte Spice was a member of the Druids Lodge and his wife received a benefit from the Lodge. Mrs Spice died on 13 Feb 1967 at the age of 77 years and was buried in Karrakatta 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----------