Stewart, Charles Douglas

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



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

Doug Stewart spent 5 years as an apprentice learning his trade, but after less than 3 months to share the benefits he volunteered to enlist and never came back.
Sadly, this was typical of the loss of young people and their skills in the War.

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Fitter

Rail employment notes: Born 15/12/1893. Joined WAGR 17/1/1910 aged 16 as Apprentice Fitter, Midland Workshops. Appointed Fitter 6/3/1915. Granted leave to join AIF 5/6/1915 (Service No.1660). Killed in action 29/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	1660
Date of death:	29 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	23
Rank:	Lance Corporal

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

Charles Stewart enlisted on 30 May1915 and was assigned to 2nd Reinforcements to 28th Battalion, and assigned number 1660. He embarked at Fremantle on 23 July 1915 on HMAT *Demosthenes* A64, listed then as Acting Corporal (which entitled him to 4 shillings per day "extra duty pay"). He nominated his mother as his Next of Kin and the sole beneficiary in his will. He had previous military service in 11th A Infantry Regiment (a parttime militia).

On arrival in Egypt, he was appointed to be the Postal Clerk as an Acting Lance Corporal and did not cross to Mudros. He was finally taken-on-strength of 28 Battalion from reinforcements on 23 January 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir and reverted to his substantive rank of Private, however he was properly appointed to be a Lance Corporal on 12 February 1916. The Battalion departed Alexandria on 16 March 1916 and landed at Marseilles on 21 March 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

He was posted as Missing in action at Pozieres on 29 July 1916 but this was amended to Killed in action (same date) when a letter was received from the Rev W E Dexter stating that he had buried the soldier. In the post war period, his grave could not be found and he has no known place of burial. His name was later added to the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Soldiers killed in France 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:

Charles Stewart was born in Ballarat, Victoria to Charles and Jane Stewart (nee Chisholm). The family must have moved to WA when he was young, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, as he attended Guildford Grammar School.

It appears he was named Charles the same as his father, but was the only son in the family:

> STEWART.—Killed in action in France on July 29, Lance-Corporal Charles Stewart, A.I.F., beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stewart, Swan-street, Guildford, and loved brother of Mrs. J. Searle (Meekatharra), Mrs. H.J. Evans (Mt. Lawley), Mrs. E. P. Dixon (Sydney), and Helen and Florence Stewart (Guildford), aged 22 years. *The West Australian* 25/10/1916p1



Charles Stewart is remembered on the Peace Memorial outside the former railway workshops in Midland. J.Austin

For his services he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. When the military sought the correct disposal of his service medals, the family stated that his father

had died already; MCB records show that he died on 17 April 1917. His mother received a military pension (details unknown). Jane Stewart died at the age of 83 years in 1940 and was buried in the same compartment as her husband at Karrakatta.

Lance Corporal Stewart has a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M186) dedicated by his family.

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 research by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------