307

Stokes, Thomas William

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 12/3/1894. Joined WAGR 31/1/1913 aged 18 as Cleaner, Bunbury. ("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.)

Transferred to Donnybrook 10/3/1913, Bunbury 10/9/1913, Donnybrook 27/2/1914 and Bunbury 21/5/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 15/8/1914 (Service No.946). Killed in action at Gallipoli 2/5/1915.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	946
Date of death:	2 May 1915
Place of death:	Gallipoli, Dardanelles, Turkey
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli Peninsula, Canakkale Province, Turkey

Thomas William Stokes was a serving member of the 25th Light Horse Regiment (volunteer part-time Militia) having served for 2 ½ years and previously for 2 years in Senior Cadets, when he enlisted in the AIF on 7 September 1914 at Bunbury. He nominated his father, Thomas Stokes, as his next of kin. Following basic training he was assigned to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 946.

The Battalion boarded HMAT *Ascanius* at Fremantle on 31 October 1914 but did not depart until 2 November 1914. *Ascanius* then joined the first convoy which had earlier departed from Albany with a substantial Naval escort to provide cover against the German Light Cruiser *Embden* which was thought to roaming the Indian Ocean. Ascanius later suffered minor damage in a collision with Shropshire and was required to enter Aden for repairs before proceeding up the Red Sea.

Suez was reached on 5 December 1914 and the troops disembarked the following day and established camp at Mena with other elements of the 3rd Brigade. Training continued in Egypt until 2 March 1915 when the Battalion moved by rail to Alexandria, boarded HMT *Suffolk* and sailed for Mudros on Lemnos Island. There was a delay of 7 weeks while the troops practiced the use of scrambling nets and maintained fitness with route marches on the Island. Private Stokes survived the Landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 but was Killed in action on 2 May 1915 during the first significant offensive action by the AIF.

He was buried in Artillery Road Cemetery but his remains were moved in the post war period to Shell Green Cemetery as the original cemetery proved to be inaccessible.

Additional/personal information:

Thomas Stokes was born in Geraldton in WA, although the family moved when he was young to Bunbury where he attended school. His parents were Thomas Stokes and Jane Stokes (nee Baker) who also registered births of 3 girls. (BDM 537/1894)

Official confirmation of deaths usually took some time to arrive so it was common for families to place a notice on the anniversary date instead:

> STOKES.—In loving memory of our only dearly loved son and brother, Private T. W. Stokes, 11th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, killed in action on Mav 2nd, 1915, Gaba Tepe, aged 21 years. His duty nobly done for King and Country." —Inserted by his parents and sisters. *Southern Times* (Bunbury) 2/5/1916p2

His family paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: “For King and Empire”. The Stokes family also erected a memorial tablet to his memory in the Bunbury Cemetery, which provided a place where the family could grieve, place a wreath on an anniversary date etc. in the days when the family was never likely to visit the actual tombstone on Gallipoli.

The personal file of Private Stokes does not mention any military pension but there is a file (not in digital form) that suggests a pension was paid and the file was closed in 1931. (NAA Series PP13/1 Control C35847 refers). Thomas Stokes, the Next of kin of Private Stokes, died in 1930 aged 64 and was buried in the Bunbury 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----------