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Stranger, Thomas James

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:	Driver

Rail employment notes: Born 7/3/1864. Joined WAGR 1/12/1891 aged 27 as Boiler Washer, Fremantle. Promoted to Fireman 27/7/1892 and Acting Driver 10/1/1893. Appointed Driver, Perth 4/11/1895 and transferred to Fremantle 27/1/1902, Perth 22/7/1902, Kalgoorlie 1909 and Shed Driver, Perth 1913.

(The promotions from washing out boilers to fireman and then driver were relatively fast and probably show Mr Stranger had experience as a driver before emigrating to WA.)

Enlisted in Railway Corps. AIF 5/12/1916 (Service No.872). Died of illness in England 10/4/1918 aged 54.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	5th Australian Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company
Service number:	872
Date of death:	10 April 1918
Place of death:	Dartford, England UK (in Hospital)
Age:	54
Rank:	Sergeant

Burial/memorialisation: Brookwood Military Cemetery, Pirbright, Surrey, England, United Kingdom

Thomas Stranger enlisted in the AIF on 19 December 1916, and was allocated to No.3 Section, Railway Unit with regimental number 872. After limited training, they embarked on HMAT *Miltiades* on 29 January 1917 from Fremantle to sail for England and Europe.

His unit was later known as the 5th Australian Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company. “Broad gauge” in this case meant the soldiers who would help keep the existing railways in France and other countries operating. They were distinct from units laying and operating temporary narrow gauge lines to move troop and supplies to the front.

Unfortunately he was taken ill in early 1918 and shipped back to England for treatment. He died in the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford, Kent, England of illness (Cholelithiasis and peritonitis – gall stones and complications) on 10 April 1918.

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Additional/personal information:

Thomas Stranger was born in Ballarat Victoria in 1864, a son of Thomas and Mary Elizabeth Stranger. He later moved to WA, where he married Eliza Margaret Flintoff in 1893.and they had at least 4 children between 1891 and 1897 although the last boy died only the next year.

> STRANGER.—On April 10, 1918, at Dartford Military Hospital, England, Sergeant Thomas James, the beloved husband of Eliza, and loving father of Emmie, Dorothy, and the late Corporal Arthur Stranger (of the 32nd Battalion). Aged 54 years. *The West Australian* 18/4/1918p1
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> STRANGER.—In loving memory of Sergeant Thomas James Stranger, of 5th Australian Railway Operating Division, who died at 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford, EngIand, on April 10, 1918. Inserted by his sorrowing wife and daughters. T*he West Australian* 10/4/1919p1

The epitaph on his gravestone reads "In Memory of dearly beloved husband of E.M.Stranger".

Their son also enlisted, as Corporal Arthur Thomas Stranger, and tragically he also died, killed in France on 20 July 1916.

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----------

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