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Taylor, John Robert

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:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 17/10/1892. Joined WAGR 21/3/1911 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.)

Promoted to Fireman, Bunbury 10/8/1913.

Granted leave to join AIF 23/1/1915 (Service No.1844). Killed in action 12/10/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	1844
Date of death:	12 October 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	25
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Passchendaele New British Cemetery, Passchendaele, Flanders, Belgium

John Robert Taylor enlisted in the AIF on 26 January 1915. On enlistment he declared his mother Mrs Jane Taylor to be his NOK. He had some military training with 2 years and 6 months with Senior Cadets in Bunbury. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and when completed he was assigned to 4th Reinforcement for 11 Battalion with the regimental number 1844 and departed from Fremantle aboard HMAT *Argyllshire* for Egypt.

He crossed to Gallipoli very soon after arrival in Egypt and was taken-on-strength of 11 Battalion on 4 June 1915. He campaigned until 15 September 1915 when he reported sick with diarrhoea, was admitted to hospital and then transferred to Egypt by the hospital ship HMHS *Guildford Castle*. Private Taylor landed at Alexandria on 20 September 1915 and was admitted to 17 General Hospital where his condition was described as dysentery. He was being prepared for return to Gallipoli when that campaign came to an end. He re-joined 11 Battalion on 07 Jan 1916. On 29 Feb 1916 he was transferred to the newly raised 51 Bn and trained in Egypt until 05 Jun 1916 when the Bn departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

Following the Battles at Pozieres and Moquet Farm he was granted a period of furlough in England. While on leave he reported sick with a fever and was admitted to 2 Australian Army Hospital on 19 Dec 1916. The precise nature of this illness is not documented but he spent many months in England

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and for part of this time was attached to 70 Battalion, which grouped soldiers recovering. Having been passed fit for duty Private Taylor crossed to France on 12 September 1917 where he joined a base depot until taken-on-strength of 51 Battalion, in the field, on 24 September 1917.

He was Killed in action during the latter stages of the Third Battle of Ypres (now Ieper) on 12 October 1917. On that day the weather was foul and the ground had been rendered atrocious by constant shelling but the assault on the remains of Passchendaele (now Passendale) village went ahead. Pte Taylor was KIA during the assault there is no record of a burial but after the War his remains were identified and buried in the Passchendaele New British Cemetery. This cemetery is unique in that all 504 burials have been concentrated from other small burial areas or recovered from the battlefield.

Additional/personal information:

John Taylor was born in Victoria, a son of George Briggs Taylor and Jane (nee Atkins) Taylor. He was the sixth of ten children. The family moved west when he was young and he attended Bunbury State School. (Vic BDM 29565/1892)

> TAYLOR.—In sad but loving remembrance of our dear sons and brothers, Private J. R.Taylor, 51st Battalion, killed in action October 12, 1917; also Private F. T. Taylor, 51st Battalion, died of wounds July 7, 1916. … Inserted by their sorrowing mother, Mrs. J. Taylor, and sister, Mrs. H. Rosell.
> *The West Australian* 112/10/1918p1

For his service Private Taylor was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother along with other memorabilia (his father being dead). His family paid for an inscription on his tombstone which read: "In Loving Memory of our Dear Son & Brother, Never Forgotten". Pte Taylor left a Will in his paybook which named his mother as the sole beneficiary. Mrs Taylor received a pension of 80/- per fortnight with effect from 09 Jan 1918.

John Taylor had two brothers who also served in the AIF. Pte Frederick T Taylor, 51 Battalion who Died of wounds at Flers on 7 July 1916 and Pte Clifford Lorne Taylor, 16 Bn who returned to Australia. Mrs Jane Taylor, the NOK of Pte J R Taylor died on 03 Aug 1928 and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery.

Pte John Taylor has a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M278A) alongside that of his brother (M278).

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----------