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Touzel, John Charles

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 19/8/1891. Joined WAGR 1/11/1909 aged 18 as Cleaner, Kalgoorlie. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise working around the locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder.)

Transferred to Coolgardie 30/1/1910, Kalgoorlie 18/4/1911 and Perth 21/6/1911. Promoted to Fireman 1/7/1911 and transferred to Kalgoorlie 6/11/1911, Norseman 6/9/1912, Kalgoorlie 2/12/1913, Coolgardie 15/12/1913 and Kalgoorlie 20/5/1914. Granted leave to join AIF 7/1/1915 (Service No.1680). Killed in action 11/4/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	16th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	1680
Date of death:	11 April 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	25
Rank:	Sergeant

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

John Charles Touzel enlisted in the AIF on 11 January 1915. On enlistment he stated that he had no previous military experience and nominated his mother, Margaret, as his Next of kin but this was later amended to his father Mr L N Touzel. He underwent basic military training at Blackboy Hill Camp and was assigned to 3rd Reinforcements to 16th Battalion with the regimental number 1680. He departed Australia through Fremantle aboard A50 HMAT *Itonus* on 22 February 1915. Following arrival in Egypt he was transferred to Gallipoli via Lemnos and then taken on strength of 16 Bn, in the field. He reported sick and was transferred to 19 General Hospital, Egypt where he was admitted as an inpatient between 30 August 1915 and 9 September 1915. Following a period of convalescence, he returned to Gallipoli on 2 October 1915 and returned to the strength of 16 Bn on 11 October 1915. Following return to Egypt he went with the machine gunners as they passed from Battalion control to Brigade control and on 9 March 1916, he was posted to 4 Machine Gun Companyy. (Both 16 Bn and 4 MG Coy were under the umbrella of 4 Brigade.)

The Company departed Alexandria on 1 June 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 09 Jun 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. He participated in the Battles of Pozieres and Moquet Farm. On 5 September 1916 he returned to 16 Bn and was promoted to the rank of Corporal the same day. Cpl Touzel was absent with illness between 30 October 1916 and 17 November 1916. Cpl Touzel developed mumps and was absent in various hospitals and a convalescent depot before he rejoined 16 Bn on 17 February 1917. Promotion to Sergeant followed on 31 March 1917. On 11 April 1917 he was posted as Missing in Action following the disastrous attack on Bullecourt but this was amended to Killed in Action by a Court of Enquiry held on 30 October 1917. His remains were never identified, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux memorial.

Additional/personal information:

John Touzel was born in Wagga Wagga, NSW the son of Louis Norman Touzel and Margaret Mary Touzel (nee Clifford). It appears the family moved west soon after (as did many people after the rapid development of the goldfields) because a brother Clifford Norman John Touzel was born in Coolgardie in 1897.

As happened too often, the enthusiastic enlistment of many young men put whole families at risk. Sgt Touzel had another brother who enlisted as 470 Pte Reginald Touzel of 2 Bn who was returned from Egypt as medically unfit in April 1915 – perhaps the lucky one because John and Clifford Touzel were later killed in the same battle on the same day as each other:

> TOUZEL. - On April 11th, killed in action, somewhere in France, Sergt John Charles Touzel, also Private Clifford Norman Touzel, beloved only son of Mr. and Mrs L. N. Touzel, Wyalkatchem, loved brothers of Mr. and Mrs. George Sheedy, Westral Hotel, Coolgardie, nephews of Mrs. J. Nyhan, Newcastle-street, Perth. immaculate heart of Mary, Pray for them. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 24/11/1917p4

The Graves Registration Unit last letter to his NOK was dated 1926 and advised that the search for his remains had been abandoned. There are a number of reports on his Red Cross File concerning his death. The accounts from 1819 Pte Sisely and 5382 Pte Meredith give a clear description of a bullet wound to the forehead. In the subsequent withdrawal his body was left where he fell on the parapet.

Further information 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----------