Tough, Alexander

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Shunter

Rail employment notes: Born 18/12/1895. Joined WAGR 29/7/1913 aged 17 as Junior Porter, Midland Junction. Appointed to Porter, 18/12/1916 ("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR and Midland, a busy junction station and terminus of suburban passenger trains, probably had at least 10 porters).

Promoted to Shunter 1/3/1917. Granted leave to join AIF 22/5/1917 (Service No.4394). Killed in action 3/5/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	48th Battalion.
Service number:	4394
Date of death:	3 May 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	22
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, France

Alexander Tough enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 30 April 1917. He nominated his father Mr W A Tough of Bayswater as his Next of kin. He had significant military experience in that he had served for 3 years in the Citizen Military Force of the Australian Engineers at the Guildford base. Because of this background he was assigned to 12th Reinforcements to 2nd Pioneer Battalion. Pte Tough departed Australia through the Port of Melbourne on 30 October 1917 aboard A60 HMAT *Aeneas* and disembarked at Devonport on 27 Dec !917. Pte Tough was entered with the 32nd Bn details on 02 Jan 1918. On 4 April 1918 following infantry training with 32 Bn in England he joined a reinforcement party bound for 48 Bn and departed the UK via Dover. For an unknown reason he was processed through the Australian Medical Board Base Depot before being taken on strength of 48 Bn in the field. He entered action almost immediately in the action around Villers-Bretonneux and was posted as MIA on 03 May 1918. At the time he was a bomber in D Coy of 48 Bn.

4345 Pte A Harris also a D Coy bomber and a close neighbour from Perth later provided a description of his wounding. Pte Tough had been shot through the shoulder, lost a great deal of blood and Pte Harris was of the opinion that he could not survive. The Unit was forced to withdraw and left the dead and wounded where they lay. Pte Tough was never shown on any German POW list and it was

presumed that he died and was buried by the German Army. No Court of Enquiry was held but acting on witness statements his classification was changed from Missing in action to Killed in action (KIA) (03 May 1918). After the War his remains were located and he was then given a formal burial at Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux and his identity discs were sent to his parents in June 1919.

Additional/personal information:

Alexander Tough was born in Kogarah, NSW, the son of William and fanny Tough. A brother William G Tough was also born in Kogarah registered in 1894 (NSW BDM), however it appears the family then joined the migration to WA in the goldrush years.

> TOUGH.—In loving memory of our dear son, Private Alex. Tough, killed in action in France, 1918. — Inserted by his father and mother, Bayswater. Western Mail (Perth) 23/8/1918p19

It appears he had a close friend at home but they would not meet again:

> TOUGH.—A tribute of love to my dear friend Private Alex Tough, killed in action in France, May 3, 1918. —Inserted by his sorrowing friend, Doris Miller, Bayswater. Western Mail (Perth) 23/8/1918p19

His file contains letters from a Mr F G Gould of Birmingham asking about his fate. His relationship to Pte Tough was not stated. For his service Pte Tough was entitled to receive the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His parents paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: For Thou O Lord Art My Refuge.

Military historian Dr Michael Galvin comments:

> At the time that this man reached the BEF the AIF was literally dragging every man they could find into infantry units. General Monash has resorted to disbanding one Battalion in every Brigade and using the "remainders" to reinforce the other 3. He was even using Pioneer Battalions as Infantry. The Pioneers took a great number of casualties in September 1918.

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----------