322

Turnbull, James

A West Australian railway employee
who died while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

James Turnbull was below the legal age for overseas service but enlists directly into the Railway Corps because of his work experience. Germany surrenders while he is en route by ship. He reaches France but is never actually taken on strength of any unit before he falls victim to Influenza which progresses to Pneumonia with a fatal outcome.

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 22/10/1899. Joined WAGR 21/2/1917 aged 17 as Junior Porter, Kalgoorlie. Transferred to Kurrawang 11/2/1918. Appointed Cleaner, Kalgoorlie 14/3/1918. ("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.) Granted leave to join AIF 31/5/1918 (Service No.2834). Died of influenza 21/2/1919.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	Australian Railway Operating Division Depot
Service number:	2834
Date of death:	21 February 1919
Place of death:	France
Age:	28
Rank:	Sapper (Private)

Burial/memorialisation: Ste Marie Cemetery, Le Havre, France

James Turnbull of Boulder enlisted in the AIF in Kalgoorlie on 13 May 1918. He had been in the compulsory military cadet scheme for 4 years, was employed in the WAGR as a cleaner and was directly accepted into the Australian Railway Corps in the same capacity and assigned the regimental number 2834. His father James was his designated NOK. He enlisted at the age of 18 years with the approval of both parents and produced his birth certificate to verify his age. He departed Australia through the Port of Melbourne on 5 October 1918 aboard SS *Zealandic* (Railway Special Draft) and disembarked in London on 5 December 1918. He marched into the Australian Railway Operating Depot on 6 Dec 1918 and then to France from Dover on 4 February 1919 where he marched into Australian General Base Depot (AGBD) on 7 February 1919. While on the Depot roll, he became ill with Influenza which progressed to Pneumonia and he died in hospital on 21 February 1919. Sapper Turnbull was buried in Ste Marie Cemetery Le Havre.

Additional/personal information:

James Turnbull was born and schooled in Boulder in WA.

His parents paid to have an inscription on his headstone which stated: “In Memory of the Beloved Son of Mr and Mrs Turnbull of Boulder”. For his service Sapper Turnbull was entitled to the British War Medal (sole entitlement) which was issued to his father together with other memorabilia.

> TURNBULL - On 26th February, 1919, at 50th General Base Hospital, London, of influenza, Private James Turnbull, only son of J. and M. Turnbull, 24 Dwyer street, Boulder. Deeply Mourned. *Kalgoorlie Miner* 6/3/1919p4

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----------