Wade, Hector William

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:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 27/11/1896. Joined WAGR 3/7/1913 aged 16 as Call Boy, Perth. “Call boy” was the most junior job for a young man wanting to join the locomotive crews on the WAGR, involving work around the locomotive shed and also being sent out, usually on bicycle, literally to call/wake crews for their rosters, especially when train times changed. The next step up would be Cleaner.

Appointed to Cleaner 27/11/1914. (“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.)

Granted leave to join AIF 14/1/1916 (Service No.925). Killed in action 30/3/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	44th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	925
Date of death:	30 March 1918
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt-L'Abbe, Picardie, France

Hector William Wade enlisted in the AIF on 18 Jan 1916 when the 3rd Division was being raised. The West Australian component of that Division was the 44th Bn and it was to that Unit that he was posted and later allocated the regimental number 925. He stated that he had previous military service in the 88th Infantry Regiment (Militia) and was cleared by that Unit for AIF enlistment. He was able to nominate his mother as his next-of-kin even though his father was still living. Training took place at Blackboy Hill Camp, the Claremont showgrounds and the Osbourne rifle range (later Swanbourne). His training included use of the Vickers Machine Gun and the AWM displays photograph of him positioned in the firing position of that weapon. The machine guns were being withdrawn from Battalion command to Brigade command as he was training. Ultimately, he was never posted to a Machine Gun Company. The Battalion machine gunners were then converted onto the light automatic Lewis Gun.

His Battalion sailed from Fremantle on 6 June 1916 aboard A 29 HMAT *Suevic*. The 3rd Division was directed to Salisbury Plains to complete their training and departed the UK through Southampton on 25 November 1916. The Bn fought its first major engagement in the Battle of Messines. Pte Wade was Wounded in Action on 31 July 1917 following which he was evacuated to a Red Cross Hospital in the UK on 9 August 1917. He recovered quite quickly and was given furlough between 28 July and 7 September 1917. Further rehabilitation followed before he departed the UK on 10 November 1917 and was taken on strength of 3 Australian Division Base Depot. At the Depot his fitness was examined and any deficiencies in equipment made good. He rejoined 44 Bn on 22 November 1917. He was Killed in Action on 30 March 1918 as the Battalion fought to halt the German advance of March 1918. He was buried at Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt-L'Abbe.

Additional/personal information:

Hector Wade was born in Sale, Victoria but the family then moved to Western Australia – as did many people after the gold finds of the 1890s – and he attended school in Northam. His mother recorded after the war that prior to enlistment he was in Citizen Forces and was a guard over German prisoners interned on Rottnest Island.

Dr Galvin comments: "The Lewis Gun was a fantastic piece of equipment and if the Germans captured any they quickly swung them into service. The Germans never developed light automatic guns during WWI although they tried."

He has a memorial plaque in Kings Park (M175) dedicated by his mother. After the War his father was identified and he then received the service medals and memorabilia.

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----------