Wardle, Thomas John

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 26/5/1891. Joined WAGR 7/11/1910 aged 19* as Cleaner, Perth. (see note re age below)

("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.)

Transferred to Fremantle 9/11/1910 and promoted to Fireman 22/12/1912. Transferred to Busselton 27/5/1914 and Merredin 26/11/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 14/9/1915 (Service No.3992). Died of wounds 31/5/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3992
Date of death:	31 May 1916
Place of death:	Fleurbaix, France
Age:	25*
Rank at time of loss:	Private
Buried/commemorated:	Estaires Communal Cemetery and Extension, Estaires, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Thomas John Wardle commenced enlistment in the AIF at Merredin and completed it in Perth on 20 September 1915. He had no previous military experience and nominated his father Mr Robert Wardle as his Next of kin. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp where he was assigned to 12th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion on15 October 1915.

He departed Australia through Fremantle on 22 November 1915 aboard RMS *Mongolia* and disembarked at Alexandria where he marched into 3 Training Battalion before being taken-on-strength of 11 Battalion on 2 March 1916. The Battalion departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* on 29 Mar 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 05 Apr 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

Private Wardle moved into the Fleurbaix sector of the frontline but on 30 May 1916 was badly injured when his section was subjected to a gas attack. Private Wardle was evacuated to 3 Field Ambulance and the following day moved back to 1 Casualty Clearing Station where he Died of wounds at 6-45pm described in the records as death being due to suffocation. He was buried in the Estaires Communal and Extension Cemetery.

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Additional/personal information:

*Thomas Wardle's father stated that Thomas was born at Lambton in the Hunter Valley coalfields of New South Wales (although this is not shown in NSW records). His father gave his age at death as 26 years and 4 days, as do all the family notices, which indicates his birth was 1890 and not 1891. As the birth is not found in NSW records, the age given by all his family seems the more reliable.

He was a son of Robert and Elizabeth Jane (nee Simcox) Wardle. It appears his family moved to WA when he was young and his youngest sisters Isabella and Irene are recorded as born in Fremantle in 1898 and 1904; his father said Thomas' schooling was at North Fremantle State School.

> WARDLE.—On May 31, died of wounds received in action, Private Thomas John Wardle, dearly beloved and only son of Mr. and Mrs. R. Wardle and brother of L. B. J. P. Alford and M. Cary, of North Fremantle. A brave hero at rest. —Inserted by parents and sisters. Newcastle papers please copy. *The West Australian* 20/6/1916p1

Because official notice of deaths took time to arrive, families typically posted a notice on the anniversary, and this gave more details of the family:

> WARDLE.—In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private Thomas John, 11th Battalion, who died of wounds, May 31, 1916, received in France on May 30, aged 26 years 5 days. … —Inserted by his loving parents and sisters Lily, Bella, Irene, North Fremantle.
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> WARDLE.—In loving memory of our dear brother, Private Thomas John, 11th Battalion, who died of wounds May 31, received in France May 30, aged 26 years. … —Inserted by his loving sisters Phoebe Alford and Mary Cary, also brothers-in-law Phil Alford and Private Joe Cary (now in France).
>
> WARDLE.—In sad but loving memory of my dear pal and comrade Tom, who died of wounds received while on active service in France, May 31, 1916. … —Inserted by his loving mate, Ern Dedman (on active service in France). All *The West Australian* 31/5/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father along with other memorabilia. Private Wardle left a will with his mother as the sole beneficiary and she also received a death benefit from the Druids Lodge. The family paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: "Loved in Life, Honoured in Death, Treasured in Memory". His Next of kin, Robert Wardle died aged 58 years on 7 May 1924 however his mother lived until 1955 at the age of 87.

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----------