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Wenn, William Henry

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 14/9/1890. Joined WAGR 3/10/1910 aged 20 as Cleaner, Bunbury. ("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 Donnybrook 7/2/1911 and Bunbury 21/8/1912. Promoted to Fireman 8/12/1912 and transferred to Northam 9/4/1915, Merredin 28/4/1915, Donnybrook 1/7/1915 and Bunbury 5/8/1915.

Granted leave to join AIF 10/10/1916 (Service No.6399). Killed in action 18/10/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	50th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	6399
Date of death:	18 October 1917
Place of death:	Polygon Wood, belgium
Age:	26
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

William Henry Wenn enlisted in the AIF on 18 Oct 1916 at Blackboy Hill Camp. On enlistment he nominated his mother Mrs Selina Wenn of Bunbury as his Next of kin and declared that he had no previous military experience. On completion of his basic training he was assigned to 18th Reinforcements to 27 Battalion and departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard transport ship HMAT *Berrima* on 23 December 1916.

He disembarked at Devonport on 16 February 1917 having been admitted to the sick quarters of the ship en route. The day after landing he was admitted to the Fargo Military Hospital suffering from pleurisy and on discharge marched into 7 Training Battalion at Rollestone. He crossed to France through Southampton to join the British Expeditionary Force but was again admitted to hospital (39 General Hosp) as a possible case of Tuberculosis. On 30 July 1917 he was discharged from hospital and taken on strength of 50 Battalion instead of his previous allocation to 18th Reinforcements to 27 Battalion.

Private Wenn was Killed in action at Polygon Wood on 18 October 1917 and buried on the battlefield. After the War the Graves Registration Unit were unable to locate his remains so that he has no known grave and is remembered on the Menin Gate at Ypres (now Ieper).

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Additional/personal information:

William Wenn was born in 1890 a son of James Rossmore Wenn and Selina Wenn (nee Buswell). – he was the fourth of eleven children. (BDM) His father appears to have died in 1915.

His sisters Victoria (b.1902) and Brenda (b.1903) are mentioned in respect of military pensions but it appears that only Brenda received a pension. This was for 15/- per fortnight with effect from 15 Jan 1918.

Private Wenn had two brothers who also served in the AIF. These were 3493 Clarence Wenn of 11 Bn and 3858 Douglas Wenn of 4 Pnr Bn. Both brothers returned to Australia. His Next of kin, Mrs Selina Wenn, died on 07 August 1930 at the age of 66 years and is buried in the Bunbury cemetery.

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----------

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