O'Connor, Thomas Patrick

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:	Midland Railway Company of Western Australia Ltd
Branch:	Civil/track
Designation:	Railway employee

Rail employment notes: Employed by the Midland Railway Co. which owned and operated the railway between Midland and Walkaway (south of Geraldton) until 1964. Individual employee records for this company have not been found, however fallen employees have been researched from Honour Boards and other sources.

Thomas O'Connor is described in his army records as a "fettler", or track worker.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4191
Date of death:	3 November 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	27
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Thomas Patrick O'Connor a fettler employed by the Midland Railway Company enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 05 Jan 1916. He nominated his mother Mary Agnes O'Connor as his next of kin (his father died in 1910) and declared that he had no previous military experience. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and while there he made his Will in which he nominated his mother as his sole beneficiary. On completion of training he was assigned to 10th Reinforcement to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 4191.

Private O'Connor departed Australia from Fremantle aboard HMAT *Ulysses* on 1 April 1916 and trans-shipped to HMT *Minnetonka* at Alexandria and disembarked at Plymouth on 12 June 1916 where he joined 7 Training Battalion. He departed the Training Battalion on 25 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force and was taken-on-strength of 28 Battalion from 2 Australian Details Base Depot (ADBD) on 8 August 1916.

On 26 March 1917 he was posted as missing, having been last seen lying wounded in no man's land. His body was finally recovered and buried on the battlefield at Gueudecourt with the map reference recorded. Later, the Graves Registration Unit were unable to locate his remains so he has no known grave, and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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The Australian War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Thomas O'Connor was born in Greenough, south of Geraldton, in 1887, a son of John and Mary Ann (nee Whitley) O'Connor. He was the second of at least four children and was educated at Mingenew State School. (BDM 1147/1887 et al.) It's thought they had arrived in the west with some children already as there is refernce in BDM to another son dying.

> O'CONNOR.—In loving memory of our dear son and brother Private T. P. O'Connor (Mingenew), who made the supreme sacrifice in France, between November 3 and 6, 1916. Gone is the face we love so dear, Silent the voice we long to hear. He gave his life, his all. —Inserted by his sorrowing mother and sister Mary, Goomalling. *The West Australian* 3/11/1917p1

For his services he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother together with other memorabilia. Various pieces of correspondence relating to his estate are on file but nothing else in relation to his mother. There is no record of any military pension.

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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