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Purser, John Joseph

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
Designation:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Employed as a labourer by the Midland Railway Co. which built, owned and operated the railway between Midland and Walkaway (south of Geraldton) until 1964. His father described him as a 'platelayer' indicating he was primarily working on track maintenance.

Individual employee records for Midland Railway have not been located, however Rail Heritage WA has a Midland Railway Honour Board and other resources.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3414A
Date of death:	1 September 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	28
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Daours Communal Cemetery Extension, Daours, Picardie, France

John Joseph Purser enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill on 24 Oct 1916. He nominated his father John Purser as his NOK and declared that he had no previous military experience. After a short period of training he was assigned to 5 Pioneer Battalion with the regimental number 3414 and departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A35 HMAT *Berrima* on 23 December 1916.

Pte Purser disembarked at Devonport on 16 February 1917 and marched into the Pioneer Training Battalion on 18 Feb 1917. His training was interrupted by a hospital admission with Bronchitis between 12 and 26 Mar 1917. On 11 Jul 1917 he was transferred from the Pnr Trg Bn to 7 Training Battalion and marked as a reinforcement for 28 Battalion. He departed England through Southampton on 26 Sep 1917 and entered the British Expeditionary Force when he joined 2 ADBD. He was taken-on-strength of 28 Bn on 03 October 1917 and his regimental number amended by the addition of "A". He saw front line action at Dernancourt, Morlancourt and the Battle of Amiens.

Private Purser was Wounded in action on 29 August 1918 by shrapnel to the head and was carried to 6 Field Ambulance and then to 53 Casualty Clearing Station where he Died of Wounds on 1 September 1918. He was buried in Daours Communal Extension Cemetery which lies some 10 Km East of Amiens.

Additional/personal information:

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John Joseph Purser was born in 1890 in Chittering, north of Midland, and attended Mogumber State School. His parents were John Purser and Mary Jane Purser (nee Clarke) and he was the second of seven children. (BDM 1033/1890)

> PURSER.—On September 1, 1918, Private J. J. Purser, late Midland Railway, Mogumber, aged 27 years, died of wounds received in action somewhere in France. … Inserted by his sorrowing parents, brothers, and sisters. *The West Australian* 23/9/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. Prior to his departure from Australia Pte Purser made his Will in which he bequeathed his estate to his mother. His father (NOK) died at the age of 84 on 05 Dec 1936 and was buried in the same compartment at Karrakatta cemetery as his wife who had died on 19 Nov 1936.

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----------