Foster, Norman Douglas

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country

Norman Foster worked in the railway workshops at Midland before enlisting in the Navy. He died in the sinking of HMAS *Sydney* – along with two more workshops employees.



Memorial at Geraldton to sailors lost on HMAS Sydney II (G. Higham)

Rail employment information

Employer: Western Australian Government Railways

Branch: Workshops

Designation: Moulder

Rail employment notes: Born 15 April 1913. Joined WAGR 6 January 1930 aged 16 as Apprentice Moulder, CME Branch, Midland Workshops. Appointed Moulder 26 February 1935.

Enlisted in RAN 4/9/1939 (date in WAGR records). Died 20/11/1941.

Military service information:

Conflict: Second World War 1939-1945

Service: Royal Australian Navy

Military unit: HMAS *Sydney* (II)

Service number: F2147

Date of death: 20 November 1941

Place of death: Indian Ocean

Rank at time of loss: Engine Room Artificer 4th Class

Age: 28 (see below)

Burial/Memorialisation: no individual grave; Remembered on the HMAS *Sydney* II memorial in Geraldton.

Norman Foster enlisted in the RAN on 2 September 1939. By 1941 he was a crew member of the Australian light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* (the second RAN ship to bear this name), D48 on the Navy's register.

HMAS *Sydney* was fatally damaged in a fight with a German raider HSK *Kormoran* offshore from Carnarvon on 19 November 1941, and is believed to have sunk early the next morning. No crew of HMAS *Sydney* survived, and the sunken ship was the subject of much enquiry and speculation until the wreck was located in 2008.

Unfortunately two other fellow employees from the WAGR Midland workshops also died in this tragedy; Ivan Jones and Alfred Shepherd.

Additional/personal information:

WA BDM records show his birth was registered (belatedly) in the Perth district in 1916 (ref 889/1916) but he was born on 15 April 1913. There is no record indicating he married.

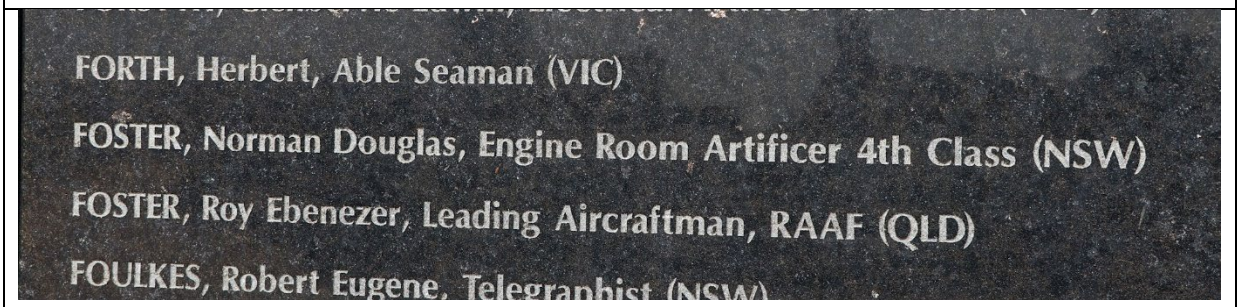
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When he enlisted, he gave his next of kin as Edna Foster, perhaps his mother, but family details have not been found and the only newspaper notices seen are from an aunt, and friends:

> FOSTER.- In loving memory of our dear Nephew and Cousin, Petty-Officer (Doug). posted missing. H.M.A.S. Sydney. Ever remembered.
> Inserted by Mrs. Stuart. Ted and Frank. *The West Australian* 20/12/1941p1
> FOSTER.-On active service with H.M.A.S. Sydney. N. D. (Doug) E.R.A. His duty nobly done.
> Inserted by Rose and Morris Eagles. *The West Australian* 8/12/1941p1



HMAS Sydney memorial at Geraldton: the wall of names; Norman Foster recorded. Phil Melling



Norman Foster is also recorded on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Plymouth, Devon, United Kingdom.

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* and on the navy website *http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-ii*

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).

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J. Austin 2019. Family information and collation by G. Higham. Photos courtesy Phil Melling.

----------Lest we forget----------