Thompson, Richard St George

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



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways
Branch:	Chief Civil Engineer
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Repairer, Malcolm. Died as POW.

("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge. The WAGR employed many such men, with many at very small settlements such as Malcolm or in tent camps.)

Military service information

Conflict:	Second World War 1939-1945
Service:	Australian Army
Military unit:	2/6 Field Park Company
Service number:	WX7183
Date of death:	13 July 1943
Place of death:	Thailand
Rank at time of death:	Sapper (Private)
Age:	31

Buried/commemorated: Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

Richard Thompson enlisted on 1 August 1940 at Claremont. He quoted his Next of Kin as Elsie Thompson, his wife. After training as WX7183 he was allocated to 2/6th Field Park Company, which comprised recruits mainly from Western Australia. Other ex WA railway employees were in the2/6th with him.

The Field Park companies were mainly involved in logistics, workshops and other support and supply tasks. This was part of the 8th Division which was sent to Singapore and Malaya and fought against the enemy until the surrender in 1942.

The British commander of allied forces in Singapore surrendered on 15 February 1942. More than 130 000 Allied troops were taken prisoner. More than 15 000 Australian soldiers were captured. Of these, more than 7 000 would die as prisoners of war.

Sapper Thompson died of illness as a prisoner, having been transported to Thailand, on 13 July 1943.

Additional/personal information:

Richard Thompson was born on 23 April 1912 in Singapore, a son of Mr & Mrs B.D.G Thompson. He later came to Western Australia. He married Elsie Maud Guppy, who had been born in WA in 1914, in Coolgardie district in 1936 and it appears the couple had one child, a son Laurie.

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As often happened in war, and especially with those taken prisoner, the death was not confirmed for some time, although families might first be advised that a soldier was "missing". It seems the family finally had confirmation in October 1945:

> THOMPSON (Richard St George). Died of illness while P.O.W.. July 13 1943: husband of Elsie. loving father of Laurie. Sleep happy, Dick. *The West Australian* 13/10/1945p1
>
> THOMPSON (Richard St George). Pal and brother of Jim Guppy (A.I.F. Borneo).
>
> THOMPSON (Richard St George). Died of illness while P.O.W.. July 13. 1943: loved brother-in-law of Enid and Tom Ditchburn and uncle of Janice.
>
> THOMPSON (Dick). — On July 13, 1949, loved brother-in-law of Nicky and Les Gille and uncle of Beryl and Lesley.... All *The West Australian* 16/10/1945p1

Richard Thompson is buried in the Kanchanaburi War cemetery in Thailand.

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. Family information and collation by G.Higham

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