

'Lives on the Line'

Each of the railwaymen who enlisted is represented in the artwork by a handmade stoneware object, created by members of the public using press moulds and clay. The moulds were used to create facsimiles of objects from the collections of Transport Heritage NSW and the Australian War Memorial. These small, everyday objects are the types of things that soldiers and railwaymen wore on their uniforms or on their person, the types of artefacts that became trapped in the mud of battlefields and later excavated.



NSW Government Railways uniform button

Polished buttons on uniforms were an important part of the public face of railway staff in NSW. Sets of brass or silver-plated buttons were issued, and fixed through holes in coats and jackets using pins or rings. These buttons were removable, which meant only a single set of buttons needed to be issued for multiple uniform articles.

RailCorp Moveable Heritage Collection



Unofficial collar badge

This unofficial collar badge belonged to a Sydney tram conductor who enlisted in 1914 with the 6 Light Horse Regiment, AIF. The badge shows the numeral '6' and a standing bird, believed to be a fighting cockerel. Unofficial hat and collar badges were a peculiarity of the Middle East campaigns. These badges were privately designed and purchased by Regiments or individuals; some were made to order in Australia or Britain, others were cheaply sand-cast in Egypt.

Australian War Memorial Collection. REL/18156



Anzac 'A' badge

The brass 'A' Gallipoli service badge was authorised for wear by Gallipoli veterans on their unit colour patches in 1916. Originally embroidered, they took the form of brass letters from 1917. The best estimate from recent research is that about 180 New South Wales Government Railways men died at Gallipoli, with most of the deceased buried on the battlefield.

Australian War Memorial Collection.



Guard's whistle

Train guards on the NSW Government Railways were issued whistles to help them to communicate imminent departure to intending passengers, station staff and enginemen. This whistle was a very personal item and represents the working life on the railway that these recruits from the railways left behind.



Rising Sun badge

Australia, unlike most other Commonwealth countries, did not adopt metal regimental badges during the First World War. All units were issued with the Australian Army General Service Badge, better known as the 'The Rising Sun' badge.

Australian War Memorial Collection.



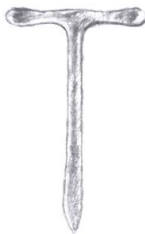
Engineers shoulder title

Engineers, also known as sappers, were essential to the running of the war. As well as constructing railways, their responsibilities included constructing the lines of defence, temporary bridges, tunnels and trenches, observation posts, roads, communication lines, buildings of all kinds, showers and bathing facilities, and other material and mechanical solutions to the problems associated with fighting in all theatres. *Australia War memorial collection. REL31916*



Infantry shoulder title

As the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) did not use regimental badges, distinctive insignia were worn on uniforms to identify the wearer's unit. In September 1914 it was announced that oxidised copper letters and numerals would be issued for wear on the collars of officer's tunics and on the shoulder straps of other ranks. Many railwaymen served in the infantry. *Australia War memorial collection. RELAWM07839.006*



Square key

Most NSW Government Railway sitting carriage doors were locked with a simple locking mechanism, operated by square-shanked keys, like this one. Keys were issued to train crew to allow them access train carriages, and to lock and unlock doors. This was an essential piece of kit for any Traffic Branch officer on the NSW Railways.

THNSW Collection.



Sydney Locomotive Brotherhood watch fob

This nine carat engraved gold watch fob was presented to Private Mersey Albert Reid, a railway fireman, on his departure from Sydney on 2 October 1915. He enlisted in August 1915, aged 25, and was killed in action at Pozieres on 28 July 1916.

Australian War Memorial Collection. REL29647



Wound badge

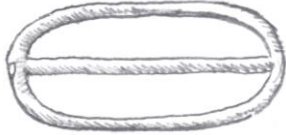
This was a strip of narrow gold Russia braid, two inches in length, worn perpendicularly on the left sleeve of the uniform jacket to mark each occasion a soldier was wounded badly enough to be evacuated from the front line.

Australian War Memorial Collection. REL/00227, REL38980



Australia shoulder title

All ranks wore an 'AUSTRALIA' title at the base of their shoulder straps.
Australian War Memorial Collection



Slide from a tunic belt

Oval brass wire slide for an Australian soldier's tunic belt, found at Gallipoli in 1919.
Australian War Memorial Collection. RELAWM07839.005



SL key

The NSW Railways standardised locks across its systems to ensure train crew could easily access buildings such as signal boxes, and emergency safeworking equipment. This was one of the standard keys that were issued to train crew as part of their equipment. This standardisation of locks is still in place today.



General service whistle

Whistles were a vital communication tool on World War 1 battlefields, used in action to issue commands and warnings.
Australian War Memorial Collection. REL/00640