Bailey, Francis William Samuel

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:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Born 22/1/1895. Joined WAGR 2/2/1910 aged 15 as Cadet, in Perth. Transferred in same role to Coolgardie 11/9/1912, then to Perth 11/7/1914. Promoted to Clerk, Perth, 1/11/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 16/9/1915. Killed in action 3/9/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	n/a
Date of death:	3 September 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	21
Rank:	Lieutenant

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

Francis William Samuel Bailey was serving as a Second Lieutenant in 86th Regiment of Infantry (a volunteer militia unit) on enlistment. He had qualified for commissioned rank by competitive examination in May 1913. On 16 September 1915 he applied for an AIF commission which was successful and he was enlisted as a second Lieutenant in 12 Battalion.

> District headquarters have been notified from headquarters. Melbourne, of the following Western Australian appointments .. Lieutenant F. W. S. Bailey, 86th Infantry appointed to 11th reinforcements, 12th Battalion. *The West Australian* 24/9/1915p7

He subsequently departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A24 HMAT *Benalla* on 1 November 1915. On appointment he nominated his mother Mrs Stella Bailey as his Next of kin even though his father was alive, but absent at Wuraming WA. He remained with the reinforcements in Egypt until 3 March 1916 when he was taken-on-strength of 52 Bn as that Battalion was formed.

He was transferred to 51 Battalion on 26 March 1916. His rank was increased to Lieutenant on 11 April 1916. The Battalion entered a period of intensive individual and formation training until 5 June 1916 when it departed Egypt from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. The Battalion entered frontline service at the Battle for Moquet Farm and it was there that Lieutenant Bailey was posted Missing in Action on 3 September 1916. His Red Cross File contains a number of reports stating that he died from a Gunshot wound to the head after an earlier GSW to the shoulder earlier that day. None of the reports indicate if

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he was buried. His status remained Missing in action (believed killed) until a Court of Enquiry on 23 April 1917 amended it to Killed in Action on 3 September 1916. Lieutenant Bailey has no known grave but is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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:

Francis Bailey was born in Melbourne, Victoria in 1895, the eldest son of Joseph Henry Bailey and Sarah Jane Bailey (nee McGee). A sister Euphemia had also been born in Vic, in 1893. But the family must have moved west soon after Francis' birth as several children are born in WA from 1896 to 1905, mostly in the Great Southern region.

Unfortunately, due to conditions in battle, the family had to wait nearly nine months before official confirmation of Francis' death, after the Court of Enquiry:

> "Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Bailey. 6 Robinson street, Subiaco, have been informed that their eldest son, Lieutenant F. W. S. Bailey, was killed in action on September 3 last. He was formerly in the railway offices at Perth and Coolgardie." *The West Australian* 21/5/1917p7,

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia.

As with many families in Australia, Francis was not the only tragedy of the war. His sister Harriett had married Edward Properjohn, who was killed in Belgium, as a Private in the 28th Australian Infantry Battalion, on 12 October 1916.

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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