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Bennett, Herbert George

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



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

Herbert Bennett was born into a large family of whom sadly two brothers died in the 19i4-18 war, while a third brother returned to Australia but died soon afterwards from illness likely related to his war service. Families often paid a terrible price.

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Leading Examiner

Rail employment notes: Born 3/3/1877. Joined WAGR 13/6/1896 aged 19 as Lifter, Fremantle. Transferred to Examiner, Perth 16/8/1896 and later promoted to Leading Examiner, Loco Branch. Examiners were responsible for checking the safety of trains before they set out, particularly wheels, brakes and undercarriage, and included the men often seen with a hammer tapping wheels to check for the sound of a crack in the days of cast wheels.
Enlisted in 28th Battalion AIF 15/3/1915 (Service No.568) Killed in action 29/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	568
Date of death:	29 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	39
Rank:	Private

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

Herbert George Bennett enlisted in the AIF at Kalgoorlie on 15 March 1915. He had no previous military experience and nominated his father James Dunn Bennett as his Next of Kin. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 568. The Battalion departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A11 HMAT *Ascanius* on 9 June 1915 and disembarked at Alexandria on 29 June 1915. They continued training in Egypt until 4 September 1915 when they departed for Egypt from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* for Gallipoli.

Following service on Gallipoli Private Bennett returned to Egypt on 10 January 1916. After a short break for rest and taking on reinforcements the Bn departed Egypt from Alexandria on 16 March 1916 aboard HMT *Themistocles* and joined the British Expeditionary Force at Marseilles on 22 March 1916. Following movement by rail to the Armentieres sector the Battalion was introduced to trench warfare following which it moved to take part in the Battle for Pozieres. Private Bennett was admitted

to hospital suffering from influenza on 1 May 1916 and was not fit to re-join 28 Bn until 2 June 1916. He was Killed in Action at Pozieres on 29 July 1916. His body was never recovered, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Additional/personal information:

Herbert Bennett was born in South Yarra Victoria in 1877, the second child of at least thirteen births registered in Victoria to James Dunn Bennett and Sarah Bennett (nee Kerr) (Vic BDM 11698/1877). He attended school in the same town. He then must have moved to WA by 1896 when he began working for the WAGR. (There was very significant immigration to WA from eastern states from about 1892-1906 following gold finds and development of mining in the Eastern Goldfields and the Murchison.)

At least two of the children died young in Victoria but the rest of the family appear to have followed Herbert and moved west after the thirteenth child was born in 1899. The father took up farming in Pinjar, now a locality in the City of Wanneroo but which must have been an isolated location at that time.

> BENNETT.—Killed in action in France on July 28, Herbert George (Bert) late W.A.G.R., Perth and Kalgoorlie, for 18 years, dearly-beloved son of James Dunn and late S.Bennett, loving brother of Mrs. Lindsay Campbell, Daisy, and Albert (on active service), aged 39 years and 5 months. Also killed in action at landing at Gallipoli, April 25 1915, James Dunn (Jim), dear son and brother of above, aged 21 years 9 months. Deeply regretted. *The West Australian* 25/8/1916p1

His father died in 1933 aged 79 years and was buried at Karrakatta cemetery. Pte Bennett had a younger brother James Dunn Bennett who served as 2018 in 6 Bn and was Killed in Action at the disastrous landing on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 (the origin of Anzac Day). Another brother Albert enlisted as 119 in 44 Bn. Albert gave his age as 18 years on enlistment but his father later stated that he was actually 17 years old. Albert returned to Australia on 8 July 1919 but died 5 months later in Geraldton from meningitis.

For his service Herbert 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. He was a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees and there is correspondence from that Society on his file.

Herbert is also honoured on the Wanneroo War Memorial.

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 P.M.Rogers and G.Higham.

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