Blythe, Drummond James

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:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Labourer, Ways & Works Branch.

Full career records have not been located, however The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures. Blythe's mother gave his calling as 'Telephone construction' - the WAGR had an extensive system of lines to build and maintain, as they built telegraph wires following every railway line for messages and safe-working.

11th Battalion AIF (Service No.863). Wounded at Gallipoli and died 6/6/1915.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	863
Date of death:	6 June 1915
Place of death:	Gallipoli, Dardanelles, Turkey
Age:	22
Rank:	Driver

Burial/memorialisation: Lone Pine Memorial, Gallipoli Peninsula, Canakkale Province, Turkey

Drummond James Blythe and his brother Francis Albert Blythe travelled from Bunbury and both enlisted at Blackboy Hill Camp on 7 September 1914. Drummond's father had died earlier so he nominated his mother Mrs Eliza Louise Blythe to be his Next of kin. He had previously been a member of Senior Cadets for 2 years and a member of 86th Infantry Regiment (Militia) for 2 years. At some time, he elected to be classified as a Driver but the date of this change is not recorded. His records at the AWM show a fine photograph of a soldier in uniform (P03169.010) which is allegedly Blythe. There must be very strong doubt that this is correct. The shape is correct for a Battalion of the 1st Division but the upper half is quite clearly white. The two units of the Division with a white upper were 12 Bn and 16 Bn while 11 Bn was Brown over Light Blue. His records fail to show that he was ever posted to either 12 or 16 Bn before being assigned to 11 Battalion. Most likely incorrect labelling at AWM or an error in the family records. He participated in basic training following which he was assigned to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 863.

The Battalion boarded HMAT *Ascanius* at Fremantle on 31 Oct 1914 but did not depart until 02 Nov 1914. *Ascanius* then joined the first convoy which had earlier departed from Albany with a substantial Naval escort to provide cover against the German Light Cruiser *Embden* which was thought to roaming the Indian Ocean. Ascanius later suffered minor damage in a collision with Shropshire and

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was required to enter Aden for repairs before proceeding up the Red Sea. Suez was reached on 05 Dec 1914 and the troops disembarked the following day and established camp at Mena with other elements of the 3rd Brigade. Training continued in Egypt until 02 Mar 1915 when the Bn moved by rail to Alexandria, boarded HMT *Suffolk* and sailed for Mudros on Lemnos Island. There was a delay of 7 weeks while the troops practiced the use of scrambling nets and maintained fitness with route marches on the Island. On 25 Apr 1915 11th Bn as part of the 3rd Brigade landed at Anzac Cove and suffered considerable casualties. Dvr Blythe participated in the actions throughout May 1915 but was WIA on an unknown date and unknown place before being evacuated to Mudros where he was taken aboard HMHS *Sicilia* and left for Malta. He Died of wounds en route on 6 June 1915 and was buried at sea on 7 June 1915. He is remembered on the Lone Pine Memorial.

Additional/personal information:

Drummond Blythe was born in Bunbury but attended Christian Brothers College in Perth.

His mother was initially granted a pension of £13 per annum which was varied to 43/- per fortnight with effect 06 Aug 1915. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother along with other memorabilia.

His brother who had enlisted on the same day served as 858 Cpl F A Blythe, 11 Bn and Died of wounds on 30 July 1916 from wounds received at Pozieres. He is buried in the Chichester Cemetery England. Mrs E L Blythe died in 1946, (BDM Wellington 92/1946).

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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