039

Burnett, Allan Scott

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



Plaque commemorating L/Sgt Burnett in Kings Park

Rail employment information

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

Rail employment notes: Born 28/8/1885. Joined WAGR 2/4/1900 aged 14 as Telephone Boy, Perth. Appointed to Cadet, Perth 1/7/1900 and promoted to Clerk, Perth 1/7/1905. Transferred to Bunbury 29/5/1907, to Perth 24/8/1907, to Geraldton 11/5/1911 and Perth 28/4/1913.
The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for all track and structures.

Granted leave to join AIF 9/9/1914. Killed in action 11/7/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	16th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	240
Date of death:	11 July 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	31
Rank:	Lance Sergeant

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Belgium

Alan Scott Burnett enlisted in the AIF at the age of 29 years. On 20 October 1914 at Blackboy Hill Camp he was allocated to 16 Battalion with the regimental number 240. He had no previous military experience and nominated his mother as his Next of kin. (Later when the Army discovered that his father was still living the Next of kin was amended to his father.) On 21 November 1914 the West Australian component of 16 Battalion sailed to Melbourne from Fremantle via Adelaide aboard SS *Indarra* where they entered Broadmeadows Camp while the 4th Brigade was concentrated.

Military training continued under the direction of Colonel John Monash and the Brigade paraded through the streets of Melbourne prior to departure for Egypt. Allan Burnett was promoted to the rank of Corporal on 20 November 1914 and the Battalion sailed from Port Melbourne on 22 December 1914 aboard A40 HMAT *Ceramic*. Arrival at Alexandria was on 3 February 1915 and all troops were disembarked by 4 February 1915 and marched to Aerodrome Camp. Training continued in Egypt before the Battalion departed Alexandria aboard *Haida Pascha* for Lemnos. At Lemnos they practised leaving the ship by scrambling nets and beach landing from ship's boats. On 25 April 1915 the Battalion arrived at Gallipoli but did not land until late afternoon. Corporal Burnett was Wounded

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in Action at the landing. He suffered a bullet wound to an arm without a fracture. Treatment was in 1 Stationary Hospital on Lemnos and he was fit to rejoin the Battalion on 14 June 1915. Military action was virtually continuous at that time and only slackened off as the weather changed to freezing. On 23 Nov ember1915 he was appointed Temporary Company Quartermaster Sergeant and this was confirmed as a substantive appointment 2 days later.

The Battalion withdrew to Egypt as the Gallipoli campaign ended and the Australian Forces were re-organized from 2 to 4 Divisions. The 16th Battalion departed Alexandria on 1 June 1916 aboard SS *Canada* and joined the British Expeditionary Force through Marseilles on 9 June 1916. After some service in a quiet sector the Battalion moved to the Pozieres-Moquet Farm sector. Sgt Burnett survived the terrible battles in that sector until the onset of winter. At his own request he reverted from CQMS to Lance Sergeant on 28 July 1916. On 22 December 1916 he reported sick and was hospitalized in 1 Australian Dermatological Hospital in the UK and graded non-effective for the next 90 days. After hospitalisation he returned to France and on 3 May 1917 which he rejoined 16 Battalion in the Messines sector of Belgium. He was Killed in Action on 11 July 1917 at Ploegsteert. His body was never recovered so he has no known grave but is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial, Belgium.

Additional/personal information:

Allan Burnett was born in New South Wales in 1885, the eldest of 4 births (all boys) registered to James and Kathleen Burnett in the Sydney area. His names was registered as "Allen" but he seems to have used "Allan" in later life. (NSW BDM 2872/1885 et al)

The family then moved to WA, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, and 2 daughters were born here in 1898 and 1903.

Despite his body being lost, advice reached the family relatively soon – some families waited for many months.

> BURNETT.--Killed in action on July 11, Sergeant Allan Scott Burnett, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. James Burnett, Wisbech-street Bayswater. *The West Australian* 3/8/1917p1

He has a memorial plaque in Kings Park (L059) dedicated by his parents (see photo).

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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