045

Cameron, Archibald William

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:	Traffic
Designation:	Junior Worker

Rail employment notes: Born 5/3/1895. Joined the Western Australian Government Railways (WAGR) 11 September 1912 aged 17 as Junior Porter, Perth. Transferred to West Guildford (now called Woodbridge) 16/2/1914, to Burswood 23/2/1914 and to Perth Goods 1/9/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 21/7/1915 (Service No.1231). Killed in action 20/6/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	32nd Battalion
Service number:	1231
Date of death:	20 June 1918
Place of death:	Corbie, France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Beacon Cemetery, Sailly Laurette, France

Archibald William Cameron (AKA "Archie") enlisted in the AIF on 19 July 1915 with the approval of his mother. At the time of his enlistment Australia had decided to create a second division in response to the flood of volunteers coming forward is response to the Gallipoli campaign. Even creating a whole new division did not accommodate the numbers and the decision was made to create an 8th Brigade. Using the model of the 4th Brigade one of the Battalions would be formed with two companies each from South Australia and West Australia. This was to become 32nd Battalion and would concentrate in South Australia before departing for overseas service. A and B companies would be South Australian while C and D companies would be West Australian. Pte Cameron was equipped at Blackboy Hill Camp and with the other members of 32 Bn sailed to Adelaide from Fremantle aboard the SS *Indarra*. (On the voyage Fremantle to Adelaide 5 stowaways were found). The Battalion was formally created on 30 August 1915 at Mitcham Camp in Adelaide. Training was conducted at both Mitcham Military Camp and Morphettville race course. At the time of enlistment Private Cameron had no previous military experience and his mother was his next of kin. There is a fine studio photographic portrait held by the AWM as P07010.001 showing Pte Cameron and a pet dog. It is not known whether this photo was taken in Perth or Adelaide.

The Battalion departed from the Port of Adelaide aboard A2 HMAT *Geelong* on 18 November 1915 and disembarked at Suez on 18 December 1916. The Bn undertook both individual and unit training in Egypt. While in Egypt Pte Cameron was in hospital with vaccination reaction and had his first entry on

his Regimental Conduct Sheet. On 17 June 1916 the Bn departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Transylvania* and disembarked Marseilles on 23 June 1916 to join the BEF. In France he suffered a severely sprained ankle which required hospitalization and he was in hospital when 32 Bn suffered huge losses in the debacle at Fromelles. He returned to his unit through 5 ADBD, had another brush with military discipline. Time in the trenches around the region of Montauban resulted in him being incapacitated with "trench foot" which required evacuation to the UK for hospitalization followed by an extended period in Convalescent Depots. During this time in the UK he had a further six entries on his Conduct Sheet! After a total period of 11 months he returned to France through Southampton. Back with his Unit he suffered a fractured metacarpal bone in one hand which required hospitalization between 13 December 1917 and 21 January 1918 followed by a period at a Convalescent Depot before re-joining 32 Bn on 8 March 1918.

He added one more charge to his conduct sheet following that. Almost all his military misdemeanours were related to being outside his camp or the false use of a leave pass. He was on a fatigue party on 20 June 1918 near Corbie when a shell explosion killed Pte Cameron and another soldier. A burial party from 32 Bn buried both soldiers the following day and carefully recorded the location as well as erecting markers. After the War the Graves Registration Unit recovered their remains and they were reburied in the Beacon Cemetery, Sailly Laurette (approximately midway between Albert and Corbie).

Further information may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Additional/personal information:

Archibald Cameron was single when he enlisted, however an elder sister Lilian F Cameron had married Frederick R. Buttsworth in 1913 and had children.

> CAMERON.—Killed in action, somewhere in France, on June 20, 1918, Private A. W. (Archie) Cameron, only loved son of Mrs. R.Cameron, aged 23 years.
> CAMERON.—Killed in action, somewhere in France, on June 20, 1918, Private Archie Cameron, loved brother of Lily and Freddie Buttsworth, uncle of Dorothy and Wallace.
> CAMERON.—A tribute to the memory of one of my old comrades, Private Arch. Cameron, killed in action in France June 20, 1918.
> Inserted by Private Stan. Gordon, 32nd Battalion (on active service). *Western Mail 19/7/1918 p19*

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These medals and other memorabilia were issued to his mother. Mrs Cameron paid for an inscription on his headstone which reads: *May his soul rest in peace beloved son of Mrs R Cameron of Perth.* There is no record of any application for a pension by Mrs Cameron on file. Mrs Cameron died on 8 May 1940 at the age of 70 years.

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----------