Campbell, Archibald James Gerald

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:	Relief Officer

Rail employment notes: Born 13/8/1887. Joined WAGR 15/4/1901 aged 13 as Junior Porter, Geraldton. ("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR – some had specific roles such as a receiving goods porter, some were general hands while some learnt safe-working and could assist with signals, et. Geraldton, a junction station and terminus of some passenger trains, probably had several porters. Junior Porters were under 21 and so paid less.)

Appointed Cadet, Geraldton 1/9/1901 and transferred to Perth Goods, 6/3/1905. Promoted to Clerk, Perth Goods 1/9/1906 and transferred to Geraldton 6/12/1907. Promoted to Station Relief Officer, Bunbury 19/9/1911.

Relieving Officers were appointed to act in place of station officers (Station Master, Assistant Station Master, Goods Agent, etc) when the latter went on leave.

Granted leave to join AIF 2/8/1915. Died of wounds 1/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	(2091)
Date of death:	1 April 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	30
Rank:	Lieutenant
Burial/memorialisation:	Godewaersvelde British Cemetery, Godewaersvelde, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Gerald Campbell (known in the Army as "Gerry") enlisted in the AIF on 16 Aug 1915 at Bunbury. He nominated his wife Mrs Ellen Muriel Campbell as his Next of Kin. He had significant previous military experience in Australian Artillery (part-time Militia) for one year and then West Australian Infantry Regiment (also volunteer Militia) at Geraldton for two years. He completed basic AIF training at the Blackboy Hill Military Camp. After training he was allocated to 11th Reinforcement to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 2091. The reinforcement party departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 2 November 1915 aboard the transport ship HMAT *Ulysses*.

In Egypt he was taken on strength of 11 Battalion from the Reinforcements on 7 January 1916. As the Battalion trained in Egypt he was appointed to be a Lance Corporal on 3 February 1916 and promoted to the rank of Corporal on 1 March 1916. The Battalion departed Alexandria on 29 March 1916

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aboard HMT *Corsica* and disembarked at Marseilles on 5 April 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Corporal Campbell was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on 11 April 1916. He was Wounded in Action at Pozieres on 24 May 1916 and evacuated through a number of medical establishments until he reached the County of London War Hospital on 7 June 1916. Sgt Campbell went through a period of convalescence before re-joining 11 Battalion on 29 September 1916. Sergeant Campbell was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant on 24 January 1917. In the Battle of Bullecourt, he was Wounded in action on 10 April 1917.

The fighting around Bullecourt on 11 April 1917 was a Black day for the AIF.

The 16th Battalion was the worst affected - they went into the Battle with 20 Officers and 797 Other Ranks. At the post-battle roll call they were missing 17 Officers and 623 Other Ranks (Reported by Capt C Longmore in the book "The Old Sixteenth"). Many were dead, while the Germans also had taken many prisoners.

The failure of the attack has been subject to endless analysis but it seems there was no preliminary artillery barrage and they relied on the new weapon "the tank" to crush a pathway through the enormous belts of wire – which didn't work.

The town of Bullecourt erected a memorial to those killed or lost on 11 April 1917. The memorial depicts an AIF soldier of that time in full field dress and equipment (right). Photo Dr G.M.Galvin.



While away recovering he was made up to the rank of Lieutenant on 1 May 1917 and re-joined the unit on 5 May 1917. Lieutenant Campbell served for a short period as Adjutant of the Battalion.

The Battalion was occupying a position known as "Beggars Rest" on 31 March 1918 when they were subjected to high velocity shelling during which Lieutenant Campbell was struck by a fragment of artillery which penetrated his abdomen through his buttock. He was transferred immediately to 11 Casualty Clearing Station but Died of Wounds the following day. He was buried at Godewaervelde British Cemetery just SW of Poperinghe (now Poperinge) Belgium.

Additional/personal information:

Archibald Campbell was born in Victoria, a son of Archibald and Maud (nee Hosken) Campbell, but moved to WA and married in 1914 to Miss Ellen Muriel Kristina.Lawson (BDM 8/1914). The couple do not appear to have had any children.

> CAMPBELL.—On April 1, somewhere in France, Lieutenant Gerald Campbell, dearly beloved eldest son of the late Archibald Campbell and Mrs. Harvey, of 20 Stuart-street, Perth. —Inserted by his loving mother, and sisters Mollie, Doris, Jean, and little Viv.
>
> CAMPBELL.—On April 1, somewhere in France, Lieutenant Gerald Campbell, dearly beloved husband of Nellie Campbell, aged 29 years. —Inserted by his sorrowing wife. Both *Western Mail* 19/4/1918p19
>
> Mrs GERALD CAMPBELL desires to thank all kind friends for the kind sympathy extended to her in her recent sad bereavement. *Collie Mail* 27/4/1918p1

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For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and these were issued to his widow along with other memorabilia. Mrs Campbell was unhappy with the way his personal effects were returned to her and there was correspondence on this matter which was ultimately resolved to her satisfaction. In the post-war period Ellen Campbell corrected his name to Archibald James Gerald Campbell and that name was used in addition to Gerald Campbell by Army Records but not by the Imperial War Graves Commission. When he married, he supplied his full name (BDM Wellington 8/1914). Mrs Campbell paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: "In Fond and Loving Memory of my Dear Husband Until the Day Dawns". His widow was lost to follow up and there is no record of her receiving a military pension.

There is a group photograph of 11 Bn officers (E01778) on his file and on his page on the AWM website, but he is not identified in the photograph.

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----------