Campbell, William Argyle

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

One of many soldiers who survived the fighting but was killed by the 1918/19 influenza pandemic – in Corporal Campbell's case, dying on Armistice day.



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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Born 12/4/1894. Joined WAGR 15/12/1909 aged 15 as Cadet, Perth. Transferred to Midland Junction 12/5/1913 and promoted to Clerk, Midland Workshops 1/12/1914.

In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.
There would have been large amounts of clerical work for clerks.

Granted leave to join AIF 6/1/1917 and appointed Traffic Clerk, Railway Corps. (Service No.1007). Died of pneumonia 11/11/1918 and buried in Northampton, England.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	5th Australian Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company
Service number:	1007
Date of death:	11 November 1918
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	24
Rank:	Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Towcester Road Cemetery, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England

William Argyle Campbell enlisted in the Railway Corps of the AIF on 10 Jan 1917. He nominated his father John Lang Campbell as his Next of Kin and stated that he had 4 years and 6 months experience in the 86th Infantry Regiment (Militia) and was still serving at the time of enlistment. He underwent some basic military training at Blackboy Hill Camp before departing Australia aboard A23 HMAT *Miltiades* from Fremantle on 29 January 1917 and disembarked at Devonport on 27 April 1917 where he marched into Training Barracks later that same day. Following further training he departed the UK through Southampton to join the British Expeditionary Force on 11 May 1917.

He joined Railway Operating Company in France on arrival and was allotted to 5th Australian Broad-Gauge Operating Company. It should be noted that "broad gauge" in this case referred to operating the existing railway systems in France and other countries, which we would refer to as "standard gauge" -

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the term was used to differentiate these lines from the narrow gauge, mostly temporary, lines which were laid down during war to move men and supplies to the front.

On 3 August 1918 he was granted UK leave and returned to his Unit on 19 August 1918. Promotion to 2nd Cpl was made on 5 October 1918. Corporal Campbell developed Influenza and was admitted to the Canadian General Hospital at Etaples before being evacuated to England where he was admitted to the Duston War Hospital where he died on 11 November 1918. His death was recorded as Died of Illness (DOI). The cause of death was Pneumonia secondary to Influenza. Cpl Campbell was buried in the Northampton (Towcester Road) cemetery on 14 November 1918 with full military honours including a bugler to play the last post and a firing party. Representatives from AIF HQ London were in attendance.

Additional/personal information:

William Campbell was born in Flemington, Victoria but his family must have moved to WA when he was young as he attended school in Kalgoorlie and Perth.

> CAMPBELL.—On November 11, 1918, at the Northampton War Hospital, No. 1007, William Argyle, beloved eldest son of John L. and Jane Campbell, of Trabalda, Princess-road, Claremont; loving brother of Donald Clyde (on active service), Jack and Olive; after two years' service in the B.G.R.O. Company, France and Belgium; aged 24 years and seven months. Deeply mourned. *The West Australian* 28/11/1918p1

Sadly, on the day this notice appeared in *The West Australian*, 4 of the 6 notices under "Killed in action" recorded the deaths of soldiers from the influenza then rapidly becoming a pandemic.

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These medals were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His parents paid for an inscription on his headstone (3½ d per letter) which reads: "Peace Perfect Peace". His NOK, John Lang Campbell died on 18 July 1927 aged 62 years and was buried at Karrakatta.

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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