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Ellis, 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:	Signalman

Rail employment notes: Born 10/9/1888. Joined WAGR 28/9/1910 aged 22 as Porter, Narrogin.

("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, etc. Mr Ellis must have studied and passed a safe-working course as he later became a signalman.)

Transferred to Fremantle 18/10/1910, North Fremantle 9/12/1911 and Fremantle 2/9/1913. Promoted to Signalman, Guildford 22/7/1915.

Granted leave to join AIF 27/3/1916 (Service No.14227). Killed in action 16/5/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	4th Australian Division Signals Company
Service number:	14227
Date of death:	16 May 1918
Place of death:	near Amiens, France
Age:	29
Rank:	Sapper

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

William Ellis enlisted in the AIF on 20 March 1916. He stated his age as 27 and nominated his wife Winifred Ellis as his next of kin. He was allocated to 3rd Reinforcements to 4th Divisional Signal Company. After initial training, this group embarked on 18 July 1916 on HMAT *Seang Bee* from Fremantle.

The Division Signals Company had the responsibility to provide communications between division headquarters staff and field groups – sometimes this meant laying or stringing lines, or carrying messages by bike or motorbike. On other occasions they ferried carrier pigeons to rake message back.

The 4th Division was heavily involved in fighting near Amiens iN France in 1918 and there Sapper Ellis was killed in action on 16 may 1918. He was buried in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

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William Ellis was born in Kent in England but came to Western Australia when he was 22 years old. In 19132 he married Winifred Ida Lilian Daws, and the couple had at least two children before he sailed, Dora in 1912 and Hazel in 1914. (BDM 200/1912 et al.)

> ELLIS.-Killed in action in France; May 16, 1918, Signaller William Ellis (Bert), dearly beloved husband of Winifred, dear daddie of little Dora and Hazel, after two years and four months' service; late of W.A.G.Railways; eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. William Ellis, of Earlsfield, England; aged 29 years and 8 months. His duty nobly done. -Inserted by his sorrowing wife and children, 6 Raphael-street, Subiaco. *The West Australian* 3/6/1918p1

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. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------