Farmery, Arthur

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:	Assistant Station Master

Rail employment notes: Born 12 July 1884. Joined WAGR 23/7/1912 aged 28 as 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, etc. Geraldton, a junction station and terminus of passenger trains, probably had several porters. Mr Farmery probably studied and passed the safe-working course, necessary to be a station master.)

Promoted to Assistant Station Master, Picton Junction 14/4/1913.
(When stations were busy enough to warrant more than one officer, the Station Master normally worked day shift 8am – 4pm and had overall responsibility, the Assistant Station Master worked 4pm-midnight and the Night Station master worked midnight-8am.)

Granted leave to join AIF 14/1/1916 (Service No.5095). Killed in action 16/4/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	5095
Date of death:	16 April 1917
Place of death:	Lagnicourt, France
Rank:	Private
Age:	33

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Arthur Farmery enlisted in the AIF on 5 February 1916 and underwent basic military training at Blackboy Hill camp. Private Farmery originated from Hull in Yorkshire and had migrated to Australia at the age of 29 years. After basic military training he departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard A9 HMAT *Shropshire* on 31 March 1916 as a member of 16th Reinforcements to 11Battalion with the regimental number 5095.

On arrival in the UK he marched into 3 Training Battalion where he remained until 31 July 1916 when he crossed to France and joined the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Farmery was taken on strength of 11 Battalion (D Company) on 13 August 1916. The Battalion was actively involved in the Pozieres and Moquet Farm actions but Pte Farmery emerged unscathed from those violent actions. On 16 April 1917 at Lagnicourt his platoon became isolated from the rest of the Battalion as they had dug

in forward of the perimeter wire. Observers noted that some members had been killed but the greater part of the platoon were taken as prisoners. Pte Farmery was posted as 'Missing in action' on 16 April 1917 as there was no indication from the observers whether he lay amongst the dead or those marched away as POWs. Later information established beyond doubt that Private Farmery had been killed by a bullet to the chest. His classification was changed from Missing in action to 'Killed in action 16 April 1917'. Further confirmation was supplied by repatriated POWs including 1112 Sgt Camden DCM, 5047 Pte Bagley and 5205 Pte Stone all of D Coy 11 Bn. His body was never recovered, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Arthur Farmery nominated his wife, Mrs Lily Farmery as his Next of kin. On his enlistment papers he stated that he had no previous military experience but on the circular after his death his wife stated that he had served for 3 years in the East Yorkshire Volunteers of the Territorial Army.

There is no record of children. A family notice in (*West Australian* 18/7/1916p1) read

> Farmery – Killed in action on April16 1917, somewhere in France, previously reported missing, Private Arthur Farmery, D Company 11th Battalion, dearly loved husband of Lily Farmery, Beaconsfield, late of Picton Junction, Western Australia. He fought that we should be free.

There was correspondence between his widow and Army Records seeking Death Certificate for the Independent Order of Rechabites – presumably Arthur had contributed to a benefit scheme and was due a payout. Mrs Farmery was granted a pension of 40/- per fortnight with effect from 6 July 1917. For his service Private Farmery was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife along with other memorabilia by Australia House, London. In a letter dated 24 March 1919 the widow advised that it was her intention to return to the UK. Nothing further is known following her return to England.

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----------