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Fitzgerald, 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:	Tramways
Designation:	Motorman

Rail employment notes: Born 5 May 1886. Joined Tramways 1 July 1913 aged 27 as Motorman, Perth.

(The tramways of Perth and adjoining suburbs were compulsorily purchased by the WA Government in 1913 and were placed in the management and responsibility of the WA Government Railways. The records of employees, including the honour roll after the war, reflected this combined operation. The date of his joining WAGR&T suggest that he already worked for one of the purchased tramway operators.)

Granted leave to join AIF 26/8/1915 (Service No.3789). Died of wounds 28/5/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	11th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	3789
Date of death:	28 May 1917
Age:	38*
Place of death:	Noreuil, France
Rank at time:	Private

Burial/commemoration: St Sever Cemetery Extension, Haute-Normandie, France

He enlisted on 30 Aug 1915 in Perth. He nominated his mother, resident in Ireland as his NOK and declared that he had no previous military experience. Following basic military training he was allocated to 12th Reinforcement to 11Battalion with the regimental number 3789 and departed Australia aboard RMS *Mongolia* on 22 Nov 1915, disembarked at Suez and was taken on strength of 11th Battalion from the 12th reinforcements on 02 Mar 1916. The Bn departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* on 29 Mar 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 03 Apr 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

In the Battle of Pozieres, he was Wounded in action (Gunshot wound left arm) sometime between 22 and 25 July 1916 and evacuated to 1 AGH at Rouen on 26 July 1916 where it was also recorded that he was suffering from Shell Shock. Pte Fitzgerald was then moved to Craiginwell War Hospital at Chichester in the UK. Pte Fitzgerald had a period of hospitalization in 3 AAH with influenza before crossing to France on 24 January 1917 aboard *Princess Clementine* and re-joining 11 Battalion.

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In action near Noreuil he was Wounded in action again (gunshot wound right knee) on 5 May 1917 and evacuated in stages to 6 General Hospital at Rouen where he died of wounds on 28 May 1917 and was buried in the St Sever Cemetery Extension.

Additional/personal information:

William Fitzgerald was born in Stoneyford, County Kilkenny, Ireland where he worked as a carpenter, but migrated to Australia at the age of 33.

*His age is uncertain – WAGR records indicate 31, the AWM shows 36 but his mother when completing the AWM form after the war said 38.

There is no record of any furlough but he made a Will on 30 August 1916 in Ireland which was witnessed by a JP for Kilkenny and a Law Clerk also of Kilkenny. In the Will he nominated his wife Josephine Fitzgerald as his sole beneficiary. His attestation paper carries an undated amendment changing his Next of kin from his mother to his wife, resident in Ireland. The paper notes that he has made a declaration and produced marriage license. The reasonable assumption is that on a period of furlough he crossed to Ireland, married and made his new Will.

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his widow along with other memorabilia directly from Australia House London. His widow received a pension of 40/- per fortnight effective from 26 Jul 1917 and his mother 30/- per fortnight from the same date but to be reviewed on 01 Aug 1918. There is a photograph (AWM P11727.001) on his file of 8 Australian soldiers labelled *Fred and his Mates* with a cross marking one of the men. It is not known if this is "Fred" or Pte Fitzgerald.

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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