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Graham, John Charles

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Labourer, Perth

Career details have not been located, however the Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and all structures so a labourer could have been engaged on assisting building and/or maintaining stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc – which might be in towns or temporary tent camps.

51st Battalion AIF (Service No.2411). Died of wounds 8/6/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2411
Date of death:	8 June 1917
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	38
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension (Nord), Lille, Nord Pas de Calais, France

John Charles Graham enlisted in the AIF on 1 April 1916 at Perth. He nominated his wife Sarah Graham as his Next of Kin. He declared that he had served in the 1st Bn Derbyshire Regiment for 5 years. Pte Graham had been born in England and migrated to Australia at the age of 30 years.

His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and on 1 May 1916 he was allocated to 5th Reinforcements to 51 Battalion which departed Australia from Fremantle on 20 September 1916 aboard A66 HMAT *Uganda*. He landed at Plymouth on 15 November 1916 and marched into 13 Trg Bn for further training before departing England aboard the *Princess Victoria* through Folkestone on 28 December 1916. He arrived in France to join the British Expeditionary Force but his time at 4 ADBD was cut short by medical treatment for scabies and it was not until 7 February 1917 that he was taken-on-strength of 51 Battalion, in the field. Pte Graham made his Will in his paybook on 05 Mar 1917 in which he left his estate to his wife. This Will was very similar to one made on 03 Aug 1916 except that in the earlier one he nominated his son (John Hartley Graham) to become the sole beneficiary in the event that his wife pre-deceased him.

Pte Graham was detached (i.e. temporarily or provisionally moved) to 13 Light Trench Mortar Battery on 23 March 1917 for duties as a batman. He attended a course of instruction between 29 Mar and 14

Apr 1917. Presumably this was instruction on the operation of the Stokes Mortar. He returned to 13 LTMB, on 14 April 1917 but still on detachment from 51 Bn. The Bn trained with great intensity in the 2 weeks prior to the Battle of Messines. On 6 June 1917 Private Graham was severely wounded in the abdomen and was evacuated to 11 Casualty Clearing Station where he Died of Wounds on 8 June 1917. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension.

Additional/personal information:

John Graham was born in Lees in Lancashire, England but came to Australian when aged 30, about 1909. It appears he had married in England, but that their son John Hartley Graham was born in WA (BDM 125/1914 Leederville).

> GRAHAM – On June 8, died of wounds received in action, Private John C. Graham, dearly beloved husband of Sarah E. Graham and loving daddy of little Jack, of Flinders-street Leederville, aged 38 years on June 4. – Inserted by his sorrowing wife and little son. *Western Mail* 20/7/1917p26
>
> GRAHAM.-In sad and. loving memory of our dear husband and daddy, Private John C. (Jack) Graham, of the 13th L.T.M. Battery, 51st Battalion, died of wounds in the 11th Casualty Clearing Station, Belgium, on June 8, 1917. Not now but in the coming years, It. may be in the better land, We'll read the meaning of our tears, And then sometime we'll understand.
> -Inserted by his loving wife and little son. *The West Australian* 8/6/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal together with other memorabilia which were all issued to his widow. Mrs Graham was given a military pension of 40/- per fortnight effective from 18 Aug 1917. She moved to Tasmania and then notified Army Records that she intended to return to the UK. There are no records of her file from that time and a Repatriation Department file was closed in 1920. The family paid for an inscription on his grave stone which reads: "Too Dearly Loved to be Forgotten Ever Remembered."

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----------