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Pidgeon, Ivan Farquhar 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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Engineer Cadet

Rail employment notes: Born 14/10/1894. Joined WAGR 27/2/1911 aged 16 as Engineering Cadet. The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures so an engineer would have been engaged on designing, building and/or maintaining tracks, stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc.

Transferred to Midland Junction 6/1/1913 and to Perth 26/5/1913.

Granted leave to join AIF 21/9/1915. Killed in action 4/5/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	5th Field Company, Australian Engineers
Service number:	(3418, until commisioned)
Date of death:	4 May 1917
Place of death:	Bullecourt, France
Age:	22
Rank:	Lieutenant

Burial/memorialisation: Vaulx Hill Cemetery, Vaulx, Picardie, France

Ivan Farquhar William Pidgeon was employed by the WAGR as an Engineering Cadet and on AIF enlistment he gave his occupation as Civil Engineer. He enlisted in the AIF on 22 September 1915 at Blackboy Hill Camp and was immediately assigned to Number 3 Section of 6th Field Engineers as a Sapper with the regimental number 3418. He stated that he had more than 2 years military experience as a militia member of 13 Field Company Engineers, Australian Military Forces (parttime militia). He nominated his father Major John Pidgeon as his Next of kin who was a serving officer in the AIF. The Army accepted his mother as an alternative Next of kin.

Sapper Pidgeon moved to the engineers training depot in Sydney following which he departed Australia from Sydney on 24 November 1915 aboard HMAT *Ceramic*. He disembarked in Egypt and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He was further promoted to Corporal on 2 March 1916. 6 Field Engineers departed Egypt on the *City of Edinburgh* from Alexandria on 19 Mar 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 27 Mar 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Corporal Pidgeon served in a number of locations in France and Belgium before he was detached on 14 July 1916 from his Unit, to attend both further engineering training and Officer Training School in England.

He graduated from Officer Training School and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 20 October 1916 for temporary duty at AIF Headquarters. He departed England on 28 January 1917 and

was taken-on-strength of 5th Field Company, Australian Engineers that same day. On 29 April 1917 he was promoted to Lieutenant. He was Killed in action on 4 May 1917 in the vicinity of Bullecourt and buried close to where he fell. At a later date he was exhumed and re-buried in the Vaulx Hill Cemetery. That cemetery was used to concentrate a number of smaller grave sites around the area. Vaulx Hill Cemetery is some 6 km NE of Bapaume.

Additional/personal information:

Ivan Farquhar William Pidgeon was born in Albany to John and Constance Ada (nee Knight) Pidgeon, the second of four children, all boys. He was educated at Scotch College in Claremont. His father was also an engineer with the railways.

> PIDGEON.--On May 4, in France, Lieut. Ivan Farquhar William, the beloved son of John and Constance Pidgeon, aged 25 years and 6 months. *The West Australian* 16/5/1917p1
>
> PIDGEON.--ln loving memory of our dear Bill (Lieut. Ivan F. W.) Pidgeon, 5th Field Co. Engineers, who fell at Bullecourt on May 4, 1917. … *The West Australian* 4/5/1918p1

Lieutenant Pidgeon's grave stone has the following inscription: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". For his service Lieutenant Pidgeon was entitled to receive the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. His father, the former Major John Pidgeon signed as receiving the early issues but he died on 21 November 1920 and his mother receipted the Victory Medal but she died on 31 July 1922 and the memorial plaque was signed for by the Executor of Constance Pidgeon's estate. This did not satisfy Army Records who enquired if there was an elder brother as by law, he was to receive the plaque. There was an elder brother Brian Francis Pidgeon, a resident of Bendigo, and the executor duly forwarded the plaque to him.

[Footnote. Major John Pidgeon, 2 Division Engineers, had departed England on 26 Dec 1916 so was not serving in the British Expeditionary Force when his son was killed. Major Pidgeon, aged 57 years, had applied for a compassionate return to Australia on the basis that his wife was terminally ill with Tuberculosis. This was granted but in the end John Pidgeon pre-deceased his wife on 21 Nov 1920 and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery. Constance Pidgeon died of Tuberculosis on 31 July 1922 and was buried in the same compartment as her husband.].

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----------