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**Robertson, (Emile) Frederick**

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**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: Locomotive

Designation: Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 25/12/1892. Joined WAGR 15/7/1911 aged 18 as Cleaner, Bunbury. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning locomotives and otherwise employed at a locomotive depot whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder.)

Transferred to Midland Junction 28/10/1912 and promoted to Fireman 3/4/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 8/7/1915 (Service No.2717). Died of wounds 26/12/1917.

**Military service information:**

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| Conflict: | First World War 1914-1918 |
| Service: | Australian Imperial Force (AIF) |
| Military unit: | 11th Australian Infantry Battalion |
| Service number: | 2717 |
| Date of death: | 26 December 1917 |
| Place of death: | Hospital, England |
| Age: | 25 |
| Rank: | Private |

Burial/memorialisation: Brookwood Military Cemetery, Pirbright, Surrey, England, United Kingdom

Frederick Robertson enlisted at the Blackboy Hill camp on 24 June 1915. On enlistment he nominated his mother Mrs Hannah Robertson as his next of kin (NOK) and stated that he had some service as a cadet in the Fremantle Artillery. On completion of his basic training he was allocated to 8th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 2717, having previously been allocated 1990 3rd/28 Bn. No reason was given for the change of Bn. Pte Robertson departed Australia from Fremantle on 02 Sep 1915 aboard A68 HMAT *Anchises*.

On arrival in Egypt he had a short admission of one week to 2 AGH with an acute chest infection. The Battalion departed Egypt from Alexandria aboard HMT *Corsican* on 29 Mar 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on 04 Apr 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Robertson had a period of 73 days non effective service while he underwent treatment for VD in the hospital at Etaples. He participated in the Battles for Pozieres and Moquet farm. On 13 Dec 1916 he was appointed to the rank of Lance Corporal. He also served at Bullecourt but at Lagnicourt he suffered a penetrating Gunshot wound to the abdomen and entered the medical evacuation chain to the UK. In England he was admitted to the Edmonton Military Hospital where he was operated on by specialist surgeons. His progress was initially good but he developed a faecal fistula and his medical condition declined. L/Cpl Robertson died on 26 December 1917 and is therefore classed as a Died of Wounds.

He was buried in the Brookwood Military Cemetery (largest military cemetery in the UK) on 19 December 1917 with full military honours including a firing party. Representatives from AIF HQ

London attended. The funeral was arranged through a civilian undertaker and there is a comprehensive report on his file. The officiating minister was the Reverend F W Bray CMG.

**Additional/personal information:**

Frederick Robertson was born in Fremantle and originally named Emile Frederick LeLong - his mother Hannah Stenton had married to Emile Lelong. However Emile died in 1897 and in 1902 Hannah remarried, to John Robertson (BDM 741/1902). Hannah apparently bore two further children, John David in 1902 and Elsie in 1904. It seems the elder boys then took their step-father's surname and in Frederick's case, he no longer used his (possibly French) first name.

> ROBERTSON.—Died on December 26 1917, of wounds received in France on April 16, 1917, Lance-Corporal Fred Robertson, dearly beloved eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Robertson, Charles-street, South Fremantle, late of Bunbury and Midland Junction, brother of Lou, killed in action in France, and of Jackie, aged 25 years and one day. … —Inserted by his sorrowing parents and brother. *The West Australian* 16/1/1918p1

For his services Lance Corporal Robertson was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. The campaign medals and other memorabilia were issued to the second husband of his mother. The family paid for an inscription on his headstone which reads: "In Loving Memory of our Dear Son Fred Dearly Loved, Sadly Missed RIP".

L/Cpl Robertson's brother 3151 Robertson also served in 11 Bn AIF and was Killed in Action.

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----------