Smith, Charles Harold

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:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Born 27/5/1892. Joined WAGR 12/1/1914 aged 21 as Clerk, North Fremantle. North Fremantle handled accounting for traffic to the North Wharf of Fremantle Harbour, and also extensive private sidings, which would have kept clerks busy.

Granted leave to join AIF 17/8/1914. Killed in action 3/9/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	Officer (previously 486)
Date of death:	3 September 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	24
Rank:	Second Lieutenant

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

Charles Smith was employed as a Clerk in the WAGR and on enlistment he nominated his father (Station Master, Kalgoorlie) to be his Next of kin. He had 3 years Militia service in the 11th Infantry Regiment. He commenced his AIF enlistment on 17 August 1914 and was finally attested as a Recruit at Blackboy Hill Camp on 9 September 1914 where he was assigned as a Private to 11th Battalion with the regimental number 486. The Battalion departed Australia from Fremantle on 31 October 1914 aboard A11 HMAT *Ascanius* to join the first convoy at sea. On arrival in Egypt the Bn established a camp at Mena and continued training. After a period at Lemnos the Bn landed at Anzac Cove on the morning of 25 April 1915. Private Smith took part in the landing and all the early offensive actions. On 23 June 1915 he was Wounded in Action with a bullet to the abdomen. He was evacuated to 1 Australian General Hospital in Egypt for surgical treatment. Following recovery from his wound he returned to Gallipoli and rejoined 11 Bn on 3 August 1915. Pte Smith remained on the Peninsula for the remainder of the campaign before returning to Egypt on 21 January 1916 and was promoted to Temporary Corporal that same day.

On 29 February 1916 he was transferred to the newly formed 51 Battalion and made a substantive Corporal on transfer. Several days later he was appointed to be a Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS) in 51 Bn. After further training in Egypt 51 Bn departed Alexandria on 05 Jun 1916 and landed at Marseilles to join the British Expeditionary Force on 12 June 1916. CQMS Smith was promoted to be a Second Lieutenant on 26 August 1916 and saw action at Pozieres. In a Battalion attack on Moquet Farm, which was repulsed with heavy casualties, he was Killed in action. Burial of

those killed took place on the battlefield in unmarked graves. Lt Smith's remains were never identified, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

Additional/personal information:

Charles Harold Smith was the son of Charles Augustus and Georgina Smith, and was born in Bathurst NSW. The family moved west, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, by January 1902 when Charles Augustus Smith was appointed Station Master Albany. This was a senior position in the WAGR and indicates Mr Smith was an experienced railway officer before moving to WA (he was later the SM Kalgoorlie 1912-1915 and SM Perth 1915-1930).

> SMITH.—Killed in action, in France, on September 3, Lieutenant C. Harold Smith, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and brother of Ethel, 36 Tate-street, West Leederville. *The West Australian* 2/10/1915p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father. Second Lieutenant Smith has a memorial plaque in Kings Park (M520) which was dedicated by his mother.

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----------