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Walsh, George

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country

Barely 21 years old, he died only 3 weeks after actually joining the fight



Villers-Bretonneux Australian memorial

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Audit
Designation:	Cadet

Rail employment notes: Born 19/2/1896. Joined WAGR 6/5/1912 aged 16 as Cadet, Perth.
A "Cadet" usually meant a man aiming for a clerical or accounting position, but underage and not yet qualified. Mr Walsh left to enlist before achieving a Clerk posting.

Granted leave to join AIF 10/1/1916 (Service No.2513). Killed in action 2/4/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2513
Date of death:	2 April 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private

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

George Walsh enlisted in the AIF on 10 Janusary 1916. On enlistment he quoted his mother Mrs Mary Walsh as his next of kin (NOK) although it was subsequently revealed that his father John Walsh was alive. He had service in the Naval Cadets but had transferred to 86th Regiment of Infantry some years later. His military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and when completed he was assigned to 5th Reinforcements to 51 Battalion with the regimental number 2513.

He departed Australia through Fremantle on 20 Sep 1916 aboard A66 HMAT *Uganda* and disembarked at Plymouth UK on 15 Nov 1916. Pte Walsh spent only a short time in England before he departed, on 12 December 1916, for France where he marched into 4 ADBD the following day. Almost immediately he was admitted to 51 General Hospital where he remained until taken-on-strength of 51 Bn on 12 March 1917.

On 2 April 1917 the Battalion was part of a Brigade assault on the German lines near the village of Noreuil and during that assault Private Walsh was Killed in Action. He was buried where he fell just to the East of the village of Noreuil but after the War the Graves Registration Unit were unable to identify his remains. He therefore has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

George Walsh was born in Koondrook in Victoria, a son of John Walsh and Mary (nee Singleton) Walsh (Vic BDM 4546/1896). The family then soon moved west, as did many families after the 1890s gold finds in WA, and 4 daughters were born in WA 1898~1904.

> WALSH.—On April 2, somewhere in France, killed in action, Private George Walsh, 51st Battalion, dearly beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Walsh, 137 Watkin-street, South Fremantle, aged 21 years. His duty nobly done. Victorian papers please copy. *The West Australian* 26/4/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. It was at this time that his mother (NOK) identified his father John Walsh who was still living. The campaign medals and other memorabilia were then issued to his father as per the legislation of the times. Mrs Mary Walsh received a military pension of 40/- per fortnight with effect from 24 Jun 1917 and a Death Benefit from a Lodge (not further identified). It is believed that Mary Walsh died on 04 Oct 1934 at the age of 65 years and was buried at Fremantle Cemetery under arrangements made by the Curator of Intestate Estates. It was not possible to trace John Walsh after 1922.

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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