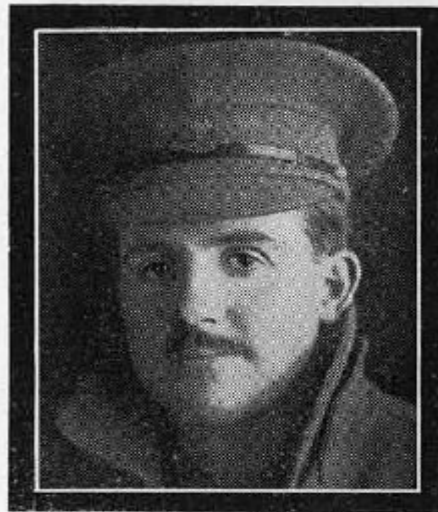


BENNETT

Francis Reginald

Service No: 5305



Lieut. F. R. BENNETT.

Killed in France. Son of Mrs. Gillespie, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Walker, late of Parramatta.

BASIC INFORMATION

Name: Francis Reginald Bennett

Service Number: 5305

Date of Enlistment: 21/9/1915

Age at Enlistment: 24 years 8 months

Civil Occupation: Company Secretary

Medals, Honours, Awards: British War Medal, Victory Medal

Height: 5 feet 4 inches

Weight: 140 lbs

Chest Measurement: 36 inches

Complexion: Dark

Eye Colour: Brown

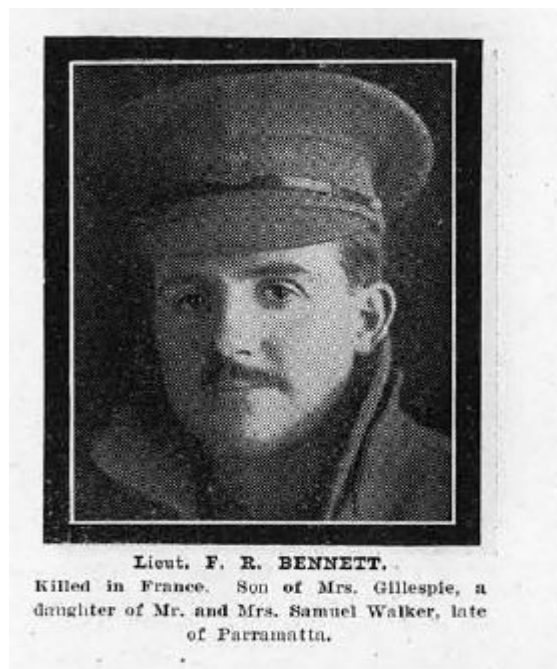
Hair Colour: Brown

Father: Francis Galgey Bennett

Mother: Nellie Mary Louise Walker

Siblings: Enid Eulalie, Marjorie Esme, Catherine Fanny, Alexander David

Married: No



Francis Reginald Bennett

Courtesy National Archives of Australia

Family History

Francis Galgey Bennett was born in Victoria in 1859. He became a teacher in NSW and married Nellie Mary Louise Walker in June 1890, at St. John's Church, Parramatta. They went on to have three children together: Francis Reginald (1891), Enid Eulalie (1893) and Marjorie Esme (1896). Enid went on to become a well-known silent film actress in the United States.

Francis first advertised his intention to start a Grammar School in York in July 1890. He advertised heavily for students in the Eastern Districts Chronicle from June 1891 until late 1895. The school was not successful and, in 1896, Francis became Headmaster of the newly established Guildford Grammar School, where he remained until his death by drowning in 1898. Francis is commemorated at the school through the name of Bennett House, one of eight "houses" within the school.

In 1900, Nellie remarried to Alexander David Gillespie who had taken over the headmastership of Guildford Grammar in 1899. They had two children, Catherine Fanny (1901) and Alexander David (1903) before David died in 1903, after a short illness.

According to the biography of Enid Bennett, Nellie supported the family by acting as Matron at Guildford Grammar School. This allowed Francis to continue his education there.

The family moved to NSW in 1914, because of Enid's acting career and, in 1918, the family relocated to the United States. It should be noted that his half-siblings, Catherine and Alexander, were all using the surname Bennett in the United States.



Enid Bennett

Courtesy of Wikipedia

All three sisters became actresses. Enid married the very successful director Frederick Niblo and retired from acting once she started a family. Marjorie continued to act in films and television until 1980, just two years before she died. Catherine, using the surname Bennett, had a short career of around three years and never married. Alexander also used the Bennett name. He married the actress Frances Lee and his application for naturalization, in 1934, listed his occupation as auditor.

There were no further links to York.

Life Story

Francis Reginald Bennett was born in York in 1891. After enlisting in Sydney on the 21st September, 1915, he attended the Royal Military College at Duntroon, qualifying for a commissioned rank, although there were no vacancies at that time.

Francis embarked aboard the *Wiltshire* at Sydney, bound for England, on the 22nd August 1916 and disembarked on the 13th October at Plymouth. In December 1916, Francis attended Cadet Officer School at Trinity College in Cambridge. In March 1917, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and posted to Infantry Reinforcements, before proceeding overseas to France on the 27th April.

Francis was Taken on Strength with the 19th Battalion, at Etaples, on the 2nd May, 1917. The Battalion had been sent to France in early 1916, where it served in the trenches along the Western Front.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DAOD1012

Men of the 19th Battalion with Gun
Courtesy Australian War Memorial

By September, the Battalion was fighting in Belgium and Francis was promoted to Lieutenant on the 26th September.

On the 9th October 1917, Francis was Killed in Action at Passchendale, Belgium, when a piece of shell passed through the back of his left lung and penetrated his heart. He died instantly and was buried the following morning in the Ypres sector of the Line. His steel helmet was placed at the head of the grave. The location of his grave is unknown and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial.

Francis is also commemorated on the War memorial at Guildford Grammar School as R.F. Bennett.

Acknowledgements

The following people and organisations helped with the research to compile this booklet.

Heather Harvey

Clarke, Cathy

References

National Archives of Australia. 2018. *Discovering Anzacs*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au>. [Accessed 3 January 2018].

Department of Justice. 2018. *Searching Western Australian Online Indexes*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/apps/pioneersindex/default.aspx>. [Accessed 3 January 2018].

National Library of Australia. 2018. *Trove*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>. [Accessed 3 January 2018].

Wikipedia contributors. Guildford Grammar School. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. February 19, 2022. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guildford_Grammar_School&oldid=1072753510. Accessed June 11, 2022.