



A Queensland Rifle Club member who made the supreme sacrifice
1914-1919

The Story Behind the Name



Captain Edward, Frederick, Robert BAGE

17 April 1888 - 7 May 1915



Captain Edward Frederick Robert BAGE

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PRE-ENLISTMENT:

- Edward was born 17 April 1888, at St Kilda, Victoria to parents, Edward (Ted) and Mary Charlotte (nee Lange) Bage. He was the third child of a well-known Melbourne merchant, and there were two older sisters, Freda and Ethel.
- Ted was a partner in a wholesale pharmacy business Felton, Grimwade & Co of Melbourne and Cranford, Fulton Street, East St. Kilda. However his health failed and he died in 1891 when Robert (his parents used this name in deference to Ted's brother) was just 3 years old. Mary subsequently took her young family to the England for five years, where the girls attended Oxford High School.
- On return to Australia, Mary and her family were taken under the familial wing of her sister Gertrude and husband Charles (Ted's brother).
- Edward Frederick Robert "Bob Badget" Bage grew up in St Kilda East and Port Phillip.

Church of England Grammar School, Melbourne



- In 1900, Bob like his father, uncle and other male relatives, began his education at the Church of England Grammar School, Melbourne. There he excelled as a student and sportsman. He obtained the Witherby Scholarship in 1901 and shone in rowing,
- He left the grammar school in 1904 with first class honours in physics at matriculation, and a Warden's Scholarship to Trinity College

- Bage was drawn to the science, maths and engineering and achieved first-class honours in chemistry and won an Exhibition in Surveying in 1905. He completed the civil engineering course in 1909, graduating with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering in 1910.
- While in residence at Trinity College during his university course, he was the honorary Secretary of the students' representative council at an early stage of its existence, and constantly took a full share in the social side of university life. He also rowed in his college eight.
- He began travelling extensively during this time, first to South Australia and Broken Hill, where he and university colleagues were hosted by BHP, then to Canada via Fiji and Hawaii.

Trinity College, Melbourne



- On completion of university in 1908, he secured employment with Queensland Railways when he was on the staff of the chief engineer in Brisbane. During his many years working in Brisbane, he lived with his sister Miss Freda Bage, who was the principal of the Women's College, Brisbane.
- Bage joined the militia in 1909 while living in Brisbane. It was at a militia camp in Queensland in 1910 he met Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, an event that was to have a significant impact on him, according to his uncle Charles. He left his job with the railways and joined the small regular Army as a military engineer and was Commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant, Corps of Australian Engineers, Qld.
- On the outbreak of War in August 1914, Bob Bage become engaged to Dorothy Scantlebury.



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RIFLE SHOOTING:

- Captain Bage was a member of the Engineers Rifle Club and was well-known in rifle shooting circles.
- He won the "C" series aggregate at the first prize meeting of the Metropolitan Union, at Enoggera, in 1910.
- Many of his results refer to R Bage (his third Christian name) and included his rank at the time, either Lieutenant or Captain

MILITARY SERVICE BEFORE AIF ENLISTMENT:

- Captain Bage began his military career in 1909 as Second Lieutenant in the Corps of Australian Engineers, Queensland, and was transferred to the Royal Australian Engineers, with the rank of Lieutenant, in 1911, after having served some time at the submarine mining station, Chowder Bay, Sydney.
- On transfer to the Royal Australian Engineers, he was stationed at the submarine mining station, in Swan Island, Victoria, and was, for some time, in command.

ANTARCTIC EXPLORER:

- Bage's military service and some family networks and connections led him to the next crucial phase of his life, his Antarctic exploration.
- In December 1911, he obtained leave of absence without pay from the Army, and joined the Australasian Antarctic Expedition, under Sir Douglas Mawson, as an astronomer, assistant magnetician and recorder of tides.
- He had been chosen for his personal qualities and to ensure he was up to speed technically, he undertook a crash course at the Melbourne Observatory.
- They embarked on the Aurora on 2 December 1911 and landed in Antarctica of 3 January 1912, expecting to stay for about a year when the Aurora left. Bage's work on the expedition won him admiration from all his colleagues, including Sir Douglas Mawson himself and photographer Frank Hurley, who went on to define Australia's involvement through his photographic skills.

The re-supply ship,
the Aurora in the
Antarctica with
Mawson and his
group of explorers
including Bob
'Badget' Bage





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ANTARCTIC EXPLORER:

- Captain Bage was the leader of the southern sledging party, which accomplished a perilous journey of 600 miles (almost 1,000 kilometers), man-hauling their sledge over rough blizzard-swept ice surfaces. The group, consisting of Bage, Hurley and New Zealander Eric Webb, suffered snow blindness, emaciation and debilitation, but garnered important magnetic, geographic and meteorological records.
- Afterwards, he contributed the chapter entitled 'The Quest of the Southern Magnetic Pole' to Sir Douglas Mawson's book 'The Home of the Blizzards'. The very important scientific results of this journey took some time to sort through and prepare for publication. He was awarded the Polar Medal by H.M. the King George V in February 1915 with it also being referred to as the Australian Silver Antarctic Medal 1912-14 for his work as an astronomer on the Australasian Antarctic Expedition 1911-1914.
- It was Bage's "quiet determination, resolution, and foresight (that) carried them through ... always cheerful, ready with a hand to anybody who needed it ... he was a born leader of men".
- By 8 February 1913, Mawson and his support team of Ninnis and Mertz, was four weeks overdue from their excursion and when the Aurora arrived, the expeditioners decided to leave behind Bage and several of his comrades to await the return of Mawson's party. A day later a haggard, emaciated, and exhausted Mawson returned alone, his two comrades having perished.
- The Aurora returned the following day to collect the remaining explorers but could not do so due to poor weather and once again departed. They delayed their departure from the Antarctica a further week but conditions did not improve.
- The Aurora did not return until almost a year later, on 13 December 1913. Bage and his comrades finally disembarked in Adelaide, Mawson's hometown, on 26 February 1914.
- They had been away two years and three months.



The Antarctic Expedition and their quest for the southern magnetic pole



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ANTARCTIC EXPLORER:

- According to Gordon Hayes in his 1928 survey of Antarctic research "Sir Douglas Mawson's Expedition, judged by the magnitude of both its scale and of its achievements, was the greatest and most consummate expedition that ever sailed for Antarctica. The expedition was a magnificently conceived and executed scheme of exploration."
- Much of this was due to Bage's southern sledging party, which, according to Mawson, "accomplished even more than anticipated". Bage's work on the expedition won him admiration from all his colleagues, including Sir Douglas Mawson himself and photographer Frank Hurley. The record for distance covered in a day's sledge hauling (some 800kg) is still retained by Bage, Webb and Hurley and it is highly unlikely that it will ever be broken.
- Mawson's expedition was overshadowed by activities going on concurrently. Amundsen had won the race to the Pole. Scott and his colleagues had perished in the attempt. The Mawson expedition's true contribution to Antarctic research was not to be realised for some years.
- The outbreak of the war in Europe further muted its impact. But its scientific value emerged as the data was progressively consolidated, interpreted and published. Webb's photographic work, for example, was not published until 1947.



Bage on the Aurora in the Antarctic

Below: Mawson and his fellow expeditioners returning to Australia after two years in Antarctica





Captain Edward Frederick Robert BAGE

17 April 1888 - 7 May 1915

SERVICE:

- Serial Number: Officer
- On his return from the Antarctic, Captain Bage was attached to the Engineers' Staff Office, Melbourne, and on mobilization being ordered in August, he took up duty at Port Phillip Heads. When the 1st Australian Division for service abroad was formed, he volunteered for active service on 25 August 1914 as a Lieutenant as part of the 3rd Field Company Engineers, Headquarters, Section 1, Section 2 and Section 4, in Melbourne, Victoria.
- He embarked on 22 September 1914 with his Unit from Melbourne, Victoria, on board Transport A2 HMAT Geelong, aged 26 years
- He was appointed second in command of the 3rd Field Company (Engineers), with the rank of Captain on 18th October 1914. He spent time training in Egypt
- He was well known because of his Antarctic exploits, but it was his personal attributes and demeanour that continued to win him the respect of all those he came in contact with. He always applied himself diligently to his tasks.
- Captain Bage was part of the first day of the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. He and the other Engineers were busy from the outset, preparing field defences, manufacturing bombs (hand grenades were not available), building roads, carting ammunition and building gun positions for the Artillery.



A prismatic compass

- Early in May some abandoned trenches were identified forward of the 11th Battalion by Captain Raymond Leane. Major General Bridges himself inspected the area and requested that an attempt be made to push forward as soon as possible to gain the position at night. To do this it needed to be clearly marked and for that to occur a party needed to go forward to do so - in daylight. Bage was nearby at the time surveying the forward area with a prismatic compass, assisted by two sappers. As he passed by Bridges exclaimed "Here's the man!" and Bob Bage found himself tasked for what he quickly realised was an almost suicidal mission.
- Bage and a small party had made their way forward near Lone Pine, and were in the process of driving in the marker pegs when they came under Turkish small arms fire. Bage was wounded several times, before being fatally wounded. The cavalier manner in which these men's lives had been thrown away on a whim by Bridges caused a great deal of resentment at the time.



Captain Edward Frederick Robert BAGE

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SERVICE:

- Captain Edward Frederick Robert Bage was killed in action on 7 May 1915, twelve days after the landings at Gallipoli. He had gone out to an exposed position and was killed immediately. He was aged 27 years.
- His dead body could not be recovered until dark; he was later buried in the Beach Cemetery at the southern end of Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



- Bob 'Badget' Bage "was very popular among both officers and men and many were the expressions of regret when the news was received at Victoria Barracks that he had fallen. He was an indefatigable worker, a thorough and efficient organizer, and one of the most promising of the younger officers of the permanent forces." (Adelaide Register 16 June 1915 P8)
- Special mention in Divisional Orders was made on 17 July 1915 for acts of conspicuous gallantry or valuable services in relation to Captain Bage.
- His war service was in Egypt and Gallipoli

CEMETERY &/OR MEMORIAL:

- Cemetery: Beach Cemetery, Anzac (Plot I, Row D, Grave No. 7), Gallipoli, Turkey - the beach at the southern point of ANZAC Cove
- Memorials: Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour
- Melbourne Cricket Club Roll of Honour 1914 - 1918
- Melbourne Grammar School WW1 Fallen Honour Roll

MILITARY HONOURS & AWARDS:

- Special mention was made in Divisional Orders for 'act of conspicuous gallantry or valuable services.'
- 1914-15 Star
- British War Medal
- Victory Medal



ARMISTICE CENTENARY WAR MEMORIAL

Commemoration Service

- Roll of Honour Tribute: ANZAC Day 2023



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ROBERT BAGE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP:

- In early 1916, Mrs Mary Charlotte Bage, mother of Robert Bage, donated £1000 to the Engineering School of the University of Melbourne, to establish a scholarship in memory of her son, Edward Frederick Robert Bage, B.C.E. Melbourne, of the Royal Australian Engineers.
- The scholarship, which initially was to the value of £40, was founded on broad principles, to be awarded annually to an engineering student or graduate who desired to obtain further engineering education, or to conduct engineering research. It was to be awarded for one year, but may have been held for two or more years in special cases.
- It was the wish of the donor (his mother) that the scholarship be administered by a small committee, the first to consist of the Professor of Engineering, the lecturer on civil engineering, and Professor Masson.
- Provision was made to add to the committee any professor or lecturer, under whom the scholar may have been conducting engineering research work. The committee was to be allowed full discretionary powers as to the character of the work to which the scholarship was attached.
- The University heartily welcomed such generous benefactions, and was very glad to perpetuate the memory of one of its graduates.
- The Robert Bage Memorial Scholarship in Engineering at Melbourne University, has been awarded to many scholars over the years, including:
 - A. H. Smith in 1919
 - Frank Vernon Smith in 1920
 - William Alexander Johnson in 1921
 - William Joseph Taylor in 1922
 - Arthur Cecil Tregoningand in 1924
 - Mr. Ernest G. Thurley in 1927
 - D. O. Mullerin in 1935
 - R. E. Pavia in 1942 - the principal subject of his research was the wood gas producer
 - Mr Md Sharafat Hossain in 2016
 - Mehrdad Ahmadi in 2019 received more than \$7000 to support his PhD
- After her death on 18 June 1931, Mary Charlotte Bage bequeathed in her Will, £1000 for the perpetuation of the Robert Bage Memorial Scholarship through the University of Melbourne.
- The Bage Memorial Scholarship continues to be awarded annually, for the purpose of field work overseas, or study at an overseas University or research institution, and in 2023, it is a single award valued at approximately \$4,200.
- In over 100 years since its inception, this annual scholarship has helped many engineers:
an incredible legacy of an outstanding individual: Captain Robert Bage.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

School of Engineering



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KILLED IN ACTION - 7 MAY 1915

- DEATH OF
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A cemetery near Hell Spit, the southern horn of Anzac Cove. Two inscriptions on the grave markers are legible. On the far left is the grave of Captain Edward Frederick Robert Bage, 3rd Field Company Engineers, killed in action on 7 May 1915. To the right of centre is the grave of Lieutenant William Henry Dawkins, killed in action on 20 May 1915, No 2 Field Company, 1st Division Engineers, who graduated among the first intake of cadets of the Royal Military College, Duntroon.

Captain Bage was a prize-winning student, athlete, explorer, rifle shooter and soldier, as well as an amazing human being who achieved so much in his life that was cut short in the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915.