065

Cook, Victor George

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:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 22/9/1894. Joined WAGR 22/10/1913 aged 19 as Cleaner, Perth. ("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 Yalgoo 4/11/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 31/8/1915 (Service No.4172). 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:	4172
Date of death:	3 September 1916
Place of death:	Moquet Farm, France
Age:	21
Rank:	Private
Burial/memorialisation:	Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Victor Cook enlisted on 14 September 1915 and was assigned to 13th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with the regimental number 4172. He quoted his father Mr F. Cook of Cottesloe Beach (now Mosman Park) as his Next of Kin and gave a history of 3 years' service with the 86th Infantry Regiment. He departed Fremantle on 17 January 1916 aboard A30 HMAT *Borda*. In Egypt he was transferred to 51 Battalion on 3 April 1916 before sailing for France.

He was posted as Missing in Action on 3 September 1916 during the battle of Moquet Farm. There is a confusing entry that he was buried at a point between Thiepval and Courcelette 4 miles NE of Albert and on 19 Jun 1918 his family received his identity disc. (If there was a burial and recovery of an identity disc, he should not have remained Missing in Action.) A Court of Enquiry was held on 23 April 1917 which determined that he had been Killed in Action on 3 September 1916. No grave was identified after hostilities and he is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, France.

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The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Soldiers killed in France 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:

Victor Cook was born in Victoria, a son of Esther Ann Cook. The family moved to WA when he was young, as did many people after the 1890s gold finds, and he attended school in Boulder.

Confirmation of soldiers' deaths often took time and so it was common to see family notices on the first anniversary:

> COOK.—In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private Victor George Cook, 51st Battalion, killed in action September 3, 1916 (previously reported missing), aged 22 years. … To serve his King and country was a sufficient task. —Inserted by his loving father, mother, sisters and brother, Cottesloe Beach. The West Australian 3/9/1917p1
>
> COOK.—A tribute to the memory of my dear chum, Private Victor George Cook, 51st Battalion who was killed in action September 3, 1916. A friend worthy to be remembered. —Inserted by his sincere friend, Bill, Cottesloe Beach. The West Australian 4/9/1917p1

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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