070

Cormack, Hugh William

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:	Power House
Designation:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 30/4/1885. Joined Tramways 1 July 1913 aged 28 as Fireman, Perth Power House. Granted leave to join AIF 2/8/1915 (Service No.1242). Died of wounds 21/7/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	32nd Battalion.
Service number:	1242
Date of death:	21 July 1916
Place of death:	Fromelles, Fance
Age:	31
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Bailleul Communal Cemetery Nord, France

Hugh William Cormack enlisted on 19 July 1915 and was assigned the regimental number 1242 in D Company of 32 Battalion. The 32nd Bn, when formed. comprised A and B companies from South Australia with C and D companies being recruited from Western Australia. The WA contingent travelled to South Australia on SS *Indarra* under the command of Major Thomas Flintoff. (SS *Indarra* was not under long term contract to the Commonwealth of Australia so is therefore not designated as HMAT nor assigned a fleet number.) The Battalion concentrated at Cheltenham Military Camp for a short period of training and then left Australia on 18 November 1915 from Port Adelaide aboard A2 HMAT *Geelong* under the command of Lt/Col D M R Coghill. There was a further short period of intensive training before the Battalion departed Alexandria on 17 June 1916 and joined the British Expeditionary Force through Marseilles on 23 June 1916.

They went into action for the first time on 19/20 July 1916 at Fromelles. The casualties killed, wounded and missing in that battle virtually rendered the 5th Australian Division useless for another 6 months. Private Cormack was wounded and taken by stretchers bearers to 15 (Australian) Field Ambulance and he was later moved to 8 Casualty Clearing Station where he died from multiple Gun Shot Wounds (GSW) on 21 July 1916 (DOW). He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Nord.

Further information will be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Additional/personal information:

It is not known where Hugh Cormack was born, but he was in WA by 1905 when he married Ellen Hay in Fremantle (WA BDM 650/1905). It appears he had three children before his death:

> CORMACK.—Died of wounds, on July 21, 1916, Hugh W. Cormack, the dearly-beloved husband of Ellen Cormack, loving father of Wallace, George and Phyllis, nephew of Mrs. C. Rich, Hamersley-road, Subiaco. —Inserted by his loving wife and children.
> Fighting on through din of battle,
> Caring not for shot or shell,
> Among our sons of dear Australia,
> Amidst our boys we love so well.
> IN MEMORIAM.
> ANZAC HEROES. *Sunday Times* 13/8/1916 p1

Other notices mention a brother, Wallace Cormack.

His widow Ellen Cormack died in 1966 aged 81.

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----------