Leadbitter, 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:	Traffic
Designation:	Shunter

Rail employment notes: Shunter, Perth Goods.
The WAGR had an extensive goods yard to the west of Perth station, between William and Milligan Streets, an area now occupied by office buildings and the underground bus station. Shunting wagons from various stations into trains to their next destination, or into the goods sheds for unloading and delivery, went on 24 hours per day.

51st Battalion AIF (Service No.2667). Died of wounds 26/8/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2667
Date of death:	26 August 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	27
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Trois Arbres Cemetery, Steenwerck, Nord Pas de Calais, France

George Leadbitter enlisted in the AIF on 19 June 1916. On enlistment he nominated his wife Mrs Florence May Leadbitter as his Next of kin. He had no previous military experience. His basic military training was at Blackboy Hill Camp and on completion he was allocated the regimental number 2667 in 6th Reinforcements to 51 Battalion. (His younger brother was allocated 2666). He departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle on 10 October 1916 aboard A23 HMAT *Suffolk* and disembarked at Plymouth on 2 December 1916.After a brief period at 13 Trg Bn he crossed to France where he joined the British Expeditionary Force by marching into 4 ADBD on 29 December 1916. Pte Leadbitter was taken-on-strength of 51 Bn on 1 January 1917. After training the Battalion entered the Third Battle of Ypres and on 26 August 1917 Pte Leadbitter suffered Gun shot wounds to his head, chest and abdomen during a period of intense German shelling. He was evacuated to 2 Casualty Clearing Station which was then located near Steenwerck where he Died of wounds. He was buried at Trois Arbres Cemetery, Steenwerck.

Additional/personal information:

George Leadbitter was born at Gateshead England but his date of arrival in Australia is not known. It appears he married Florence before arriving, but their son George William Leadbitter was born in the West:

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> LEADBITTER.—On September 29, at 22 Tamar-street, East Perth, to the wife of Private G. B. Leadbitter—a son. Both well. *The West Australia*n 30/9/1916p1

This was just 11 days before George sailed from Fremantle – it is to be hoped that George saw his new son, but certainly the baby would not remember his father. The boy was also named George.

(Family notices quote a second initial "B" but records available in Australia do not show what this name was.)

> LEADBITTER.—Died of wounds received in action on August 20, 1917, Private George B. Leadbitter, dearly loved husband of Florence M. Leadbitter, and loving daddy of little Georgie, of Tamar-street, East Perth; aged 27 years. Deeply mourned. R.I.P.
>
> LEADBITTER.—Died of wounds received in action on August 20 1917, Private George B.Leadbitter, dearly beloved eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. William Leadbitter, brother of Will (on active service), and brother of Susan and Herbert, also Mrs. Carr and Mrs. Cockett, of Tamar-street, East Perth, late of Newcastle-on-Tyne, England; aged 27 years. Deeply mourned. R.I.P.
> Both *The Western Mail* 7/9/1917p26

For his services he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife together with other memorabilia. In his Will Pte Leadbitter left his total estate to his wife and she also received a benefit paid by the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society. Mrs Leadbitter received a military pension of 40/- per fortnight and their son George William Leadbitter 20/- per fortnight both effective from 04 Nov 1917. Mrs Leadbitter died on 19 May 1964 at the age of 73 years and was cremated at Karrakatta Cemetery.

Private Leadbitter's younger brother, 18 year-old Thomas William Leadbitter, also a WAGR employee, enlisted with George and sailed on the same ship. He served in 51 Bn from 26 June 1916 to 23 January 1919, was decorated with the Military Medal during his service and returned safely to Perth.

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----------