Oma, Norman Frederick

A West Australian railway employee
killed while on military service for their country



Memorial plaque in Kings Park

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Stores
Designation:	Clerk

Rail employment notes: Born 3/7/1890. Joined WAGR 3 December 1906 aged 16 as Cadet, Midland Junction. Promoted to Clerk 1/12/1910 and transferred to Perth 12/1/1911 and then back to Midland Junction 2/12/1912.

Granted leave to join AIF 5/7/1916 (Service No.2967). Killed in action 5/4/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	48th Battalion.
Service number:	2967
Date of death:	5 April 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	27

Rank at time of death: Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Norman Frederick Oma enlisted at the age of 25 years at Belmont on 1 May 1916. He underwent basic military training at Belmont and Blackboy Hill Camp. On enlistment he nominated his mother Mrs Fredericka Oma as his Next of kin and declared that he had no previous military experience. He was allocated to 7th Reinforcements to 48th Battalion with the regimental number 2967.

He departed Australia aboard A8 HMAT *Argyllshire* from Fremantle on 09 Nov 1916 and disembarked at Devonport on 10 Jan 1917. Pte Oma marched into 12 Training Bn the following day. During his time at the Training Bn he was absorbed onto the instructional staff for the period 1 Oct 1917 to 19 Mar 1918 and awarded the acting rank of Sergeant. He departed the UK through Southampton on 19 Mar 1918 and officially reverted to his substantive rank of Private although much subsequent correspondence continues to refer to him as Sergeant. He passed through the AIBD before being taken on strength of A Coy 48 Bn, in the field, on 5 April 1918.

Pte Oma was killed instantly (Killed in action) when a stray shell exploded alongside him on the road between Albert and Dernancourt on 05 Apr 1918. 2981 Pte E W G Reed provided an eye witness account of his death. He was buried at the place of casualty and although the site was marked it could not be located after the War, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, 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:

Norman Oma was born in Tenterfield NSW but the family must have moved west soon after as his schooling was at Midland (then called Midland Junction).

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Mrs Fredericka Oma informed Army Records that although she was the Next of kin his father was still alive but he had deserted her more than 10 years previously. All attempts by Army Records and HQ Fifth Military District to contact his father failed and the final decision was to issue the medals and other memorabilia to his mother on the bond that if the father subsequently laid claim she would surrender the items. Pte Oma held a policy with MLC Assurance and it appears that this was paid to his estate. Mrs Oma dedicated a memorial in Kings Park to her son (M547A) but his rank is shown as Sergeant although this is not strictly correct.

Further information 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----------