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Plummer, John David

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



Villers-Bretonneux memorial

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Fireman

Rail employment notes: Born 20/7/1887. Joined WAGR 14/6/1904 aged 16 as Store Boy, Fremantle.
No other case of a "Store boy" has been seen, but Fremantle had a large loco depot and presumably he was a junior assistant in the loco store where supplies and parts were kept..

Transferred to Cleaner, Fremantle 30/1/1906, Perth 27/8/1906, Geraldton 4/5/1907, Kalgoorlie 27/3/1909, Wagin 5/12/1909 and Northam 25/2/1911.
("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.)

Promoted to Fireman, Northam 30/5/1911 and transferred to Perth 1/5/1912.

Granted leave to join AIF 9/3/1916 (Service No.4789). Killed in action 3/5/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict: First World War 1914-1918

Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4789
Date of death:	3 May 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	29
Rank:	Corporal

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

John David Plummer (AKA Jack) enlisted in the AIF on 18 February 1916. On enlistment he nominated his wife Florence Maude Plummer as his Next Of Kin (his father was also enlisted and overseas) and declared that he had no previous military experience. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 12th Reinforcement to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 4789.

Private Plummer departed Australia from Fremantle on 17 April 1916 aboard A60 HMAT *Aeneas* and disembarked at Suez on 14 May 1916. He was employed on duties in Egypt and then departed for England on 04 Nov 1916 which he reached on 18 Nov 1916 and marched into 7 Training Bn that same day for duty on instructional staff. On 10 Jan 1917 he was promoted to Temporary Sergeant but on 24 Jan 1917 his substantive rank was made Cpl while he remained a T/Sgt. He crossed to France through Folkestone on 19 Apr 1917 to join the British Expeditionary Force at 2 ADBD and then to 28

Battalion where he was taken-on-strength on 26 April 1917 and reverted to his substantive rank of Corporal at the same time. The Battalion went into action on 3 May 1917 and he was detailed to be a stretcher bearer. He was in a shelter with 7 other men when it received a direct hit from an explosive shell. All died and there were no bodies recovered. Cpl Plummer was marked as Missing in action (MIA) but a Court of Enquiry held on 26 July 1917 determined that he had been Killed in action (KIA) on 3 May 1917. Cpl Plummer's remains were never located, 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:

John Plummer was born in Ringwood in Victoria but the family must have moved west soon after as he attended James Street state school in Perth. He married Florence M Congdon in Perth (BDM 561/1908) and they had at least three children:

> PLUMMER.-On May 3, 1917, killed in action (previously reported missing). Corporal John David Plummer, late employee loco. department, West Perth, dearly beloved husband of Florence M. Plummer, loving father of Gertie, Mavis, Edna. …. -Inserted by his loving wife and children, 50 Cardigan-terrace, Jolimont, W.A *The West Australian* 15/8/1917p1
>
> PLUMMER.--Killed in action in France on May 3, 1917, John David, the dearly loved eldest son of Sergeant J. Plummer (on active service), and Mrs. Plummer, brother of Sergeant R. G., Private W. H. (on active service), and Mervyn, Ethel, Nellie, Elsie, Florrie, Ruby, 102 Duke-street, West Perth. … *The West Australian* 16/8/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife together with other memorabilia. His wife Florence initially received a pension of 40/- per fortnight effective from 28 Jul 1917 but this was increased to 52/3 from 26 Sep 1917. Pensions were also awarded to his step-daughter Gertrude Congdon 20/- and daughters Mavis Florence 15/- and Edna Aileen 10/- per fortnight all to date from 28 Jul 1917. His widow (NOK) died at the age of 92 years on 11 Oct 1977 and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery.

Cpl Plummer's brother Second Lieutenant Robert George Plummer 5 MG Bn enlisted in the AIF on 30 Jun 1915 and was awarded the Military Medal but died of illness in France on 14 Feb 1919 before he could be returned to Australia. Cpl Plummer has a memorial tablet in Kings Park (M552) and his brother is at M552 A.

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----------