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Sumner, Cyril William

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:	Apprentice Car and Wagon Builder

Rail employment notes: Born 30/1/1898. Joined WAGR 18/8/1913 aged 15 as Apprentice Car & Wagon Builder, Midland Workshops.

In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Granted leave to join AIF 2/7/1915 (Service No.3114). Killed in action 14/8/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	3114
Date of death:	14 August 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	19
Rank:	Private

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

Cyril William Sumner, aged 18 years, enlisted in the AIF on 2 July 1915 with the signed approval of his widowed mother, Mrs Mary Sumner who he also nominated as his Next of kin. Previous military experience was noted to be 9 months in Senior Cadets. His enlistment was at Blackboy Hill Camp where he also received his basic military training. Following training he was allotted to 10th/11 Bn with the regimental number 3114.

Private Sumner departed Australia from Fremantle aboard HMAT *Themistocles* and disembarked at Suez, Egypt. On arrival in Egypt he joined the pool of reinforcements and when the AIF in Egypt was increased from 2 to 4 Divisions, he was reassigned to 51 Battalion which he marched into on 29 February 1916. The Battalion engaged in intensive training at both the individual and formation level until 5 June 1916 when it departed Egypt from Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and landed at Marseilles on 2 June 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force.

The Battalion moved quickly to the Battle of Pozieres where Private Sumner was Killed in action sometime between 14 and 16 August 1916. For record purposes his date of death was determined as 14 August 1916. His remains were never found and he is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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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:

Cyril Sumner was a local boy, born in North Fremantle and later schooled in Midland Junction before winning the apprenticeship. He was the elder son of Arthur and Mary (nee Draper) Sumner, a younger brother Stanley James Sumner being born in 1901. (BDM 1282/1898 et al.)

However the origin of his parents has not been found – they appear to have moved to WA during the rush of immigrants after the 1890s gold finds, and they brought a daughter Dorothy Eileen Sumner who was born about 1896 with them. They do not show up in available interstate records and may have arrived from the UK or elsewhere.

> SUMNER.-- In loving memory of our dear son and brother. Private Cyril Wm. Sumner, B Company 51st Battalion, late 10-11th Battalion, killed in action, between August 14 and 18, 1916. at Pozieres. Thy will be done. -Inserted by his loving mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. H. Rowe, brother Stan Sumner, and sister and brother-in-law, Dolly and Erie Winthrop. *The West Australian* 15/8/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother Mrs Mary Rowe, his mother having remarried after his enlistment. The Memorial Plaque was presented to his brother Stanley James Sumner, acting on behalf of their mother, by the Lieutenant Governor of Western Australia. Mrs Rowe being absent in the Eastern States at the date of presentation. There is no record of a pension payable in respect of her son but whatever it was increased by 7/6 per fortnight following the death of her second husband (Hugh Rowe) in 1921. Mrs Rowe, nee Sumner, the next of kin of Private Sumner, died on 7 July 1926 aged 59 years and was buried at Karrakatta cemetery.

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----------