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Thompson, Victor Albert

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Born 23/2/1890. Joined WAGR 13/6/1911 aged 21 as Repairer, Glenlynn. ("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge. The WAGR Annual report for 1914/15 showed they employed 882 Repairers at 8 shillings per day, with many at very small settlements or tent camps.)

Transferred to Brookhampton 10/1/1914 and Greenbushes 12/10/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 18/11/1914 (Service No.1644). Wounded at Pozieres and died 13/9/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	1644
Date of death:	13 September 1916
Place of death:	Place not yet found
Age:	24
Rank:	Lance Corporal

Burial/memorialisation: Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Wimereux, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Victor Albert Thompson volunteered for the AIF on 09 Nov 1914 at Blackboy Hill Camp. He nominated his mother Elizabeth Fenner as his next of kin (NOK). His father had died on 17 Jul 1898 and his mother had remarried. He had no previous military experience. His training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was allotted to 3rd Reinforcements to 11 Battalion and departed Australia from Fremantle on 22 Feb 1915 aboard A50 HMAT *Itonus* for Egypt.

He spent a minimum of time in Egypt before crossing to Gallipoli where he was taken-on-strength of 11 Bn on 07 May 1915 and participated in their campaign until 16 Oct 1915 when he reported sick with influenza. He was admitted to the CCS, then transferred by hospital ship to Alexandria where he was admitted to 1 AGH. Following recovery, he returned to Lemnos where he re-joined the Battalion before returning to Egypt at the close of the Gallipoli campaign. The AIF in Egypt was expanded from 2 Divisions to 4 Divisions by taking half of the Gallipoli veterans from battalions 1 to 16 and expanding them with waiting reinforcements. Half of the Gallipoli veterans from 11 Bn were used to create 51 Battalion. Pte Thompson was transferred from 11 Bn to the newly created 51 Bn on 29 Feb 1916.

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Following intensive training at both the individual and formation level 51 Bn departed Alexandria on 05 Jun 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles on17 Jun 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte Thompson was appointed to be a Lance Corporal on10 July 1916. In the heavy fighting at Moquet farm L/Cpl Thompson suffered Gunshot wound and fracture to a leg. He entered the evacuation chain and was admitted to 14 GH where he Died of Wounds on 13 September 1916 and was buried in the Wimereux Communal Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

Victor Thompson was born in Perth in 1892, s son of James and Elizabeth Jane (nee Allen) Thompson. (BDM 347/1892). His father died and his mother remarried to George Hector Fenner in 1905. When Victor enlisted he gave is birth as 1890 but that may have been to gain an adult job and pay rate – when his mother completed papers for the AWM she confirmed his age as 24. He was one of a large family:

> THOMPSON —In loving memory of Lance Corporal Victor Albert Thompson, 51st Battalion, who fell mortally wounded near Mouquet Farm, France, and died on September 13th 1916. He served through Gallipoli with the glorious 11th. Youngest son of Mrs. G. H. Fenner, Busselton. Brother of Mrs. Sayers, Misses C. and V. Thompson Sussex House, Claude W., Busselton, J. H., Perth, and Charles E. on service in Flanders, After life's fitful fever, He sleeps well. *The South Western News* (Busselton) 14/9/1917p2

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 along with other memorabilia. His mother paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: “He is not Dead but Sleeping”. Mrs Fenner’s second husband George died in 1921 and Mrs Fenner, NOK of L/Cpl Thompson died in 1932 (BDM Sussex 4/1932).

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----------

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