

## THOMAS HENRY COOKE

On the 21th of September 1916, Thomas Henry Cooke was signing up for the adventure of a lifetime.

Thomas Henry Cooke was 28 when he signed up to World War One (WWI). Born in Tandarra, Thomas later shifted to Macorna, near Kerang. His mother, Maria Amelia Cooke of Little River, was listed as his next of kin. She later moved to Macorna, then Malvern. His father, Thomas Richard Cooke had passed away in 1908, leaving his mother and at least 7 children behind.

At the time of enlistment, Thomas was 5 foot, 9 ¼ inches. He had brown hair, blue eyes and a medium complexion. Thomas was a driver on the Western Front. He was part of the February 1917 Reinforcements of the Australian Field Artillery Brigade.

Waving goodbye to his family and friends he set off to war on the HMAT A9 Shropshire. It left Melbourne on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1917. Although the war was harsh, Thomas was able to see some parts of the world he may not ever have seen otherwise. Aside from death around him, bullets shooting pass him and the weight of his gun, Thomas got to see France, Belgium and England. These places would bring back amazing yet often unfortunate memories.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*HMAT Shropshire Troopship, 11th May 1917*



*The 29th Artillery Battery on the morning of 29 March 1918, near Vaux-sur-Somme.*

After being unwell at sea, Thomas proceeded to France on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1917 and was taken on strength at Belgium on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October as part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Artillery Brigade. By the 12<sup>th</sup> December, he was transferred to the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, 29<sup>th</sup> Artillery Battery.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, 1917 Thomas became ill with Bronchitis and was admitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance in France. He recovered reasonably fast and was discharged for duty on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, 1918.



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The unit was marched out from Le Havre, France to England on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 1919. They disembarked Southampton for Sutton Veny where he stayed until they left for Australia on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1919.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, 1919 a letter was sent home to Mrs. Cooke informing her that Thomas was returning home. After all the gunshots, illness, and death around him he was returning home after a long 3 years of service.

Thomas returned to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on the 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1919 aboard the troopship Frankfurt. He received 3 medals for his participation in WWI: the British War Medal, The Star and The Victory Medal.

Thomas never married. He died on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1923 and is buried at the Bendigo Cemetery. His brothers remained in the Kerang and Echuca areas until their deaths in the 50s and 60s.

Thomas Henry Cooke. We will remember you. We will remember them.

### Sources:

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