

Walter James Cain

Private (Pte) 3037 Walter James Cain enlisted in the 21st Infantry Battalion in Melbourne on 28 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 18 November and disembarked in Egypt about four weeks later.

During the reorganisation of the AIF in early 1916, he was transferred and taken on strength of the 59th Infantry Battalion in the 15th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Australian Division at Tel el Kebir, on 15 March 1916.

The 59th Battalion sailed for France on 18 June 1916 and arrived at Marseilles on 29 June. They travelled north by train to Steenbeque, where they undertook training in the use of gas masks and trench mortars.

The battalion moved into the frontline near Fleurbaix on 18 July in preparation for a planned assault the next day. At 7.00 pm on 19 July 1916, the battalion attacked the strong German defences in what would later become known as the Battle of Fromelles – the first action by the AIF on the Western Front. The attack should never have occurred and was the folly of the British commander, General Richard Haking, who had used the same plan a year earlier with similar results – a disaster from start to finish.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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German view of the flat, open Fromelles battlefield looking towards the line from which the 15th Infantry Brigade attacked on 19 July 1916.

In less than 24 hours at Fromelles, the 59th Battalion lost 20 officers, and 674 other ranks killed, wounded, captured or missing, one of whom was Pte Cain, who was killed in action on 19 July 1916. His body was never recovered, and he has no known grave.

Private 3037 Walter James Cain is remembered on Panel 16 of the V.C. Corner Australian Cemetery Memorial, Fromelles, France.

Name: Cain, Walter James	
Service Number	3037
Date enlisted	28 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	21 st Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	18 November 1915 HMAT A18 <i>Wiltshire</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	30 years 9 months
Place of birth	St Arnaud, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Cain, Mr Daniel Patrick, father, c/- Frankston PO, Victoria
Permanent address	Langwarrin, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, dark brown hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 4 inches, weight – 9 stone, 9 lbs, chest measurement – 33/35 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	59 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France
Fate	Killed in action
Date and place died	19 July 1916 Fromelles, France
Cemetery details	No known grave. Commemorated on Panel 16 of the V.C. Corner Australian Cemetery Memorial, Fromelles, France
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, Frankston Avenue of Honour and Frankston Great War Honor Roll.