

**Stourbridge Cemetery,  
Stourbridge, West Midlands, England  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**3651 PRIVATE**

**A. HOFF**

**56TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**9TH SEPTEMBER, 1918**

## Axel HOFF

Axel Hoff was born at Molde, Norway (as listed on his Attestation Papers) in 1895 to father Mr Axel Hoff. The Royal Norwegian Consulate, Sydney, NSW wrote a letter to The Recruiting Officer, 167 William Street, Sydney, NSW on 26th June, 1917 stating that Axel Hoff was born at Thronhjem, Norway on 5th September, 1895.

Axel Hoff attended Boarding School, Trondhjem, Norway.

According to information provided by his father for the Roll of Honour – Axel Hoff came to Australia when he was 19 years old.

Axel Hoff was a 21 year old, single Labourer from Pymont, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted at East Sydney, NSW on 26th June, 1917 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3651 & his religion was Orthodox. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Axel Hoff, 9 Bergolis Street, Frondhyem, Norway.

From information provided by his father for the Roll of Honour – Axel Hoff was a Sailor who intended to graduate as Mate. He was in American Navy for about six months in 1915.

Private Axel Hoff was posted to Show Ground Camp, Sydney, New South Wales on 26th June, 1917 for recruit training. He was transferred to Recruits Depot at Liverpool, Sydney, NSW on 28th June, 1917. Private Hoff was transferred to "A" Company, 1st Depot Battalion at Liverpool, NSW on 11th July, 1917. He was later transferred to 10th Reinforcements of 56th Battalion.

Private Axel Hoff was admitted to Liverpool Field Hospital, Sydney, NSW on 23rd August 1917 with Coryza. He was discharged to duty on 31st August, 1917.

Private Axel Hoff embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Euripides (A14)* on 31st October, 1917 with the 56th Battalion, 10th Reinforcements. He was admitted to Ship's Hospital from 28th November, 1917 until 7th December, 1917 with Measles. Private Hoff disembarked at Devonport, England on 26th December, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Axel Hoff was marched in to 14th Training Battalion at Hurdcott, Wiltshire on 27th December, 1917 from Australia.

Private Axel Hoff was sent sick to Bulford Military Hospital, Wiltshire on 14th February, 1918. He was admitted to 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, Wiltshire on 14th February, 1918 with V.D. & discharged on 3rd April, 1918.

Private Axel Hoff was marched in to 14th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire, on 4th April, 1918.

Private Axel Hoff proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 7th April, 1918 from 14th Training Battalion. He was marched in to A.I.B.D. (Australian Infantry Base Depot) at Havre, France on 8th April, 1918 & marched out to his Unit on 12th April, 1918. Private Hoff was taken on strength of 56th Battalion in the Field on 15th May, 1918 from Reinforcements.

Private Axel Hoff was wounded in action on 1st September, 1918. He was admitted to 9th Australian Field Ambulance on 1st September, 1918 with Shrapnel wounds to legs. Private Hoff was transferred & admitted to 53rd Casualty Clearing Station on 1st September, 1918 then transferred to Ambulance Train 33 on 2nd September, 1918. He was admitted to 9th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 3rd September, 1918 & embarked for England on 5th September, 1918 on Hospital Ship *West Australia*.

### 56th Battalion

The 56th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 14 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 4th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the

composition of the 4th, the 56th was predominantly composed of men from New South Wales. The battalion became part of the 14th Brigade of the 5th Australian Division.....

With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie. The 14th Brigade, took up positions to the north of Villers-Bretonneux and held these even when the village fell, threatening their flanks.

Once the German offensive had been defeated, the Allies launched their own offensive in August 1918. The 14th Brigade did not play a major role in these operations until late in the month, but its actions were critical to the capture of Peronne, which fell on 2 September. The 56th fought its last major battle of the war, St Quentin Canal, between 29 September and 2 October 1918. It was resting out of the line when the Armistice was declared on 11 November. Soon after, members of the battalion began to be returned to Australia for discharge.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

From information from the War Diary of 56th Battalion they were at Peronne on 1st September, 1918. Zero hour was at 6 am.

Casualties for 1st & 2nd September, 1918:

Killed – Lieut. W. H. Oldham, D.C.M., Lieut. H. R. Musgrove and 24 other ranks.

Wounded – Capt. E. L. Dalkeith, Lieut. A. W. Hicks, M/C/, Lieut. H. L. Cory, Lieut E. Bullock, Lieut. C. R. Burton, Lieut. H. R. Williams and 195 other ranks.

Missing – 2 other ranks

*(Information from War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private Axel Hoff died at 5.10 am on 9th September, 1918 at 1st Southern General Hospital – Stourbridge Section, Birmingham, England from wounds received in action - G.S.W. to both legs & left arm.

A death for Axel Hoff, aged 23, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Stourbridge, Worcestershire, England.

Private Axel Hoff was buried on 12th September, 1918 in Stourbridge Cemetery, Stourbridge, West Midlands, England – Plot number 7 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private Axel Hoff - *Coffin was Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the "Union Jack", and borne to the graveside, where The Rev: F. H. Simms, C.F. conducted the burial service. The grave will be turfed and an oak cross erected by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Private Axel Hoff requested in his Will dated 21st August, 1917 that in the event of his death he gave the whole of his property & effects to his friend, Mrs Louisie Nelson, 88 Union St, Pymont, Sydney, NSW.

Private Axel Hoff was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Hoff's father – Mr A. Hoff, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque issued from England in November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Axel Hoff – service number 3651, of 56th Battalion, Australian Infantry. No family details are listed.



Private A. Hoff is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 162.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(44 pages of Private Axel Hoff's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **440th CASUALTY LIST**

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

DIED, OTHER CAUSES

Pte AXEL HOFF, Norway

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 9 November, 1918)*

### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Private A. Hoff does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **Stourbridge Cemetery, Stourbridge, West Midlands, England**

The cemetery contains 47 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-18 war, (including those of 13 Australian soldiers, near which a Cenotaph is placed); and a War Cross is erected on the main roadway close to the entrance. The 1st Southern General Hospital had a Section in the Stourbridge Infirmary.

Most of the First World War burials are scattered but 17 form a small plot. The cemetery also contains 20 scattered burials of the Second World War and 1 Non World War burial here.

*(Information from CWGC)*



*(Photo by cookie – Find a Grave)*



**Australian Plot** (Photo courtesy of Margaret Carter)

### **Stourbridge Cemetery Overseas Soldiers Sarcophagus**

Adjacent to the Plot where the 13 Australian WW1 War Graves are located sits a Sarcophagus Memorial (listed by CWGC above as a Cenotaph) which reads:

*“In Grateful Memory Of Our Comrades From  
Overseas Who Died In The Stourbridge Military  
Hospital During The Great War 1914-19.”*

The names of the 13 Australians are listed on the Plaque along with a Soldier from Canadian Contingent & 2 Soldiers from U.S.A.



(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)



**Stourbridge Cemetery Overseas Soldiers Sarcophagus/Memorial**

*(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)*



**Arrow showing the Plot where Australian WW1 War Graves are located** *(Photo courtesy of Margaret Carter)*





**Stourbridge Cemetery showing Australian WW1 War Graves** *(Photos courtesy of Margaret Carter)*



Photo of Private A. Hoff's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Stourbridge Cemetery, Stourbridge, West Midlands, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett – Private Collection)*