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## Lawlor**, Alfred John

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### A West Australian tramway employee killed while on military service for their country

Alfred Lawlor left a young son and his wife pregnant with another boy who would never see his father. Sadly his was not the only child born in this circumstance during the war.



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

**Rail employment information**

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|---|---|
| Employer: | Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways |
| Branch: | Tramways |
| Designation: | Conductor |

Rail employment notes: Born 19/8/1893. Joined Tramways 21 November 1915 aged 22 as Student, Perth. Appointed to Conductor, Perth 30 November 1915. Granted leave to join AIF 13/6/1916 (Service No.2594). Killed in action 4/7/1918.
(The tramways of Perth and adjoining suburbs were compulsorily purchased by the WA Government in 1913 and were placed in the management and responsibility of the WA Government Railways. The WAGR's records of employees, including the honour roll after the war, reflected this combined operation.)

**There is some confusion over Mr Lawlor's name. The WAGR recorded him as A J Lawler, however military authorities recorded Lawlor, as it was in BDM records, and that is the way his widow spelt it.

**Military service information:**

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|---|---|
| Conflict: | First World War 1914-1918 |
| Service: | Australian Imperial Force |
| Military unit: | 43rd Australian Infantry Battalion. |
| Service number: | 2594 |
| Date of death: | 4 July 1918 |
| Place of death: | France |
| Age: | 24 |
| Rank at time: | Private |

Burial/commemoration: Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Picardie, France

Alfred John Lawlor was allotted the regimental number 2594 in 5th Reinforcements to 43rd Battalion following his enlistment in the AIF on 7 June 1916. Originally, he was assigned to 5th/44 Bn but this was changed during his training period at Blackboy Hill Camp.

He departed Australia aboard HMAT *Argyllshire* on 9 November 1916 and disembarked at Devonport UK on 10 January 1917. He marched in to 11 Training Battalion on 5 February 1917. Training was seriously disrupted when he was admitted to the Australian Dermatological Hospital, which treated soldiers for venereal and other diseases, between 19 June 1917 and 13 November1917 resulting in 148 days of non-effective service. He departed for France through Southampton on 17 January 1918 and spent 2 days at the Australian Infantry Base Depot before being taken on strength of 43 Battalion in the field. In February he again reported sick and was non effective for 59 days before rejoining his


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Unit in the field. Scabies resulted in another hospital admission between 23 April and 30 April 1918 before he returned to 43 Battalion.

On 4 July 1918 he was Killed in Action at the Battle of Hamel. Witnesses reported that he was in open 'no man's land' when he was cut down by an artillery shell and buried close by with another soldier (not identified). The burial site was identified as Hamelet and later marked with a cross by a Sergeant of a Pioneer Battalion. After the War his remains were identified and relocated to Crucifix Corner Cemetery, Villers-Bretonneux.

**Additional/personal information:**

Alfred Lawlor was born in the Perth district in 1893, the son of Alfred Luke Lawlor and Frances (nee Wilcox) Lawlor (BDM 1649/1893). Records indicate he had at least three siblings, Mabel (later Mabel Wall), Alice (later Alice Wood) and Elsie (later Elsie Bond).

He married Irene Ethel Oates in Perth in 1914 and BDM records show the couple had at least two children, sons Alfred born 1914 and Leonard in 1917. Given the date of Alfred's departure from WA, it appears he left WA before Leonard was born so the baby would never see his father.

> LAWLOR.—Private Alfred J. Lawlor, killed in action on July, 4, 1918, late of Government tramways; dearly beloved husband of Irene Lawlor, 95 Charles-street, Perth, and loving father of Alfie and Lennie. R.I.P. *The West Australian* 26/7/1918p1

His widow remarried in 1919 in Sydney to a Mr Albert Cookesley (NSW BDM 616/1919).

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----------