

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

Senior, Alfred

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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Traffic
Designation:	Porter

Rail employment notes: Born 12/8/1892. Joined WAGR 18 July 1914 aged 21 as Porter, Bunbury. Granted leave to join AIF 31/8/1914 (Service No.979). Died of wounds 11/6/1918.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	12th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	979
Date of death:	11 June 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	25
Rank at time of death:	Private

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

Noted war historian Dr Mike Galvin comments:

This man is a really rare soldier. He landed on the beach on Anzac Day 1915 and almost made it to the end of the war. If you put down every move and event it would look like an Aztec calendar. The Great War just chewed up manpower from death, illness, wounding, disease etc. The amazing thing about this chap is that he went so long before he was wounded for the first (and last) time.

What was unfortunately not rare, was the number of deaths within a family – Alfred's brother-in-law Arthur Farmery, also a WA railwayman, enlisted and was killed In 1917.

Alfred Senior enlisted in the AIF on 10 September 1914 at Blackboy Hill Camp. He had no previous military or naval experience. He nominated his mother as his NOK. Pte Senior was allocated to H Company of 12 Bn with the regimental number 979. 12 Bn was a multi-state Bn with the greatest number of members being drawn from Tasmania. While in WA they trained as an element under command of 11 Bn. The two companies of 12 Bn (G and H) departed from the Port of Fremantle aboard A7 HMAT Medic on 31 Oct 1914. On arrival in Egypt the two companies were combined to form a new D Company so that they conformed to the 4 Company structure of British Battalions and joined the rest of the Bn at Mena Camp. 12 Bn trained with the other Battalions of 3 Brigade in Egypt

and on 02 Mar 1915 moved to Alexandria where they joined A3 HMAT *Devanha* and sailed for Mudros Harbour on Lemnos Island. Training on Lemnos consisted of route marches and practice at leaving a ship by scrambling nets. On 22 April 1915 D Company transferred to the command of 11 Battalionn aboard *Suffolk*. As part of the Third Brigade 12 Bn was amongst the first ashore on 25 April 1915 suffering a great number of casualties but Pte Senior was unharmed. He participated in all the frontline action of 12 Bn until 25 August 1915 when he reported sick with dysentery. Pte Senior was evacuated from Gallipoli to the London General Hospital via the Stationary Hospital on Lemnos then the RN Hospital Malta. He finally rejoined 12 Bn in France and fought through the Battles of Pozieres and Moquet Farm before enduring the severe winter of 1916-1917 on frontline and reserve service.

Pte Senior was one of the very few original members of the Battalion to survive the Third Battle of Ypres and saw action at Polygon Wood and Passchendaele. He had 2 weeks UK furlough during that time. He had a short period of hospitalization in November 1917 before rejoining 12 Bn on 22 November 1917. He was hospitalized with scabies between 14 March and 04 April 1918. On 22 April 1918 he was Wounded in action for the first time, suffering a penetrating abdominal injury and was admitted via the medical evacuation chain to the USA General Hospital at Boulogne where he Died of wounds on 11 June 1918.

He was buried in the British Empire Grave section of the Wimmereux Communal Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

He had been born in Hull, Yorkshire and arrived in Australia at the age of 21 years, finding work with the WAGR at Bunbury.

It appears his mother remained in England, however Alfred's sister Lily also emigrated to WA with her husband Arthur Farmery, who also joined the WAGR. Arthur Farmery also enlisted, and died in the war in 1917.

> SENIOR.—Private Alfred Senior, dearly loved youngest brother, of Mrs. Farmery, Taylor-street, Beaconsfield, Fremantle, after 3 years, 8 months active service.
> In honour's cause he fell, Fighting for those he loved so well.
> —Inserted by his sorrowing sister. *The West Australian* 6/7/1918p1

For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. These medals and other memorabilia were issued to his mother from Australia House, London. His mother was granted a pension which she continued to receive up until her death at the age of 85 years. His only sister (aged 70) successfully applied for the Anzac plaque when it was issued in 1965 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

Further information 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----------