Uren, Alfred Nicholas

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



Plaque in Kings Park

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Carpenter

Rail employment notes: Carpenter, Ways & Works Branch. Career details have not been located, however the Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures so a carpenter might have been engaged on building and/or maintaining stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc.
Enlisted in 3rd Tunnelling Co. AIF 1/12/1915 (Service No.1193). Died of wounds 11/8/1918 aged 49.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	3rd Australian Tunnelling Company
Service number:	1193
Date of death:	11 August 1918
Place of death:	France
Age:	49
Rank at time of death:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Pernes British Cemetery, Pernes-en-Artois, Arras, Nord Pas de Calais, France

Alfred Uren gave his occupation as a Mine Carpenter when he enlisted in the Mining Corps in Perth on 1 December 1915 and was given the regimental number 1193. At age 47 years he was actually above the enlistment age. He was transferred to Sydney but no ship has been named to account for the movement. The Number 3 Mining Company sailed from Sydney on A38 HMAT *Ulysses*.

He joined the British Expeditionary Force through Marseilles on 5 May 1916 and immediately entrained for Hazebrouck where he detrained on 8 May 1916. He had been promoted to the rank of Corporal (Provisional) on 18 December 1915 and then to Sergeant on 16 January 1916. The mining companies operated almost independently of the AIF until the middle of 1918. In the closing months of the War tunnelling for mines was not required as the War had entered a phase of movement. Many of the tunnellers were deployed to work with Pioneer Battalions but it is not known if Sgt Uren was amongst them. The London Gazette dated 17 June 1918 records his award of the Meritorious Service Medal which is repeated in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 07 Nov 1918 but no citation is on record. He was Wounded in action on 11 August 1918 and taken to 34 Field Ambulance and then moved on to 22 Casualty Clearing Station but was declared to be dead on arrival. He is therefore classed as Died of wounds. He was buried at Pernes British Cemetery (7 miles NNE of St Pol).

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Additional/personal information:

Alfred Uren was born on 27/11/1868 in Kapunda, South Australia, and educated in South Australia, however he was in WA by 1894 when he married Annie Gertrude Pennington, in Southern Cross. (BDM 182/1894). They were still in Southern Cross when a daughter was born in 1895, but the next births were in Perth in 1898 then Boulder in 1902 and 1904.

It is not known when he began working for the WAGR – his wife noted that he was also a "certificated engine driver" so in both Southern Cross and Boulder he may have been working on mines.

He was very involved with the Scouts movement, as recorded in newspaper articles after his death:

> Prior to leaving for the. front, he was Hon. Scoutmaster of Troop No. 32 (Highgate) and was respected as a true gentleman and Scout. tenders the deepest sympathies of the Scout Council and W. A. Boy Scout Troops generally to Mrs Uren and family in their sad bereavement. *Bunbury Herald* 7/9/1918p6

Prior to his enlistment and departure, the boys of Troop 32 presented him with a parting gift, and in responding he made the following statement:

> The question has been asked me, 'why have you enlisted?' I will tell you why. I have a theory, which is that in my opinion. the Commonwealth is very ill-advised in sacrificing the youth of the country, as has been, and is being done in this great war, while there are numbers of men of mature years who can go to the front, and whose lives are of much less value than those of the young men. This theory determined me to enlist, and I am. prepared to do my utmost in the service of .my Empire, and, if need be to lay down my life in assisting to defend her.' *The Daily News* 31/8/1918p5

In June 1918 he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, the exact citation has not been found but this was generally for outstanding service but not in the face of the enemy, His wife was asked if she wanted the MSM to be sent to her or have it publicly presented. She elected to have it presented to her at a Tunnellers Reunion Social on 4 June 1919.

Sgt Uren has a memorial tablet (M364) in Kings Park which shows that the tree was planted by the Boy Scouts.

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----------

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