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Welshman, Alfred Charles

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

The First War was a time of great patriotism – four brothers from this family enlisted, however the Welshmans were lucky – three returned.



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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Locomotive
Designation:	Apprentice Moulder

Rail employment notes: Born 26/5/1897. Joined WAGR 4/8/1913 aged 16 as Apprentice Moulder, Midland Workshops.
In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Granted leave to join AIF 17/12/1915 (Service No.186). Killed in action at Messines Ridge 8/6/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	44th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	186
Date of death:	8 June 1917
Place of death:	Messines, Belgium
Age:	20
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Alfred Charles Welshman enlisted in the AIF on 4 December 1915, and nominated his father John Welshman as his next of kin. Alfred stated that he had some military experience in the 86th Infantry Regiment, a WA militia (volunteer part-time). He was then 18 years old. He was allocated to "A" Company, 44th Infantry Battalion.

The 44th battalion of approximately 1000 men was a primarily West Australian unit, initially raised at Claremont. After local training, the Battalion embarked on HMAT Suevic on 6 June 1916 to sail for England. Further training in the UK followed, mainly on Salisbury Plain. They crossed the Channel to France in November 1916.

In June 1917 the Battalion was involved in a battle around Messines, and Private Welshman was mong those killed here. His body has never been located, and he is remembered on the Menin Gate memorial.

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Additional/personal information:

Alfred Welshman was born and attended school in Gloucester in England, a son of John Welshman. His family came to Western Australia when he was 17, Alfred being the youngest son. Family notices indicate there were at least five sons and a sister:

> WELSHMAN.—Signaller Alf. Welshman, A Company, 44th Battalion, killed in action June 8; 1917, beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Welshman, North Fremantle, and brother of Jack, Fred, Tom, and Harry, on active. service.
>
> WELSHMAN.—Signaller Alf. Welshman, "A" Company 44ih Battalion, aged 20 years, killed. in action June 8, 1917, beloved brother of Mrs. A. A. Williams, and brother-in-law of Bert Williams (on active service). …
>
> WELSHMAN.—A tribute to the memory of Sig. Alf Welshman; killed in action, June 8, 1917. His duty nobly done. —Inserted by his friend, Flo. Norman. All The West Australian 2/7/1917p1

No-one could accuse the Welshman family of not taking the war seriously, as at least three of Alfred's brothers also enlisted:

> Frederick William Welshman joined the 32nd Infantry Battalion (no. 1074)
>
> Henry Welshman enlisted in the 10th Light Horse Regiment (no.349), he rose to be a Sergeant, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and returned to Australia safely after the war.
>
> Thomas James Welshman joined the 32nd Infantry Battalion (regimental no. 1387)

These three were more fortunate than Alfred, all returning to Australia. The family notices show that a brother-in-law also enlisted.

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. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------