Edwards, Alfred

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



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

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Stores (Railway Sawmills)
Designation:	Labourer

Rail employment notes: Labourer, No.2 Railway Mill, Dwellingup.
In this period the WAGR operated two sawmills, whose operations were included in the Commissioner of Railway's responsibilities and reports. WAGR records of individual employees, available from the SRO, have not been found for Mr Edwards, however designation and other information have been listed from WAGR Roll of Honour, the Railway Institute Magazine, and other sources.

Enlisted in 44th Battalion AIF 4/1/1916 (Service No.175). Killed in action 14/3/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	44th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	175
Date of death:	14 March 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	18*
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Alfred Edwards enlisted in the AIF on 23 December 1915 with the approval of both parents. (It is likely that he gave a false age in order to enlist as he was probably 17 or 18 then) On enlistment his father John Alfred Edwards became his Next of kin. At the time of enlistment, he was serving as a senior cadet in the 87th Regiment. His basic training was conducted at Claremont Showgrounds and local district and on completion he was assigned to A Company, 44 Battalion with the regimental number 175. The Battalion departed Australia from Fremantle on 6 June 1916 aboard A29 HMAT *Suevic* and disembarked at Plymouth on 21 July 1916 for continuation training on Salisbury Plains.

He departed England on 25 November 1916 from Southampton and landed at Le Havre to join the British Expeditionary Force. In action around Armentieres Private Edwards was posted as Missing in action on 14 March 1917 which was subsequently changed to Killed in action by a memorandum dated 23 March 1917. It appears that he was buried on the battlefield but his remains were never located. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

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Additional/personal information:

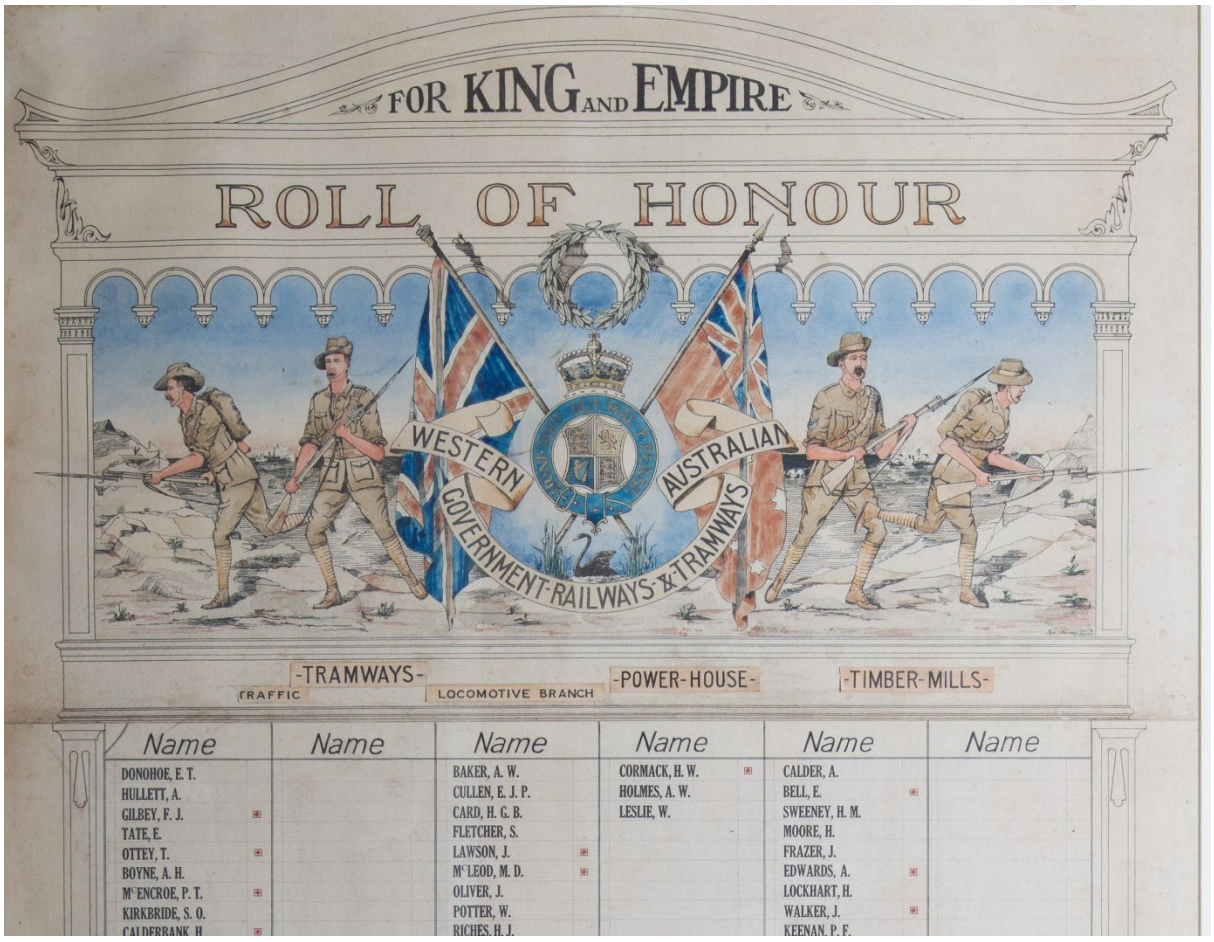
Alfred Edwards was born in Helensburgh, Sydney NSW, a son of John Alfred and Dinah (nee Harris) Edwards (NSW BDM 3677/1899).

It is likely that he gave a false age in order to enlist as he was probably 16 or 17 then. The registration of his birth in NSW suggests he was 18 when he died, and his father also states 18 years old when completing the record card post-war now in the AWM online.

It appears the whole family moved west following the gold rush boom, as third son Harold Peter Edwards was born in WA in 1903. (WA BDM 4804/1903).

> EDWARDS.-On March 14, 1917, killed in action in France, Private Alfred Edwards, of 44th Battalion, the dearly beloved son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, and brother of Jack, Harold, Cyril, of Nedlands Park, aged 18 years and 2 months. A loving son and brother; a noble end. New South Wales papers please copy. *The West Australian* 5/4/1917p1

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His mother, Dinah Edwards was granted a military pension of 14/- per fortnight effective from 26 May 1917. Dinah Edwards (the pensioner) died on 21 Sep 1941 aged 67 years and her husband John Alfred Edwards, his NOK died on 22 Jan 1943 at the age of 73 years. His parents were buried in the same compartment at Karrakatta cemetery.



When the WAGR had Honour Rolls prepared after World War I, the Timber Mill employees were included on a sheet showing the smaller branches of the organisation.

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----------