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Ellis, Frederick Walter

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

Fredrick Ellis married just before departing for war and left his wife pregnant with a daughter he would never see.



War memorial at Yarloop

Rail employment information

Employer:	Millar's Karri & Jarrah Company (1902) Limited
Branch:	Yarloop mills
Designation:	Locomotive fireman

Rail employment notes: Frederick Ellis was described both by himself (embarkation papers) and his brother-in-law as a locomotive fireman based at Yarloop, which could only mean that he worked for Millars who had their main workshops there plus a major mill on the north-east edge of the town. The company had developed an extensive rail system to transport logs from the cutting areas to various mills, and to take the sawn timber down to Yarloop WAGR station for further transport.

Millars' workshops at Yarloop survived into the 21st century as a museum, but the disastrous fire in 2016 destroyed the buildings (along with most of the town) and with them any remaining employee records.

*Comprehensive information on Yarloop mills and rail operations, with maps, can be found in
Gunzburg, A. and J.Austin: "Rails through the bush": Perth, 2008, Rail Heritage WA: ISBN 978-0-9803922-2-7

Military service information:

Conflict:	The Great War 1914-1919
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	n/a
Date of death:	30 July 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	26
Rank:	Second Lieutenant

Burial/memorialisation: Puchevillers British Cemetery, Puchevillers, Picardie, France

Frederick Walter Ellis enlisted in the AIF on 26 June 1915. His place of birth was recorded as Devonport in England. On enlistment he nominated his father Ben Ellis of Yarloop as his Next of kin but this was amended (undated) to his wife Margaret. It would seem that he married sometime between enlistment and departure from Fremantle, to Margaret Hunter. (BDM Leederville 60/1915).

He stated that he had served in the Royal Garrison Artillery and Royal Field Artillery between 1902 and 1911 following which he had migrated to Australia. It seems he was serving as a gunner in the British Army when his father migrated to WA and became a timber worker at Yarloop. When his enlistment expired he also migrated to Australia and it looks as if his father got him employment at

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Millars. He obviously did not keep the British Army aware of his location and did not see, or avoided, the recall notices displayed around Australia concerning reservists. With his recent artillery service he would definitely have a reserve obligation of 5 years to return to the colours. In the second half of 1914 British reservists were chased up quite vigorously.

The recruiting officer did not assign him to a Depot Company for training as a soldier but had him sent to the Officer Training Unit (then located at Claremont Showgrounds). He passed the course and applied for an AIF commission which was awarded and he then joined 9th reinforcements to 28th Battalion as a Second Lieutenant (2Lt) on 16 September 1915 and trained with that Company until departure from Fremantle aboard A28 HMAT *Miltiades* on 12 February 1916. On arrival in Egypt the 9th reinforcements joined the main body of 28 Battalion and departed Alexandria on 21 March 1916 aboard HMT *Oriana* and disembarked Marseilles, 27 March 1916 where he marched into 2 ADBD as part of the British Expeditionary Force. On 6 July 1916 he left 2 ADBD and was taken-on-strength of 28 Battalion in the field.

Second Lieutenant Ellis was Wounded in action on 28 July 1916 (Gunshot wounds both thighs). He was initially treated by the South Midlands Field Ambulance before being transferred to 3 Casualty Clearing Station where he Died of wounds on 30 July 1916 and was buried that same day with the Reverend A H Brighton officiating. His grave is located in Punchevillers British Cemetery 19 Km NE of Amiens.

Additional/personal information:

Frederick Ellis was born in Devonport, England, but came to WA sometime after 1912, possibly encouraged by his father who had emigrated earlier and found work at Yarloop.

A family notice in the newspaper indicated multiple enlistments from his family:

> ELLIS.- On July 30, died of wounds sustained somewhere in France, late of Yarloop, Second Lieutenant F. W. Ellis, dearly beloved eldest son of Private B. Ellis, on active service, and his sorrowing mother; also his only brother, Ben, also on active service; and his youngest sister, Rose. His duty bravely done and won, Will never be forgotten by his dear ones. (*The West Australian* 29/8/1916p1)

A notice from his brother-in-law was more informative, indicating that Frederick and Margaret had a daughter born about the time he embarked and it is unlikely he saw the child before leaving.

> ELLIS--In loving memory of our dear brother in-law, Second Lieutenant F. W. Ellis, who died of wounds on active service received somewhere in France on July 30, 1916; also dearly loved husband of Margaret Ellis, of Shetland Isles, Scotland, and father of little Margaret, aged 6 months.
>
> His duty nobly done.
>
> -Inserted by his brother and sister-in-law. Mr. and Mrs. James Hunter, Arlington-avenue, South Perth ; also Private AV. Hunter, on active service. (Western Mail 8/9/1916p50)

It seems that his wife and daughter sailed to the UK either before or soon after he left, perhaps to join extended family as so many of the men from both Ellis and Hunter families had enlisted.

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his wife. His memorial plaque was issued to his father-in-law Mr P Hunter, resident in the UK - the personal file offers no explanation for this decision. Mrs Ellis received a military pension of 70/- per fortnight commencing with effect 30 September 1916 and the daughter Margaret Ann Caroline Ellis received 20/- per fortnight from the same date but marked to expire on 13 February 1932. Such pensions to children were usually calculated to expire on the 16th birthday, which indicate the baby never saw her father.

Mother and daughter were both resident in the Shetland Islands when the pensions were determined. The family paid for an inscription on his tombstone which reads: “The Lord Giveth and He Taketh Away, By His Loving Wife and Daughter**”.**

The father of 2Lt Ellis, Benjamin Ellis, a timber worker of Yarloop, enlisted in 28 Bn AIF with the regimental number 4416 after his son on 26 February 1916 but was returned to Australia on 12 November 1916. He died in 1933 at the age of 72 years. Frederick Ellis’s younger brother, named Benjamin Ellis after his father, also enlisted and returned to Australia, dying in 1975 aged 78.

Lieutenant Ellis is commemorated on the Yarloop War Memorial, which has been restored since the 2016 fire that razed the town.

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 Rail Heritage WA resources and J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

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