

Our Australian Soldier

Alfred Edmund WARD

Alfred Edmund Ward (Ernest) was born in Warialda, New South Wales, Australia in 1885. His parents were John and Henrietta Ward. Warialda (aboriginal for 'place of wild honey') is a



small rural town on the northern edge of NSW bordering Queensland. Warialda is only 25 miles from a place called Myall Creek which is synonymous with an aboriginal massacre which happened at a sheep station in the 1830s as land was taken by European white settlers.

Although he was born at Warialda it is doubtful he spent much time growing up here as he is documented as attending school at Cleveland Street Public School, Sydney. This school is in the suburb of Surry Hills where he resided at a boarding house belonging to Mrs Evelyn McCullough of 130 Devonshire Street, before he enlisted in the AIF age 30.

Prior to enlisting he worked as a labourer but it is known that before this he worked in a circus as a 'rough-rider, cowboy' and in his military records it states '*he is believed to be one of the smartest at these performances*'. He toured with the circus both within the Commonwealth and South Africa where he was possibly stationed during the Boer War. During the Boer War he served with the NSW Imperial Bushmen Unit and must have only been 16 years old when he listed.



In the NSW Imperial Bushmen camp, South Africa, 1900

The NSW Imperial Bushmen Unit served from May 1900 until 11th June, 1901. The only record for an Alfred Edmund from Warialda is as follows and it is not clear why the name Thomas was used.

Boer War Nominal Roll - Alfred Edmund Thomas

Ward Service number: 422

Rank: Private

Unit: NSW IMPERIAL BUSHMEN

Conflict: South Africa, 1899-1902 (Boer War)

State: NSW

Source: Murray page number – 93



His horsemanship must have enabled him to become an effective soldier in the war.

After the Boer War Ernest settled back into life at Surry Hills, Sydney.

Devonshire Street, Sydney was the site of the old cemetery where early pioneers and convicts were buried. In 1901 the headstones were relocated for the expansion of Sydney Central Railway Station. It is possible Ernest worked on the expansion of the Central Railway Station as he was working as a labourer and lived at Devonshire Street at the time.

At Devonshire Street Ernest shared lodgings with William James Harpur (Jacky), a shearer who had worked on the Queensland Border not far from Warialda. Jacky Harpur joined the same Battalion 19th Bn, 11th Reinforcement and although they enlisted on separate days, they both sailed from Sydney on the HMAT *Nestor* (Liverpool) on 9th April 1916.

William James Harpur was killed in Flers, France as he was hit by a shell he was killed instantly along with a comrade.

Ernest continued with the 19th Bn until 1918 when he was granted leave whilst serving in France. He decided to visit family in England and stay with his cousin J H Leech. It was whilst he was on leave in Darwen that he succumbed to influenza pneumonia and died at Vale Mount House, Spring Vale (the home of his cousin J H Leech) on 1st December 1918. He was accorded a full Military Funeral with a firing party, bugler and pall bearers.

With no apparent relatives in Australia his landlady Mrs. Evelyn McCullough commissioned his grave in Darwen. Mrs. E McCullough died May 28, 1938 aged 72years and her children are listed as Harold, Alma, Gladys and Dorothy (there was no mention of a husband in the records).