

Alfred Reginald John Morley

When choosing which of the more than 15,000 Tasmanian men sent overseas to fight during World War One I wanted to research, I knew wanted to cover someone's story that had never been told before. I wanted to investigate a name that I knew nothing about, and at the end of it all feel as though this person had been given at least some of the honour they deserved for all that they had done for our country. Alfred Reginald John Morley was a young man who fought in both the Boer War and World War One, and who is currently featured on the honour wall of Sandford Hall in Southern Tasmania. This is where I found him, and after some research, which continued to take me deeper and deeper in Tasmania's War history, managed to find his war-time records. For my project I chose to write a poem. All the information has been taken directly from what records I could find, and although there are a few gaps, I hope it at least shows a bit of the amazing person he was. Dedicated to his life and memory, I present to you the story of Alfred Morley. Lest We Forget.

Alfred Reginald John Morley

Born in Oatlands Tasmania,
In March 1880,
Alfred Reginald John Morley,
His parent's sixth baby.

Along with his large family,
He grew up in the town,
Until they decided to move,
To Sandford they travelled down.

He became a farm hand by trade,
Working hard for his keep,
A strong and able-bodied man,
His life did not come cheap.

The Boer War had come and gone,
And Alfred played his part,
The Bushmen's Mounted Infantry
He fought with from the start.

He climbed aboard the 'Manhattan',
On April twenty-sixth,
And set sail for South Africa,
On shore he stood transfixed.

Served across the sea for one year,
Four mates killed in action,
And two taken down by disease,
The fight, a distraction.

Finally, the war was over,
A chance to travel back,
Aboard the ship called 'Britannic',
He walked off with his sack.

He lived in peace for fifteen years,
Living a simple life,
Working as a labourer,
And staying out of strife.

War came again in 1915,
Alfred was thirty-five.
A single man - no wife or kids,
Just glad to be alive.

Unlike the young men around him,
He didn't long for change,
The price would peace for not be cheap,
The idea wasn't strange

Although the War was far away,
He knew he had to go,
For both his king and country,
He had to face the foe.

With a medium complexion,
Brown eyes and black hair,
He was young and strong and healthy,
Fit for active warfare.

He in enlisted in the army,
January 1916,
And with his sign of 'A Morley'
Vowed truth – no in-between.

So, under oath, he swore to serve,
"Our Sovereign Lord the King"
Service number 4835,
What would the future bring?

Alfred joined the 12th Battalion,
Tasmania's main brigade,
Although he missed Gallipoli,
They still needed his aid.

But the Morley's were risking much,
Four sons sent off to war,
A next of kin medal gifted,
To his mum, back on shore.

At last, it came - the faithful day,
That he arrived in hell,
Alfred got used to his new life,
Of blood and death and bombshell.

The fronts of Ypres and Flanders,
Fought in Winter's harsh cold,
Layers of snow covering fields,
The horrors still untold.

As the heavens drained their contents,
And dirt turned into mud,
The allies began to gain ground,
Despite the endless flood.

But even though we had our wins,
We still suffered losses,
And Alfred watched his friends fall,
The hills left covered in crosses.

But He was not among them,
And went along his way,
Yet in and out of hospital,
He was often away.

And then in the personal notes,
Of the Mercury News,
Alfred was lying ill in France,
So much that he could lose.

He recovered, but soon returned,
Bringing an injured knee,
After this came a nasty boil,
Varicose veins made three.

Despite this, he returned each time,
Admitted to field care,
Then discharged again to duty,
With a softly spoken prayer.

He fought across the Western Front,
Showing his patch with pride,
A rectangle, pale blue and white,
The colours didn't lie.

Tasmanian through and through,
Fighting alongside boys,
From the states often forgotten,
Through mud, shots, and bomb noise.

And the life of Alfred Morley,
Did not end overseas,
Returning to Australia,
In August 1917.

He was sent home due to his age,
And despite his great skill,
He was now too old for service,
Whatever he might will.

Although he was not laid to rest,
Under a foreign field,
The hardships of the test he faced,
Have still not been concealed.

His story may not be one
Of heroic death in war,
But it still rings true with hope and love,
A life that still had more.

Now thrust back into normal life,
Alfred needed a trade,
The 'Returned Soldiers Settlement'
An Act that offered aid.

If he applied, and succeeded,
He could be granted land,
A chance for a fresh start in life,
A future, built by hand.

He had dreams to be a farmer,
Or a miner perhaps,
And requested one hundred pounds,
To fill in all the gaps.

Once granted, he made it his home,
And built his life with pride,
Having to support his mother,
After his father died.

His children, named Reg, Max and Carl,
And Lylia, his wife,
Had become his world after war,
A sweet, fulfilling life.

By the time his life was over,
Fifty-three years of age,
He was remembered by many,
Curtains closed on life's stage.

The next time the papers named him,
Grief and death, was the cause,
A memorial by his wife,
Asking loved ones to pause.

Buried at Cornelian Bay,
In the state that he loved,
A Tasmanian to the end,
Remembered and beloved.

But then, just a few years later,
In 1943,
His mother's dear badge was stolen,
Travelling to Sydney.

Wrote to officer D. Portwin,
Agreed that he could try,
Then forwarded to A. Bowman,
Who sent her a reply.

Statutory Declaration,
The form which must be signed,
'True in every particular'
At risk of being fined.

She signed the form and sent it back,
And soon received her prize,
The medal and three bars returned,
Made tears well in her eyes.

Tears for the boy that was now gone
And for the medal won,
The only way to remember,
To remember her son.

Now pictured on the honour boards,
Of Sandford's local hall,
And St. Martin's Anglican Church,
His picture on the wall.

And that was what he was to me,
A picture, then a name,
A man I knew had done great things,
But never one of fame.

He was ordinary, like me,
No named biography,
But still a story there to find,
Words and photography.

I wonder what he'd think today,
To read about his life,
I wonder what his kids would say,
And what about his wife?

I think that they'd be proud of him,
Of all that he has done,
And I think that's all he wanted,
The safety of his sons.

Peace for the town he was born in,
All those long years ago,
Peace for the earth he had worked on,
Watching precious crops grow.

Peace for the mates he had to leave,
In the fields of strange lands,
And peace for the enemies killed,
From weapons in his hands.

Peace for the worrying mother,
Wishing her sons were home,
Peace for the next of kin father,
Working the fields alone.

Peace for the boys he'd fought beside,
For those who came back here,
And peace for all the families,
Who lost one that was dear.

Peace for the world men had destroyed,
With bombs and blood and guns,
Peace for those who'd come after him,
The sons of all his sons.

Peace for his wife and grandchildren,
The kids he'd never know,
And peace for those like you and I,
Peace in our tomorrow.

Private Alfred Reginald John Morley



Image 1 - Alfred Reginald John Morley at the time of the Boer War in South Africa. He was 21 years of age, and joined the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen Mounted Infantry.



Image 2 – Alfred at the time of First World War, aged 35. This image, along with those of 11 other men, are featured on the Sanford Pictorial Honour Roll.



Image 3 – The 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen Mounted Infantry, commanded by Major R.J Lewis, and comprising of 122 Tasmanian men. Served from June 1900 until June 1901.



Image 4 – The female relative badge, a copy of which would have been presented to Mrs. Morley. A bar was added to the bottom for each additional serving family member.