

Private Alfred Edward Keed©
Regimental number: 4811
54th Battalion, Australian Infantry

born: 1884–died: 1916

Alfred Edward Keed was born in 1884 in Narrandera, New South Wales, Australia, the eldest child of Frederick G. and Elizabeth Keed.¹ Their other children were Mary Ellen (b. 1885),² Isabella Anne (b. 1887),³ Elizabeth (b. 1889),⁴ Lucy E. (b. 1892),⁵ Emily Jane (b. 1894),⁶ Frederick George (b.1902),⁷ Ruth Victoria (b. 1907),⁸ and Emery John (b. 1908).⁹

Frederick, born in 1858,¹⁰ was the poundkeeper in Junee, New South Wales,¹¹ a local government official responsible for the feeding and care of stray livestock.¹² He was the son of Emery Keed, an engineer born in London, England,¹³ who emigrated to Australia with his wife in 1855.¹⁴

Frederick married Elizabeth Twohey in 1883.¹⁵ Born in New Zealand in 1867, she was the daughter of William Jeremiah and Sarah Ann Toohey.¹⁶ After four decades of marriage, in 1923 Frederick was named as a co-respondent in the dissolution of another couple's marriage.¹⁷ At some point after this event, Frederick and Elizabeth appear to have lived separately.^{18, 19} Elizabeth died in 1939, aged 72,²⁰ and Frederick in 1946, aged 88.²¹

Alfred got married in 1912 to Clara Jane Johnstone,²² the daughter of William Johnstone, a farmer.²³ They had two children, Brian Kerwin in 1912,²⁴ and Nancy Mignon in 1915.²⁵

A couple of weeks after Nancy was born, on 4 August 1915, Alfred enlisted in the 15th Reinforcements, 2nd Battalion, C Company.²⁶ His trade is listed as a carpenter, and he had apprenticed for five years in Junee. The 15th Reinforcements left Sydney, Australia, on 8 March 1916 on HMAT A15 *Star of England* bound for Egypt.²⁷ However, the Gallipoli campaign was over and the reinforcements unneeded. Once in Egypt, Alfred was transferred to the 54th Infantry Battalion on 21 April 1916. Two months later, on 19 June, the battalion boarded HT *Caledonian* to join the British Expeditionary Force in Europe. It disembarked 10 days later in Marseilles.

The 54th Battalion was created half from Gallipoli veterans of the 2nd Battalion and half from fresh Australian recruits.²⁸ Most of the battalion members were from New South Wales. There were 31 officers and 951 other ranks.²⁹

The 54th Battalion made its way to Hazelbruck on 2 July 1916.³⁰ It spent a few days training, including in preparation for gas attacks, and then occupied the front line trenches. On 19 July, less than three weeks after arriving, it was thrown into the attack as part of the Battle of Fromelles. The battalion briefly occupied the enemy's front-line trenches but withdrew to its billets on the morning of 20 July.



Alfred Edward Keed, Virtual War Memorial, Australia
(<https://vwma.org.au/explore/>)

Casualties were 3 officers and 70 other ranks killed, 11 officers and 277 other ranks wounded, and 4 officers and 169 other ranks missing. On 26 July, after the addition of 6 new officers, the strength of the battalion was 16 officers and 317 other ranks, compared with the 31 officers and 951 other ranks who disembarked just a month earlier. Only one third remained.

Private Keed was one of those wounded on 20 July. He was admitted first to the 8th Field Ambulance with multiple gunshot wounds to the legs and then moved to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Bailleul; he succumbed to his injuries on 21 July. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Reference II. F. 29.³¹ The inscription on his headstone reads:

THY WILL BE DONE

The cemetery lies in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the Nord department of the Hauts-de-France region; it contains the remains of 4344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Private Alfred Edward Keed received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) for his service. He also received the 1914–15 Star, for service in any theatre of the war in 1914–15.

Alfred's widow, Clara, moved to Inglewood, 800 km to the North, in her native Queensland. There she became a store keeper³² and raised their two children, who attended Warwick East State School.³³ She died in 1966, aged 82.³⁴ Their son, Brian Kerwin, became a carpenter like his father³⁵ and enlisted in the army's civilian military forces during World War II.³⁶ Their daughter, Nancy Mignon, was a shop assistant in Inglewood in 1937³⁷ (so likely working for her mother) before she married Philip Auburn Smith in 1941.³⁸

Mary, Alfred's eldest sister, was married before the war (in 1908) to William Russell Nicholls,³⁹ who was a railway official.⁴⁰ They had three sons in their first three years of marriage.^{41, 42} Mary died in 1956, aged 71.⁴³

Isabella, Alfred's second-oldest sister, married late in life (at age 41) to Frederick Charles Woodhouse Powell.⁴⁴ He had a previous marriage.⁴⁵ They lived in and around Sydney, where he was a grocer⁴⁶ and then a builder.⁴⁷ Isabella died in 1974.⁴⁸

The next-oldest sister, Elizabeth, married Edward Francis Condon in 1920⁴⁹ and moved over 1200 km to Windsor, just north of Brisbane, Queensland.⁵⁰ Edward was a labourer. He died in Queensland in 1970.⁵¹ Before her death in 1979,⁵² Elizabeth had moved to Hobart, Tasmania, where her will was proved.⁵³

The next sister, Lucy, had a short life, passing away in 1895 at age 3.⁵⁴

Emily Jane was the next-oldest sister; she died unmarried at the age of 25 in Camden, a suburb of Sydney.⁵⁵

Alfred's brother Frederick married twice, first to Edith G. Chuchin in 1931,⁵⁶ and then to Blanche Isabel Barnes in 1945, following his divorce from Edith in 1944.⁵⁷ Frederick was a painter⁵⁸ and then a carpenter like his brother.⁵⁹ A military record suggests he enlisted in the Army (2nd Australian Imperial Force) during World War II, but no details are given.⁶⁰ He died in 1990, aged 87.⁶¹

Ruth, Alfred's youngest sister, also married twice. The first marriage was to Albert James Turner, in 1928.⁶² Albert James was a salesman.⁶³ This marriage was annulled in 1941 due to desertion.^{64, 65} Ruth married again in 1952, to Frank Melvin.⁶⁶ Frank enlisted in the army (2nd Australian Imperial Force) during World War II⁶⁷ and continued to be listed as "soldier" in the electoral rolls.⁶⁸ Frank died in 1959,⁶⁹ aged 55, while Ruth lived another 30 years, passing away in 1989.⁷⁰

The youngest sibling, Emery, was a labourer.⁷¹ He lived with his brother Frederick for a few years both before⁷² and after⁷³ his marriage in 1942 to Bessie Beaumont Napier.⁷⁴ Emery died in 1961, aged 53.⁷⁵ © 2025 BIFHSGO

¹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Alfred E Keed

² "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Mary E Keed

³ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Isabella A Keed

⁴ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Elizabeth Keed

⁵ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Lucy E Keed

⁶ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Emily J Keed

⁷ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Frederick G Keed

⁸ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Ruth V Keed

⁹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Emery J Keed

¹⁰ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Frederick G Keed

¹¹ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 3 December 2024), entry for Frederick George Keed, 1903–1904

¹² "Australia, Poundkeepers," *Wikitree* (https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:Australia%2C_Poundkeepers: accessed 11 December 2024), search for Poundkeeper

¹³ "June," *Daily Advertiser* (Wagga Wagga, NSW), 3 February 1915, page 3, *Trove* (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/141932973?searchTerm=emery%20marchant%20keed>: accessed 11 December 2024), search for Emery Keed

¹⁴ "New South Wales, Australia, Assisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1828–1896," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Emery Keed

¹⁵ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Frederick G Reed [sic]

¹⁶ "New Zealand, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1840–1902," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Elizabeth Toohey

¹⁷ "Divorce: O'Brien v. O'Brien," *Daily Advertiser* (Wagga Wagga, NSW), 19 November 1923, page 4, *Trove* (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/143200914?searchTerm=frederick%20keed>: accessed 11 December 2024), search for Frederick Keed

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- ¹⁸ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 February 2025), entry for Frederick George Keed, 1937
- ¹⁹ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 February 2025), entry for Elizabeth Keed, 1937
- ²⁰ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Elizabeth Keed
- ²¹ "Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Frederick George Keed
- ²² "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Alfred Edward Kee Chow [sic]
- ²³ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 3 December 2024), entry for William Johnstone, 1908
- ²⁴ "Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1814–2011," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Brian Kerwin Keed
- ²⁵ Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Nancy Mignon Keed
- ²⁶ Australia, WW1 Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Alfred Edward Keed, service number 4811. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military service comes from this source.
- ²⁷ "2nd Infantry Battalion," *Virtual War Memorial Australia* (<https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/289#:~:text=1st%20Reinforcement:%20Left%20Melbourne%20on,A67%20Orsova%2C%2014%20July%201915>: accessed 12 December 2024), search for 2nd Infantry Battalion, Australian Infantry Force
- ²⁸ "54th Australian Infantry Battalion," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51494>: accessed 15 December 2024), search for 54th Battalion, AIF
- ²⁹ "Australian Imperial Force Unit War Diaries, 1914–18 War - AWM4 Subclass 23/71, 54th Infantry Battalion," *Australian War Memorial* (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1345983>: accessed 15 December 2024), search for 54th Battalion war diary
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2024), entry for Alfred Edward Keed, Service Number 4811
- ³² "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Clara Jane Keed, 1925
- ³³ "Queensland, Australia, School Admission Records, 1860–1992," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entries for Brian Keed and Nancy Keed
- ³⁴ "Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Clara Jane Keed
- ³⁵ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Brian Kerwin Keed, 1937
- ³⁶ "Australia, World War II Military Service Records, 1939–1945," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Brian Kerwin Keed
- ³⁷ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Nancy Mignon Keed, 1937
- ³⁸ Official marriage record not found, but engagement notice located in newspaper: "Engagements," *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane, Old.), 25 May 1941, page 22, *Trove*

(<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/98254660?searchTerm=nancy%20mignon>: accessed 6 January 2025), search for Nancy Mignon

³⁹ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Mary E Keed

⁴⁰ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 3 December 2024), entry for William Russell Nicholls, 1932

⁴¹ "Australia, Birth Index, 1788–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entries for Russell G Nicholls, Raymond J Nicholls

⁴² "Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1814–2011," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2025), entry for William Alfred Nicholls

⁴³ "NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages," *Museums of History NSW* –

(https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=ADLIB_RNSW118531658&context=L&vid=61SRA&lang=en_US&search_scope=Everything&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=default_tab&query=any,contains,NRS-13660&offset=0: accessed 2 February 2025), search for Mary Ellen Nicholls

⁴⁴ "Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1814–2011," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2025), entry for Isabelle Anne Keed

⁴⁵ "New Zealand, Marriage Index, 1840–1937," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Frederick Woodhouse Powell

⁴⁶ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Isabelle Ann Powell, 1932

⁴⁷ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Isabelle Anne Powell, 1936

⁴⁸ Official record not found. Date comes from *Ancestry* tree online (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/63523386/person/42146093143/facts>: accessed 16 January 2025), search for Isabella Anne Keed

⁴⁹ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Elizabeth Keed

⁵⁰ "Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Edward Francis Condon, 1931

⁵¹ "Brisbane, Australia Burials and Cremations, 1831–2023," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 16 January 2025), entry for Edward Francis Condon

⁵² "Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Elizabeth Condon

⁵³ *Ancestry* tree: <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/201235915/person/232630929438/gallery?galleryPage=1&tab=0&sort=-created>: accessed 16 January 2025

⁵⁴ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Lucy E Reed [*sic*]

⁵⁵ "Australia, Death Index, 1787–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Emily J Keed

⁵⁶ "Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Frederick G Keed

⁵⁷ No official record found. Information comes from *Ancestry* tree online (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/7276286/person/240009725319/facts?phsrc=WcY7741&phstart=successSource>: accessed 19 January 2025), search for Frederick George Keed

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- ⁵⁸ “Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Frederick George Keed, 1935
- ⁵⁹ “Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Frederick George Keed, 1949
- ⁶⁰ “Australia, World War 11 Military Service Records, 1939–1945,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 January 2025), entry for Fredrick [sic] George Keed
- ⁶¹ “Australia, Newspaper Vital Notices, 1831–2001,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 January 2025), entry for Frederick George Keed
- ⁶² “Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Ruth V Keed
- ⁶³ “Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Albert James Turner, 1930
- ⁶⁴ “In Divorce,” *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW)*, 7 September 1940, page 7, *Trove* (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/27947178?searchTerm=albert%20james%20turner>: accessed 19 January 2025), search for Albert James Turner
- ⁶⁵ “In Divorce,” *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW)*, 11 April 1941, page 2, *Trove* (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/17740082?searchTerm=albert%20james%20turner>: accessed 19 January 2025), search for Albert James Turner
- ⁶⁶ “NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages”, *NSW BDM* (<https://familyhistory.bdm.nsw.gov.au/lifelink/familyhistory/search/result?3>: accessed 19 January 2025), search for Frank Melvin
- ⁶⁷ “Australia, World War 11 Military Service Records, 1939–1945,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 19 January 2025), entry for Frank Melvin
- ⁶⁸ “Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Frank Melvin, 1958
- ⁶⁹ “Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Frank Melvin
- ⁷⁰ “Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Ruth Victoria Melvin
- ⁷¹ “Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903–1980,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 15 January 2025), entry for Emery John Keed, 1931
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 1934
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1946
- ⁷⁴ “Australia, Marriage Index, 1788–1950,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 11 December 2024), entry for Emery John Keed
- ⁷⁵ “Australia and New Zealand, Find a Grave Index, 1800s–Current,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2025), entry for Emery John Keed