081

Davis, Ernest 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:	Locomotive
Designation:	Dresser

Rail employment notes: Dresser, Midland Workshops.

In this era, the "Locomotive" branch of the WAGR, which would later be named the Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Enlisted in 28th Battalion AIF 3/5/1915 (Service No.1528). Killed in action 8/1/1917 age 36.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	7th Field Company Engineers, Australian Engineers
Service number:	1528
Date of death:	8 January 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	36
Rank:	Sapper

Burial/memorialisation: Delville Wood Cemetery, Longueval, Picardie, France

Ernest Davis was born in Swansea, Wales to John and Eliza Davis and migrated to Australia at the age of around 10 yrs. He had no previous military experience when he enlisted on 03 May 1915. He was married to Maud Fanny Davis who is sometimes recorded as Fanny Maud Davis. Maud automatically became his Next Of Kin upon enlistment. There is no record of a Will. He was the father to two girls (b. 1903 and 1905). He commenced his military training at Blackboy Hill Camp as a recruit but was made a Pte in 1st Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 1528.

He departed Australia on 05 Jun 1915 aboard A2 HMAT *Geelong* and disembarked at Alexandria where he was taken-on-strength of 28 Bn from 1st reinforcements on 18 Aug 1915. His time in Egypt was short and he crossed to Gallipoli on 04 September 1915 where he remained until the conclusion of the campaign. In Egypt as the AIF was reorganized Pte Davis was transferred to 7th Field Engineers as a component of 2nd Division Engineers. Spr Davis departed Alexandria on 14 Mar 1916 aboard HMT Minneapolis and disembarked at Marseilles on 19 Mar 1916 to join the BEF. His early days were spent in a number of minor medical Units suffering from Gonorrhoea. He rejoined his Unit at Etaples having been non-effective for a total of 51 days. 7 Fd Regt was active in the Battle of Moquet Farm following which it was withdrawn for general engineering work over the winter of 1916-1917. He was Killed In ActionA near Longueville and buried in a Cemetery near Guillemot.

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After the War many of the burials in these small cemeteries were concentrated into the major cemetery at Delvile Wood.

Additional/personal information:

Ernest Davis was born in England, however he had emigrated to Australia by 1908 when he married Fanny Maud Dewar (sometimes written Maud Fanny) in the Fremantle district (BDM 46/1908). The couple had at least two children:

> KILLED IN ACTION
> DAVIS.--On January 8, killed in action in France, Sapper E. A. Davis. beloved husband of Maud Davis, father of Eric and Thelma, late of Greenmount and Loco. Shops. T*he West Australian* 25/1/1917p1

The major cemetery at Delvile Wood is also the site of the South African National Memorial on the Wester Front. His tombstone bears the inscription: "God be with you till we meet again Blessed be the name of the Lord".

Mrs MacDonald (nee Davis) received some benefit from a Lodge of which Ernest Davis was a member. For his service he was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal all of which were issued to his widow together with other memorabilia.

Mrs Davis remarried to a James MacDonald (BDM Swan 8 1918). No children were born to this later union.

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----------