Francis, John Richard

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:	Way and Works
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Repairer, Kwobrup. Ways & Works Branch. Kwobrup was a siding on the railway Katanning-Nyabing, which at the time was the site of a small settlement with a school. ("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger who was in in charge.)
16th Battalion AIF.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	16th Battalion.
Service number:	2215
Date of death:	29 August 1915
Place of death:	Gallipoli, Turkey
Age:	38
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Embarkation Pier Cemetery, Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey

John Richard Francis aged 38 enlisted in the AIF at Blackboy Hill on 22 March 1915. He stated that he had been born in Liverpool (UK) and he had been a member of the Royal Naval Reserve for 10 years. After basic training at Blackboy Hill Camp he departed Australia through the Port of Fremantle aboard A62 HMAT *Wandilla* on 25 June 1915 as a member of 6th Reinforcements to 16th Battalion. His records are silent on his progress through Egypt and next records that he was taken on strength of 16 Battalion on 30 July 1915, in the field, at Gallipoli. Private Francis was Killed in Action on 29 August 1915 when the Battalion was engaged in action at Hill 60. He was buried close to where he fell but after the War his remains were moved to Embarkation Pier Cemetery.

Additional/personal information:

He was married with children and on his Honour Card after his death his wife Catherine gave his earlier occupation as 'mariner" and stated that he was 36 when he came to Australia. His identity discs were saved and later sent to his widow. The family were granted pensions but for unexplained reason these were cancelled on 8 November 1917. (? Responsibility moved to Repatriation Department.) It would seem that the Francis family were close to destitute while awaiting a death certificate and the paymaster at Perth urged urgent action to obtain the certificate so that his pay and

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deferred pay could be paid out to Mrs Francis. This finally happened and she received £19-16-0. Upon receipt she signed with a cross and this was annotated 'her mark' suggesting that she was illiterate. She moved several times and the last recorded address was PO Dumbleyung in 1923. Pte Francis was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal although it would seem that the Victory Medal was never claimed.

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----------

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