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Kelly, Percival James

A West Australian railway employee
killed while on military service for their country

Percival Kelly volunteered in 1918 to join the army but after training and transport to England, he contracted influenza which was then rampant and died before he could enter the war zone.



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Traffic
Designation:	Head Shunter

Rail employment notes: Born 11/10/1887. Joined WAGR 24/6/1913 aged 25 as Boilermaker's Assistant, Midland Workshops. Transferred to Porter, Midland Junction 15/3/1915 - this meant a transfer from the Locomotive Branch, which at that time included the Workshops at Midland, to Traffic Branch.

Transferred to Shunter, Midland Junction 24/1/1916. Promoted to Head Shunter, Collie 13/3/1918.

Granted leave to join AIF 23/5/1918 (Service No.2813). Died of influenza 26/1/1919.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	Australian Railway Operating Division Depot
Service number:	2813
Date of death:	26 January 1919
Place of death:	The Hill Military Hospital, Farnham, Surrey, England, United Kingdom
Age:	31
Rank:	Sapper

Burial/memorialisation: Brookwood Military Cemetery, Pirbright, Surrey, England

Percival James Kelly enlisted in the AIF on 16 May 1918 at Collie for service with the Railway Operations and was allocated the regimental number 2813. He nominated his wife Jessie as his Next of Kin and also made her the sole beneficiary under his Will. He transferred to the Railway Training Depot at Broadmeadows, Victoria. He departed Australia on 5 October 1918 aboard SS *Zealandic* and on arrival in the UK marched into the Rail Operating Depot. Within a month he developed Influenza complicated by Pneumonia. Sapper Kelly was admitted to The Hill Military Hospital at Farnham, Surrey. His illness proved to be terminal and he died on 26 January 1919. He was buried at the Brookwood Military Cemetery with full military honours on 30 January 1919. Two sergeants and 4 sappers attended the burial which was conducted by Chaplain, the Reverend Crotty of 3rd Australian Division.

Additional/personal information:

Percival Kelly was born in Tasmania but had come to WA by 1910 when he married Jessie I Emery (BDM Swan 36/1910) and it appears the couple had at least three children before Percival enlisted.

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DIED ON SERVICE.
KELLY.—On January 25, 1919, at Frensham's Hill Military Hospital, Farnham, England, Private P. J. (Percy) Kelly, dearly beloved husband of Jessie, dear daddy of Marjorie, Nellie, and little Harold, beloved son-in-law of Mr.and Mrs. W. H. Emery, dear brother of Nellie, Ernie, Harold (on active service). Aged 30 years. So far from home. To have to love and then to part Is the saddest story of the human heart. Inserted by his loving wife, Jessie, Boundary-road, Midland Junction. Eastern States papers please copy. *The West Australian* 4/2/1919p1

Full details of his funeral were sent to his wife in Australia, however Jessie Kelly wrote impassioned letters requesting a Death Certificate so that she could make a claim on both his Lodge and MLC Insurance. When he died his dependents were his wife aged 30 years, daughter Marjorie 8 years, Nellie 6 years and Harold aged 2 years. Unfortunately Mrs Jessie Kelly died, aged 30 years, on 11 August 1919 - the cause of death has not been recorded - and she was buried at Karrakatta cemetery. The children were placed in the care of their maternal grandparents (Emery). Sapper Kelly's gravestone was inscribed: "In memory of Percy loved husband of the late Jessie United unto death". For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal (sole entitlement). His service medal and Memorial Plaque were issued to his grandmother as trustee until Harold came of age.

Notwithstanding the father's loss, Percival's son Harold Kelly enlisted in the Second AIF on 3 November 1939 as VX519 and served until 25 October 1945. At the time of discharge, he was a Trooper in 6th Div Cav Regt.

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----------