Miles, Frances Thomas

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

Losses of life in the war in Europe were very high. This volunteer spent nearly a year in training and transport before being thrust into battle in Belgium, but was killed within three weeks.



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, Elabbin, Ways & Works Branch. Elabbin was a siding on the railway from Wyalkatchem to Merredin via Trayning – there was negligible town there so the gang probably lived under canvas in tents.
("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 in charge.)

39th Battalion AIF (Service No.2861). Killed in action 5/10/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	39th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	2861
Date of death:	5 October 1917
Place of death:	Belgium
Age:	36
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Nine Elms British Cemetery, Poperinghe, Flanders, Belgium

Francis Thomas Miles aged 34 years enlisted in the AIF on 13 October 1916 in Perth. He had been born in Chepstow (UK). He a small amount of military experience in the 3rd Battalion of the Welsh Regiment. Following basic training he was allotted to 6th Reinforcements to 39 Battalion and departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A34 HMAT *Persic* on 29 December 1916 and disembarked at Devonport, England on 03 Mar 1917. He marched into 10 Training Bn on 21 Mar 1917 but the records do not show where he was between 03 and 21 Mar 1917. He remained at the Training Bn from 21 March 1917 to 30 Aug 1917 when he departed for service with the BEF. He was at 3 ADBD between 31 Aug 1917 and 12 Sep 1917 when he marched out to join his Unit. He was taken on strength of 39 Bn on14 Sep 1917 in the field. The Bn was engaged in the Third Battle of Ypres near the Zonnebeke sector when he was Wounded in Action on 4 October 1917. He was initially evacuated to 11 Field Ambulance then to 44 CCS where he died on 5 October 1917 (Died of Wounds). He was buried that same day in Nine Elms British Cemetery with the Chaplain attached to 44 CCS conducting the service.

Additional/personal information:

Correspondence on file shows that his widow (Mary Jane Miles), a son and two daughters all received pensions.

> MILES.—Died of wounds somewhere in France, on October 5, the dearly-beloved husband of Mrs. F. T. Miles (late of Glyde street, East Fremantle). *Western Mail* 2/11/1917p20

Mrs Miles wrote that she intended to leave Australia for Monmouthshire (UK) on 30 May 1918 however there is further correspondence showing that she had returned to Australia by 1922 and made application for a War Service Homes Loan. She was resident in Randwick NSW at that time.

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----------