

**Netley Military Cemetery,  
Hampshire, England  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**13287 PRIVATE**

**A. R. FRANCIS MM**

**AUST. ARMY MEDICAL CORPS**

**6TH SEPTEMBER, 1916**

## Antonia Robert FRANCIS

Antonio Robert Francis was born at Sydney Flat, Eaglehawk, near Bendigo, Victoria in 1885 to parents Antonio Robert Francis & Mary Ann Francis (nee Mancy). (Victorian Railway Employees list has date of birth as 25th May, 1885).

Mary Ann Francis, mother of Antonio Robert Francis, died on 14th October, 1895 at Kerang, Victoria.

Antonia Robert Francis married Mary Catherine Agnes Henery in 1908 in Victoria.

A son was born in 1908 at Bendigo – Robert Edward Francis. He died in 1911 at Carlton, Melbourne, Victoria.

A daughter was born in 1910 at Loch, Victoria – Phyllis Francis.

Newspaper item – *The Ballarat Star*, Victoria – 9th August, 1911:

### **BENDIGO DIVORCE COURT**

*Antonio Robert Francis, a railway employee, was granted a divorce from Mary Catherine Agnes Francis, on the ground of adultery with James Conroy, also a railway employee, and the petitioner was given the custody of one child.*

Antonia Robert Francis married Emily Georgina Smith in 1912 in Victoria. A birth was registered on 1913 in Echuca, Victoria for Robert John Francis & a birth was registered in Echuca in 1915 for Mary Gina Eileen Francis, both children of Antonia Robert & Emily Gina Francis.

The 1912 & 1915 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Echuca, Victoria listed Antonio Robert Francis, Railway Employee, of Annesley Street.

The 1917 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Ballarat, subdivision of Soldiers Hill, Victoria recorded Antonio Robert Francis, Railway Employee, of 416 Doveton St, Ballarat.

Antonia Robert Francis (Note: Christian named was listed as "Antonia" on Attestation Papers) was a 30 year old, married, Railway Fireman from Echuca, Victoria when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 6th August, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 13287 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs E. G. Francis, of Pakenham Street, Echuca, Victoria. Antonio Francis stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been a member of the Rifle Club at Birriwillock for 1 year.

Private Antonia Robert Francis was posted to Australian Medical Corps at Ascot Vale on 1st September, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to A.M.C. at Broadmeadows on 14th February, 1916 then transferred to Special Ambulance Reinforcements at Broadmeadows on 7th March, 1916.

Private Antonia Robert Francis embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Karoola* (A63) on 7th March, 1916 with the Army Medical Corps, Special Reinforcements.

Private Antonia Robert Francis was transferred to 12th Field Ambulance on 20th April, 1916 & joined his Unit at Serapeum on 20th April, 1916.

Private Antonia Robert Francis embarked from Alexandria on *Scotian* on 4th June, 1916 to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 11th June, 1916.

Private Antonia Robert Francis was wounded in action on 8th August, 1916. He was admitted to 12th Field Ambulance as a patient on 8th August, 1916 with shell wounds to his back & his condition was reported as serious. Private Francis was transferred & admitted to 13th Field Ambulance on 8th August, 1916 with shrapnel wounds to back then transferred the same day to Casualty Clearing Station. He was transferred to 6th General Hospital at Rouen, France then embarked at Rouen on 13th August, 1916 on Hospital Ship *St Andrew* for England with "G.S.W. Back (helpless)".

Private Antonio Robert Francis was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, Hampshire, England on 14th August, 1916 & his condition was severe. He was reported as dangerously ill on 16th August, 1916 & was removed from the dangerously ill list on 20th August, 1916. Private Francis' condition was reported as "serious, slowly sinking (dangerous)" on 1st September, 1916. The Hospital Admissions form stated "wounded in France at Pozieres" on 7th August, 1916.



**Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley**

Private Antonio Robert Francis died at 10.20 pm on 6th September, 1916 at Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, Hampshire, England from wounds received in action in France – Gunshot wounds to spine.

A death for Antonio R. Francis, aged 32, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of South Stoneham, Hampshire, England.

Private Antonio Robert Francis was buried on 9th September 1916 in Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England – Plot number N. 370 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private Antonio Robert Francis contains a letter written by Major C. Bremhall, R.A.M.C. Registrar, Royal Victoria Hospital which reads "This patient was admitted with gunshot wound to Spine, transverse lesion of cord. He died on September 6th 1916, result of his wounds, suffering no pain, gradually lapsing into a drowsy condition followed by coma. The last wishes of Pte Francis regarding his affairs, children etc., were written direct to his wife in Australia. He was buried in the Netley Military Cemetery at 3.30 pm on September 9th 1916, the number of the grave being 370."

Newspaper item - Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette, Victoria – 16 November, 1916:

### **A SOLDIER'S DEATH**

#### **PRIVATE FRANCIS, ECHUCA**

#### **GENERAL'S WIFE ATTENDS HIS BEDSIDE**

The following letter is from Mrs. L. Buckle, of Netley Hospital, Hants, England, whose husband is General Buckle, serving in France. Mrs. Buckle wrote to Mrs. Francis, of Echuca, whose husband, Private Francis, whilst serving in France was wounded and sent to Netley Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries, this letter conveying the sad news :— 'St. Hilda's Netlev. Hants. September 7, 1916.— Dear Mrs. Francis - I have sat by your husband for some hours each-day. Yesterday the end was so near that I did not leave him between 5.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m., though he

had become quite unconscious. He died at 20 minutes past 10 on Wednesday night, September 6. It has been a very quiet and painless passing away. There was no hope from the first. He soon saw it for himself. I wrote to you for him last mail. He was too weak to talk much after that. His throat was almost paralysed. But he got a good deal of pleasure out of the jellies and grapes I took him every day. It was a regular thing for me to say some prayers with him and then feed him with a new flavored jelly. He never grumbled or fussed, but just said the jellies were 'grand.' I think he felt that he was laying down his life for others just as Christ did for us. He said to me on Sunday that he was going with a clean sheet — not one entry! Before he passed away I sang 'Abide With Me' very softly. I think he was too far gone to hear, but I did not want the other soldiers in the big ward to hear his hard breathing. It may be some comfort to you to know that he had every care. My husband is one of the generals in France. My only son is fighting there also, so I came to live by this great hospital, and my work is to sit by the dying. We get very fond of each other, and your husband often held my hand and said, 'Don't go!' He was a bravo man. I pray that God will comfort you, and that your children may grow up good and brave like their father. — Yours, faithfully, L. Buckle.

P.S. — I enclose a picture of the R.V. Hospital. Netley. Private Francis was on the top floor. He will have a military funeral, which I shall attend; if possible. The cemetery is in a beautiful wood and is kept, like a garden - full of flowers.

Private Antonia Robert Francis, 12th Field Ambulance, was recommended on 11th August, 1916 for the Military Medal by Lieutenant-Colonel T. G. Ross, c/o 12th Austrafor "ield Ambulance for "coolness and perseverance under fire in collecting and evacuating wounded".

Private Antonia Robert Francis was awarded the Military Medal. It was gazetted in *The London Gazette* on 16th November, 1916 & the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on 19th April, 1917.

### **Military Medal**

The Military Medal (MM) was a military decoration awarded to personnel of the British Army and other services, and formerly also to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land. The award was established in 1916, with retrospective application to 1914, and was awarded to other ranks for "acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire". The award was discontinued in 1993 when it was replaced by the Military Cross. (*Wikipedia*)



Mrs E. G. Francis, of Dixons Store, Parkenham Street, Echuca, Victoria, widow of the late Private Antonia Robert Francis, was advised on 25th April, 1917 by Base Records that her late husband had been awarded the Military Medal. She signed for, as receipt of, the Military Medal on 27th June, 1917.



Dear Madam,

I have much pleasure in forwarding hereunder copy of extract from Fifth Supplement No. 29827 to the London Gazette of 16th November, 1916, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by your husband, the late No. 13287, Private A. R. Francis, 12th Field Ambulance.

X

X

X

X

AWARDED THE MILITARY MEDAL.

" HIS MAJESTY THE KING has been graciously pleased to award the Military Medal for bravery in the Field to the undermentioned soldier:-

No. 13287, Private ANTONIA ROBERT FRANCIS."

X

X

X

X

The above has been promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. 62 of 19th April, 1917.

Amongst the personal effects of the late Private Antonia Robert Francis that were returned to his widow – Mrs E. J. Francis, c/o Dixons Store, Parkenham Street, Echuca, Victoria in March, 1917 was a German cap.

Mrs Emily Georgina Francis, widow of the Private Antonia Robert Francis, remarried in 1922 to Harold Kemp.

Base Records wrote to The Postmaster, Post Office, Collingwood, Victoria in August, 1923 stating that they understood that Mrs E. G. Kemp was drawing a Pension (Certificate No. 81580) on account of the service of the late No. 13287 Private A. R. Francis, 12th Field Ambulance, and were enquiring as to her present address as communications forwarded to her at George Street, Fitzroy, Victoria had been returned to the Office unclaimed. Base Records asked if the Post Office did not have a later address, could they ask Mrs Kemp the next time she attended the Post Office to collect her pension to contact Base Records so that they could contact her regarding the war mementoes of her late husband's service.

Private Antonia Robert Francis was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal – signed for by Mrs E. G. Kemp in August, 1923. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Francis' widow as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent January, 1922 (signed for by E. G. Francis) & Plaque sent August, 1922 (signed for by E. G. Kemp).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private A. R. Francis – service number 13287, of 12th Australian Field Ambulance, Australian Army Medical Corps. No family details are listed. Awarded M M (Military Medal).

A. R. Francis is remembered on the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Honour Roll, located in Echuca-Moama Uniting Church (formerly St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church), Hare & Pakenham Streets, Echuca, Victoria.



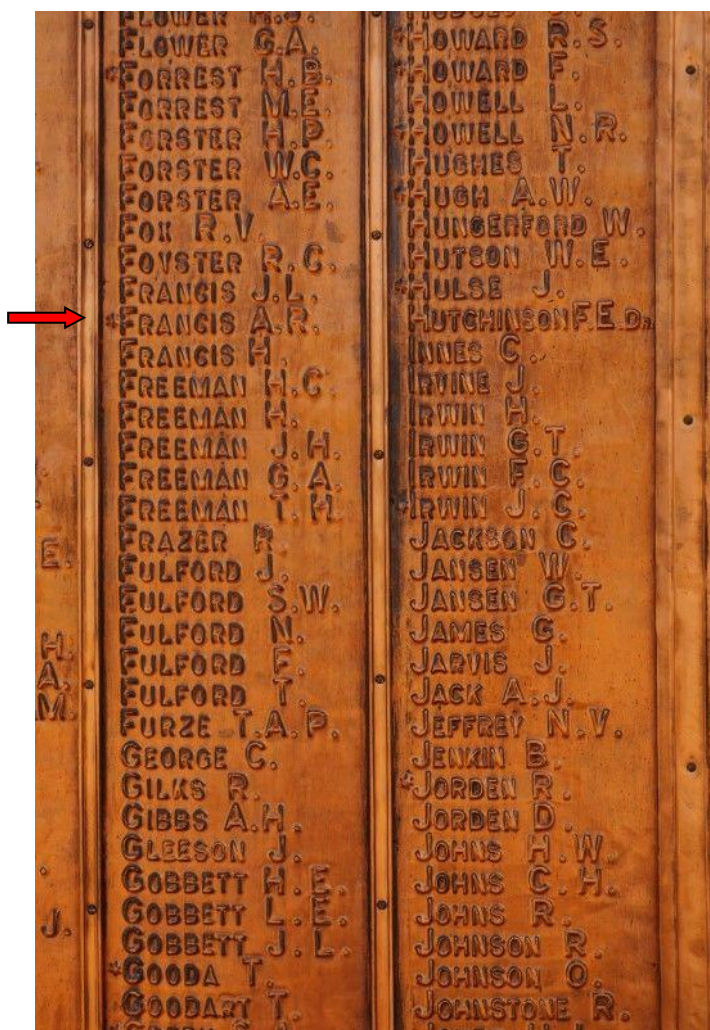
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Honour Roll (Photo from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)



A. R. Francis is remembered on the Echuca War Memorial, located in Civic Centre Gardens, Hare Street, Echuca, Victoria.



**Echuca War Memorial** (Photos from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)



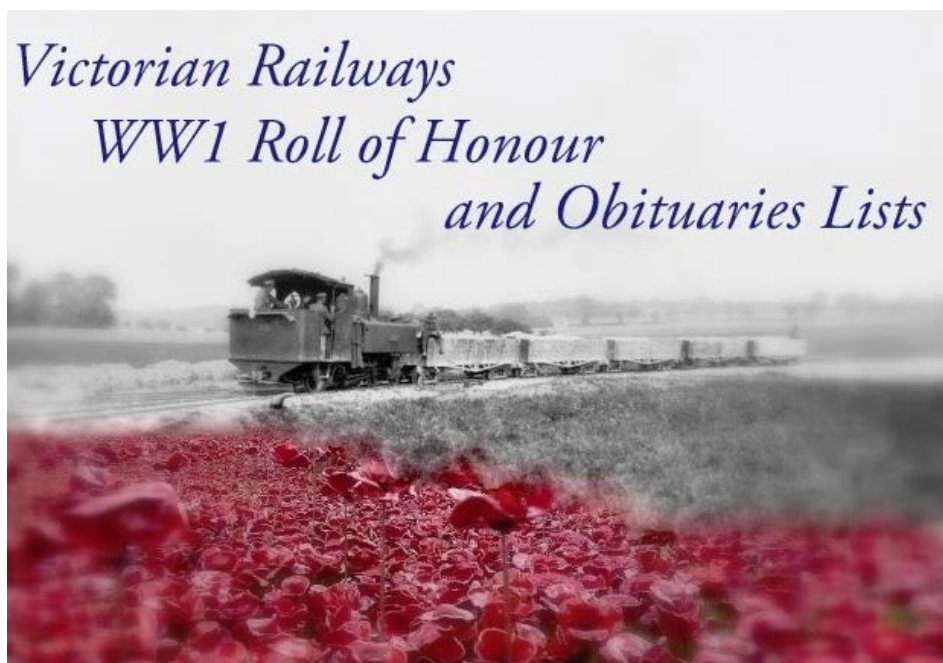


A. R. Francis is remembered on the Bendigo Loco Honour Roll which commemorated Bendigo Railway employees who enlisted and served in World War One. A photocopy of the Roll is located at Bendigo Historical Society, Specimen Cottage, 178-180 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo, Victoria. The location of the original roll is unknown to Monument Australia.



**Bendigo Loco Honour Roll (photocopy)** (Photo from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)

Antonio Robert Francis is remembered in the Victorian Railways WW1 Roll of Honour and Obituaries Lists.





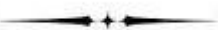
Private A. R. Francis is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 182.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(47 pages of Private Antonia Robert Francis's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



*(The Bendigo Independent – 29 September, 1916)*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **ECHUCA ENLISTMENTS**

At the Echuca Town Hall yesterday the following recruits took out papers of enlistment with the Australian expeditionary reinforcements:- John H. Rosenow (24), Echuca; Antonio Robert Francis (30), Echuca....

*(Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette, Victoria – 5 August, 1915)*

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### **AUSTRALIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES**

#### **204th CASUALTY LIST**

##### **WOUNDED**

Private A. R. FRANCIS, Echuca (dangerously ill)

*(Bendigo Advertiser, Victoria – 2 September, 1916)*

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#### **THE 215th CASUALTY LIST**

##### **WOUNDED**

Private A. R. Francis, Echuca

*(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 23 September, 1916)*

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#### **THE 222nd CASUALTY LIST**

##### **DIED OF WOUNDS**

Private A. R. Francis, Echuca

*(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 30 September, 1916)*

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### **MILITARY MEDAL**

The Defence department has forwarded to Mrs E. G. Francis, of Pakenham-street, a copy of an extract from the London "Gazette," dated November 16, 1916, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by her husband, the late Private A. R. Francis, 12th Field Ambulance. The extract reads as follows:- "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award the military medal for bravery in the field to No. 13287. Private A. R. Francis (since deceased), A.M.C."

*(Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette, Victoria – 8 May, 1917)*

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

FRANCIS – In honoured and loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private A. R. Francis, A.M.C., who died of wounds at Netley Hospital, Hants, England on the 6th September, 1916, aged 31 years.

*(Ballarat Courier, Victoria – 7 September, 1917)*

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

FRANCIS – In honoured and loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private A. R. Francis, A.M.C., who died of wounds at Netley Hospital, Hants, England on the 6th September, 1916, aged 31 years.

He sleeps beside his comrades,

In a hallowed grave unknown;

His name is written in letters of love

By his dear ones left at home.

Inserted by his fond parents and sisters, Rose and Susie, also little son, Robbie.

*(Ballarat Courier, Victoria – 7 September, 1918)*

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## Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Private A. R. Francis does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

## Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England

Netley Military Cemetery is a permanent military cemetery, the property of the Ministry of Defence. The cemetery was at the back of the Royal Victoria Military Hospital and was used during both wars for burials from the hospital. The cemetery contains 637 First World War burials but only 35 from the Second World War. In addition to the Commonwealth graves, there are a number of war graves of other nationalities including 69 German graves dating from the First World War.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*



Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire







**Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire** (Photo above - Andrea Charlesworth; below - darealjolo)





Photo of Private A. R. Francis's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire, England.



*(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth)*





**Original Cross markers – Netley Military Cemetery**