

FITZGERALD

John

Service No: 8275



BASIC INFORMATION

Name: John Fitzgerald

Service number: 8275

Date of enlistment: 2/07/1917

Age at Enlistment: 28 years

Service Occupation: Sapper

Civil Occupation: Farm Hand

Medals, Honours, Awards: British War Medal, Victory Medal

Height: 5 feet 8 ½ inches

Weight: 182 Pounds

Chest measurement: 35 inches

Complexion: Dark

Eye Colour: Dark

Hair Colour: Black

Father: John Fitzgerald

Mother: Mary Isaac/Morell

Siblings: Cecil, Raymond (both served in World War Two)



Life Story

John Fitzgerald, the eldest of fifteen children, was born in York in 1889 and grew up in the Greenhills area where his father held a property. As a young man, he participated in race meets organised by the York Athletics Club and clubs in the metropolitan area.

John applied to enlist in the A.I.F. on the 13th June 1917, signing his name with a mark, and was appointed to D3 Depot with the rank of Private. His brother, Harold, enlisted on the 6th June 1917 but was discharged a month later as medically unfit.

On the 13th July, John was posted to the 12th Reinforcements of the 2nd Pioneer Battalion before being appointed to the Tunnellers' Company and transferred to the 1st (Depot) Battalion, A.I.F., in Victoria for training.

John sailed overseas aboard the *SS Indarra* on the 26th November, bound for France. On route, he was admitted to the 62nd General Hospital in Bordighera, Italy, with measles. Two months later, John contracted mumps and was admitted to the 52nd Stationary Hospital in Le Havre before being transferred to the 4th Convalescent Depot in England on the 4th May 1918.

He headed back to France and re-joined his unit in the Field on the 20th May, but John's service continued to be interrupted by illness. He was admitted to hospital again in late July and treated for a furuncle (boil) on his side. Then, In November, he was hospitalised with influenza and transferred to the Convalescent Depot at Le Havre, where he remained for five weeks. Between February and May 1919, John spent a further two weeks in hospital with influenza before returning to England for demobilisation.

John Fitzgerald left England on the 12th July on board the *City of Exeter*. He disembarked in Sydney on the 16th August 1919 and returned to Western Australia the same year.

After the War, John lived in the Quairading and Avon Valley areas. He became a well-known identity and was granted a special exemption from the personal restrictions of the *Aborigines Act 1905* (upon his second application).

John Fitzgerald died in York Hospital in 1936, at the age of forty-seven, after being injured while trying to stop a fight. At the time of his death, he was working as a labourer for R.G. Parker.

Members of the York R.S.L. accompanied his coffin to the gravesite and The Last Post was played at his burial. The flag was flown at half-mast as a sign of respect.

John Fitzgerald was buried in an unmarked grave.

On the 21st December, 2008, Honouring Indigenous War Graves Inc. began a project to mark the final resting places of Indigenous servicemen. They placed a headstone on John Fitzgerald's final resting place in York.

The ceremony to raise John's headstone was a combination of military and traditional cultures and was attended by his family, representatives of the W.A. Sapper Association and the 10th Light Horse Memorial Troop. It included didgeridoo music, a smoking ceremony, an Army bugler and a Maori prayer presented by a seventy-four year-old New Zealand member of the 10th Light Horse Memorial Troop.

John's two younger brothers, Cecil and Raymond, served in World War Two and returned safely to Australia.

Acknowledgements

The following people and organisations helped with the research to compile this booklet.

Harvey, Heather
Roberts, Maureen
Clarke, Cathy

Silhouette artwork by:
York District High School students

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