

# Francis Henry Naylor



Francis was born on Tuesday 27th December 1892 at 14 Richmond Road, Grays, Essex.

His parents were William Henry and Louisa Bennett, however Louisa died when Francis was only two years of age. Francis followed his father into the railways and became a railway fireman.

The Great war began in June 1914 and Francis was called up in October 14. He signed up to the 46th Battalion of the Royal Field Artillery at Woolwich aged only 20. Francis underwent a medical and was passed fit for duty, and after an initial training in Glasgow he became a driver and later bombardier with the 46th battalion.

The RFA were a horse drawn artillery that operated on or close to the front line. The 46th, along with the 47th, 48th and 49th which used howitzers, formed part of the 14th Light Division.

The 14th Light Division formed part of the Third army commanded by General Allenby.

In 1915, Allenby's army saw action in Hooze where they were the first to be attacked with flamethrowers. They then took part in the second attack on Bellewaarde, near Ypres, Flanders.

In 1916 they took part in the Battles of Delville Wood and Flers-Courcelette, Both were phases in the Battle of the Somme. In 1917 the Germans retreated to the Hindenburg Line, and the Third army saw action in the First and Third battles of the Scarpe, which were part of the Arras offensive.



A Royal field Artillery gun position (47th Battalion)

On the 25th May 1917, Francis was shot in his chest, armpit and right thigh. He was evacuated to the general hospital at Le Treport on the Normandy coast and a telegraph was sent to his parents to let them know that he was seriously ill.

Francis wasn't taken off the critical list until on the 12th June.

Francis was sent back to England, first to Roehampton, then the Northern General Hospital in Holloway, and finally to the Queen Mary's Hospital. He was in hospital for nearly 18 months and his right leg was amputated during this time.

The comrades he had left behind went onto serve at Passchendaele and went back to the Somme in 1918.

Francis was finally sent home from hospital on 12th September 1918. He was sent back to his father with a 'a suit of plain clothes, a grey coat and £1.'

He was officially discharged from the army and in October 1918 awarded a pension of 27 shillings and 6 pence a week for life by the Ministry of Pensions based at the Royal Chelsea Hospital. He became a clerk in the Engineers office for the Port of London Authority.

Unfortunately he didn't receive his pension for long, as after giving his country nearly four years of his life, being shot three times and losing a leg, Francis disappeared in July 1920.

His body was later found on the shore of the Thames at Mucking Creek. Francis was only 27 years of age.

Story provided by his great niece, Julie Stone.