

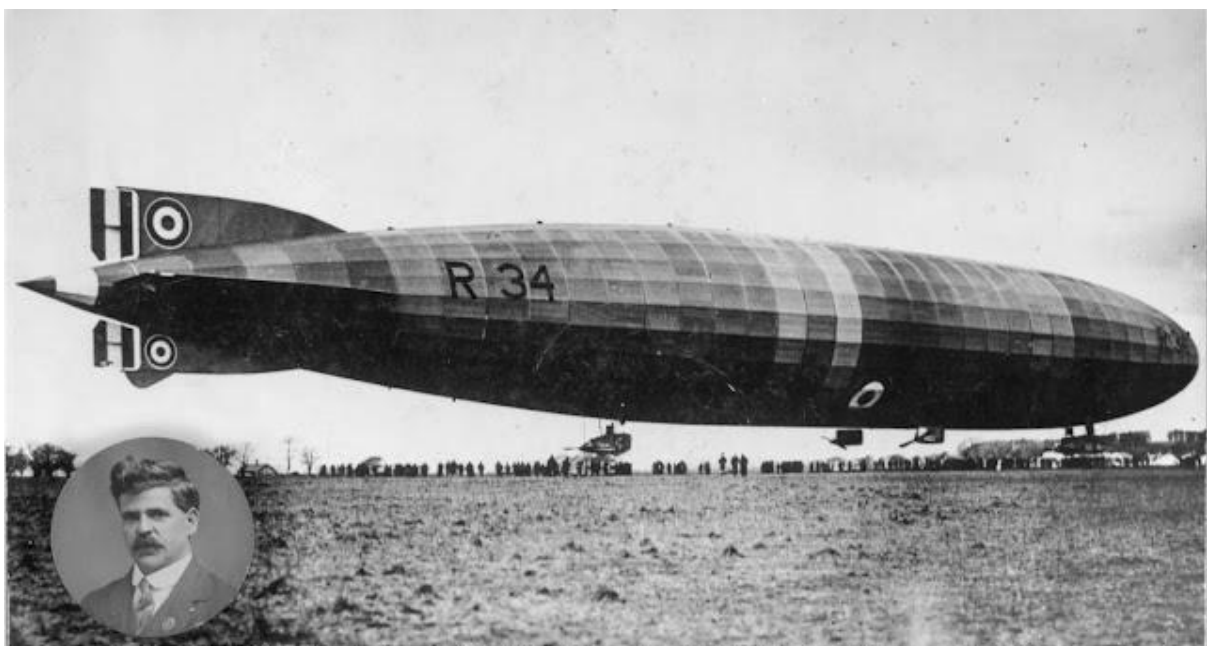
In October 1915, John travelled on the troopship *HMAT Nester* to join other Australian troops camped just outside Cairo. He was then aged 36. Not long after his arrival he developed a series of illnesses that made him unfit for active service.



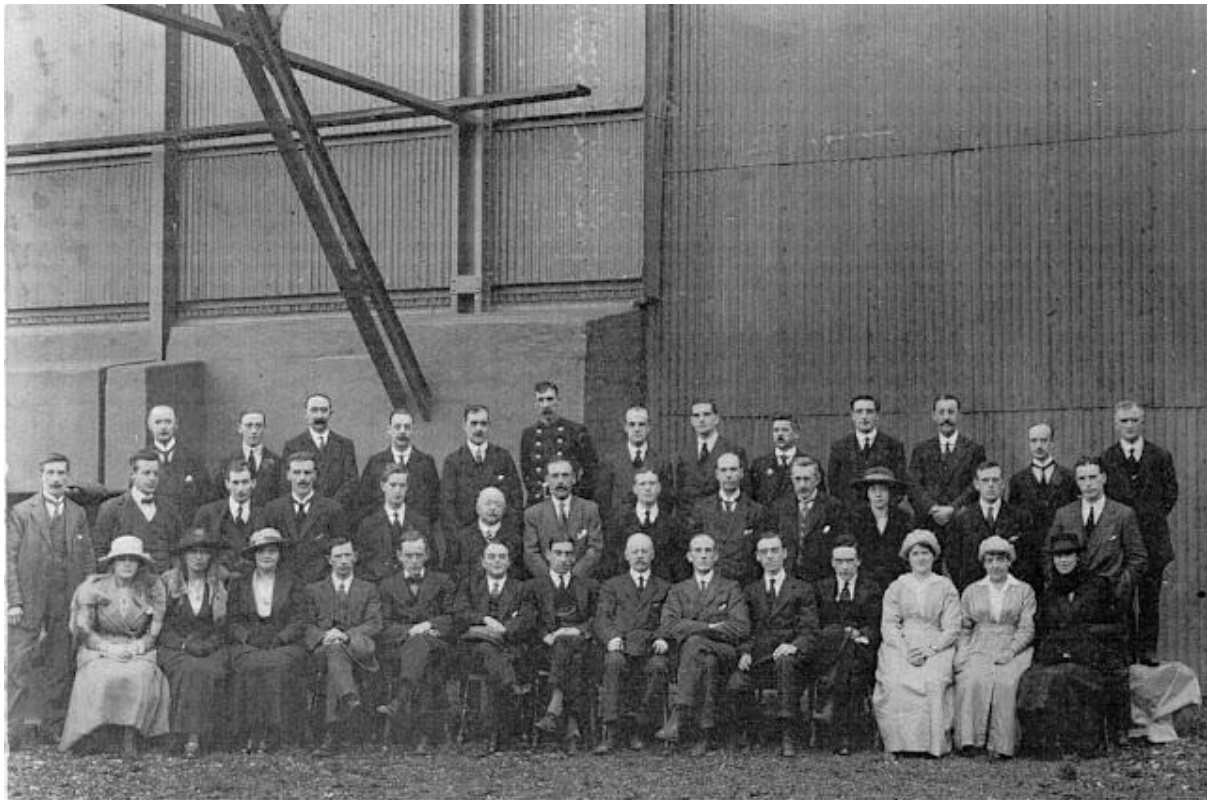
John S. Richardson II (far right, middle row) with the 6th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, in Egypt, 1915 or 1916

John recovered sufficiently to be transferred to England where he became a military trainer and was joined by his family.

Despite having a heart condition that continued to make him unfit for active service, he was judged fit enough to be transferred to munitions early in 1918. This involved in him being moved to Inchinnan, near Glasgow, to work as a wireman on the R34 airship being constructed by W. Beardmore and Company Limited for the British Navy.



R34 Airship at the Inchinnan Airfield, 1918. Inset: John S. Richardson, Chief Inspector



Wiring team for the R34 airship. John S. Richardson, Chief Inspector, fifth from the right in the back row.
Photo taken at the Inchinnan airfield in 1918 or 1919



By the time the R34 was completed and ready for service, the war was over. It was thought possible that there might be a commercial use for airships, so in July 1919 it gained fame as the first airship to cross the Atlantic in both directions. However, it was wrecked in 1921 after first hitting a hillside on the Yorkshire Moors then getting into difficulties in high winds after landing at Howden near Hull. (More on the R34 from the Airship Heritage Trust [website](http://www.airshipheritage.com).)



About the time the R34 was making its historic flight, John Richardson was returning to Australia on the the *SS Bahia Castillo* to be formally discharged from the munitions service and to look for work. He returned to Wonthaggi, where he was put in charge of the electric pumps, fans and winches at the State Coal Mine.

He was joined in Australia by his wife and family early in 1920. He worked on and off for the State Coalmine before finally being made redundant in 1932 as part of staff cutbacks at the mine.

He and his brother Jim had a private coal mine near Wonthaggi and at another time a laundry. Both proved unprofitable. In his spare time, he was a keen, but not very successful, gold prospector in the Dargo High Plain in south-eastern Victoria.



John S. Richardson snr (centre) with friend Hugh Hunter and John Richardson jnr's girlfriend, Rena Cox.
Taken about 1933 on an (unsuccessful) gold prospecting trip to Dargo in Gippsland, Victoria

Eventually, John's poor health got the better of him and he spent his final nine months as a patient in the Caulfield Repatriation in Melbourne. He is buried in a war grave in the Wonthaggi Cemetery.



John S. Richardson grave - Wonthaggi Cemetery (photographed 1971)

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"Wonthaggi Sentinel":

OBITUARY

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MR. J. S. RICHARDSON

Born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, 54 years ago, Mr. John Smith Richardson (better known among his friends locally as "Scotty"), sailed for Australia on 30th January, 1913. After short periods in Broken Hill and Queensland he came to Wonthaggi and secured employment at the State mine. He enlisted with the Australians, for the Great War on 10th July, 1915, and saw active service with the 6th Battalion in Egypt, from whence he was invalided to Salisbury, England. From there he was transferred to munitions in Scotland, and in the construction of airships, rose to be chief inspector of R33. At the end of the war he returned to Australia per the Bahia Castella, a German ship, the trip taking three months owing to various kinds of trouble. His wife and two sons followed him to Wonthaggi three months later. The effects of the trouble sustained in Egypt began to manifest themselves in later years and after nine months in Caulfield Military Hospital, the end came on 13th inst. The remains were brought to Wonthaggi and the funeral took place on Monday. The service was conducted at the Presbyterian church by Rev. W. D. Fairbairn, assisted by Rev. T. V. Paul, the R.S. and S.I.L.A. taking part at the graveside, members of the local branch being present in numbers. The flag at the Town Hall, with the Lest We Forget bannerette, were flown at half mast and the conductor of the funeral bowed his head in passing the flag, while, at the Soldiers' Club rooms, the cortege was halted for a space. The ritual throughout was most impressive and all future funerals of returned men will be conducted on the same lines.

"Powlett Express & Victorian State Coalfields Advertiser"

Obituary

Mr. J. S. Richardson

Two years of intermittent suffering was brought to an end on Saturday, 13th April, when Mr. John Smith Richardson, 7 Edgar street, Wonthaggi, died at the Caulfield Military Hospital. Mr. Richardson served with the troops abroad and it was while stationed there that he is believed to have contracted the illness which was to react so fatally years after the war ended. Although the international strife ceased, the diseases and illnesses caused by infected water and rat-infested trenches went on. Their effect was yet to come. After his return, "Jock," as he was known by all his old associates, secured work in the State Mine, but two years ago the first painful reminders of his war years made themselves felt.

Several times after that he was a hospital patient with brief recoveries raising the hopes of his friends, but to no avail. Nine months ago he was again admitted to the Caulfield Military Hospital. Packages of tobacco and other trifles were constantly sent by fellow-diggers of the Wonthaggi branch to cheer him up, while the president of the Heidelberg section, which visited Wonthaggi recently, gave a personal assurance that he would not lack visits from members of the lodge. The end of his worldly battle came on Saturday, however, and deepest sympathy is extended to his widow and his two sons, Jack and Ted. The funeral took place in the Wonthaggi cemetery on Monday, 15th April. At the Town Hall the Union Jack and Lest We Forget pennant were flown.

IAN RICHARDSON ADDS: I never knew my grandfather Richardson. He died before I was born, but I deeply regret that I failed to learn more about him when my father and my grandmother were still alive. He was clearly what could be described as "a character" and I feel there could have been much to say about his life.