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McCullagh, William Hugh

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



Plaque L43A in Kings Park

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way and Works
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Born 10/9/1888. Joined WAGR 15/10/1910 aged 22 as Repairer, Muja.
("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. The WAGR Annual report for 1914/15 showed they employed 882 Repairers at 8 shillings per day, with many at very small settlements or tent camps.) The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track (once built) and structures.

Transferred to Kalamunda 29/5/1911.

Granted leave to join AIF 16/3/1915 (Service No.2416). Died of wounds 23/8/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	51st Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	2416
Date of death:	23 August 1916
Place of death:	France
Age:	27
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Puchevillers British Cemetery, Puchevillers, Picardie, France

William Hugh McCullagh enlisted in the AIF on 15 March 1915. On enlistment he nominated his father Harry McCullagh as his Next Of Kin. William had no previous military experience. He began his basic military training at Blackboy Hill Camp. He remained a recruit until 16 Apr 1915 when he was allotted to the newly raised 28 Battalion with the regimental number 740. On 29 May 1915 that number was cancelled and he was assigned to 7th Reinforcements to 11 Battalion with a new regimental number, 2416. During his time at Blackboy Hill he had a studio photograph taken. This is a fine full-length photograph showing him in uniform. The photograph is held at the AWM as P08533.001 and may be seen on McCullagh's page there.

Pte McCullagh departed Australia aboard A63 HMAT *Karoola* bound for Egypt and from there Gallipoli. He departed Alexandria on 31 Jul 1915 and was taken-on-strength of 11 Bn on 04 Aug 1915. He presented sick on 12 Aug 1915 with severe diarrhoea on 12 Aug 1915 and was admitted for treatment passing through 2 Fd Amb an1 CCS before being evacuated aboard HMHS Neuralia to

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Egypt where he was admitted to 1 AGH on 14 Aug 1915. Pte McCullagh remained under medical care until he was fit to re-join 11 Bn on 07 Jan 1916. As the AIF Divisions were expanded from two to four, half the strength of 11 Battalion was used to create the nucleus of the new 51 Battalion. Pte McCullagh was one of those transferred on 1 March 1916. The Bn continued to train at both the individual and formation level until 05 Jun 1916 when it departed Alexandria aboard HMT *Ivernia* and disembarked at Marseilles on 12 Jun 1916 to join the British Expeditionary Force. Pte McCullagh was on the sick roll between 19 June and 25 June 1916 suffering from a septic ankle. The Bn joined the action at Pozieres where he suffered a shell fragment wound to his skull on 14 August 1916 resulting in a fractured skull. He was evacuated from the battlefield to 3 CCS where he Died of Wounds on 23 August 1916. Pte McCullagh was buried in Punchevillers British Cemetery 19 Km NE of Amiens.

Additional/personal information:

William McCullagh was born in South Australia, his parents being Henry (Harry) and Caroline Wilton (nee Day) McCullagh but they moved to WA when he was young and he attended Kalamunda school. He had at least two younger siblings born in Kalamunda.

> McCULLAGH.—Killed in action, in France, on August 23, 1916, Private William Hugh McCullagh, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. H. McCullagh, Kalamunda, aged 27 years. For ever with the Lord.
> The West Australian 22/9/1916p1

For his service Pte McCullagh was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia. His father received a military pension of 30/- per fortnight with effect from 07 Jul 1917. He left a Will in his paybook, dated 02 Aug 1915, in which he left his total estate to his mother Mrs Caroline McCullagh. William McCullagh died in 1929 aged 80 years and was buried in the Guildford cemetery. His wife died in 1947 and was buried with her husband. Pte McCullagh has a memorial plaque in Kings Park (L43A) which was dedicated by his family in 2006. On 04 Jul 1967 his brother Terrance McCullagh applied for, and was granted, the Anzac Medallion issued by the Australian Government to mark the 50th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign.

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----------