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McInerney, Francis Robert

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



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

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

Rail employment notes: Born 16/2/1893. Joined WAGR 9/1/1912 aged 18 as Nipper, Perth. Transferred to Junior Labourer 29/4/1912 and appointed Labourer, Perth 16/2/1914.

The Way and Works Branch (later the Chief Civil Engineer's branch) was responsible for track and structures so a labourer might have been needed on a variety of sites, building and/or maintaining stations and smaller buildings, bridges, wooden culverts, etc. His mother wrote that he was employed in the Interlocking section, i.e. signals, turnouts and the rods and wires which connect them.

Granted leave to join AIF 18/2/1916 (Service No.4780). Killed in action 20/9/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force (AIF)
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4780
Date of death:	20 September 1917
Place of death:	Messines, Belgium
Age:	23
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Francis Robert McInerney (nick name "Snowy") enlisted in the AIF on 29 February 1916. He declared that his father was dead and that his mother Mrs Mary Hamilton of Narrogin was his Next of Kin. He had no previous military experience. His basic military training was conducted at Blackboy Hill Camp following which he was assigned to 12th Reinforcements to 28 Battalion with the regimental number 4780.

Pte McInerney departed Australia from Fremantle aboard A60 HMAT *Aeneas* bound for Egypt on 17 April 1916. Prior to departure he had a studio photograph taken. The photo, in uniform, is of the upper body and face slightly angled to the right. In the photo he is shown wearing a service dress cap. The photograph is held in the AWM as P08503.001 and may be seen on McInerney's page there. Pte McInerney's date of arrival in Egypt is not recorded but shortly after arrival he developed a leg ulcer and was held on the nominal roll of 14 Training Battalion between 07 Jun 1916 and 01 Aug 1916. He departed Egypt from Alexandria on 02 Aug 1916 attached to a reinforcement party of 27 Bn aboard HMT *Franconia*. He remained with 27 Bn and was taken onto the roll of 7 Trg Bn on 14 Oct 1916 when he crossed to France and joined the British Expeditionary Force at 2 ADBD and finally re-joining 28 Bn in the field on 30 October 1916. In action near Flers he suffered a Gunshot wound to the

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buttocks on 16 November 1916. He was treated that day at an Advanced Dressing Station before being transferred to a CCS and later evacuated to England where he was admitted to hospital in Birmingham. He remained a patient until 7 March 1917 although he was granted a short furlough before returning to France. He had a short period of isolation because of swollen glands but finally re-joined 28 Bn on 27 June 1917. Pte McInerney completed a paybook Will prior to the commencement of the Third Battle of Ypres naming his mother as his sole beneficiary.

On 20 September 1917 near Polygon Wood he suffered a massive head injury from a high explosive shell. He was taken by stretcher to the nearest dressing station but was declared dead shortly after arrival. A number of soldiers verified the sequence of events and these reports are all available in his Red Cross File. The Battalion moved forward shortly afterwards and no one was able to provide any information relating to his burial. His remains were never recovered, he has no known grave and is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres (now Ieper).

Additional/personal information:

Francis Robert Clarence McInerney's birth was registered in Trawalla in Victoria (Vic BDM 809/1895), a son of Francis and Mary Jane (nee Ross) McInerney. The third forename is not mentioned later. The family had moved to the west by 1898 when the first of several more births were registered in WA and Francis completed his schooling in Narrogin.

> McINERNEY.—Killed in action (previously reported wounded), on September 20, 1917, Private Francis Robert McInerney (Frank), aged 22 years and 7 months. —Inserted by his sorrowing father and mother, brothers Jim (on active service), Alex, and sisters May, Lily, Dolly and Flora.
>
> McINERNEY.—Killed in action, somewhere in France, on September 20, 1917, Private Francis R. McInerney (Frank). —Inserted by his ever loving friend, Lil Waldock.
> Both *The West Australian* 26/10/1917p1

It appears that Francis McInerney senior died in 1912 (*The West Australian* 21/3/1912p1 and BDM) and his mother Mary may have remarried, although the record of marriage has not been found.

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his mother together with other memorabilia. Pte McInerney's brother James served in the AIF 24 Jan 1916 to 13 Apr 1919 as No.4965 in 48 Bn, late 16 Bn, and was decorated with the Military Medal. His NOK, Mrs Mary C Hamilton died on 10 Nov 1931 and was buried in the Karrakatta cemetery.

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----------