McNeill (aka. McNeil), William Wallace

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:	Locomotive
Designation:	Cleaner

Rail employment notes: Born 12/3/1894. Joined WAGR 26 December 1912 aged 18 as Cleaner, Kalgoorlie. ("Cleaner" in this case was a position in the Locomotive branch, cleaning and otherwise working around locomotives whilst training to be a Fireman, the next step up the ladder) Transferred to Coolgardie 13/7/1913 and to Kalgoorlie 26/3/1914.

Granted leave to join AIF 29/11/1915 (Service No.4365). Killed in action 3/11/1916.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	28th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	4365
Date of death:	3 November 1916
Place of death:	Flers, France
Age:	22
Rank at time of death:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

William Wallace McNeill was a serving member of 84th Regiment (a WA volunteer Militia unit) when he began his enlistment in the AIF at Kalgoorlie and was formally attested at Blackboy Hill Camp on 2 December 1915. He was transferred to the NCO School at Bunbury between 7 December 1915 and 14 January 1916 following which he returned to Blackboy Hill Camp and assigned to 11th Reinforcements to 28th Battalion with the regimental number 4365. On enlistment his father Thomas McNeill became his Next of kin.

On completion of basic training he departed Australia from Fremantle on 31 March 1916 aboard A9 HMAT *Shropshire*. On arrival in England he marched into 7 Trg Bn for continuation training. Pte McNeill departed England for France on 14 October 1916 and joined the British Expeditionary Force when he marched into 2 ADBD on 16 Oct 1916. On 19 October 1916 he was appointed an acting Corporal (with pay) and kept this rank until 29 October 1916.

He was taken-on-strength of 28 Bn on 30 October 1916. Pte Mc Neill was posted as Missing in action sometime between 3 and 6 November 1916 in the Flers sector. There were no eye witnesses to his fate and his body was never found. A Court of Enquiry held on 26 July 1917 determined that he had been Killed in action on 3 November 1916. Pte Mc Neill has no known grave and is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. (His Red Cross File contains no information as to the circumstances of his death or burial.)

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The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

William McNeil's birth was registered in the Canning district (WA BDM reg 621/1894), although all the army records later spelled his surname McNeill with a second "l". He was a son of Thomas William McNeil and Eliza Jane (nee Crothers) McNeil. He had at least two siblings (Nellie and Annie) and attended school at Armadale.

For his service he was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his father together with other memorabilia.

Further information will 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----------

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