

# Bulford War Graves



*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1



**7349 SERGEANT**

**A. MacWILLIAM**

**5TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**9TH MAY, 1917 AGE 33**

*Till The Day Dawns*

*And Shadows Flee Away*

## Alexander MacWilliam (McWilliam)

Alexander Edward McWilliam was born at Eaglehawk, near Bendigo, Victoria in 1884 to parents George & Catherine McWilliam.

Alexander McWilliam married Catherine Mary Smeaton in 1909 in Victoria.

The 1914 & 1917 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Batman, subdivision of Fitzroy South, Victoria recorded Alexander Edward McWilliam, Driver, & Catherine Mary McWilliam, Home Duties, living at 206 Young Street, Fitzroy.

Alex MacWilliam stated he was a 28 year old, married, Labourer from Young Street, Fitzroy, Victoria when he enlisted at Melbourne, on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1914 with the 14th Infantry Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1397 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Catherine MacWilliam of 206 Young Street, Fitzroy, Victoria. Alex MacWilliam stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served for 3 years, time expired, with 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, Bendigo.

Private Alex MacWilliam was promoted to the rank of Corporal from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1914. He was appointed Lance Sergeant on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1915.

Lance Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Clan McGillivray (A46)* on 2nd February, 1915 and disembarked at Egypt (no date recorded).

Lance Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam was promoted to Sergeant on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.

While at Gallipoli, Sgt. MacWilliam had fallen over while carrying a disey (?) of boiling tea. His knee and ankle were scalded. He was admitted to Hospital at Dardanelles on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1915. He was dispatched to England - Lewisham Military Hospital on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1915 and remained there 5 weeks before being transferred as his foot had not quite healed.

Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam was admitted to 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England with a scalded leg on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1915. He was discharged on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1915.

Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam was placed on Supernumerary List at Dardanelles on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1915. He embarked on *Star of England* from Portland, England on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1915 & disembarked at Melbourne due to Paralysis of Right arm.

Lance Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam was admitted to No. 5 Australian General Hospital (Base Hospital) Melbourne on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1916 with a withered arm (wasting of forearm).

Proceedings of a Medical Board on an Invalid held 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1916 – Sergeant A. MacWilliams, 1397 at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Disability - *Paralysis of Right Extensor Commirris Digitorum*. Former Occupation – *Horse Driver*.

Place & date of original disability – *About middle February, 1915 Transport Clan McGillivray*

*Patient fell with R. hand doubled under him, gradually lost power in hand. Went to Hallipoli. Was there 8 weeks. Invalided in August 20<sup>th</sup> from scalded leg. Fall. Active Service.*

Present condition – *Patient feels no disability from scald, patient is unable to extend fingers or do any spec work with the hand such as writing &c. Wasting of R. commiris Digitorum, no wrist.*

Was an operation performed ? – *No. Transport "Caladonis" to England, Lewisham Hospital 5 weeks, Harefield 5 weeks, furlo 1 month, Weymouth Depot 3 days "Star of England" Aust.*

Was an Operation advised and declined – *Yes refusal reasonable*

Do you recommend discharge, as permanently unfit ? *Yes (Another copy of form has "Not at present", dated 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1916)*

Incapacity – *25%*

General Recommendation (8<sup>th</sup> March, 1916) – *He has some definite limitation in extensions of the right elbow, in addition to the wasting of the extensor muscles previously noted. He should be investigated thoroughly and x-ray pictures obtained.....*

A report by Lt. Col. W. Moore, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1916, regarding Sgt. A. MacWilliam reads in part: *“Captain Williams informs me that he saw McWilliam lighting a cigarette and using his fingers freely. I had him anaesthetized and while going under the anaesthetic he extended his fingers and hand fully. ....The wasting of the extensor muscles is no doubt due to the voluntarily refraining from using them. I am quite satisfied he is malingering.”*

Sergeant Alex MacWilliam requested a discharge from the Australian Imperial Force, dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1916. Alex MacWilliam was discharged from No. 5 Australian General Hospital & was medically unfit for Active Service, dated 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1916.

Lance Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam had served 681 days with A.I.F.

Claims were made for a War Pension by Katherine MacWilliam, Wife; Alex MacWilliam, Son; Alfred G. MacWilliam, Son & Freda M. MacWilliam, Daughter. All the claims were rejected “Soldier’s incapacity not proved”. Dated 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1917.

Alex MacWilliam was a 33 year old, married, Labourer from Fitzroy, Victoria when he re-enlisted at Melbourne on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1916 with the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 7349 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs C. MacWilliam of 206 Young Street, Fitzroy, Victoria. Alex MacWilliam’s Attestation Papers stated his occupation as “Soldier”.

Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ballarat* (A70) on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1917 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Sergeant Alexander MacWilliam was marched in to 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Battalion from Australia on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1917.

Sergeant Alex MacWilliam died at 6.30 p.m. on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 at 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, Wiltshire from Diabetes.

Sergeant Alex MacWilliam was buried on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1917 in Bulford Church Cemetery, Wiltshire - Grave No. 4 Australian Reserve Section (CWGC Plot number 3. I. 4.) and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Sgt. MacWilliam - *Coffin was good, Elm with Brass Mountings – The funeral obsequies were carried out with dignity and decorum. The Battalion Band was in attendance, also a firing party in accordance with usages incidental to the burial of a soldier. An old workmate of deceased, Private C. Duncan was one of the burial party and the Officer in Charge of the party was Lieut. A. B. Harrison, a fellow townsman, from Bendigo, Australia.*

Sergeant Alex MacWilliam was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sgt. MacWilliam’s widow – Mrs C. MacWilliam (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent July, 1922)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sergeant Alex MacWilliam – service number 7349 as being 33 years old & served with 5th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of George and Catherine MacWilliam; husband of Catherine MacWilliam, of 3 Otter Street, Collingwood, Victoria. Born at Bendigo.

War Pensions were granted to the following in respect of the service of Sergeant Alex MacWilliam:

- Catherine MacWilliam, widow - £2 per fortnight, granted from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1917
- Alfred George MacWilliam, son – 20/- per fortnight, granted from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1917
- Freda May MacWilliam, daughter – 15/- per fortnight, granted from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1917
- Katherine Jean MacWilliam, daughter – 10/- per fortnight, granted from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1917

Sergeant A. MacWilliam is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 44.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(115 pages of Sergeant Alex MacWilliam's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **DEATHS**

McWILLIAM – Died of illness in England, 9<sup>th</sup> May, Sgt-Major Alexander McWilliam, dearly beloved only son of George and Kate McWilliam, Job's Gully, Bendigo and loving brother of Stella. Aged 32 years.

*(Bendigo Advertiser, Victoria – Saturday 19 May 1917) & (Bendigonian, Victoria – Thursday 24 May 1917)*

## **DIED ON SERVICE**

McWILLIAM- Died of illness, 9th May, at First Dermatological Hospital, Sergt. A. McWilliam, loved husband of Kitty, and loving father of Alfie, Freda, and Jean, 206 Young street, Fitzroy, only son of Mr and Mrs G. McWilliam, and brother of Stella, of Job's Gully, Bendigo.

McWILLIAM- Died on active service abroad, on May 9, Sergt. A. McWilliam, loved son-in-law of Mrs M., and brother-in-law of M. H. and F. Smeaton.

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – Saturday 26 May 1917) & (*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – Saturday 26 May 1917)

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## **AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES**

303<sup>rd</sup> CASUALTY LIST

DIED FROM ILLNESS

Sgt. A. MACWILLIAM, Fitzroy, 9/5/17

(*Bendigo Advertiser*, Victoria – Monday 28 May 1917)

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

MCWILLIAM – In loving memory of Sergt. A. McWilliam, who died 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1917, loved husband of Kitty, loving father of Alfie, Freda, Jean, loved son of Mrs K. McWilliam, and the late G. McWilliam, and brother of Stella.

- Inserted by his loving wife and children.

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – Friday 9 May 1919)

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## Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone in Bulford Church Cemetery. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(*Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921*)

A letter from Base Records, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1921, to Mrs C. MacWilliam of 206 Young Street, Fitzroy, advises that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of her husband, the late Sergeant A. MacWilliam, had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Sergeant A. MacWilliam does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Till The Day Dawns  
And Shadows Flee Away*

Photo of Sergeant A. MacWilliam's Headstone at Bulford Church Cemetery, Wiltshire.



*(Photo courtesy of Andrea Charlesworth 2012)*



**Bulford Church Cemetery** (*Photo courtesy of Andrea Charlesworth 2012*)