

Codford War Graves



Lest we Forget

World War I



7026 PRIVATE

J. C. P. McGRATH

15TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

2ND MARCH, 1917 Age 21

FOR KING & COUNTRY

HE GAVE HIS BEST

THY WILL BE DONE

Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte J. C. P. McGrath is located in Main Front Row (Right hand side) Grave Plot # 10 of Codford War Graves Cemetery (Using Map by Brian Marshall)

(CWGC Reference - Grave # 84)

James Charles Patrick McGrath was born at Marlborough, near Rockhampton, Queensland in 1895, to parents Patrick & Margaret McGrath. He was a 21 year old, single Station Hand from Hughenden, Queensland when he enlisted on 30th August, 1916 with the 4th Infantry Brigade, 15th Infantry Battalion, 23rd Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 7026 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Maggie McGrath of St. Lawrence via Rockhampton, Queensland.

Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Beltana* (A72) on 25th November, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 29th January, 1917.

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

Pte McGrath was marched in to 4th Training Battalion at Codford, Wiltshire on 30th January, 1917.

Pte McGrath was admitted sick to Group Hospital at Codford, with influenza, on 17th February, 1917. From the Medical Case Sheet for Pte McGrath – “complains of pain in right side on coughing – last week. Cough ever since leaving Australia over three months ago.”

Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath died at 7.20 p.m. on 2nd March, 1917 at No. 3 New Zealand Military Hospital, Codford of Broncho pneumonia.

A death for James C. P. McGrath, aged 21, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire.

From the burial report of Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath – he was buried at St. Mary’s Cemetery, Codford, Grave No. 84 on 7th March, 1917. *Polished Elm Coffin – He was buried with full Military Honours and the officers & Men of his Company (23rd/15th Bn) followed his remains to the grave. His grave will be attended to.*

Private J. C. P. McGrath is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 76.



(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)

*3 Soldiers (Above)- J.C.P. McGrath, D.E. McGregor & G. McIlroy were all from 15th Battalion & are all buried in Anzac Cemetery at Codford St. Mary, Codford, England.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte McGrath's mother – Margaret McGrath (April, 1923 & May, 1922)

Pte McGrath's mother – Margaret McGrath of St. Lawrence was awarded a War Pension in the sum of £2 per fortnight from 7/5/1917.

Mrs McGrath, mother of the late Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath, wrote several letters requesting her son's personal belongings, namely a silver watch & chain, & letters & also for his uniform. Base Records replied that it was not the practice to return the uniform to the deceased's family & that they had not received any personal belongings to date – April, 1919. Further enquires were made on behalf of Mrs McGrath's requests at it was ascertained that Pte McGrath's personal items were collected on 6th March, 1917 & signed for by a Lance-Corporal W. Patterson on behalf of the Officer Commanding of the 4th Training Battalion A.I.F. Codford. Apparently Lance-Corporal Patterson had returned to Australia on 8th November, 1918. A Statutory Declaration made by William Walter Patterson, dated 14th April, 1919, stated that the personal effects of Pte McGrath were received by him & that he saw Capt. Snartt afterwards sorting out the personal effects from the military effects. Capt Snartt then gave Sergt Major some instructions regarding the items but William Patterson could not say exactly what the instructions were. Cecil Edwin Snartt also signed a Statutory Declaration stating he had no recollection of the personal effects of Pte McGrath & that 2nd Lieut. Day was Adjutant at the time & he dealt with all the articles of personal effects of deceased soldiers. Further investigations were made & Essington Day was located. He provided a letter which stated that he could not remember the particular case of Pte McGrath's personal effects & the procedure was the items "were brought into the Orderly Room of the 4th Training Battalion & either the Commanding Officer, the Orderly Room Sergeant or himself, as Adjutant would have dealt with the items".

A letter to Mrs McGrath from Base Records dated June, 1919 states that “although exhaustive enquiries have been made no trace of the late soldier’s property can be found.” A further letter states that “The A.I.F. is morally responsible for the loss and in the circumstances the value of the articles of a private nature might be paid as an act of grace.”

(77 pages of Pte James Charles Patrick McGrath’s Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives

oooOOOooo

Newspaper Reports

AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES – LIST No. 280

DIED OF ILLNESS – QUEENSLAND

J. C. P. McGrath

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria, Tuesday 20th March, 1917)

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 at Codford War Graves 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)

Pte J. C. P. McGrath does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Photo of Pte J. C. P. McGrath's Headstone at Codford War Graves Cemetery



(Photo by Romy Wyeth)