

McNeil, Louden Bain

Louden was born in Glasgow on 21 June 1891, the son of William and Mary McNeil. His parents had married in 1883. His father died in 1908.

Louden had five siblings, Gordon (1884–), William (1886–), Douglas (1888–), Charles (1890–1916) and Lex (1894–) who were all living in Scotland in 1901. In November 1911, he departed from London for Queensland on the *Waipara*.

In 1913, while Louden was working as a bookkeeper, he and his brother William lived at 43 Gipps Street, Fortitude Valley. In 1915 Louden lived at Fairymead (Wide Bay) where he was the shire clerk. It is not known whether William and Louden travelled to Australia together. Their brother Gordon also immigrated to Australia.

Louden played cricket for Fairymead and was a brother in the Star of Fairymead Lodge. He did a recitation at a Lodge concert in 1913.

Louden enlisted in the 3rd Field Ambulance on 3 February 1915 in Bundaberg. He gave his next-of-kin as Mrs MG McNeil of 239 Kilmarnock Road, Glasgow. He was described as 164cm tall, weighing 59kg and with a 77cm chest. He had a fair complexion, blue eyes and light hair, with a mole on his left forearm. He gave his religion as Baptist and said he was employed as a clerk.

He embarked on the *Karoola* in June 1915. He served at Gallipoli, and then in France. In June 1916, Louden was given leave to go to Scotland, probably to visit his mother, returning 1 July. In August 1916, he was promoted to lance corporal.

Louden was wounded in action on 11 November 1916, by a gunshot wound to his right thigh, and died of his wounds at the 38th Casualty Clearing Station.

The AIF were in action on the Somme during the winter of 1916. The conditions in mid-November were described in the official records as having ‘deteriorated almost to chaos.

Approach trenches [for stretcher bearers] were impassable. Each sledge took three horses, those of the Field Ambulance being supplemented by the Army Service Corps. To extricate and clear the four hundred casualties, slight and severe in this



Stretcher bearers in the mud (AWM)

action, required the utmost efforts of two bearer divisions and the help of some 400 infantry'. Elsewhere, it states that six to eight men were required in relays to transfer one stretcher patient. Loudon was buried at Heilly Station Cemetery, 2½ miles NNE of Corbie, Méricourt-L'Abbé.¹

He was posthumously awarded the 1914–15 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. A memorial scroll and a memorial plaque were issued to Loudon's mother.

His comrade, Private Harold Larsen, MM, who enlisted in the 3rd Field Ambulance on the same day, was also killed in action at Zonnebeke two days before Loudon.²

Loudon's personal effects consisting of a devotional book, two note books, Geneva Red Cross badge, first-aid book, box containing Gillette safety razor, blades, knife, spoon, cards, letters, photographs, identity disc, letters, wristlet watch and strap, purse and coins, scissors and a tin box containing pins, needles, pencils, photo, writing pad, 4 pairs of scissors, lock (broken), two brushes, shell band, leather case, belt, two pairs of mittens, 20 handkerchiefs and gloves, were sent to his mother in Scotland.

Loudon's brother William had also enlisted in Brisbane in the 3rd Field Ambulance on 18 August 1914, six months before Loudon. He served in Egypt and at Gallipoli, but in January 1916 was discharged medically unfit due to an injury to his knee. In April 1917 William re-enlisted in the Australian Medical Corp in the Field Ambulance Section, for which the medical requirements were probably less strict. He then served in France. His name is not included on the City Tabernacle Roll of Honour so presumably he had no involvement in the church or attended another.

Loudon's brother Charles also enlisted and served with the 17th Battalion Highland Light Infantry, the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce Battalion. Charles McGregor McNeil died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, the same day that Loudon returned from leave to visit Scotland.

Loudon and Charles are both listed on the plinth of the war memorial in Pollokshaws, Glasgow.

¹ Australian War Memorial, *First World War Official Histories*, Section 1, p. 87.

² *The Bundaberg Mail*, 10 November 1920, p. 2.



Pollokshaws War Memorial