

Samuel McKay

Private (Pte) 7062 Samuel McKay enlisted in the 5th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division in Melbourne on 6 September 1916. He embarked overseas on 23 November and disembarked in Plymouth on 29 January 1917, where he joined the 2nd (Brigade) Training Battalion at Durrington.

He sailed from England on 14 May and landed in France the next day, where he was taken on strength of the 5th Battalion, in the field at Henencourt, on 29 May 1917.

On 14 September, the battalion moved north to Belgium, and then to Zillebeke on 19 September, where extra ammunition and rations were issued in preparation for an assault the next day. At 2.30 am on the morning of 20 September 1917 the battalion moved to their starting point near Glencorse Wood where, at 5.40 am, they attacked. Considered a success, victory at the Battle of Menin Road nevertheless came at a heavy cost, and the 5th Battalion alone suffered 279 casualties (96 killed).

Pte McKay was admitted to the 2nd Field Ambulance with a fever on 27 September. Subsequently identified as trench fever, he was treated at the 6th General Hospital at Rouen from 30 September – 7 October, then transferred to England where he was admitted to the Civil General Hospital in Birmingham between 9 October – 28 January 1918.

He was granted leave in England between 28 January – 11 February, then returned to France on 22 May, and eventually rejoined the 5th Battalion, in the field near Strazeele, on 29 May. The battalion remained in this region until early August, when they moved south to the Somme to participate in the upcoming Allied offensive

During the Amiens offensive, which commenced on 8 August, the 5th Battalion helped capture the village of Lihons between 9 – 11 August at a cost of 209 casualties (37 killed).

Two weeks later the battalion participated in the 1st Division's successful assault on Chuignes on 23 August, where the 5th Battalion alone captured 450 prisoners for the loss of 113 casualties (28 killed).

The 5th Battalion's last action of the war was as part of the 1st and 4th Division's successful attack on the Hindenburg Outpost Line at Hargicourt on 18 September, which included the old British front lines overrun by the Germans back in March 1918. The total Australian casualties of 1,260 were relatively light given the ground was captured, along with 4,300 German prisoners.

Just a few days later, on 23 September, Pte McKay was evacuated to the 2nd Field Ambulance with another fever. He was transferred to England on 1 October, where he was admitted to the Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol from 2 – 18 October, then granted leave in England from 19 October – 23 November.

Private 7062 Samuel McKay embarked for return to Australia on 12 December and disembarked in Melbourne on 1 February 1919, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 15 May 1919.

Name: McKay, Samuel	
Service Number	7062
Date enlisted	6 September 1916
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 November 1916 HMAT A20 <i>Hororata</i>
Previous military service	3 years Citizens Military Forces
Stated age/DOB (if known)	21 years 9 months
Place of birth	Croydon, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Driver
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	McKay, Mr Joseph, father, 7 Albert Street, Auburn, Victoria
Permanent address	7 Albert Street, Auburn, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, brown hair, hazel eyes, height – 5 feet 10 inches, weight – 9 stone, chest measurement – 34/36 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	12 December 1918 HT <i>Nestor</i>
Date discharged	15 May 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (illness)
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	