



# **Sgt. Ronald George McKail**



**6<sup>th</sup> August 1916**



**Played with Adelaide University**



**Football Club: 1915 A Grade**

**(Intervarsity 1912)**

**Degree: BSc (Forestry) 1914**

**SANFL: North Adelaide 1907 - 1913 (Captain 1913)**

## **Background**

***Coinciding with the Centenary of Anzacs our incentive behind the series of biographical publications is the Adelaide University Football and Cricket Club's desire to honour our players who served in the Great War (1914 - 1918). These brave men put on hold their academic, professional and sporting careers for King and Country in the name of peace and freedom. The AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee is endeavouring to identify every one of our players who served and prepare life stories on all. This is to ensure their sacrifices and further contributions to society will be recognised by future generations.***

***On Anzac Day 2015, the Centenary of the Gallipoli landing, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the Adelaide University Oval Pavilion and this was followed by the erection of a picket fence between the pavilion and the scoreboard with each picket bearing a plaque with the name of an AUFC/AUCC player who served.***

***The following documentation relates to the life of Ronald George McKail. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.***

## The AIF Project

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=199892>



### Ronald George McKAIL

Regimental number	4174
Place of birth	Albany, Western Australia
School	St Peter's (Catholic) College Adelaide, South Australia
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Forester Bsc
Address	Millicent, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	25
Next of kin	Mother, Mrs E L McKail, 215 Gover Street. North Adelaide, South Australia
Previous military service	Served in the St Peters College as a SGT.
Enlistment date	15 July 1915
Rank on enlistment	Private
Unit name	16th Battalion, 13th Reinforcement
AWM Embarkation Roll number	23/33/3
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Adelaide, South Australia, on board HMAT A30 <i>Borda</i> on 11 January 1916
Other details from Roll of Honour Circular	He led B. Company of the 48th Battalion trenches in windmill Pozieres 6th August 1916, he gained his objective and then had his leg blown off nearly at the thigh and in this condition for 2 hours maintained command of his men cheerfully ignoring his dreadful wound, he cheered up his wounded and dying.
Fate	Killed in Action 6 August 1916
Place of death or wounding	Pozieres, Somme Sector, France
Age at death	27
Place of burial	No known grave

Commemoration details	<p>Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France</p> <p>Villers-Bretonneux is a village about 15 km east of Amiens. The Memorial stands on the high ground ('Hill 104') behind the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Fouilloy, which is about 2 km north of Villers-Bretonneux on the east side of the road to Fouilloy.</p> <p>The Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux is approached through the Military Cemetery, at the end of which is an open grass lawn which leads into a three-sided court. The two pavilions on the left and right are linked by the north and south walls to the back (east) wall, from which rises the focal point of the Memorial, a 105 foot tall tower, of fine ashlar. A staircase leads to an observation platform, 64 feet above the ground, from which further staircases lead to an observation room. This room contains a circular stone tablet with bronze pointers indicating the Somme villages whose names have become synonymous with battles of the Great War; other battle fields in France and Belgium in which Australians fought; and far beyond, Gallipoli and Canberra.</p> <p>On the three walls, which are faced with Portland stone, are the names of 10,885 Australians who were killed in France and who have no known grave. The 'blocking course' above them bears the names of the Australian Battle Honours.</p> <p>After the war an appeal in Australia raised £22,700, of which £12,500 came from Victorian school children, with the request that the majority of the funds be used to build a new school in Villers-Bretonneux. The boys' school opened in May 1927, and contains an inscription stating that the school was the gift of Victorian schoolchildren, twelve hundred of whose fathers are buried in the Villers-Bretonneux cemetery, with the names of many more recorded on the Memorial. Villers-Bretonneux is now twinned with Robinvale, Victoria, which has in its main square a memorial to the links between the two towns.</p>
Panel number, Roll of Honour, 146	
Australian War Memorial	
Family/military connections	PTE, JC McRail, BR (sic)
Other details	<p>War service: Western Front</p> <p>Medals: British War Medal, Victory Medal</p>

Note: St Peter's College, Adelaide is incorrectly stated as Catholic in the information above

# Service Record

<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=1947799>

12th Reinforce  
16th Battalion

**D** 16506 **AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.**  
**AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.**

**Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.**

No. 1174 Name McKail, Ronald George  
Unit 13/16 Inf  
Joined on July 13 1915.

**Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.**

- What is your Name? ... Ronald George McKail
- In the Parish of ... in or near the Town of Albany in the County of West Australia
- Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ... NB
- What is your age? ... 15 1/2 Years
- What is your trade or calling? ... Forester (BSc)
- Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ... Yes to Telegraphy to Eastern Extension Co. Coy Adelaide 4 years
- Are you married? ... No
- Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ... Mother, Mrs Green, Poonah, McKail, 32 Barnard St North Adelaide, S.A. (auth 3A1C/07933)
- Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ... No
- Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ... No
- Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ... 5th Pattern College Cadets 8 yrs Capt School
- Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... Yes
- Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... No
- (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)—Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued to you after embarkation during your term of service? ... Yes
- Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ... Yes

I, Ronald George McKail do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to ~~not~~ three-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my ~~wife~~ wife and children.

Date 9-7-15 R G McKail  
Signature of person enlisted.

D.377/1.15.—C.605. \* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age. † Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

## Casualty Form - Active Service

Army Form B. 103.

Regiment or Corps *48th Bn Remp 16th Bn* *PA Pwua*  
 Regimental No. *11174* Rank *Sgt* Name *McKail R.G. Ronald George*  
 Enlisted (a) *13 July/15* Terms of Service (a) *Sergeant* Service reckons from (a)  
 Date of promotion to present rank } Date of appointment to lance rank } Numerical position on roll of N.C.O's. }  
 Extended Re-engaged Qualification (b)

REPORT		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36 or other official documents.	
Date	From whom received					
	Nom. Roll	Allotted to 48th Bn.	Zeitoun	9/3/16	A.P. 5295	
	C.O. 48th Bn.	Taken on Strength 48th Bn.	Tel-el-Kebir	do	A.P. 5609	
	<i>Full Rm 17.3.16</i>	<i>Reverted to Rank of Pte</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>A.P. 6378</i>	<i>20/7/35</i>
	<i>Am 14/3/16</i>	<i>Promoted Pte. (Temp)</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>9/3/16</i>	<i>A.P. 6795</i>	<i>B213 P2/1209</i>
	<i>do</i>	<i>Promoted Sgt. (Temp)</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>P2 1225</i>
	<i>do 23 3 16</i>	<i>Temp Rank of Sgt confirmed</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>9/3/16</i>	<i>B.L. 2487</i>	<i>B213 P2/2689</i>
	<i>B.M. 1</i>	<i>Proceeded to 401 B.M.F. 2-6-16 Alexandria</i>				
	<i>Discharged 14 3 16</i>	<i>Discharged 14 3 16</i>				
	<i>C.O. 48th Bn 16</i>	<i>Killed in Action</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>6/8/16</i>	<i>A.P. 2400</i>	<i>B213 P2/1209 701</i>
						<i>20/7/35 Cao List 17/2/16 VL 53</i>

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D. Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.  
 (b) e.g., Signaller, Shoeing Smith, &c., &c., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties. (P.T.O.)

DMH.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

KIT STORE.



110, GREYHOUND ROAD.

FULHAM, LONDON.

S.W.

Telephone:—HAMMERSMITH 1899.

Inventory of Effects of— The Late. No. 4174 Sgt. McKail, R.G. 48th Batt'n. A.I.F.

Forwarded to— (Mother).

Mrs. E.L. McKail,  
 11, Thurlow Road,  
 Hampstead,  
 N. W.

Effects.

Ex. Kit Store. ) Cap Comforter, 2 Handkerchiefs, Fly Net, 1 Pair Mittens,  
 Note Book, 1 Pair Brushes, Cigarette Lighter, Wristlet  
 Watch & Strap, (Damaged), Book of Poems.

3rd Echelon, ) Brush, Writing Paper & Envelopes, Small Tin, Knife,  
 No. 4440. ) Note Book, Purse, Letters, Arabic Book.

No. of Package D/S. 5709.

Checked by



## Virtual War Memorial Australia

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/118605>

"LATE SGT. R. G. McKAIL.

Mrs. E. L. McKail, of North Adelaide, has been notified that her son, Sgt. Ronald C. McKail, was killed in action in France on August 6. Sgt. McKail was born in Western Australia, but at an early age came to South Australia with his family. He was educated at St Peter's College, and after leaving that institution joined the staff of the Eastern Extension Cable Company, in which he served for several years. When the Government instituted a Forestry Department at the University, he was one of three successful applicants chosen for the course, which he completed in three years. At the same time, he gained his B.Sc. Degree.

When he enlisted he was Assistant Forester at the Mount Burr Forest Reserve, Millicent. While at college Sgt. McKail was keenly interested in all sports, and captained the teams at both football and cricket in the intercollegiate matches. He will be remembered by many as a member of the North Adelaide football team, of which he was captain during his last season before leaving the city." - [from the Adelaide Register 09 Sep 1916 \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

From the book ***Fallen Saints*** - (by Robert Kearney)

Ronald George McKail of North Adelaide was born in Albany, Western Australia in 1889. While at St Peters College he was a good all round student and sportsman and during the three years he served in the senior cadets was promoted to the rank of sergeant.

He left the School in 1907 and after graduating (BSc) from Adelaide University was employed as a Forrester; he subsequently joined the Eastern Extension Cable Company as a Training Officer. (sic)

He enlisted at Keswick on 13 July 1915 and attended the Mitcham Camp NCO School 21 July - 31 August. On 1 September he was posted to the 32nd Battalion and in October was made an acting sergeant. Throughout November, he attended No 10 Officers School and at the beginning of December joined the 13th quota of reinforcements for the 16th Battalion.

He sailed from Adelaide aboard HMAT Borda on 11 January 1916 was made an acting sergeant for the voyage but upon reaching to Egypt was reverted to his substantive rank; he but was made a temporary sergeant again in March.

When the 48th Battalion was raised from the 16th Battalion he was taken on the battalion's strength as a substantive sergeant and sailed from Alexandria with the battalion aboard HMT Caledonian on 2 June; Sergeant McKail was killed in action on 5 August; he was 27 years of age.

When completing the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour circular in 1928 his mother offered the Australian War Memorial her son's diary and wrote a number of brief notes.

... led B Company of the 48th into the trenches in the vicinity of the Windmill at Pozières and gained his objective before a German bomb tore his leg off at the thigh. In spite of his horrific injuries he continued to command his men until he died. [i]

In a letter to Base Records dated 12 Jan 1923, Ronald's mother said her son had been killed during the taking of the last two trenches taken at Pozières.

... He was in command of the men operating there & 2 of his men informed me in 1917 when in London – that they dug his grave at the top of the trench near the Wind mill.... [ii]

The following excerpt is from a letter written by Ronald's brother Sapper John McKail (OS) 4th Field Company, Engineers.

Before the Brigade went into action at Pozzières, Pepper had been Brigade Gas Sergeant, a job that possessed the merit of being fairly safe. He threw it up to go with his platoon, who bore the brunt of the heaviest artillery fire possible, for the enemy threw a barrage behind and another in front, where they dropped with absolute accuracy in the shell craters, and holes that the 48th Battalion had as their only cover. Pepper was killed by high explosive carrying away his lower limbs; he had been wounded previously, but applied first aid and carried on. His platoon has told me that they considered him a hero. No aid from the A.M.C. could come up as a barrage in the rear prevented it. [iii]

On 30 September 1916, with one son dead and another still at the front Mrs McKail wrote to Base Records seeking a death certificate for her son. She needed it urgently so she could probate his Will and set his affairs in order before sailing to England to visit and support her daughter whose husband, a doctor in the British Army, had been listed as missing in action for three and a half months. [iv]

Lieutenant George Dean (Old Scholar) specifically mentioned Ronald in a letter dated 4 April 1917.

Many I have met are dead – poor old Sgt. Pepper McKail, a tip top chap. [v]

[i] Australian War Memorial, Roll of Honour Cards 145, 1914-1918 War, Army - McKail, Ronald George viewed 5 October 2005

[ii] National Archives of Australia: B 2455, McKail, R G / 1947799, viewed 5 October 2005

[iii] St Peter's School Magazine - W K Thomas & Co, Adelaide, May 1917, p. 59

[iv] National Archives of Australia: B 2455, McKail, R G / 1947799, viewed 4 February 2006

[v] St Peter's School Magazine - W K Thomas & Co, Adelaide, August 1917, p. 42-43

#### **McKAIL, Ronald George**



Service no 4174  
Sergeant  
48th Battalion

Born 1889 at Albany, WA  
Son of John Frederick McKAIL and Ellen Louisa nee WRIGHT  
Of North Adelaide, SA  
Occupation prior to enlistment Civil Servant  
Enlisted 11 January 1916  
Killed in action 06 August 1916 in France  
Aged 27 years  
Commemorated Villers-Bretonneux, France

State Records of SA GRG 26/5/4/935





## Biography

### Early Life

Ronald George McKail was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1889, the third son and fourth child of John Frederick McKail and Ellen Louisa Wright, at Albany, Western Australia.

His siblings were Cecily Helen (born 1891), Hugh Francis (born 1883) and John Cecil (born 1887).

Ronald acquired the nickname “Pepper” which was frequently shortened to “Pep”.

Pep’s grandfather, John McKail was an early settler in Western Australia, arriving from Deptford, United Kingdom in 1812. He moved to Albany, WA in 1835 and was an agent for Mr Anthony Curtis. John later became a merchant and financier and a member of the Legislative Council for WA. He died aged 61. He had two sons and seven daughters with his wife Henrietta Jenkins.

Pep’s father, John Frederick McKail, was involved in various partnerships that traded as agents under the business name of “John McKail & Co” in Albany, WA. The family moved to Adelaide, South Australia when Pep was young. Sadly for the family, Pep’s father passed away at Miss Tibbits’ Hospital, Wakefield Street, Adelaide on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1901, aged 41. He was buried at the North Road Cemetery.

### Schooling

Pep and his older brothers (John and Hugh) commenced at St Peter’s College, Adelaide in 1897.

Pep excelled academically. He won the Form III prize December 1899, the Form IVj prize for Scripture in 1900, the ‘Remove b’ form prize for Scripture in 1902 and the ‘Remove a’ form prize in 1903. He passed Primary Examinations in English History, Greek, Latin, French, Algebra and Geometry in 1903 and was second to HH Blackburn for the Allen Classics Scholarship at St Peter’s College that year.

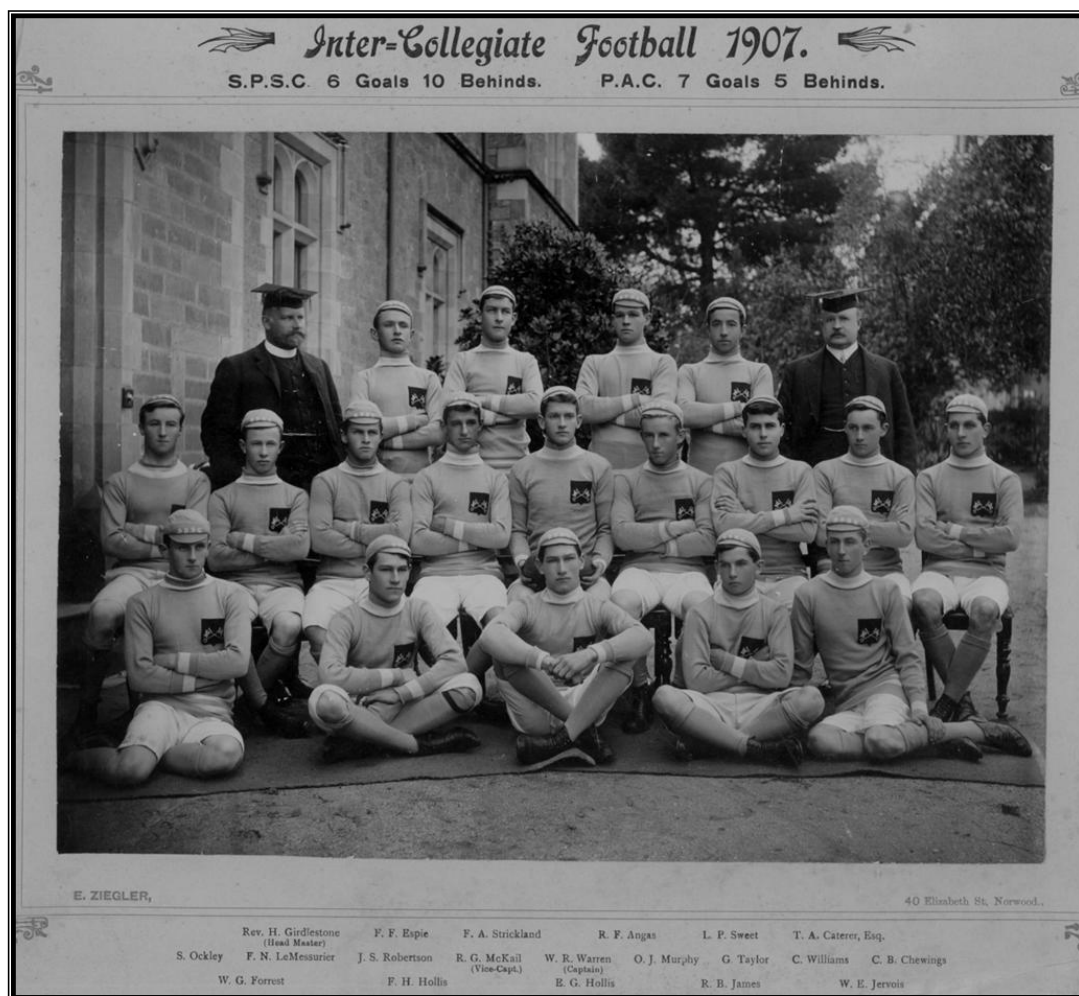
Pep passed three Senior Examinations (English literature, geometry, inorganic chemistry) in 1905 and seven (English History, Greek, Latin, Arithmetic and Algebra (with credit), Geometry, Trigonometry and Inorganic Chemistry) in 1906. In his final year at St Peter’s, Pep passed five subjects in the Higher Public Examinations (Greek, Latin, Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics and) Inorganic Chemistry and was awarded the St Peter’s Westminster Scholarship for Classics.

Pep competed in the St Peter’s College Sports coming third in the Senior Obstacle race (400 yard) in September 1905. He was on the committee who organised the Sports in 1907.

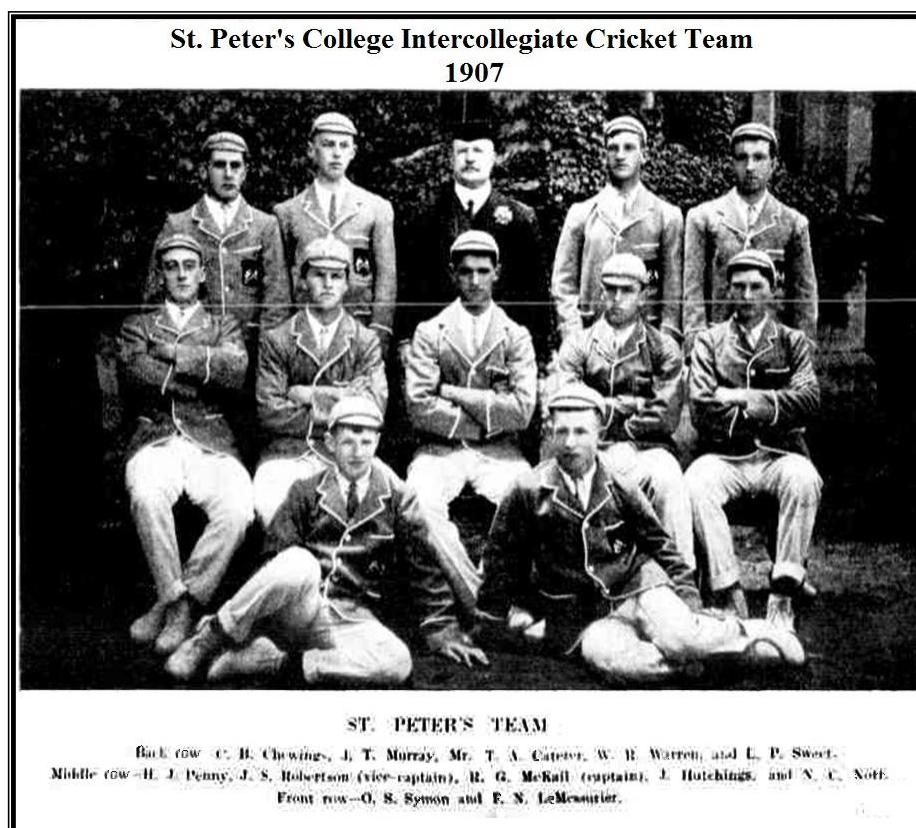
Pep was also excelled at sports and played in the St Peter’s football team from 1905 to 1907. He was in the best players in a match against Christian Brothers College in June 1905 and played for the present boys against the Old Scholars’ team that year. He represented St Peter’s in intercollegiate football against Prince Alfred College from 1905 to 1907 and against Scotch College, Melbourne in 1906. He was vice-captain of the St Peter’s team in 1907.

In a newspaper article published shortly after Pep enlisted in July 1915, Pep was described as “one of the best footballers the “Saints” ever had”.

He played South Australian Cricket Association B Grade District Cricket for St Peters in the 1906/07 and 1907/08 seasons and represented the College in intercollegiate matches against PAC in 1906 and 1907, captaining the side in 1907.



**"THE INTERCOLLEGIATE CRICKET MATCH: PLAYED ON THE ADELAIDE OVAL."**  
*Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1895 - 1954) - 28 December 1907*



**RG McKail (captain) – Middle Row - Centre**

In 1907 Pep won one of the two challenge cups presented at St Peter's for rifle shooting (he was in the Cadet Corps at St Peter's for 3 years) and he attended the St Peter's College Dance in December that year.

## Early Career

After completing his schooling at St Peter's College, Pep commenced working for the Eastern Extension Cable Company (EECC) as a telegraphy apprentice.

He worked for the company for four years (1908 to 1911). In his final year at EECC he also commenced his forestry degree at the University of Adelaide.

Pep represented the EECC in a "Reporters versus Telegraphists" football match in September 1911. Among the players were four who had never played football and others had not played for many years, however, the EECC team included RK McKail (League -North Adelaide), AK Schedlich (League- South Adelaide), JD Yeatman (probably D Yeatman – Amateur League - Glenferrie) and TF Flaherty (Amateur League- St Francis Xavier) and EECC won the match easily.

### *Evening Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1869 - 1912) - 5 September 1911*

**FOOTBALL.**  
**REPORTERS V. TELEGRAPHISTS.**

The reporting staffs of the three Adelaide daily newspapers had been under the impression that in their ranks there was a deal of athletic form worthy of being put to more strenuous use than the mere chasing of "copy." They tested the theory on Monday afternoon—and found it untenable. They met on the Adelaide Oval 18 members of the Eastern Extension Company. A clean, fast, clever, and strenuous game followed, in which the press football critics put their theories into energy, and but for the unhappy exposition of umpiring on the part of Mr. Dollman-Williams, who failed to see eye to eye with the scribblers' readings of the rules, the scores would have been far different from 6 goals 12 behinds to 2 goals 2 behinds. The victory of the Eastern Extension 18 was a closer thing than the statistics indicate, for the pencil brigade after their three-quarters' siesta, finished strongly. Following were the teams:—Eastern Extension—A. S. Kempthorne, C. L. Hayward, W. Hard, L. Hayter, C. A. Cleland, L. W. Hack, A. S. Stevens, K. Douglas, R. G. McKail, J. D. Yeatman, M. M. Stewart, D. Mitchell, J. Stoate, H. Hallifax, L. Hallifax, H. G. Holmes, A. K. Schedlich, and T. Flaherty. Press:—J. Edwards, A. Forbes, C. J. Graves, C. Holloway, T. Lewis, James Martindale, V. Stevens, L. Dumas, C. B. Fry, A. H. Hauptmann, S. Pratt, E. Prior, M. Shanahan, L. Trembath, M. Chinner, H. R. Drakard, and A. Jacobs. Goalkickers:—E.E.—Stoate (2), Hallifax (2), Cleland, and Douglas, 1 each. For the losers T. Rucker Forbes and Jacobs were the goal-getters. Among the winners the following gave most trouble:—Stewart, Kempthorne, Yeatman, Flaherty, Schedlich, Hallifax, and Holmes. At afternoon tea, the whole of the visitors were entertained by the combined players.

## McKail, Ronald George

**Preferred Name:**

**Born:** 4 March 1889

**Deceased:** 6 August 1916

Competition	Total Games	Total Goals
League	64	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3</b>

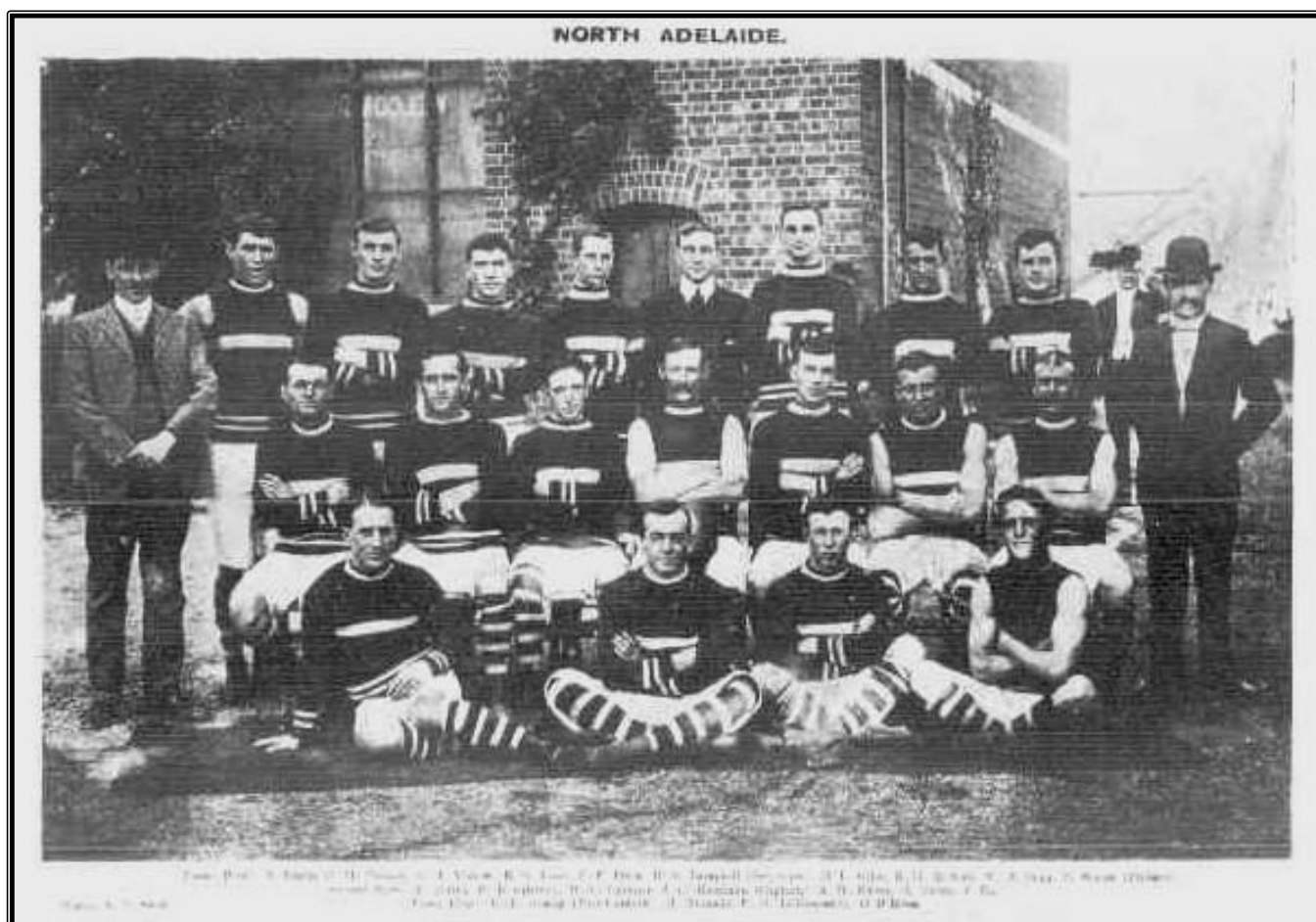


Pep played League football in for North Adelaide from 1908 - 1913 seasons. He played 64 league games (see <https://nafc.com.au/history/player?playerId=0866c43f-212e-4f5b-9516-93f5c28f5365> for more details).

In his second season with North, Pep was awarded the club medal for best follower. He was elected Vice-Captain of the team for both the 1912 and 1913 seasons. When the 1913 Captain (B Leahy) broke his leg in May 1913, Pep was elected Captain for the remainder of the season and took the team to the grand Final where they were defeated by Port Adelaide.

**"NORTH ADELAIDE."**

**Observer (Adelaide, SA : 1905 - 1931) 29 May 1909**

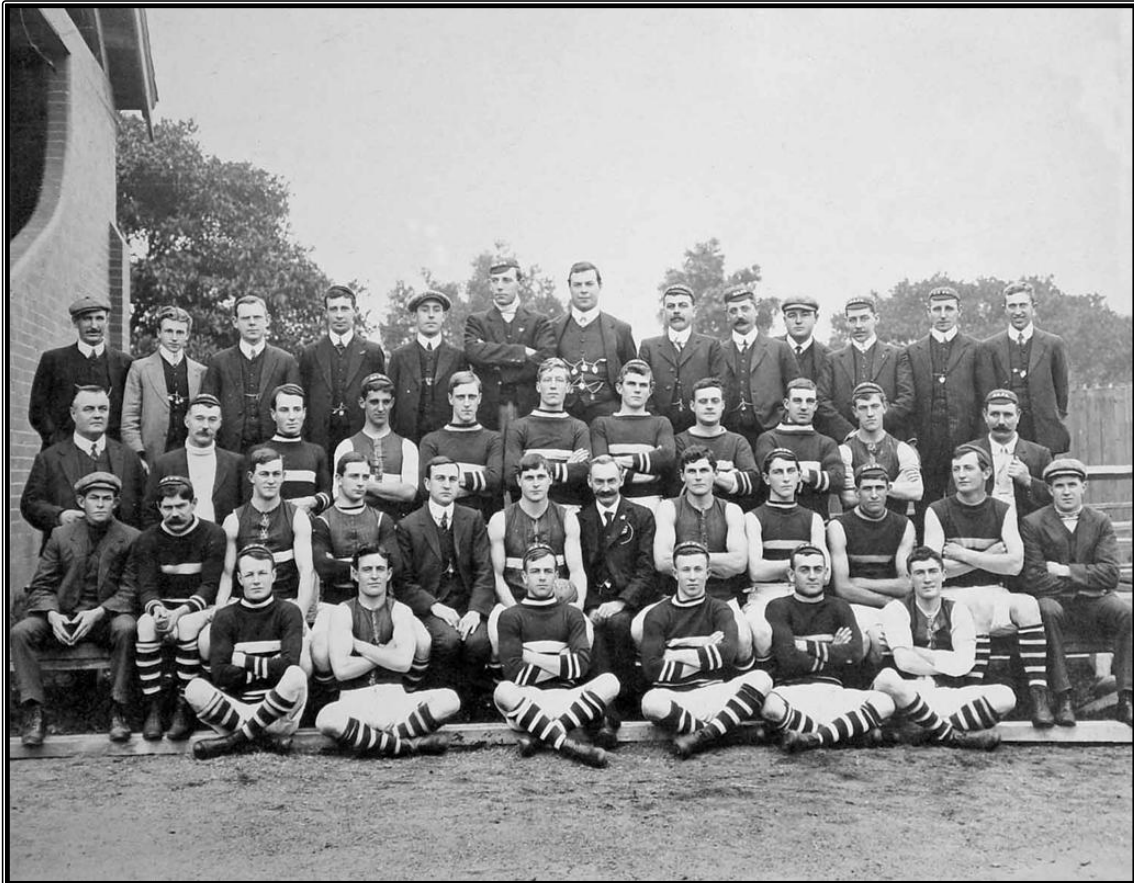


***RG McKail - Back Row – Third from Left***

In June 1910, Pep joined the team on a tour to Sydney where they played a match against a New South Wales League team and another against Sydney.



**North Adelaide Football Club  
SYDNEY, JUNE 1910**



**RG McKail – Third Row – Fourth from left**

**Back row:** W. Conway, G. Rager, J. McNamara, J. Burke, H. Brideoake, J. Burke, J. Dwyer, W. Harris, J. Bennett, J. Lawry, S. Sharp, A. Rosser, W. Tuckey

**Third row:** E. Johns snr, R. Burton, H. Pash, R. McKail, K. Steele, P. Russell, V. Leahy, A. Sugg, A. Ewers, F. Allen, F. Lewis

**Second row:** J. Turnbull, A. Daly, A. Klose, C. Drew, B. Lamprell (manager), B. Leahy (captain), C. Nitschke (patron), T. Leahy, S. Williams, C. Tuckey, H. Williams, G. Carty

**Front row:** N. Pash, D. O'Brien, M. Stevenson, F. LeMessurier, D. Nicholls, E. Jones

**Daily Herald (Adelaide, SA : 1910 - 1924) - 12 June 1912**

McKail played a magnificent game for North, and by general consent was given the palm as best of the 36. He is a wonderful worker, and is equally at home following or placed. He received generous applause for his fine play.

At the end of the 1912 season Pep joined the team on a visit to Broken Hill where they played against a team from the Barrier Ranges Association. The team also visited the mines and were entertained at an ice skating rink. The full team photo appeared in *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922) on the 28th September 1912, however the picture is quite dark so only the likeness of Pep is below.



**RG McKail**

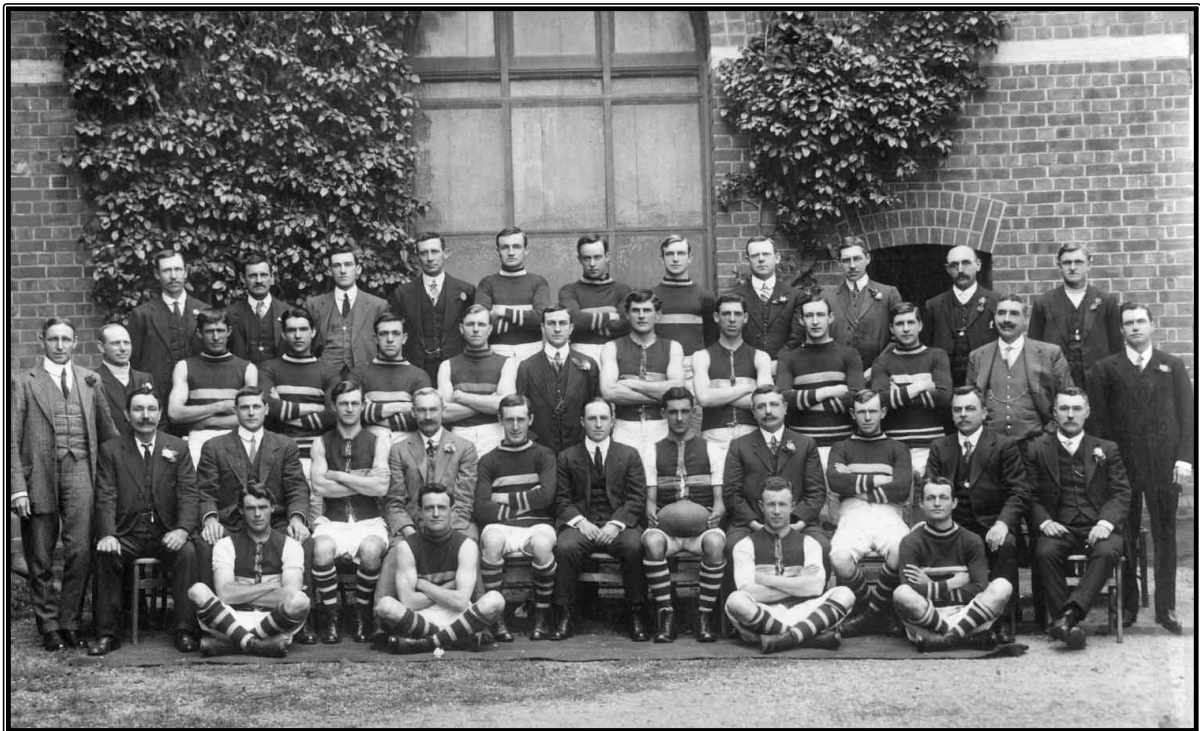
Before the match on Saturday the North Adelaide players met in the dressing-room and elected R. G. McKail to captain them for the season, in place of B. Leahy, who broke his leg a week previously. R. Le Messurier was appointed vice-captain.

McKail played a magnificent game for North, and by general consent was given the palm as best of the 36. He is a wonderful worker, and is equally at home following or placed. He received generous applause for his fine play.

In December 1913 at a smoke social given by the North Adelaide Football Club the years trophies were presented and a number of gifts presented including a travel bag given to Pep for efficient service.

## North Adelaide Football Club

### 1913 - RUNNERS-UP



***RG McKail (Captain) – Second Row – Seventh from Left***

**Back row:** W. Avery, J. Bruce (trainer), B. Moss (committee), J. Burke (trainer), G. Trescowthick, S. Seccombe, D. Cole, J. McNamara (trainer), S. Sharp (assist.secretary), T. Catlow, S. Hine (trainer)

**Third row:** A. Rosser (timekeeper), D. Gay (trainer), C. Tuckey, S. Wallis, J. Wainwright, R. Nixon, B. Lamprell (hon.secretary), T. Leahy (committee), A. Sandery, H. Teague, G. Pratten, A. Roberts (committee), T. Hodges (trainer)

**Second row:** F. Lewis (trainer), B. Leahy, A. Klose, C. Nitschke (patron), A. LeMessurier (vice-captain), C. Jessop (president), R. McKail (captain), J. Bennett (hon.treasurer), P. Lewis, W. Harris (committee), R. Burton (trainer),

**Front row:** K. Threadgold, D. O'Brien, F. LeMessurier, E. Johns (committee), L. Thomas - absent

## Other Sporting Activities

### *Cricket*

Pep played B Grade cricket in the South Australian Cricket Association for North Adelaide (now Prospect) in 1908/09, 1909/10 and finally the 1910/11 season.

Pep made a total of 93 runs in the 1910/11 season from 9 innings with a high score of 31 not out, he also played a minor role as a bowler taking 1 for 15.



NORTH ADELAIDE.						
Batting.						
	Inn.	N.O.	H.S.	Runs.	Avge.	
A. H. Sanders .. ..	9	—	94	317	35.22	
L. C. Bleechmore ..	8	1	65	229	28.71	
D. L. Giles .. ..	6	—	62	171	28.50	
K. Stuart .. ..	8	1	86*	197	28.14	
R. R. Cox .. ..	7	—	44	130	18.57	
S. Clutterbuck .. ..	6	1	60*	83	16.00	
E. W. Day .. ..	8	—	34	132	16.50	
C. Sanders .. ..	7	—	51	110	15.71	
R. G. McKail .. ..	9	2	31*	93	13.28	
A. L. Smith .. ..	5	—	26	64	12.80	
O. H. Finch .. ..	11	2	24	109	11.11	
F. V. Miers .. ..	10	2	21	85	10.62	
H. J. Williams .. ..	10	1	14	45	5	
Also batted—R. H. Botten, 2 inn. 41 r.; P. V. Tonkin, 1 inn. 0 r.; C. A. Willcox, 1 inn. 0 o.						
*Not out.						
Bowling.						
	Wkts.	Runs.	Avge.			
O. H. Finch .. ..	19	278	14.63			
K. Stuart .. ..	13	231	17.76			
A. L. Smith .. ..	18	237	13.72			
H. J. Williams .. ..	15	300	20			
R. R. Cox .. ..	8	213	26.50			
A. H. Sanders .. ..	18	408	27.56			
S. Clutterbuck .. ..	2	98	49			
Also bowled—C. A. Willcox one for 12, McKail one for 15, D. L. Giles one for 12.						

Pep also played cricket against a country team selected by Mr Frank McArdle, of Balaklava in March 1910.

*The Areas' Express (Booyopolee, SA : 1877 - 1948) - 11 March 1910*

**COUNTRY CRICKETERS IN TOWN.—As an adjunct to the visit to the Adelaide Show last week, Mr. Frank McArdle, of Balaklava, mustered a team of local cricketers to play a match against a team chosen by Mr. R. G. McKail. The result was a win for the countrymen. Scores.—McArdle's team, 372; Harley 108, Crouch 21, Clarke 42, M. Longmire 82, B. Longmire 41, G. Angel 62, McArdle 42 not out. McKail's team 226, G. Bloomfield 71, P. Desmazures 50 not out, Pincombe 28. Tiller three for 11.**

Even though he was enrolled for several years from 1911 and after completing the 1910/11 season with North Adelaide, he did not ever play cricket with Adelaide University. It appears as a Forestry student that his summer vacations may possibly have been spent in the South East of the State at the Mt Burr plantations where he would gain practical experience. He did however play cricket for several seasons (1913/14 and 1914/15) for Millicent in the South East of South Australia.

During the winter months he was back in Adelaide playing football again with North Adelaide.

In November 1909 Pep was involved in a demonstration of boxing by Mr Frank Charlton's School of Arms.

*The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931) - 1 November 1909*

## BOXING.

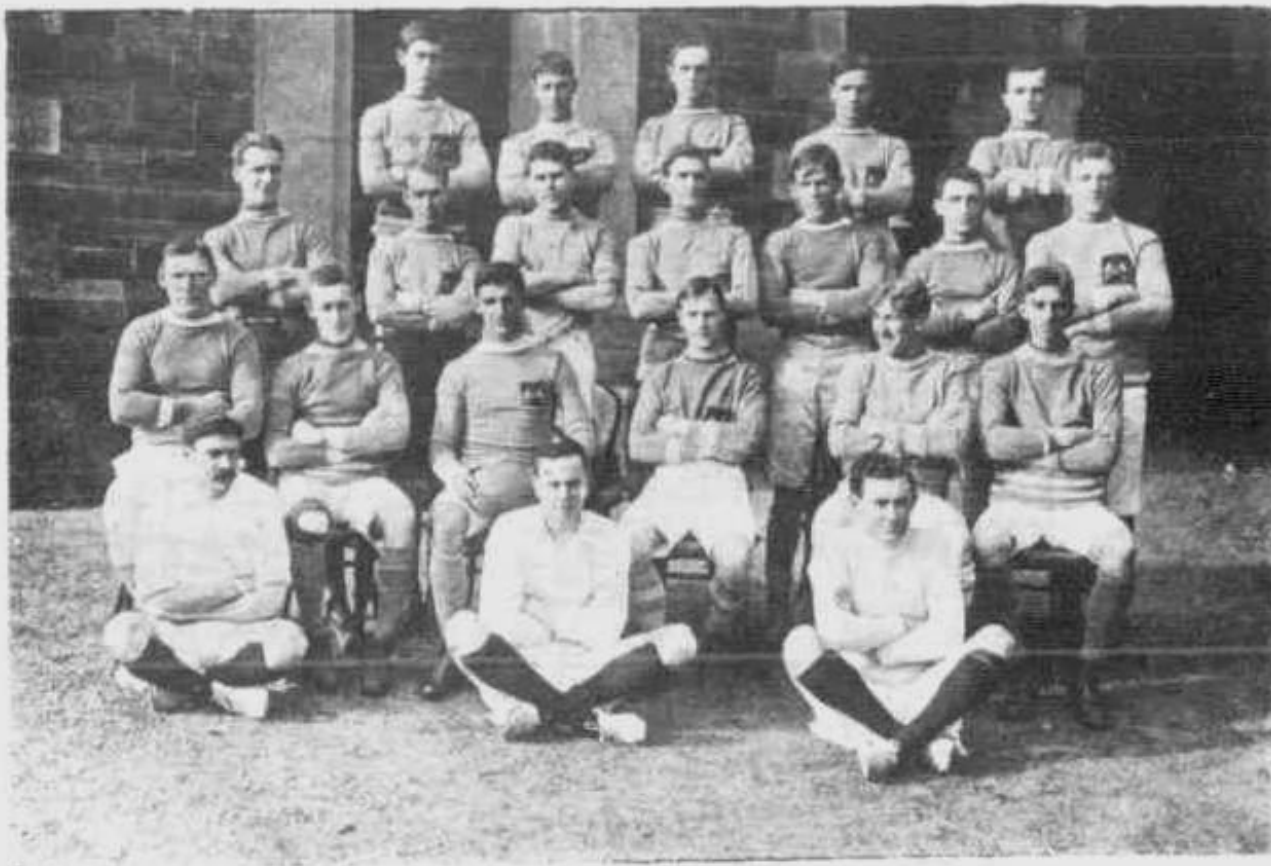
### BOXING DEMONSTRATION.

For several years past the annual demonstration of the pupils of Mr. Frank Charlton's School of Arms, Hould-street, has been held in the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium, but owing to the increased popularity of the yearly gathering the display was this year held in the main hall. There was a crowded audience, and the Premier (Hon. A. H. Peake) occupied the chair. The Mayor of Adelaide and several prominent citizens were also amongst the attendance. The programme was, as usual, an attractive one. Mr. Charlton has amongst his pupils students of different colleges and the University, and many of them are veritable sons of Anak, and worthy of the reputation which the Australian youth has in the old country for fine specimens of physical development. The demonstration was one of the best Mr. Charlton has yet given. The interest in the various events was well sustained, and there was not a dull moment in the proceedings. The audience were worked up to a pitch of great excitement at times when the young bloods hit hard, but always quite good-naturedly, and when an opponent managed to make a good drive on the solar plexus or did an unnercent that was equally effective the ladies and gentlemen present shrieked with laughter. The brothers Nash opened the programme with an illustration of the preliminary stages of the art of self-defence. The exercises which have to be gone through prior to perfection in boxing impressed the assemblage greatly, and they cheered the boys. Messrs. C. Dare and M. McCawley gave a vigorous display of boxing, and they were followed by Messrs. J. G. Seppelt and F. LeMessurier. The most willing "go" of the evening was between Messrs. F. Usher and R. O'Kelly. The two youths sparred so willingly and with such abandon that the assemblage broke into loud cheering when they had finished. Messrs. T. A. Shepley, K. C. Scott, R. G. McKail, R. B. Bronner, W. A. Ross, W. H. Nicholls, F. C. Powell, E. W. Forwood, C. T. Maddigan, R. Mowat, R. G. Bullock, M. Nash, and J. G. Christie also gave displays of boxing. The Aeolian Male Quartet (Messrs. W. Shields, W. Bailey, A. Behrndt, and E. Charlton, jun.) sang two humorous items, which were greatly appreciated. Miss Mayor and Signor Angelo Demodena played a banjo duet, "March Australia" (Demodena), excellently, and they had to respond to an imperative encore. Signor Demodena played on the mandoline, "Teddy Bear's picnic" (Bratton). The accompanists were Miss Cissy Parks and Mr. F. Crosby. Mr. Harold Du Bois was the secretary. Mr. G. Douglas was leader of the ring.

### *Old Scholars Football*

Pep represented St Peter's Old Scholars in six consecutive football matches against PAC Old Scholars from July 1908 to July 1913.

#### **St Peter's Old Scholars Team *Critic (Adelaide, SA : 1897-1924) 23 July 1913:***



#### **ST. PETER'S COLLEGE (OLD SCHOLARS) TEAM.**

Back Row—Messrs. Kobley, Stevenson, Thrush, Fraser, Kingsborough.  
Centre—Messrs. Wastell, Cummings, Taylor, Stidston, Nash, Kinnish,  
Smith.  
Front—Messrs. Dempster, LeMessurier, McKail, Badger, Stevens, Jose.  
Umpires—Messrs. Ninnes, Isaachsen, Tate.

***RG McKail – Front Row of Players– Third from Left***

### *Old Scholars Cricket*

Pep played in the 1908 and 1911 St Peter's Cricket matches playing for Old Scholars against the present boys.

### *Tennis*

In March 1911 Pep competed in the Men's Doubles Handicap Class II at the annual South Australian Lawn Tennis tournament.

## University

Pep commenced studying at the University of Adelaide In 1911. Pep, Alfred Leslie Pinches and Alfred Carl Schedlich were the first three students to enrol in a Forestry degree. He completed subjects at the University and at the School of Mines. In his first year he won prizes for both Botany and Forestry.

*Daily Herald (Adelaide, SA : 1910 - 1924) - 29 November 1911*

<b>Physiography (55a). — Division II. (in order of merit) — Goode, Kenneth Burden; Riddle, Arthur Raymond; McKail, Ronald George; Gault, Estelle Ruth. Division III. (in alphabetical order) — Madigan, Paul Edward; Pinches, Alfred Leslie, Schedlich, Alfred Karl.</b> <b>Geology. Part I. (55). — Division III. — Goode, Kenneth Burden.</b> <b>Mining Geology (61). — Division I. (in order of merit) — Pearson, Harold Ford; Basedow, Fritz Johannes.</b> <b>Botany (57). — Division II. (in order of merit) — Savage, Clarence Golding; McKail, Ronald George.</b> <b>Woods and Forests Department. — Preliminary Paper in Forestry. — Division II. — McKail, Ronald George. Division III. (in alphabetical order) — Pinches, Alfred Leslie; Schedlich, Alfred Carl.</b>
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Adelaide University Student Card for RG McKail

NAME AND ADDRESS <i>McKail, Ronald George</i>		<i>44 Moleworth St N. Ad.</i>		REGISTER NO. <i>2347</i>		GRADE <i>1st Year</i>				
COURSE <i>Sc Forestry</i>	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF MATRICULATION <i>Forestry</i>								
SENIOR <i>1906</i>		<i>Geom, Greek, Latin, Trig, Chem, Hcis, Arith &amp; Alg.</i>		<i>1905 Eng Lit etc</i>						
HIGHER <i>1909</i>		<i>Greek, Latin, Chem, Appl Maths Pure Maths.</i>		<i>1910 French</i>						
STATUS GRANTED <i>H.P. Pure Maths 1st Yr</i>										
YEAR	SUBJECT	RECEIPT	FIRST TERM	RECEIPT	SECOND TERM	RECEIPT	THIRD TERM	EXAMN.	RESULT	REMARKS
1911	Physiography	11309	7/-	11309	7/-	11309	7		N11. PII	
	Physics		35/-		35/-		35/-		N11. PII	ave.
	Forestry 1st Yr								N11. PII	
	Botany			11309	2/2/-	11309	2/2/-		N11. PII	
1912	Geology 1st Yr	136287	2/2/-						S12 PIII	
	Chemistry 1st Yr					11676	2/2/-		N12 PII	Lab changes 11/6. 5/9
	Biology						2/2/-		N12 PII	
	Forestry 2nd Yr						2/2/6		N13 PII	
	Forest Botany								N12 PII	
	Forest Mineralogy								N13 PI	
1913	Forestry 3rd year								N13 PII	
	Entomology								N13 PII	
	Forest Botany								N13 PII	71- Adm 7/10

NAME AND ADDRESS		H.H. Molesworth St. North Adelaide									
		ON WAR MEMORIAL									
YEAR	SUBJECT	RECEIPT	FIRST TERM	RECEIPT	TERM	RECEIPT	THIRD TERM	EXAMN	RESULT	REMARKS	
1910	Physical Chemistry	88381	1/1-	—					2/13 P	Sub. exp. 8/12	
	Organic "		2/1-	209153	2/1	189867	1/1-		NB P		
1912	Surveying								N12 P II		
B.Sc Degree Conferred May 1914											
Died - Great War. (H-Roll)											

Pep completed the subjects toward his degree in 1913 and in March 1914 he also passed the Senior Examination in French. When his degree was conferred in a special ceremony in May 1914 he was the first student admitted to a degree in forestry in Australia.

*The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931) - 14 May 1914*

The first student to obtain the diploma is Mr. R. G. McKail of the Mount Burr Forest. He was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Science in Forestry of the University of Adelaide on Wednesday. Mr. McKail is the first student admitted to the degree of forestry in Australasia. He has displayed commendable zeal during the three years study, and has applied himself to arduous work both in the University and on the forest reserves with energy and marked ability, and as a result he now possesses the hall-mark of the degree in forestry.

## University Sport

### Football

Pep was a member of the 1912 Adelaide University Intervarsity side who lost to Melbourne University at University Oval Adelaide in August that year. Pep was one of the best South Australian players in the match and he scored two goals (see below).

*Daily Herald (Adelaide, SA : 1910 - 1924) 13 August 1912*

**FOOTBALL**  
—♦—

**INTER-VARSITY MATCH.**  
**A WIN FOR MELBOURNE.**

A couple of hundred enthusiasts gathered at the University Oval yesterday afternoon to witness the match between the Melbourne and Adelaide University eighteens, and they watched an interesting contest. The ground was in good condition, but a sharp shower which fell during the half-time interval made the turf a trifle slippery. Although the Melbourne men was not represented by their best team, they proved too strong for the local students, and they had a comfortable margin at the finish. The visitors were a speedy lot of players, and they proved that they possessed plenty of dash. In the air they had the better of the deal, and every man was able to kick far and accurately. The Adelaide players put up a good game, and they pushed their opponents much more closely than the scores indicate. They were very solid, but much too slow, and time after time they were beaten because the Melbourne men possessed more dash. The local team had to play a man-of-war during the greater part of the final term, as Blacket received a nasty cut on the head, and was compelled to leave the field. Carter was central umpire.

The opening quarter was splendidly contested, and was of a seesaw nature, first one team scoring and then the other. The Adelaide forwards made full use of their opportunities, and owing to the accuracy of their goalgetters the locals were ahead at the change of ends. The second term was in Melbourne's favor, and they had the bulk of the play although at half-time they were only 4 points to the good. In the third quarter the visitors got into their stride, and they went right ahead. Play became crowded, and it was a common thing to see half a dozen men scrambling round the ball. In the final bout Melbourne continued to prevail, and at the finish they held a 35 points' advantage.

The winner's best players were:—Gray, Martin, Kelly, Corbett, Doubleday, Park, and Woods; while the most prominent South Australians were Williams, McKail, Robinson, Cauer, Willemore, Hurley, Cole, Schedlich, Le Messurier. The goalkeepers were:—Melbourne—Park 6, Nicholson 3, Milne 2, Willis 2, and Martin. Adelaide—McKail 2, Le Messurier 2, Wilton 2, Williams, and Schedlich.

Scores:—

First Quarter.
Melbourne, 3 goals 2 behinds.
Adelaide, 4 goals.
Second Quarter.
Melbourne, 6 goals 5 behinds.
Adelaide, 6 goals 1 behind.
Third Quarter.
Melbourne, 8 goals 5 behinds.
Adelaide, 6 goals 4 behinds.
Fourth Quarter.
Melbourne, 14 goals 10 behinds.
Adelaide, 8 goals 11 behinds.

At night the Victorians were tendered a dinner in the Aurora Hotel, and the opportunity was taken to congratulate them on their win.



Pep continued to play league football for North Adelaide while a student at Adelaide University however after graduation he moved to Millicent to commence his career and had to retire from league football.

In late July 1915, Pep travelled to Adelaide to enlist for World War I. It is possible that Pep played one game for the Adelaide University Football Club in the Amateur League on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1915, as he was listed among the 21 players available for the match.

*The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931) - 31 July 1915*

**University versus Kingswood.—University (from)**  
**—Bawden, Carthew, Colman, Gurner, Kneebone,**  
**Mengelsen, Moyes, McKail, Northey, Pellew (cap-**  
**tain), Piper, Phillips, Rayner (2), Stremmel, Ste-**  
**vens, Thrush, Williams (vice-captain), Laurie,**  
**North, Power.**

*Boat*

Pep was a member of the Adelaide University Boat Club from 1911. He competed in the Henley-on Torrens carnival in December 1911. He was stroke for the Science (Forestry) boat at the University Schools Races in July 1913.

**Forestry Career**

On completing his studies, Pep became the Assistant Forester with the Woods and Forest Department at the Mount Burr Forest Reserve near Millicent.

Through sport, Pep quickly became a member of the Millicent community. He played cricket for Millicent from January 1914 and became Secretary of the Millicent Cricket Club by November 1914. Pep spoke on behalf of the Club when they farewelled their captain Mr ML Gurr when he enlisted in March 1915.

*The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 27 January 1914*

**CRICKET.**

**Millicent v. Hatherleigh.—**These teams will meet on Saturday next at Millicent. The home team will be composed of R. G. McKail, J. A. S. Williams, L. Gurr, L. Martin, J. A. Sullivan, H. G. Armitage, J. Wright, F. Tilemann, P. McGregor, F. Webb, J. Laurie and W. Letschke.

In the winter of 1914 Pep played football for the Millicent Warriors assisting the team in winning its first premiership in the Drainage Area Football Association competition.

**The Premier Team.**—It is interesting to review the performances of the Warrior team during the past season. Up to the present the central representation has been a "back number," but they have plodded on, and stuck together, determined each year to go one better in the next. Their hopes are now realised, for they have been declared premiers of the Drainage Area Football Association for 1914, with more points in their favor than any local team who has yet won that distinction. Each of the other competing teams for years past has hung its name to the winds, likewise the colors, but the Warriors have always been warriors in the proper sense of the word, and the old familiar colors of to-day were those used in the days when "Dinny" Boase was "commander-in-chief." The Warriors have been fortunate this year in more respects than one. A more enthusiastic secretary than Alex. Campbell would be hard to find. M. L. Gurr was elected captain of the team this season, and his instruction and superior oversight has been a big factor in the success of 1914. R. G. McKail has also done good service as Gurr's assistant. But all the experience that could be brought to bear would be of little value without men of grit. Every playing member of the Warrior team deserves the highest credit. They played gentlemanly football throughout, and their conduct on the field gave spectators something to admire. President Grigg is an enthusiastic leader, and his motor car has been requisitioned on many occasions to convey players to the field in matches away from home. The season opened at Tantanoola on May 23, when the Warriors inflicted a crushing defeat on Tigertown. They then repeated the dose in a match against the Blues. The latter beat them by a small margin in the next meet, and from then on they never took defeat. Of the last three matches with the Blues they won two and drew one. Thus the Warriors scored 22 points, Blues 18 and the Wanderers 4.

In addition to football and cricket, Pep was a member of the Millicent Tennis Club and he competed in the men's handicap singles in March 1915 and won his semi-finals match but lost the final to Mr WS Hobart.

*The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 9 March 1915*

**TENNIS**

**Millicent Club Tournaments.**—In the second round of the men's handicap singles, W. A. Lawrie (owes three-sixths 15) has beaten T. P. Stuckey (receives 15). W. S. Hobart (owes 40) beat L. W. McMahon (owes 30), 5-6, 6-2, 6-1. F. J. McLaughlin (owes three-sixths 15) beat M. L. Gurr (owes three-sixths 15), 6-3, 6-5. In the semi-finals, R. G. McKail (owes 30) beat F. J. McLaughlin, 6-2, 6-3.

Pep was a member of the Millicent Caledonian Society's and he competed in the handicap Hurdles, 130 yards, at the Society's Highland Gathering which was held on Easter Monday, April 5, 1915. He was also an active member of the Millicent Rifle Club.

Pep's forest diary is held by the University of Adelaide library (MSS 634.9 M153 see <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/mckail/>)

## Ronald George McKail

### *Forest Diary*

MSS 634.9 M153

### Biographical

Born in Albany, Western Australia in 1890, Ronald George McKail, went to school at St Peter's College Adelaide, South Australia. He went on to study Forestry at the University of Adelaide, becoming the first graduate of forestry. In 1915 he enlisted in the Military and embarked from Adelaide, South Australia, on board HMAT A30 Borda on 11 January 1916.

He was wounded and killed in action in Pozieres, Somme Sector, France, on the 6th of August 1916.



### Contents

#### Diary. Illustrated. 1v.

Diary contains inscription in front: "This is the forest diary of the Late Ronald George McKail, who was the first graduate of Adelaide University in forestry. Ronald George McKail fell in action in France after having served in the Australian Expeditionary Forces in Egypt, etc."

#### 2 panorama plates.

Stored with MSS oversize material.

## World War I

Pep and Peter Sutherland left Millicent on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1915 to proceed to Adelaide to enlist.

### *The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 2 July 1915*

**Volunteers from Millicent.**—Private L. Loudon will be returning to Millicent to-day, to say farewell to his local friends prior to leaving for the front. He will go back to Adelaide on Monday. On Saturday the members of the Caledonian society will entertain him at a farewell social at the Grand hotel, when all friends of the guest will be welcome. Should any other volunteers return with Private Loudon, they will also be entertained.—Messrs R. G. McKail and Peter Sutherland will proceed to Adelaide to-day to enlist. Before the departure of the train this afternoon, their friends will meet at the Millicent hotel to partake of a parting glass with them.—Lance-cpl. M. L. Gurr was too ill to leave with his troop when the last reinforcements left Adelaide. He is now at the Keswick hospital, suffering from rheumatic fever, and will probably be confined there for several weeks.

### *Border Watch (Mount Gambier, SA : 1861 - 1954) - 7 July 1915*

On Friday afternoon, at the Millicent Hotel, Messrs. P. Sutherland, R. G. McKail, and Garnet Haines, three of our young men who are going to Adelaide to join the expeditionary forces, were entertained. Mr. F. Kayser presided. In the forenoon, at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Kayser, Mr. McKail and several of his bachelor friends were entertained at lunch.

Pep commenced the enlistment process on the 9<sup>th</sup> July and enlisted on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1915 with Service Number 4174. He was 25 years and 4 months old, 5 foot 9½ inches tall and weighed 159 lbs. Pep had a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair. His mother was listed as his Next-of-kin.

From the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1915 to 31 August 1915 Pep attended Non Commissioned Officers School. He was appointed a Private in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion from the 1<sup>st</sup> September to the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1915 then an acting Sergeant from 16<sup>th</sup> November 1915 with the 13<sup>th</sup> reinforcement of the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

The North Adelaide Football Club held a smoke social at the North Adelaide Institute on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1915 to honour Pep and other A and B grade players who were about to go into camp.

Mail (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1954), Saturday 9 October 1915, page 7

## FAREWELL SOCIAL TO PATRIOTIC RED AND WHITES.

The members and supporters of the North Adelaide A and B Football Clubs rolled up in full force to a smoke social tendered to Messrs. R. G. McKail, I. Sneyd, G. Pratten, J. Ashhurst, W. Hamilton, J. Craig, E. King, J. McKenzie, and J. Earle, past and present members of the club, at the North Adelaide Institute. These players are now in camp, and will shortly leave for the front. The hall was tastefully decorated with flowers and a liberal display of bunting. Mr. C. L. Jessop (president of the club) presided, and was supported by Ald. Isaacs and Downs. Ald. Cohen and Mr. G. E. Yates, M.H.R., wrote regretting their inability to be present, and wished the boys the best of luck and a safe return. The proceedings opened with the toast of the King, which was enthusiastically honoured. The toast of "Our Boys for the Front" was submitted by the chairman, who in a stirring speech said that while they were in one sense far removed from the terrible struggle they were in another sense in the midst of it. They were removed from it because our great British Navy, aided by our own Australian ships, had not only rid the seas of those German maritime pests the Emden and her confederates, but had also bottled up the main body of their fleet. That they were in the midst of the struggle was brought forcibly home to them that night when they gathered to say farewell to comrades who were going to the front to risk wounds, disease, and death itself. They were going because they were citizens of the Great British Empire, who hated tyranny, trickery, deceit, and oppression. He was reminded of a speech delivered by that great English statesman, the late Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, who did so much to bind the British Empire together. In the course of that speech, delivered so long ago as 1895, he uttered some words which were almost startlingly prophetic. He said:—"This great British Empire of ours is bound together by a thread apparently so slender that even a breath could sever it, but it is a thread capable of carrying a force of sentiment which would yet prove a potent factor in the history of the world." How true those words were to-day. This thread of sen-

timent had drawn all her children to the help of the old motherland in her time of stress and struggle, and who would say that such help would not prove the turning point in the great struggle? The fact that their guests were members of the old red and whites was sufficient guarantee that they would play the game nobly and well. They had played it nobly and well on the football field and would do so again on Gallipoli's heights. They had fought like sportsmen for the old red and whites, and would fight like heroes for the old red, white, and blue. They were men of proved courage and trained athletes. Wellington was reported to have said that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. Might not the victory which would free the world from a hypocritical tyrant well be won on the playing fields of the British Empire? (Applause.)

The toast was supported by Ald. Isaacs and Messrs. C. H. Nitaclike, G. McEwin, H. E. Wadey, and J. F. Bennett, and drunk with great enthusiasm. Each of the soldiers was presented with a money belt. The toast "North Adelaide A and B Football Clubs" was proposed by Mr. J. Evans, and responded to by Mr. R. Burton, who mentioned that in addition to those they were honouring that evening several of their members were already serving their King and country. He referred to Drs. E. B. Jones, F. N. Le Messurier, C. F. Drew, and Ken Steele, and Messrs. Tom Sadler, W. Barnes, P. Russell, L. Johns, Elbridge (2), S. Shilum, L. Sandery, and Robley. A capital musical programme was carried out, and much enjoyed by all present, those contributing to the evening's entertainment being Messrs. P. Rosman, Dan O'Brien, H. King, G. Whittle, R. H. Grenfell, and Harry Berde. It was unfortunate that the secretary of the club (Mr. C. Young) was prevented from being present through having met with a bicycle accident. In his absence the duties of secretary devolved upon Mr. W. E. Harris, who worked hard, and the success of the gathering was largely due to his efforts.



On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1915 Pep was present when the "Gawler Races" were held at Victoria Park due to the requirements of martial law.

Pep returned to Millicent on the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> December 1915 to spend some of his final leave with friends. He also spent some time at Pt Elliot, returning to Adelaide on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1916.

***The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 10 December 1915***

**Volunteers.**—Sergeant R. G. McKail came to Millicent on Wednesday night, to spend his final leave, and will return to Adelaide on Saturday. He expects to leave Australia before Christmas. At 8.30 to-night, at the Grand hotel, all friends of Sergt. McKail are invited to meet for the purpose of bidding him goodbye. Privates Dean, Inns, Serle, and Cunningham are either in the town or were at Millicent during the week, and if it is possible for any of them to attend the farewell gathering to-night they will be cordially welcome.

***The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 14 December 1915***

**A Soldier Farewelled.**—At the Grand hotel on Friday night a number of residents entertained Sergt. R. G. McKail, who returned to Adelaide on the following morning, and expects to leave Australia within a few days. Captain T. F. Stuckey presided. After the customary loyal toast, the chairman proposed the health of Sergt. McKail, and his remarks were supplemented by Messrs M. Williams, J. McLaughlin, M. White, P. Aitken, F. Kayser, A. Jamieson, W. Redford, W. S. Hobart, and J. C. Capper, and the Rev. W. A. Terry. Before the toast was honored, the chairman made the guest the recipient of a case of pipes and a wallet containing several sovereigns, with which he was asked to equip himself with useful articles that would serve to remind him of his friends at Millicent. Sergt. McKail replied in an interesting speech, and gave a humorous account of his experiences in camp. During the evening songs were rendered by Messrs P. Donlon, W. S. Hobart, W. Redford, and W. Spehr.



***RG McKail***

Pep embarked from Adelaide, South Australia, on board HMAT A30 *Borda* on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1916 and arrived at Zeitoun, Egypt and reverted to the rank of Private when taken on the strength of the 48<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916 he was made an acting Corporal and on the same dates an acting Sergeant. He left Alexandria, Egypt on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles, France on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1916.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1916 a rumour spread around Millicent that Pep had been killed in action, on that same day a undated letter from Pep was printed in the '*The South Eastern Times*' (Millicent, SA : 1906 – 1954) . The letter details Pep's experiences travelling through France and his time in Egypt.

***The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 29 August 1916***

**No Further Particulars.—We have had no confirmation of the reported death in France of Sergt. R. G. McKail. There is reason to hope that there is no truth in the report circulated so widely at Millicent last week.**

***The Mail (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1954) 2 September 1916***

**Sgt. R. G. McKail, who is at the front, is reported to be well.**



Pep's letter (see below) may have been one of the last he wrote as despite the hopes and reports that Pep was at the front and well, Pep had been killed in action on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1916.

## A JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE.

### MILLICENT SOLDIERS' IMPRESSIONS.

An undated letter, evidently written from Northern France, has reached us from another Millicent officer, who writes:—

"The change from Egypt to France is one of extremes. In the former land not a blade of grass, not a drop of rain blessed the land; here it is one never-ending sea of green and incessant rain, and as cold as charity. To come from a land as hot as the hells of hell to this chilly atmosphere is rather sudden, and very productive of husky throats, snivelling noses, and cold feet. The latter I attribute to the dampness underfoot, although if it were dry the sound of heavy artillery fire quite handy would produce a similar result. This is the nearest we have been to the firing line, and I don't suppose it will be long before we are doing our bit, although the idea of dodging the 'iron foundries' they fling at each other is not too savoury to a novice, and we in this battalion are all more or less novices at the game. The village where we are billeted was overrun by the Germans in the early part of the war. The very house where we are billeted was visited, and had to provide food and wine for them. The inhabitants ought to consider themselves lucky at being let off so lightly, especially the female portion. In a paddock attached to this homestead is a little fenced-in grave, with a tombstone, upon which is engraved the following:—'S. B. Armistead, 11th Hussars, killed near here October, 1914. I hereby declare that the best fun I have had I owe to horse and hound.' I can conjure a picture of a don't-care devil of a fellow from that epitaph. Other little graves can be seen with simple wooden crosses. Our trip through France on our way to this part was absolutely an eyecopener—as far as scenery goes, especially in the south of France. I have read somewhere of the smiling fields of France. That expression exactly sums it up in a nutshell. The fields, houses, rivers, etc., all seem to smile at one, while the women make no pretence of it. After leaving Egypt we experienced beautiful weather and calm seas, with hardly a ripple, and never a sign of a submarine, although divers rumors were current. Marseilles, considering it is a seaport, is a most picturesque and beautiful spot. Approaching it one sails below tall cliffs, towering up above the sea, and running sheer down into it, and pass white, waxy-looking rocks that jut out from the level of the

rocks that jut out from the level of the sea. Viewed from the sea, the land looks a mass of serrated peaks, and the most unlikely spot for lovely scenery and verdant pastures. One is still gazing at these cliffs, when an island, with a round-towered building over its whole area, is seen in a bay. All eyes centre on this, and gradually the boat swings round, when the outskirts of Marseilles come into view. At first one cannot see the shipping, which is hidden behind a promontory, which is covered with green trees and red-roofed houses, and looks like a bit of Sydney harbor transported. As we round this point, the shipping is seen—at least hundreds of masts and funnels, that show up behind a high stone pier. This pier runs right round the wharfs and moles, and forms an admirable protection against the weather. The moles and wharfs, and hangars on the moles are all kept scrupulously tidy, as compared with harbors in South Australia. The whole city is tucked away at the foot of high hills. We lay in mid-stream for a day, and immediately on disembarkation were hustled into a train. When I say train, I don't mean a self-respecting passenger train, but consisting of one long line of trucks, with this written up on the side—'Hommes 30-40, Chevaux (en long)—8.' These trucks were about 18ft. x 8ft., so you can quite imagine how we slept at night. If you have ever noticed how neat and comfortable sardines look in a tin, you can form some idea how we were placed, only minus the neatness and comfortableness. A pair of hob-nailed boots in the pit of one's stomach on one side, and ditto in the small of the back, are not the best of bedmates, especially if one wants to turn. Going out from Marseilles, we passed through a series of tunnels, one of which seemed an enormous length, and took us fully five minutes to go through it. In between the tunnels we get a fine view of the harbor, with its shipping and business centres, and tall chimneys, denoting the factories. On the borders of this, the red of the Marseilles tiles, and the green of the natural timber that runs

right down into the clear blue of the sea, present a picture that will not easily be forgotten. In the centre of the harbor, on the promontory that runs out into the sea, and on the top of a high hill, is a church with a high steeple, upon which is a golden figure, that shines out in the sunlight like a blaze of light. After leaving the hills just adjacent to Marseilles, the railway travels along the slope of the hills, and down below we see a patchwork of crops and vines, with a little wood at odd intervals. Every road shows up white, and is bordered on each

shows up white, and is bordered on each side by long lines of trees. At the first stop we had tea, and also our first conversation with French women. This was rather a novelty, not only on account of the complete absurdity of it—for neither party understood the other—but also it marked the first talk since leaving Australia that we have had with a white woman, one that we could feel was of our own flesh and blood. These women were raking in an honest penny or two by selling chocolates, cakes, etc., seemingly at a healthy price, too, as far as our knowledge of French money went. The next morning provided the most wonderful scenery that ever one could wish to see. We travelled up the Rhone Valley, past Valence, across the river Isere, through Vienne, and up to Lyons. On our right the Rhone was in sight the whole way, its sides bordered by willows and silver poplars. Just beyond these trees farms with the houses all two-storeyed, gable-roofed, and marseilles-tiled, and the open fields of vineyards and crops, occupy the flats. As a background, the hills slope straight up and away into the distance. These hills in Australia would be turned down by the average cockey as 'mafish,' as far as cropping or cultivation was concerned. ('Mafish' is an Egyptian word for 'no good,' that has gained great favor among Australian troops.) However, there is not a square yard that is not growing something, and it is a truly remarkable sight to crane one's neck to look up a hill, and then to see on top and up the sides vines, vegetables, crops, and fruit trees, with paths running zigzag up to the summit. Moreover, it is not one hill only, nor several hills, but every hill, and far away in the distance one can see hills similarly cropped. The most pleasant part of it to me is the little woodlet that every farm tends with the utmost care. It shows what their opinion is of the necessity of growing timber, for they do not mind putting a fair portion of their best land under forest, and judging by the result, it must be a profitable concern to them. This class of country continues up to Lyons, where we cross the Rhone and travel up along the river Saone. Lyons is a large manufacturing city, where we were accorded a great welcome from the crowd, who waved and threw kisses (a great habit of theirs—lack of closer contact leaves me guessing whether their actual kissing is done as elegantly). I must confess that it was with great regret we left the Rhone Valley, with its silver stream amid red and green, with little clustered villages, each with its spired church nestled away in the valleys, and with its hill crowned by some ancient ruin of either a church or a castle. But the river Saone, with its surroundings, provided equally fine scenery. Not a square yard of the

surroundings, provided equally fine scenery. Not a square yard of the whole country seems to be barren. Crops wonderfully even, vineyards wonderfully fresh-looking, with not a weed to be seen, fruit trees laden with fruit, long lines of planes and elms, all testify to the prosperity of the land; while crowds of rosy-cheeked kids testify to the fecundity of the 'genus homo Francais.' In Australia we held an opinion that the birthrate of France was nearly a thing of the past. It may be so in towns, but in the country it seems to be the reverse. While talking of French kids, the most amazing characteristic of them is their cleanliness. From Marseilles to past Paris I never saw a dirty child, and this was commented on by nearly all of us. Neatly brushed hair, clean faces and hands, tidy clothes and boots, was always the case. This fact reflects great credit on their womenfolk, for in these times of stress money must be scarce, and the work of a woman great. In the fields, no young or middle-aged were seen, old men and mere youngsters doing the jobs in some cases, while in others whole droves of women, with big white sunbonnets, could be seen toiling. One's heart went out to these women, especially to the old women, who would stop and wave and throw kisses to us in a graceful way. There is no mistake about the elegance of the French race, for no action of theirs appears awkward, but done in such a manner that one immediately feels respect for them, and this, too, from an Australian soldier who can hardly be classed as a great respecter of persons. Through the gorgeous scenery of the Saone, through chalons near Saone, we came to Dijon, a large city, with chimney stacks bristling all over it, like bristles on a hedgehog. On the station at Dijon there were some French ladies, who dealt out some refreshments, and some lassies, who were after 'Australian Rising Suns,' as souvenirs. These lassies were winsome, and thus had no difficulty in getting what they were after. One was smoking a fag, with the utmost sangfroid; and that, too, under a maternal wing. This custom hardly appealed to us, owing, no doubt, to its strangeness. A few young ladies affect the fag habit, but I have never seen one yet smoking in the main street. The next part of the journey was missed, owing to the blandishments of the goddess of sleep. We became easy victims to her charms, despite the limited bed space. Much to our disappointment, we did not go through Paris, but skirted round to Versailles. On our way we passed through the forest of Thalon, consisting chiefly of hardwoods, such as oak, beech, maple, and chestnut. A hardwood forest at the best of times is a rather tame affair, such as you know, but I feel certain that apart from its lack of



neatness, your hypercritical eye (when occasion demands it) can find no fault. The broad leaves that these trees possess make a veritable roof of leaves, and the floor looks moist and cool. After Versailles, I will leave you guessing our direction and destination, for fear the censoring officer takes an objection. The north of France hardly appealed to us like the south of France. It looks cold, and feels it, too. The people do not possess the same open welcome demeanor, nor do they exhibit the same interest in us as Australians, much, as you may surmise, to our regret. Soldiers of all nationalities must be a very common occurrence in these parts. The French soldier, as we have seen him, looks a solid antagonist. Dressed in their French grey uniforms, with helmet, they look well, and the more one sees of them, the less does he reckon the Germans' chance is worth. By all reports, the Russians seem to be doing well on the eastern front. Whether it is one of their customary sprints, or whether it will be sustained, remains to be seen. Upon its success depends the duration of the war. Germany and Austria, after two years of fighting, cannot possibly have a very large reserve to fling from one part to another without weakening her forces on the front from which they were taken, and judging from her repeated attempts and failures to press through, once she does that she is a gone coon. Still, she may have a few cards up her sleeve yet. I will never regret my trip through France, and one can feel the spirit that must be moving the French armies, for a man that would not fight for such a land as this would not be worth his salt. Altogether they are a most lovable people, amongst whom one feels at home at once,

not a stranger in a strange land, as he did in Egypt. The very look of the Egyptian, although all smiles and sincerity for the soldier, inspires no feeling of confidence, but rather one of mistrust. A 'Gyp, I reckon, given a quiet place, no fear of the presence of soldiers, and a sharp knife, would soon provide the amen to a fellow's life. At the best they are a crawling, snivelling race. The country homestead where we are billeted is not too inspiring, for the methods of sanitation are peculiar. A square courtyard at the rear, with buildings round it, the dwelling one side, stables, cowbyre, barns, etc., form the other side. In the centre of the yard is a large pit of straw, water, refuse, etc., all in a very decomposed state, and can hardly be classed as healthy. This dirty state may be due to the absence of the men at the front. Every homestead is

characterised by the number of outbuildings, which, I suppose, are for the housing of stock during the winter months. The milk separator is worked by a dog, who is tied up inside a large, circular, upright wheel, in such a manner that he has to keep running, and so rotates the wheel, which is shafted into the separator. The use of dogs in this way is common in this district. Remember me to all and sundry at Millicent, especially to the boss. Len. Gurr is knocking round these parts somewhere, but I have not had the luck to strike him yet. I believe his battalion has been going a bit, and I have been wondering how he has been getting on."

## Death

Sadly for Pep's family the rumours of his passing were correct. Ronald George "Pep" McKail was killed in action on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1916 at Pozieres, Somme Sector, France. "He led B. Company of the 48th Battalion to the trenches in the vicinity of windmill Pozieres 6th August 1916, he gained his objective and then had his leg blown off nearly at the thigh and in this condition for 2 hours maintained command of his men cheerfully ignoring his dreadful wound, he cheered up his wounded and dying."

A letter received in Adelaide on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917 gives an account that Pep was wounded in the calf but had the wound bound and continued fighting but he was shot in the leg again and succumbed to his wounds the next morning.

Pep has no known grave and is commemorated at the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, France. He left an estate values at £1,360.

Letters from soldiers at the front, delivered in Adelaide on New Year's Day, brought new and interesting details concerning the fate of deceased heroes. One relating to the late Sgt. R. G. McKail is as follows:—"Pep McKail had bad luck. I met a chap who knows him, and was with him when he fell. He told me how game 'Pep' was. The calf of one of his legs was shot off. Glancing at the injured member, Pep said, 'That's nothing. I've still got another leg.' He had it bandaged up, and, notwithstanding the fearful injury, was prepared to go on, when another shot hit the wounded leg again, and he died next morning, game to the last. He has passed with honours. He was admired by his men more than can be expressed in words." A reference to the late Sgt. McKail, who was the first forestry student in Australia to secure the B.Sc. Degree in Forestry, appeared, with his photograph, in *The Register* of September 9 last.

"LATE SGT. R. G. McKAIL."

*The Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1923) - 8 September 1916*

LATE SGT. R. G. McKAIL.  
Mrs. E. L. McKail, of North Adelaide, has been notified that her son, Sgt. Ronald C. McKail, was killed in action in France on August 6. Sgt. McKail was born in Western Australia, but at an early age came to South Australia with his family. He was educated at St. Peter's College, and after leaving that institution joined the staff of the Eastern Extension Cable Company, in which he served for several years. When the Government instituted a Forestry Department at the University, he was one of three successful applicants chosen for the course, which he completed in three years. At the same time, he gained his B.Sc. Degree. When he enlisted he was Assistant Forester at the Mount Burr Forest Reserve, Millicent. While at college Sgt. McKail was keenly interested in all sports, and captained the teams at both football and cricket in the intercollegiate matches. He will be remembered by many as a member of the North Adelaide football team, of which he was captain during his last season before leaving the city.

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THE LATE SGT. R. G. McKAIL.

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**"WOODS AND FORESTS DEPARTMENT SUFFERS A LOSS."**  
*Daily Herald (Adelaide, SA : 1910 - 1924) - -11 September 1916*

**WOODS AND FORESTS DEPARTMENT  
SUFFERS A LOSS.**

Mrs. E. L. McKail, of North Adelaide, has received advice of the death of her son (Sergeant R. G. McKail), who has been killed in action in France. So far as is known this is the first representative of the Woods and Forests Department who has paid the supreme sacrifice in the war. Sergeant McKail, at the time of enlisting for active service with the expeditionary forces, was assistant forester at the Mount Burr Forest Reserve, near Millicent, in the South-East. His prospects in connection with forestry were of a promising character. He was the first student admitted to the degree of bachelor of science in forestry of the University of Adelaide, and obtained his diploma in May of 1914. There was also a special interest in the fact that Mr. McKail was the first student admitted to the degree of forestry in Australasia. He displayed commendable zeal in pursuing his studies during the three years' course, and performed arduous labors not only in the University, but also in the practical work carried out on the various forest reserves. Young men acquiring a thorough knowledge of the principles of sciences relating to forests and tree culture, generally, must, as their experiences extend and mature, become an asset of more than ordinary value to the Commonwealth. He was an enthusiast in all manly sports, and during his college career he filled the position of captain of the teams representing St. Peter's College in the annual intercollegiate cricket and football matches. Later he captained the North Adelaide football team during the last season prior to removing to the country. Keen regret is felt by a large circle of friends, and much sympathy goes out to the bereaved.

*The South Eastern Times (Millicent, SA : 1906 - 1954) - 12 September 1916*

<p><b>For King and Country.</b>—Three weeks ago it was reported at Millicent that Sergt. R. G. McKail had been killed in action in France. Enquiries were instituted in Adelaide, but failed to elicit any confirmation of the report. The news tinged many Millicent homes with sadness, and there was keen relief when it was made to appear that rumour had been false. That the intelligence was correct, however, was evidenced by the following paragraph in Saturday's "Register," which was accompanied by a photograph of the deceased soldier:—  <b>"Mrs E. L. McKail, of North Adelaide, has been notified that her son, Sergt. R. G. McKail, was killed in action in France on August 6. Sergt. McKail was born in Western Australia, but at an early age came to South Australia with his family. He was educated at St. Peter's College, and after leaving that institution joined the staff of the Eastern Extension Cable Company, in which he served for several years. When the government instituted a Forestry Department at the University, he was one of three successful applicants chosen for the course, which he completed in three years. At the same time he gained his B.Sc. Degree. When he enlisted he was assistant forester at the Mount Burr forest reserve, Millicent. While at college Sergt. McKail was keenly interested in all sports and captained the teams at both football and cricket in the intercollegiate matches. He will be remembered by many as a member of the North Adelaide football team, of which he was captain during his last season before leaving the city."</b></p>	<p>Sergt. McKail was 28 years of age. Although he was a "bird of passage" so far as residence in the Millicent district was concerned, residents here will mourn his untimely death because of their knowledge of his fine personality and the splendid physical and mental qualities that would have lifted him into a prominent and highly useful position in life. A few hours before the news of his death first reached Millicent a long, undated letter, written by him in France, was published in these columns, and few of his friends had any difficulty in identifying the author of it. The manner of his death would not be hard to guess. A born leader of men and quite devoid of fear, he would be in "the thick of things" at the first command to attack the enemy. Strangely enough, Sergt. McKail seemed to know before he left Millicent that the war was to mean the end of all things mundane to him. He was in no hurry to volunteer, but when his own alert brain had shown him that the hour had come when men must go out to fight, then he took the momentous step and went forward without flinching. Such men need no tombstone epitaph. Sergt. McKail's is inscribed indelibly in the minds of all who were privileged to know him intimately.</p>
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"TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT McKAIL."

*Daily Herald (Adelaide, SA : 1910 - 1924) 13 September 1916*

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT McKAIL.

Mrs. McKail, mother of Sergeant R. G. McKail, who was killed in action on August 8, has received the following letter from the Attorney-General, Hon. J. H. Vaughan:—"Will you please accept my deep and heartfelt sympathy with you in the great blow that has fallen upon you in the death of your son at the front. I can only speak of him as an officer of the Forest Department, but when the sad news reached me to-day that he had fallen it came to me with the shock that one feels when one loses a friend. Before he left South Australia he had, by his splendid devotion to the work of which he had decided to give his life and energies, shown such qualities as marked him for one of the highest positions in the Forest Service. Mr. Corbin, only little more than a week ago, forwarded to me a long and most interesting letter from him, which showed how keen an interest he still took in forestry, even when he was facing the dangers and hardships of war. Only last Thursday, little knowing that he had already made the supreme sacrifice, I gave official approval to Mr. Corbin's proposal that the military authorities should be asked to release him from further duty and that he should proceed to the Forest School at Nancy, France, and in April next return to South Australia to take up the work of assistant lecturer in forestry, so that scientific training might be given to our foresters. This exceptional course will show you in what regard your son's character and abilities were held in the Forest Department. I mention these facts in the hope that in the hour of your greatest sorrow you may derive some consolation from a knowledge of them. May I add that I feel that whatever he may have accomplished, had he lived to fulfil the high expectations we all had of him, he could never have done anything worth as much as by laying down his life in the way he has done. He has died as he lived—nobly giving all to the cause of honor and righteousness."

**The Late Sergt. R. G. McKail.**—Wednesday's daily papers contain appropriate tributes to the memory of Sergt. R. G. McKail, of Millicent, who was killed in action in France last month. When the boys attending St. Peter's College, Adelaide, assembled on Tuesday after their Michaelmas vacation, the acting head master (Mr T. Ainslie Caterer, B.A.) remarked that he wished to say a few words to the school on events that had happened during the vacation. They had all followed the progress of the great offensive, and it was with sorrowful hearts they had noted day by day the toll the war had made upon their old boys. One of those who had made the supreme sacrifice was Ronald George McKail, and if he made special reference to him it was because he had left his mark in the classrooms and the playing fields and as a pupil that would always win for his memory the respect and affection of masters and schoolfellows alike. Wholesouled, generous, buoyantly happy, fair-minded, and clean-living, he was the type any public school wished to send forth into the larger world to do his life's work honorably and successfully. This heavy cloud of sorrow, however, hanging over them all was lightened by the joyous news that a fourth Military Cross had come to the school through Edward Arnold van Senden, and the coveted Victoria Cross had been awarded to Arthur Seaforth Blackburn, of the "Fighting 10th," for conspicuous gallantry "somewhere in France."

*Observer (Adelaide, SA : 1905 - 1931) - 4 November 1916*

#### **THE LATE SGT. MCKAIL.**

Mrs. E. L. McKail, of Barnard street, North Adelaide, has received letters of sympathy from the captain and colour-sergeant-major of the company to which her deceased son (Sgt. McKail) belonged. The former says:—"A braver or more self-denying soldier it has never been my good fortune to meet. During the terrific bombardment we were subjected to he was splendid, and commanded his men as only a true soldier can, and then, in spite of his fearful wound, his thoughts were only for his wounded comrades. No man or N.C.O. in my company was more liked and respected." The C.S.M. wrote:—"I sincerely sympathize with you in the loss of one of our finest and bravest soldiers. I went to St. Peter's College with him, and 'Pep' upheld our college motto ('Pro Deo et Patria') to the end. He was one of my best pals in the company, and should I have the misfortune to be wounded or killed, I only hope that I can bear it with that fortitude and coolness that your son showed when he was dying."

LYONS LEADER,  
Land, Commission & Estate Agents &c.

Percy F. Leader  
S. Haynes Leader

Telephone No 127.

*National Chambers,  
late  
Imperial Chambers.  
King William Street.  
Adelaide 6 Dec 1916*

6 Mrs. R. Hodge Esq  
Registration. University  
Box 498. G. P. O.

Dear Sir.

Your Memo re Mr. R. G. McKail has just reached me; as Attorney for Mrs. E. L. McKail.

Ronald George McKail joined the A. I. F. in June 1915 & left for Egypt, as Sergeant with the 13th Reinforcements of 16th Battn. Inf on the 15th January 1916, he remained there until June of the same year being meanwhile transferred to B Company of the 48th Battn. Inf; was transferred to France in June where he was killed in action at Poizieres on 6th August last, at the age of 27 years. Attended St Peter's College from 1896-1908. Employed in the Eastern Extension Cable office until 1911 when he left to attend the University course in Forestry in which he secured his B.Sc Degree in May 1914. If you require any further particulars I shall be pleased to furnish you with same.

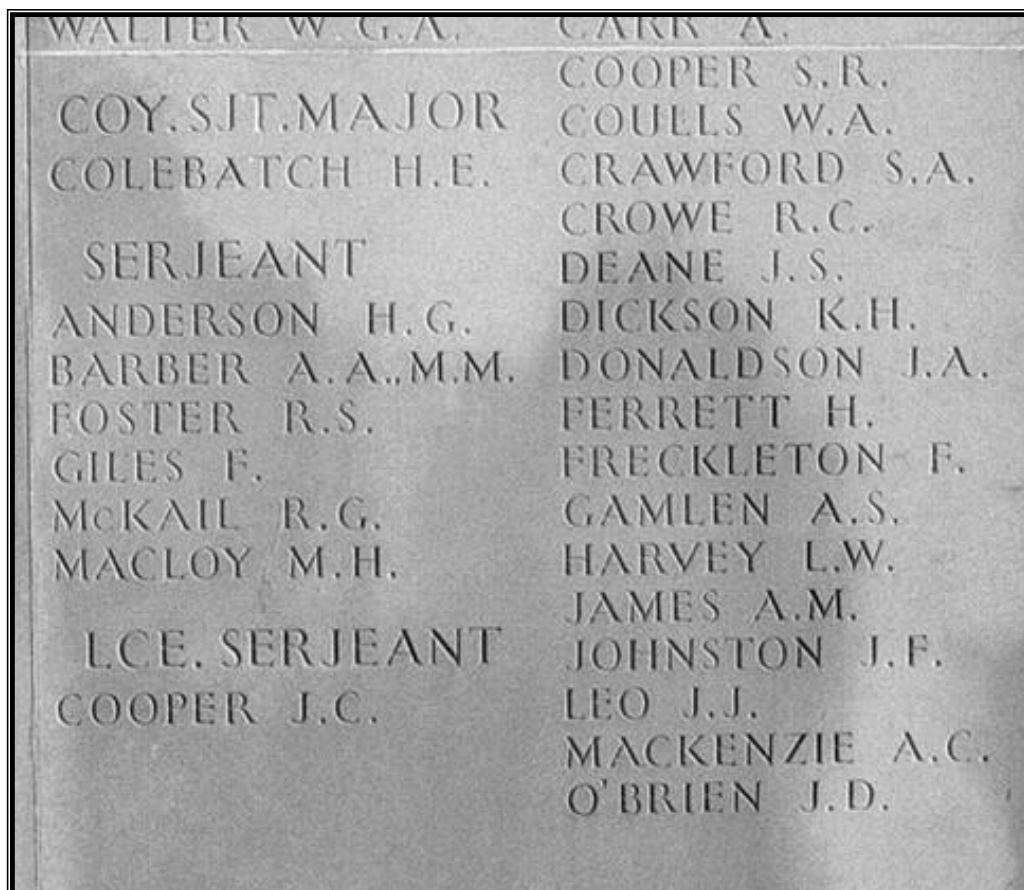
Yours faithfully

S. Haynes Leader

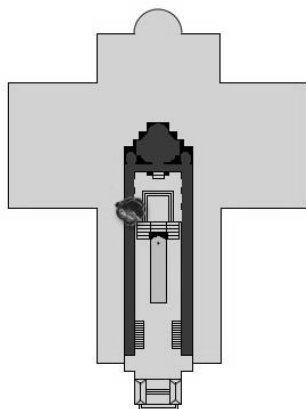
Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, France



Panel at Villers-Bretonneux Memorial including RG KcKail's Name



Ronald George McKail's name is located at panel 146 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial (as indicated by the poppy on the plan).



For the first anniversary of Pep's death a notice of remembrance appeared in the Adelaide paper 'The Journal', inserted by Sergeant WP Russell, AIF, France.

***The Journal (Adelaide, SA : 1912 - 1923) - 4 August 1917***

**McKAIL.**—In memory of Sergeant R. G. McKail (Pep.), killed in action in France, on the 5th August, 1916.—Inserted by Sergeant W. P. Russell, A.I.F., France.

It is likely that WP Russell was Company Sergeant Major, William Paterson Russell of South Australia and the 48<sup>th</sup> Battalion who tragically was killed in action on the 12 October 1917 and is buried at the Passchendaele, New British Cemetery, Belgium.

For many years the North Adelaide Football Club awarded the "RG McKail Memorial Trophy" to the clubs best junior and at the Centenary of ANZAC Pep was remembered in the tribute (below).



***"RG McKail Memorial Trophy"***



**North Adelaide Football Club**  
**Centenary of ANZAC – Tribute to RG McKail**



**Ronald George McKail**

(#4174; Private ; 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion – 13<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements)  
(1907-1914; 63 Games – 3 Goals)

Ronald "Pep" McKail, joined the club straight from St Peter's College in 1907, when he played 7 games. He played a further 7 games in 1908 before he played in all 12 matches in 1909. He later captained the club in 1913 after injury put an end to Bernie Leahy's season. He went onto play a total of 63 games (kicking 3 goals) before enlisting to fight in World War One at the age of 25.



**McKail and Fred LaMessurier in the 1913 team photo**

McKail was born in Albany, Western Australia, but at an early age came to South Australia with his family.

Whilst at St Peter's College, he excelled at sport Captaining both the First XI and the First XVIII in 1907.

After leaving school he joined the Eastern Extension Cable Company working there until 1911, when he applied for the newly introduced Forestry Department course at Adelaide University being one of only three applicants chosen. Upon the completion of his B.Sc degree he took up a position as an Assistant Forester at the Mount Burr Forest Reserve, Millicent and as such missed the 1914 season with North Adelaide. The 1913 Grand Final was his last match in the red-and-white.

He embarked for overseas on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1916 with the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

Stationed at the front line he saw a lot of fighting before he was killed in action at Pozieres, Somme Sector, on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1916.

*"He led B. Company of the 48th Battalion trenches in windmill Pozieres 6th August 1916, he gained his objective and then had his leg blown off nearly at the thigh and in this condition for 2 hours maintained command of his men cheerfully ignoring his dreadful wound, he cheered up his wounded and dying. "*



## Other Family Details

Pep's brother John Cecil McKail enlisted on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1916 and departed from Adelaide on the 12<sup>th</sup> August 1916, a mere six days after Pep's death. It is probable that John did not hear of his brother's death until he arrived in the United Kingdom.

John initially served in his brother's old battalion and later transferred to the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Company Engineers. He was wounded in action in France on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1917. (see further details below).

**McKAIL, John Cecil**



Service No. 2295  
Private  
48th Battalion

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN

Occupation prior to enlistment agent from North Adelaide, South Australia  
Enlisted on 8 January 1916.  
He embarked for overseas with the 4th Reinforcements from Adelaide on 12 August 1916 aboard HMAT Ballarat.  
He saw action in France with the 48th Battalion before transferring to the 4th Field Company Engineers in July 1917.  
On 23 September 1917 he was wounded in action in France and evacuated to England and then onto Australia.  
He was discharged medically unfit on 25 January 1918.

State Records of SA GRG 26/5/4/2779



Pep's sister Cecily married Captain Reginald Blockley Lucas at West Hampstead, London, England on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1916.

### *The Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929) 13 May 1916*

**LUCAS—McKAIL—**On the 3rd April, at St. James's Church, West Hampstead, London, by the Right Rev. Dr. Harmer, Bishop of Rochester, assisted by the Rev. Olderoyd, Reginald Blockley, elder son of Mrs. A. R. B. Lucas, Millswood, to Cecily Helen, daughter of Mrs. McKail, North Adelaide.

Captain Lucas was a doctor in the RAMC and he was reported missing at the front in a big offensive on the Somme in June 1916. Pep's mother travelled to the UK in October 1916 to be with her daughter. Captain Lucas was later declared to have died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916 and he is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial, Thiepval, Departement de la Somme, Picardie, France.

## **Sources and Acknowledgements**

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