

## **Alexander George McKay**

Trooper (Tpr) 1560 Alexander George McKay enlisted in the 6<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (LH) Regiment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Brigade at Liverpool on 23 June 1915, aged 43 years.

He embarked overseas on 23 October and disembarked in Egypt in mid-November, where he joined the Light Horse details camp at Maadi.

Between 4 February – 10 June 1916, Tpr McKay was hospitalised on several occasions for minor ailments and was absent without leave twice for which he was fined several days pay.

On 15 August he was taken on strength of the 6<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment at Et Maler on the Sinai Peninsula. About a month later, he was evacuated sick and treated for haemorrhoids between 22 September – 3 October, when he rejoined the regiment at Hill 70.

Tpr McKay was charged with being drunk on duty on 15 November. At a subsequent Field General Court Martial on 21 November, he was found guilty and originally sentenced to 90 days imprisonment with hard labour. This was later commuted to 90 days Field Punishment No. 2, which involved extra menial work duties, sometimes under restraint.

After he had served his sentence, Tpr McKay was transferred and taken on strength of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse (Brigade) Training Regiment at Moascar on 17 February 1917.

He again absented himself without leave on 4 – 5 May but at the subsequent Field General Court Martial on 30 – 31 May, he was also charged with using a pistol to compel two Egyptian men to drive him to Port Said. Found guilty of both charges, he was sentenced to 90 days imprisonment with hard labour and fined £74 10s. He was subsequently incarcerated at the Citadel Military Prison and Detention Barracks in Cairo on 13 June 1917.

The unexpired portion of his sentence was suspended on 31 August, and he rejoined the 2<sup>nd</sup> LH Training Regiment at Moascar later the same day. He attended a Vickers machine gun course at the Imperial School of Instruction at Zeitoun from 23 September – 13 October, but his service record states that he failed the course. He spent the period between 19 October – 7 November at the Port Said rest camp then joined the Light Horse details at Moascar.

Tpr McKay departed Egypt and rejoined the 6<sup>th</sup> LH Regiment, in the field at Esdud, on 23 December 1917. The regiment participated in operations along the River Jordan during March 1918, during which time Tpr McKay was evacuated sick with rheumatism and arthritis on 27 March.

He was initially treated by the Australian Camel Field Ambulance, then passed through several casualty clearing stations back to Egypt, where he was eventually admitted to the 14<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital at Port Said between 5 – 15 April.

After a week at a rest camp, he left Egypt and rejoined the 6<sup>th</sup> LH Regiment at Wadi Auja on 13 May 1918. The regiment spent the entire northern summer in the inhospitable Jordan Valley with its mosquito infested swamps, where hundreds of the men succumbed to malaria.



*Column of Australian Light Horse crossing the Pontoon Bridge at Auja Ford, in the Jordan Valley. In the distance can be seen horsemen descending the steep winding track. May 1918*

Tpr McKay was evacuated ill with haemorrhoids and rheumatism on 22 July. After a series of moves through Ludd, Gaza and Kantara, he once again found himself at the 14<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital at Port Said, where he was admitted between 29 July – 15 September 1918. He rejoined the 6<sup>th</sup> LH Regiment in Jerusalem on 6 October.

Tpr McKay came down with malaria on 11 October and once again had to make the long trek back to Egypt, where he was subsequently treated at the 31<sup>st</sup> General Hospital at Abbassia from 18 October – 1 November, then granted 28 days leave until 29 November, by which stage the war had ended.

After two more bouts of malaria, one in mid-December and another in late-January 1919, he embarked for return to Australia on 18 February.

Trooper 1560 Alexander George McKay disembarked in Melbourne on 24 March, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 23 May 1919.

Name: McKay, Alexander George	
Service Number	1560
Date enlisted	23 June 1915
Place enlisted	Liverpool, NSW
Rank on enlistment	Trooper
Initial Unit	6 <sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment
Previous military service	Victorian Mounted Rifles – 4 years
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 October 1915 HMAT SS <i>Hawkes Bay</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	43 years
Place of birth	Geelong, Victoria
Marital status	Married
Occupation	Hairdresser
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	McKay, Mrs Nellie, wife, 1 Clare Street, New Town, Tasmania
Permanent address	New Town, Tasmania
Appearance	Fair complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 10 ½ inches, weight – 10 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 37 inches
Final Rank	Trooper
Final Unit	6 <sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Sinai, Palestine
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	18 February 1919 HT <i>Lancashire</i>
Date discharged	23 May 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (malaria)
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Connection to Leopold unknown but he was born in Geelong and later resided at 112 Ryrie Street, Geelong post-war. Also remembered on the Leopold War Memorial.