Booklet Number 218

DAVID BRUCE McKECHNIE
1888-1916
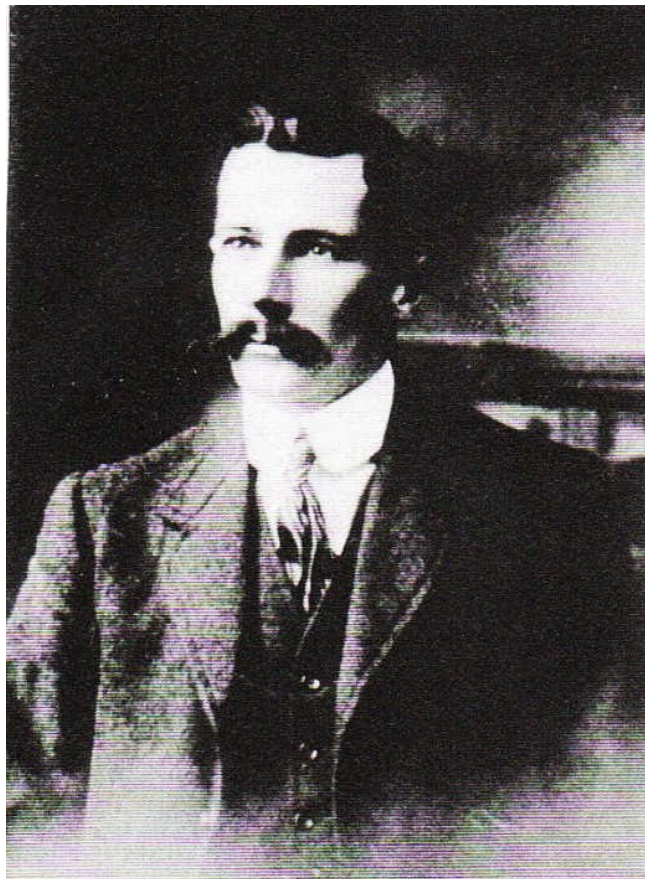
166 Crown Copyright reserved   THE MAIN STREET, LONGUEVAL (captured July 14th, 1916)   " Daily Mail " Official Photograph

Longueval is a small village north west of Amiens. It was almost totally destroyed in World War I.
Private McKechnie died at Longueval on 28 July, 1916.

Private David Bruce McKechnie

David Bruce McKechnie had commenced a promising career in the public service when the Great War broke out. He travelled from Brisbane to London to enlist in the British Army and served at The Somme but sadly did not return.

David's life began at Mt Korong, Wedderburn[1], Victoria, the fourth child and second son of William McKechnie (1850-1924) and Charlotte née Guthrie (1859-1889). Following Mrs Charlotte McKechnie's death soon after David's birth, William married Charlotte's sister Mary (1863-1911) with whom three more children were born. At the age of 17, David McKechnie applied for appointment to the Commonwealth Public Service. He was successful and in 1905 left his father's farm property near Wedderburn to take up a clerk's position in the Patents Office of the Department of Trade and Customs in Melbourne.

He attended classes at the Working Men's College and completed courses in Engineering Drawing, Applied Mechanics, Theoretical Chemistry and Electricity.

Melbourne Working Men's College (Now part of RMIT)
(Museums Victoria)

1.Wedderburn is a rural town in Victoria on the Calder Highway, 214 kilometres north of Melbourne. It has a population of about 680. It is mainly a farming community but its early residents were gold miners and prospectors.

In 1907 DB McKechnie moved to the position of Junior Assistant Engineer in the Postmaster-General's Department. At the age of 21, David was listed in the Electoral Roll: address - 360 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne; his occupation an electrical engineer.

In May 1913, David Bruce McKechnie moved again on promotion to Brisbane, Queensland where he was appointed Assistant Engineer in the Electrical Engineer's Branch of the PMG Department. He stayed at Mrs Price's boarding house called Ashton Hall in Old Sandgate Road, Albion.

War was declared in 1914. David would have been mindful of his uncle's sacrificial service in the Dardanelles Campaign: Trooper AR Guthrie of the 10th Light Horse Regiment was wounded at Gallipoli and died in August 1915 while at sea on a hospital ship between Mudros and Alexandria. Three of David's siblings were to enlist during the course of the Great War. His younger half-brothers, Lance-Corporal Clyde Guthrie McKechnie and Trooper William Alan McKechnie later joined the AIF and served with the Australian Light Horse on the battlefields of the Middle East to defend the Suez Canal and the Sinai Peninsula. David's older sister, Sister Christina Ralston McKechnie enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and worked in hospitals and on ships in and around India from 1916 to 1919.

The call to serve caused David to leave his work in Brisbane in 1915. Undoubtedly to see his family before he left, he travelled first to Victoria and embarked from the port of Melbourne on board the steamship *Medina* later that year, bound for London. According to the shipping line's list of second class passengers, Mr DB McKechnie's last permanent residence had been in Queensland and he intended to stay on his arrival in London with Mrs Archibald at Princes Street.

Arriving in London on 8 August 1915, David Bruce McKechnie enlisted there to serve with the British Army 24th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, Regimental Number SP/3994. Private McKechnie's 24th Battalion served in France and Flanders.

The battalion's War Diary for July 1916 records battles near Pernes, Corbie and Bernafay Wood. The entry on 28 July at Trones Wood says, "Relieved 17th Royal Fusiliers – B Company in the wood. Remainder of battalion in Longueval Alley. A very hot day and several casualties."

David McKechnie was among them. He died in battle at Longueval, Picardie, France on 28 July 1916 and his name is remembered on Pier and Face 8 C 9 A and 16 A at Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. It is near the village of Thiepval in Picardy in France.

· *Thiepval Memorial is the largest Commonwealth Memorial to the missing in the world*
· *The memorial commemorates 72 337 members of British and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 who have no known grave*
· *It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and comprises a series of intersecting arches which increase in height and proportionate width.*

A feature of most British and Commonwealth military cemeteries and memorials is The Stone of Remembrance. At Thiepval it has particular meaning because the words that are carved on every Stone of Remembrance "Their Name Liveth For Evermore", were suggested by Rudyard Kipling whose son John[1] was killed in action at one of the battles that took place in The Somme between July and November 1916. It was at this time and place that nearly all the men whose names are remembered at Thiepval Memorial including those of John Kipling and David Bruce McKechnie, lost their lives. The phrase is taken from Ecclesiasticus, chapter 44, verse 14: "Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore".

David McKechnie was posthumously awarded the Victory Medal and the British Medal.

1. John Kipling (17 August 1897 – 27 September 1915) was the only son of British author Rudyard Kipling. His death at the Battle of Loos caused his father immense grief.

A record of David's wartime service is kept on the Commemorative Roll of the Australian War Memorial. An 'In Memoriam' Shield at the gate of Wedderburn Soldiers' Memorial Park honours B McKechnie [1] along with 36 other soldiers who fell in the battles of World War 1.

When they enlisted, David's uncle, sister and half-brothers all gave their religious denomination as Presbyterian.

A current family member has also confirmed the McKechnie family's staunch Presbyterian ties. This explains, in part at least, why David McKechnie was known and remembered by friends at Saint Andrew's, a Presbyterian church easily reached from Albion, when they heard news of his tragic death. Appropriately, his name was inscribed there on two memorials – an honour board and the mural brass plaque listing those who paid the supreme sacrifice. They remain within the Merrington Memorial Peace Chapel in Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.

1. An initial might have been omitted. David Bruce McKechnie had left the district before the turn of the century though family members remained. There are no Australian Army enlistments with surname McKechnie and single initial B.

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Lest we forget