**SAPPER JOHN McGROGAN**

**7957 – Tunnelling Details**

Goulburn, New South Wales was the birthplace of John McGrogan in 1871 the son of William and Eliza Jane (nee Governey) McGrogan. His father died in 1908 and his mother in 1915 and had been residents of Captain’s Flat for over twenty-five years and were buried in Hoskinstown cemetery. Military experience was gained from seven years with the Light Horse in New South Wales. John married in 1903 in Denilquin to Agnes McAvoy but she died a year later with the announcement published in the:

*Sydney Morning Herald* Tuesday November 29, 1904:

DEATHS

McGROGAN. --November 28, 1904, at Sydney, Agnes, dearly belove wife of John McGrogan, of Finlay, N.S. Wales, aged 27 years.

At the recruiting depot in Broken Hill, NSW on 28 June, 1917 the forty-four-year-old single miner applied to enlist for active service abroad and passed the medical examination. Attestation form describe him as 176cms (5ft 9¾ins) tall, weighing (150lbs) with a chest expansion of 87-94cms (34-37ins) and had a fair complexion with his grey eyes testing to very poor eyesight in one eye and poor vision in the other. Distinctive marks were 5 vaccination marks on his left arm, mole right nipple and a scar on his right knee. Next-of-kin nominated was his sister Martha Ebsworthy of 89 Redfern Street, Redfern, NSW. He signed and took the Oath of Enlistment the same day.

Acknowledgment to the departing volunteers was published in the:

*Barrier Miner* Friday June 29, 1917:

SEND-OFF TO VOLUNTEERS

The weekly send-off to recruits who have enlisted for active service abroad with the A.I.F. was given at the Sulphide-street station last night by the various patriotic organisations of the city. The street procession was headed by the Irish Pipers’ Band. Other organisation to participate were the Broken Hill Recruiting Committee, Barrier Empire League and Boy Scouts. At the Sulphide-street station farewell tunes were played by the band, and as the train steamed out cheers were given for the departing volunteers. The names of the volunteers who left were: **J. M’Grogan**, L. Hocking, T. T. Court, and W.S. Foley.

Basic training commenced with B Coy at Mitcham camp, Adelaide (4th Military district) on 2 July, 1917 until July 15 moving to the 31st Reinforcements to the 9th Light Horse but this changed and was transferred to the Miners’ training camp at Seymour, Victoria joining the May, 1917 Reinforcements to the Tunnelling Companies. They trained at Bendigo camp from August 28 to 2 November returning to Seymour to prepare for abroad and spent the night at Broadmeadows camp, near Melbourne (3rd M.D.) on November 20 in readiness to board the transport. Military authorities noted his Will was lodged with them. His rank was Sapper with the regimental number 7957.

The troopship HMAT A71 *Nestor* departed Port Melbourne, Vic on November 21, 1917 with 168 Reinforcements on board. The voyage of twenty-five days duration terminated at the Suez on December 15, 1917 and the men disembarked going to the Australian Infantry Camp, Suez the same day. They entrained for Alexandria on January 4, 1918 and marched into the Australian Camp, Gabbary, in Alexandria on January 5.

The Reinforcements left Port Said on January 9, 1918 aboard the H.M.T. B:102 *Kashgar* arriving at Taranto, Italy on January 20. A week later in Italy were entrained at Bordighira on January 27 and reached Cherbourg, France at the end of the month. On January 31, 1918 the H.M.T. C.O.168 *Mona’s Queen* conveyed them across the English Channel where they disembarked at Southampton, England on February 2, 1918. A further entrainment completed their journey to Tidworth and they marched into No. 3 Details Camp at Parkhouse.

Sapper went sick on 4 March, 1918 to Delhi Hospital, Tidworth with scabies (a skin irritation caused by Itch Mite whose eggs are laid under the skin’s outer layer) and discharged four days later to the Training Depot.

On March 15, 1918 was admitted to the Tidworth Military Hospital suffering I.T.C. (inflammation connective tissue – carbuncle on neck and rheumatism) and after forty days convalescing was discharged to the No. 1 Command Depot, Sutton Veny on 23 April. Was sent to the Group Clearing Hospital on April 30 with rheumatism / sciatica and returned on May 17. On 12 July marched out for Parkhouse until 31 August and to the No. 2 Details camp then was transferred to No. 3 Command Depot at Hurdcott. He appeared before the Medical Board there and his Statement of Case reads:

 Disability: Sciatica L

 Date of disability: prior to enlistment (sgd. J. McGrogan)

 Place of disability: New South Wales

 Essential facts: Has had trouble for three years. Coming to England it got worse

 Has had treatment for four months without noticeable improvement. Causation: constitutional

 Attributed to: prior to enlistment – not attributable to service – aggravated by

 service

 Present condition: (1) describes pain as running down front of thigh

 (2) has pain in the hip and knee

 (3) left leg smaller than right

 (4) age 46

 Debility given: Ordered C3 A.D.M.S.

 No 3 Command Depot 5/9/18

At the Classification Hut, Hurdcott – classified sciatica 31/8/18. Medical notes: still has pains in left hip and leg. Has had 4 months treatment. Massage. B1b debility. 5/9/18 to A.D.M.S.

Sapper reported to the No. 2 A.C.D. at Weymouth on 12 September, 1918. Medical notes: Sciatica L – reported from 3 C.D. Hurdcott – sciatic P – E

Pain – albrey? L. Sciatica. Age 46.

Sapper McGrogan embarked as an invalid on 20 October, 1918 for discharge in Australia due to sciatica L on the H.T. *Borda* from Devonport, England. His berth for the voyage was a hammock. Base Records advised his sister on 21 November, 1918 he was returning home. Medical notes during the voyage were: Has improved on board. Complains of right knee at times.

His name was among those listed as returning and published in the:

*Barrier Miner* Saturday November 30, 1918:

RETURNING SOLDIERS – LIST “X”

The South Australian military authorities advise that the following soldiers have been listed (list “X”) for return to Australia, and are actually en route from abroad.

Sapper J. M’Grogan, Tunnellers’ Details *Article abridged*

The transport docked in Sydney (2nd M.D.) on 22 December, 1918. News of their arrival was reported in the:

*Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) Monday December 23, 1918:

BACK FROM WAR ZONE – LARGE PARTY BY STEAMER

A party of 546 soldiers, nurses and munition workers disembarked at Woolloomooloo Bay from the steamer Borda yesterday morning. 336 men were for N.S. Wales and 186 soldiers for Queensland. Most on board were invalided home. Large crowds of people assembled along the road and warmly cheered the men as they passed.

The trip from England was uneventful. Over a thousand men were on board when the ship called at Adelaide and there was no illness.

He appeared before the Disembarkation Medical Board at No. 4 Aust General Hospital, Randwick and his Case reads:

 Has had trouble for three years. Coming to England, it got worse. Has had treatment for

 4 months, without noticeable improvement.

 Debility: constitutional

 Patient still complains of pains down legs. Is having galvanism and massage.

 Is to have one month at Homaderry.

A return visit to No. 4 A.G.H. on 11 February, 1919. Notes: sciatica.

Complains of pains running down legs. Is having galvanism (electrical current by chemical action) and massage.

Another visit to No. 4 A.G.H. on 11 April, 1919 went before the Medical Referee Board who reported:

Board opinion: (a) no; (b) no; (c) yes – independent of military service; (d) no.

 Improvement: three months

 Labour market: (a) & (b) 1/5th

 Recommendation: permanently unfit for military service

Military Discharge took place in Sydney (2nd M.D.) on 26 April, 1919 as medically unfit.

Base Records were advised on 29 April, 1919 that he had returned and discharged in consequence of medical unfitness and his documents and medical board proceedings were enclosed.

The British War Medal (79398) was issued to Sapper 7957 John McGrogan, Tunnelling Details for serving his country. As he did not enter a theatre of war, he was ineligible for the Victory Medal.

In 1930 he was working at No. 8 Camp, Unanderra as a miner near Mittagong, NSW. From 1932 he was a labourer with William McGrogan at Rossmore, Werriwa, NSW.

John McGrogan passed away on 2 November, 1943 aged 70 years at Randwick, Sydney. Interment took place in the Roman Catholic portion of Rookwood Cemetery in sub-section S16 with in row 3288.



His Commonwealth War Grave (centre) in Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney

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