

Colin Vernon McCulloch

Colin McCulloch was admitted to the New South Wales Bar while in uniform on 22 July 1916. He enlisted on 18 January 1916, aged 24, and embarked on 9 September 1916 at Sydney aboard *Euripides* with the 20th Reinforcements for the 2nd Battalion. He landed in Plymouth on 26 October 1916. He attended Officers Training School, Tidworth, after recovery from pneumonia and, crossed to France to 2nd Battalion on 25 April 1917. He fought at Bullecourt, winning his commission as a second lieutenant 'on the field' on 15 May 1917. McCulloch was wounded in the arm at Hooze 16 September 1917. He wrote to his parents describing how it happened. At around 2.00pm they were at Shrapnel Corner.

Then began a most objectionable trek of about one and half miles to our trench near Hooze. The country was absolutely open and barren, and our had to pass and they had to pass along Zillebeke Lake, which was receiving quite a lot of attention from enemy guns as so many of our artillery were collected there. We got past without casualties, and finally reached our little "home in the mud", where our relieved a London regiment, dug in there for ten days or so without having a shot fired at them. But Fritz must have seen the troops coming up, for he started quite a lively little barrage. We had only two slight casualties up to about 7 pm, when by bad luck one of the enemy guns got the exact range on the part of the trench where two of our platoons were situated. A shell landed on the edge of a trench, an old one, half burying some poor fellows who had been badly wounded, one dying almost immediately. We had quite a lively time for a while. I think only one gun had the exact range, but it was firing rapidly, shells from its muzzle falling all around us. Every fourth or fifth shell landed in the trench or blew bits of it in. I had quite a few casualties by this time. Several men were killed outright, and others were as good as dead, while the rest were only slightly wounded. Things seemed to calm down for a little while. The O.C. went up to see what damage had been done, and I followed him in about a minute. Then Fritz opened up again, and the O.C. was frightfully wounded by a shell. He died in about fifteen minutes. More of the boys had been hit after that, and the new O.C. decided that, as the shells were registering directly on that sector of the trench, it would be best to put the men into one of the other parts. After I had done that, a shell landed alongside me and wounded me on the right arm. On the way to the dressing station I had to pass Hell Fire Corner. Things were even more lively there. Just in front of us an ammunition wagon was, and then suddenly it wasn't, while bits of mule flesh were scattered all round the place.

McCulloch was invalided to London and promoted lieutenant during convalescence in England. He returned to France in March 1918. He was killed in action by artillery fire when he was checking on his wounded men near Amiens rail station, 11 April 1918 and buried in St Pierre Cemetery, Amiens. McCulloch's death was well investigated by members of the legal profession acting as Searchers for the Red Cross in both England and Australia. He was a popular young officer who was known to look after the well-being of his men. He was 'an only son.'

Further information:

Taylor, F W. and Cusack, T. A. *Nulli Secundus* New Century Press, Sydney 1942.

Peterson, Robert. *Facing the Foe Shore*, Sydney Church of England Grammar School, North Sydney 2006.