

COLIN HUGH KENNEDY



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DA10738

Fresh faced and eager to serve his country, Colin Hugh Kennedy enlisted at age 18 on the 7th of July, 1915.

He was born to Duncan and Amelia Elizabeth Kennedy (nee Smith) in 1899 at Mitiamo. At the time of his enlistment, he was working as an apprentice printer for McCarron Bird and Co. printers in Collins St, Melbourne. His father and his employers wrote letters of consent in order for Colin to serve in the AIF.

Colin had been so eager to serve that he attempted to enlist before he was 18 years old. He had his mother write a letter to give consent on the 7th of July, 1914. This attempt was apparently unsuccessful, but although he could not enlist in active service earlier, Colin decided to continue with the 50th Infantry of the Citizens Military Forces (CMF). All up, he spent 15 months with the CMF before enlisting when he turned 18.

On enlistment, Colin is described as having a fresh complexion, grey eyes and light brown hair. He was 165cm tall (5 foot, 5 inches) and 62kg (9 stone, 10 pounds).

The letter of consent Colin's father Duncan wrote for him.

21 Bowen Street
E Prahran
I D Kennedy Father of Colin Hugh
Kennedy minor give my consent & approval
to join the Expeditionary Forces
D Kennedy
8 July 1915
I certify that the above signature
is genuine
D.H. Kennedy

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Embarking from Melbourne aboard the HMAT A71 Nestor on 11 October 1915, Colin would likely have been thinking about the acts of bravery he might display and the adventure he was about to have. Nothing could prepare him for what was ahead, though.

Whilst in Australia still, Colin had been Acting Corporal and Acting Sergeant, but when he was taken on strength with the 11th reinforcements to the 5th Battalion on the 22nd of March, 1916, he reverted back to the rank of Private. He visited the field ambulance momentarily with a minor complaint but was soon back in the field.

On the 2nd of March, 1917 Colin was captured by the Germans at Bapaume. He received either a gunshot wound to his right thigh or suffered injuries to both legs and his left arm due to shrapnel from a bomb (there are conflicting reports). He was interned at the Prisoner of War Camp (Gefangenenlager) at Dülmen, Germany. On the 12th of March, 1917 the AIF received a postcard from Colin simply stating that he was “going along alright”.

His parents were notified of his capture on the 7th of June and it was reported in the Bendigo Independent newspaper on the 23rd of June. By this time, Colin had been transferred to the Limburg camp. While the Dülmen camp had a reasonably good reputation for conditions, Limburg did not. There were reports of so much overcrowding at Limburg that no tents were available, and men had to sleep out in the open even in hail, rain, frost and snow.

Four months later, Colin was transferred again on the 27th of October 1917, this time to Friedrichsfeld. This camp had allocated spaces for physical activity and vegetable gardens, along with a laundry area and shower room facilities.



The camp at Dülmen.



The camp at Friedrichsfeld.

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His family were likely to be very worried for Colin. His personal effects were returned to his family on the 23rd of March, 1918. This would likely have left his family feeling uneasy and uncertain as to whether their boy would return.

On the 22nd of November, 1918 Colin was repatriated and arrived in England on the 25th. From this date he was granted leave until the 3rd of January, 1919. He left England to return to Australia aboard the Nevasa on the 5th of March, 1919 and arrived in Melbourne on the 25th of April.



The Record Chambers building in Collins Street. This was where Colin initially worked for McCarron Bird and Co. This building is now heritage listed.

Doctors had assessed Colin and diagnosed him with Effort Syndrome, otherwise known as Da Costa's Syndrome or Soldier's heart. Essentially, this was a form of anxiety which appeared to have symptoms much like heart disease. The report from doctors stated he was "short of breath on exertion" and that the origin of his disability was from "1917, Germany" while Colin was in the prisoner of war camps.

Due to his Effort Syndrome, Colin was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit, only to have this cancelled due to the possibly temporary nature of his ailment. A letter dated the 16th of August, 1920 states that he was still on the strength of the AIF. It is unclear when his service period ended.

Once he was back in Australia, Colin tried to get on with his life. It is not known whether he resumed his position at McCarron Bird and Co. He met Nellie (Ellen Teresa) Fitzgerald and later married her in 1925.

Colin died suddenly at his home on the 2nd of June, 1931 aged just 32 years. His father Duncan and sisters Elsie and Millie mourned his loss along with Nellie. He is buried at the Fawkner Memorial Park in Fawkner, Victoria.

Colin suffered for the sake of our freedom and will be remembered as a hero.



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