

Private, Wesley Paul
Choate of Cherry
Gardens

The Story of Private Wesley Paul Choat

South Australian Private Wesley Paul Choat fought with the 32nd Battalion in France in 1916. In the battalion's very first enemy engagement, Choat's two brothers were killed, and Choat was captured. Private Choat subsequently escaped twice from German prison camps, each time helping his comrades find their way across Germany to reach the frontier, and at the second attempt, reaching neutral Holland. Choat's exploits demonstrated immense courage, tenacity, endurance, ingenuity and, above all, an astonishing willingness to risk his own life for the good of his fellow soldier. Private Wesley Choat's truly displayed the meaning of the term 'Anzac Spirit'.

Wesley was born to Alice and Joseph Choat at Cherry Gardens in 1895. He was their second son and one of seven children. Whilst Wesley was still a small boy, the family relocated to Francis Street in Clarence Park, Adelaide, and Wesley attended the nearby Goodwood Primary School.

When war broke out, Wesley Choat was working as a farm laborer. His younger brother Archie was doing the same, working on the Duncan family farm at Gunn Creek. When the Commonwealth Government put out a Call to Arms at Adelaide in 1915, the three Choat brothers, Raymond, Wesley and Archie, answered the call. At just eighteen and twenty years old, Archie and Wesley needed written permission from their father before they could join up. On the 12th of July 1915 the brothers enlisted with the 32nd Battalion at Mitcham, joining A company, and receiving regimental numbers 66, 67 and 68.

On 18 November 1915, the 32nd Battalion set sail for Egypt to undergo training before entering the war. Thousands of people lined the streets of Port Adelaide and packed the Outer Harbour to farewell their loved ones. After six months in the Middle East, the Battalion was transported to Marseilles, and from there they travelled by train to Northern France and the Front.

Just days after their arrival, the inexperienced 32nd Battalion was thrown into the Battle of Fromelle. The plan was a two-pronged attack by Australians from the north and the British from the West, aiming to seize a German stronghold called the Sugar Loaf. The underlying motive for the attack was to distract attention from the main offensive occurring eighty kilometres to the south at the Somme River. Three Australian divisions attacked and initially made good ground, capturing a kilometer of German trenches. Sadly though, progress was not maintained. The heavy bombardment that had preceded the attack had failed to dent the German defenses in front of the Australian 14th Division; the Diggers were ruthlessly mown down by machine gun fire. Waves of German counter attacks followed, and during the night, the remaining Australian forces became cut off and were forced to attempt a withdrawal across No Man's Land. Casualties were horrendous; 5533 Australian and 1517 British soldiers lost. The 32nd Battalion was devastated.

ENLIST AT ONCE

Wesley Choat took part in the advance. In the midst of battle, he heard the shout "We're surrounded! Every man for himself!" Wesley formed up with his comrades, and together they tried to charge back towards the Australian lines. As he raced across No Man's Land, he was struck to the face by shrapnel and landed unconscious in a shell hole. When he came around, he was a prisoner of war.

Choat was housed with other Australians in a prison camp in Germany. Life was tough, especially prior to arrival of the much-awaited Red Cross parcels. Food was sparse and had to be earned by hard labor. Hunger was ever present.

Choat's spirits were lifted when a fellow prisoner happened across a map showing their whereabouts and routes to the Dutch border. Wesley immediately began to make plans to escape with five of his mates. He bought a cheap fiddle and they played music to create the illusion that they were happy to sit out the war in the camp. But Wesley and his friends were determined to risk all in attempt to re-join comrades. Finally, in September 1917, they were ready to go. Late at night, the six men climbed through an upstairs window. They swung from a ledge onto a lightening conductor and climbed down to the yard. After hiding from a sentry, they breached the fence and made their escape.

Once outside the camp, they split into two groups. They travelled mostly at night; Wesley had memorised a chart of the night sky and used it for navigation. They headed for Dusseldorf. The biggest obstacle between them and freedom was the Rhine, a river too fast flowing to swim. They decided to cross the river by train, but were unable to find the station. Wesley was the only German speaker in the group. He courageously sent the other two away and approached a policeman alone. Pretending to be a Belgian workman, he asked for directions. When the policeman began to question him, Wesley kept his nerve and pretended to be offended by his attitude. The bluff worked; he received directions, and re-joined his mates.

After passing countless soldiers and policeman they found the station. Whilst his mates hid outside, Wesley approached the ticket booth and purchased three tickets. They travelled for a couple of hours on the train, crossing the river, then disembarking at a small rural station. They set off in search of somewhere to hide but were confronted by a Military Policeman. They were taken for questioning. Wesley maintained the bluff of being Belgian workmen, but the policeman was not convinced. He searched Choat's pockets and found letters in English and his old field pay book. Luckily, the policeman didn't recognise English and so Wesley pretended it was his 'arbeit' book, and to his surprise, he was believed. They were free again and heading for the border. They continued to hide by day and follow the stars by night. Finally, they approached the border. They were weary from walking. Choat sat down to rest his feet whilst the others walked on. Moments later, he heard a shout of "Halt!" - his two mates had been spotted by a sentry who demanded their passports. Choat had still not been seen and so now had two options; slip quietly away on his own and cross into Holland, or almost certainly sacrifice his own freedom for the sake of the remote chance

of freeing his friends. In an act of immense selflessness and loyalty, he re-joined his mates. This time though, his bluff failed. The three men are recaptured, just a mile from freedom.

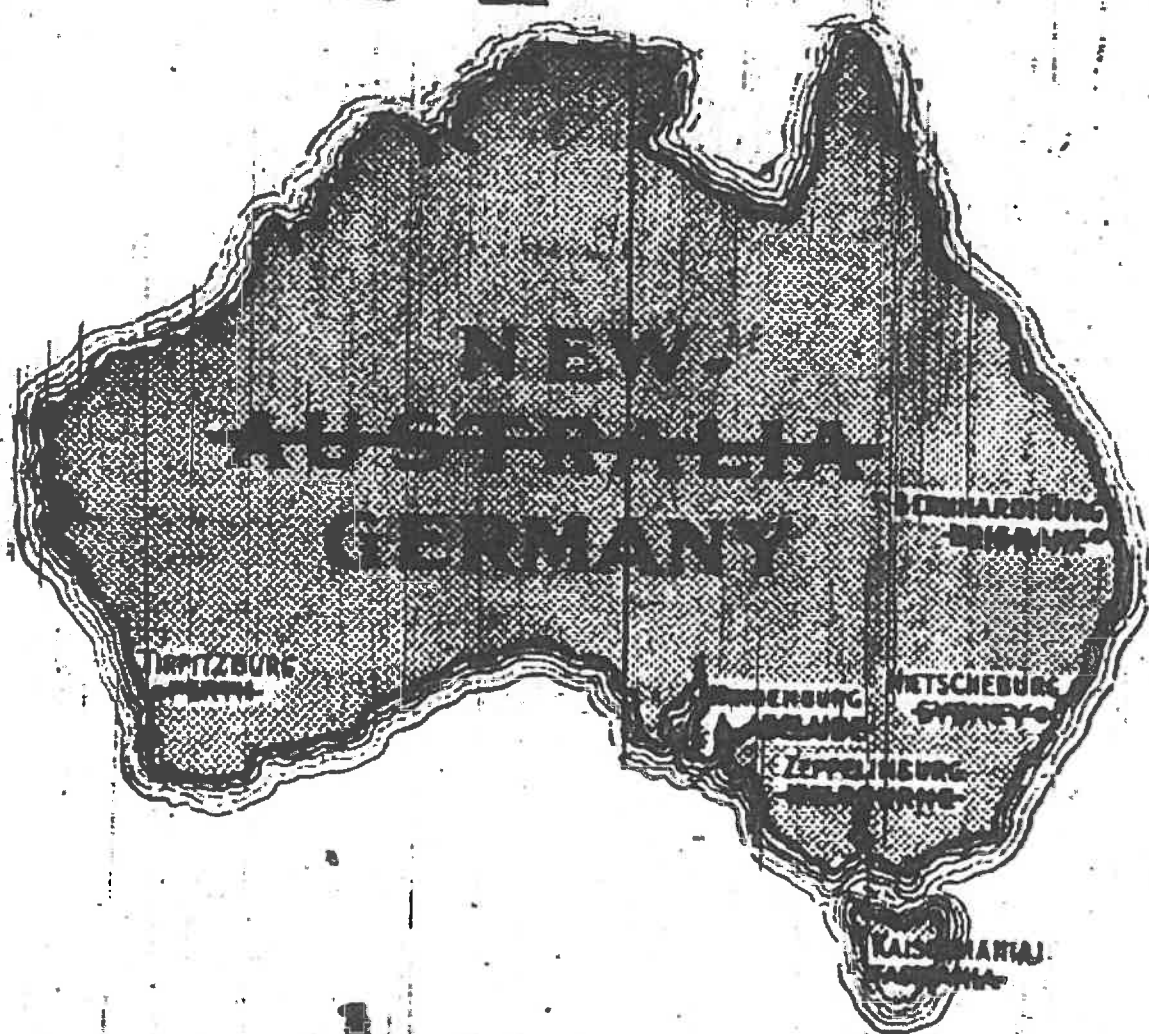
After six weeks of punishment, imprisoned on bread and water, Choat was returned to the prisoner of war camp. Undeterred, he broke free again in December 1917, climbing out from a high window and descending onto a snow covered shed roof with fellow South Australian, Lance Corporal James Pitts. They headed to Dusseldorf and Choat again purchased train tickets. The carriage was packed; Pitt found a seat and faked sleep. Choat was forced to stand until a friendly German soldier insisted he sit on his knee. Choat obliged and made polite conversation so as not to raise suspicions. Once safely over the bridge, they left the train and continued on foot by night. The weather was bitterly cold with the ground covered in snow; days spent hiding in woods on beds of twigs were painfully long, damp and uncomfortable. After more close encounters with German soldiers, Choat and Pitt finally reached the border. The rain was heavy and helped hide them from sentries. They crossed into Holland to be greeted by a friendly Dutchman who invited them in for coffee. Shortly afterwards they were transported back to England.

Wesley's parents were notified of his escape, prompting his mother to immediately send a letter to the Australian Army. She pleaded for Wesley to be spared from returning to the Western Front after his ordeal. The letter was unnecessary, however, as Wesley was already on his way home in recognition of his achievement. Along with Lance Corporal Pitt, Choat was awarded the Military Cross.

After the war Wesley fathered two children. He lived in Unley before moving to Curramulka on the Yorke Peninsula. He lived until the grand age of 81, dying in 1977. He was cremated at Centennial Park. Wesley's name can be found on the honour boards at Curramulka Uniting Church, Goodwood Primary School and Unley town hall.

Wesley Choat was an ordinary Australian man who displayed extraordinary qualities in the face of tremendous adversity. As a German-speaker, it would have been much easier for him to travel alone to make his escape, yet not only does he take his friends with him, he refuses to abandon them even when he knows it will cost him his freedom. He shows great courage in bluffing German policemen and soldiers, ingenuity by following the stars, making his own compass and inventing plausible stories to fool German authorities. He demonstrates great endurance, twice making his way mostly on foot from Dusseldorf to the Dutch border. He refuses to accept defeat, maintaining his bluff even when all looks lost, and when he is recaptured, he simply breaks out again. His story is truly remarkable. Private Wesley Paul Choat's conduct represents a perfect portrayal of the Anzac spirit.

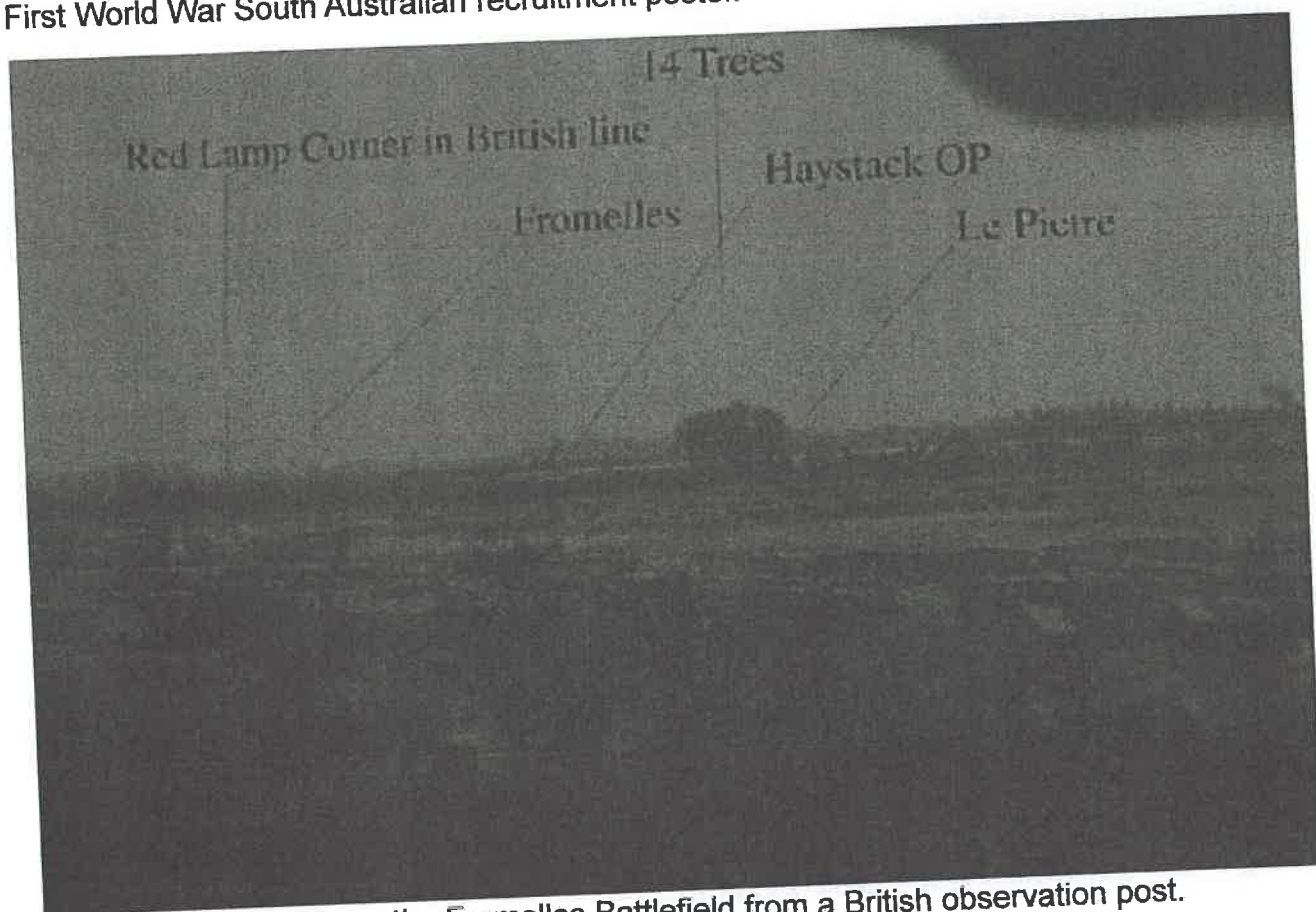
AUSTRALIANS ARISE!



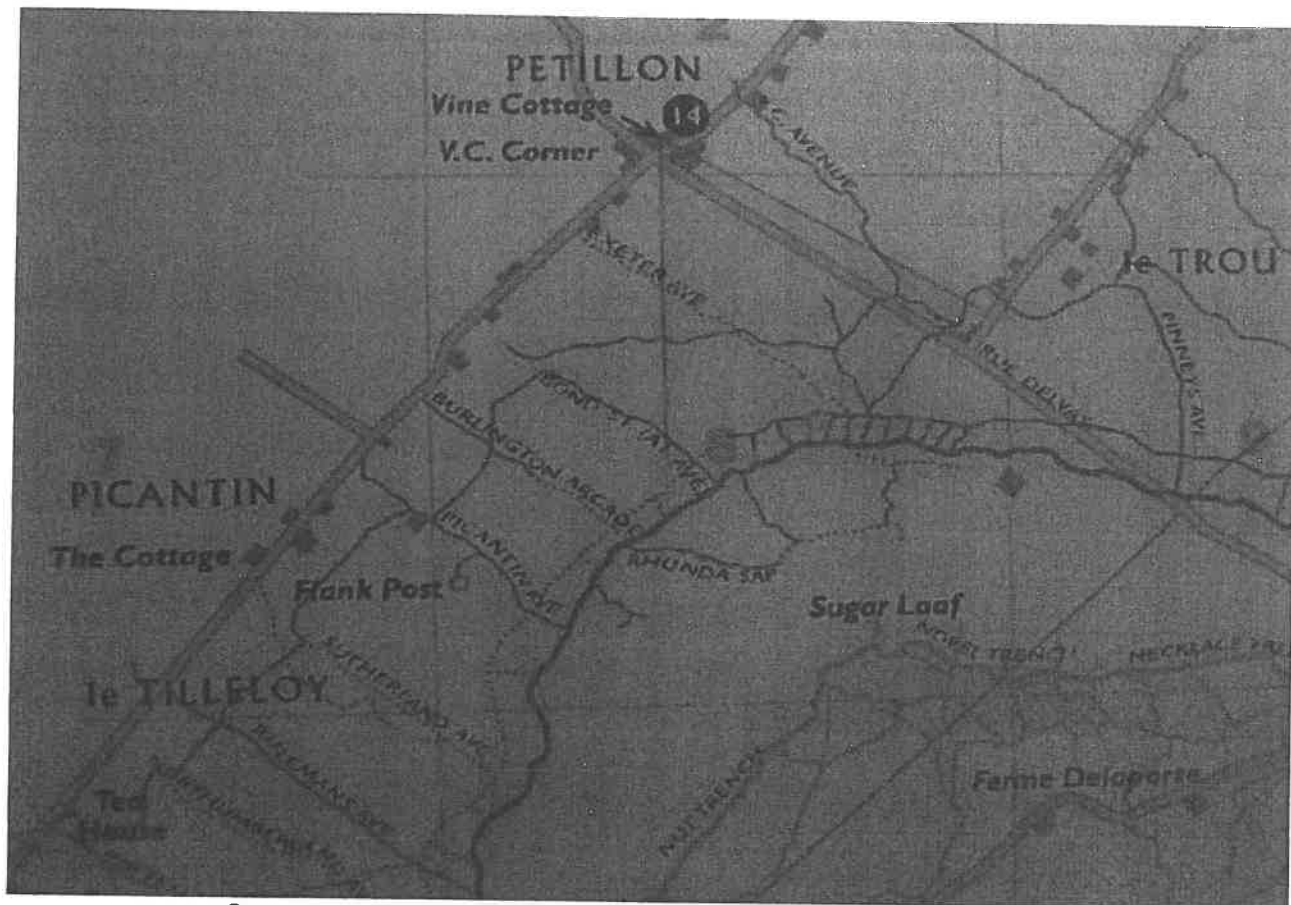
Save her
from this Shame!



First World War South Australian recruitment poster.



The view over the Fromelles Battlefield from a British observation post.
 Australian Light Horse Studies Centre; <http://AustralianLightHorseStudiesCentre.htm>



Contemporary map of the attack at Fromelles, 19 July 1916.

Australian Light Horse Studies Centre; <http://AustralianLightHorseStudiesCentre.htm>



Troops in readiness at the Battle of Fromelles. Daily Mail, Monday, Sep 19 2011



Part of the German front line after the Battle of Fromelles. Australian War Memorial, <http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/A01560>



Australian and British soldiers captured during Battle of Fromelles July 1916. An Australian soldier found the photo in a German trench later in the war

[Http:Lost Diggers' remains found at Fromelles/ Lost Diggers of Fromelles/ CourierMail.htm](http://LostDiggers.com/lost-diggers-of-fromelles/)



Captured Australians arriving at the German collecting station on the morning of 20th July during the Battle of Fleurbaix which took place on 19 July 1916 and 20 July 1916.

Australian War Memorial, ID A01552 <http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/A01552>

The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Monday 4 September 1916, page 8

THE LATE PRIVATE P. A. CHOAT.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Choat, of Clarence Park, have been notified that their second son, Private Wesley P. Choat, has been missing since July 20, also that their third son, Private Archibald P. Choat, was killed on July 20 in France. Their eldest son is also serving in France.

National Library of Australia

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6476825>



Lance Corporal James William Pitts, and Private Wesley Paul Choat,

Australian War Memorial <http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P03236.156>

Francis Street
Clarence Park

June 30th 1915

To Military Headquarters Newmach

This is to certify that we, the
parents of Wesley Paul Choat, do
hereby give our joint consent to
his proposal of joining the forces for
the sake of King & Country.

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Signed Joseph Choat

I hereby certify that the above-named person, Wesley Paul Choat, is of the
following description:

Scars, marks, or blemishes; impaired constitution; defective intelligence; defects
of vision, hearing or hearing; hernia; hemorrhoids; extensive scars; any other defect
which would render him unfit for military service; or any other defect which would
render him unfit for military service; or any other defect which would render him
unfit for military service.

He can see the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy;
he has the free use of his joints and limbs; and he declares he is not subject to any of the
above defects.

I consider him fit for active service.

Date

Place

Signature of Examining Medical Officer

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER

I CERTIFY that this Attestation of the above-named person is correct, and that
the required forms have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him
to 32nd BATTN. ON A.I.F.

Date

Place

16 AUG 1915

D.M.R. Coghill

LIEUT.-COL.

C.O. 32nd BATTN., A.I.F.

Commanding

2

CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER.

The foregoing questions were read to the person enlisted in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to by him.

~~I have examined his naturalization papers and am of opinion that they are correct.~~

~~(This to be struck out except in the case of persons who are naturalized British Subjects.)~~

Date 12 JUL 1915

C. Woodhouse Capt

Signature of Attesting Officer.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY PERSON BEING ENLISTED.*

3. Wesley Paul Choat swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from 12 JUL 1915 until the end of the War, and a further period of months thereafter unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So HELP ME, God.

W. P. Choat

Signature of Person Enlisted.

Taken and subscribed at Reservoir in
the State of South Australia
this 12 JUL 1915 day of

 19 , before me—

C. Woodhouse Capt

Signature of Attesting Officer.

*A person enlisting who objects to taking an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Act, and the above form must be amended accordingly. All amendments must be initialed by the Attesting Officer.

The Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929), Thursday 16 December 1915, page 6

THE 32ND BATTALION.

Enthusiastic Farewell.

Amidst a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm the 32nd Battalion of Infantry, under Col. Coghill, embarked on board the troopship at the Outer Harbour on Thursday, November 12. Long before the vessel was ready to sail the wharf was besieged by friends of the troops, anxious to say farewell and to give the brave boys a fitting send-off on their mission to fight the Empire's battles on foreign soil. The whole scene as the hour of departure approached was a never-to-be-forgotten picture. Thousands of people congregated at the wharf-side, and the interval of waiting between embarkation and the moving off of the great ship was occupied in the passing of messages and parting gifts, in the singing of patriotic songs, and cheers for the Empire, our Allies, and the dear ones left behind.

The camp at Cheltenham, where the 32nd Battalion had been quartered, was astir early that morning, for the first troop train left shortly after 6 o'clock, and others from the same rendezvous and from Mitcham followed at intervals. En route to the Outer Harbour the soldiers were given a fitting send-off. Port Adelaide, with its usual manifestation of loyalty, had St. Vincent street decorated with bunting; whistles shrilly tooted and bells rang out their heralds of farewells. All along the line to the Outer Harbour the citizens assembled at points of vantage to give the departing troops an encouraging cheer. During embarkation the wharf at which the — was berthed was barricaded off. A strong guard of pickets barred the way behind the enclosures until the men's kit had been stowed on board, and the loading of gear, stores, and cargo had been completed; and when this was done to the satisfaction of the embarkation officers the crowd was permitted right alongside ship. An hour before sailing time multi-coloured paper ribbons passed between friends and the troops, and in the bright morning sunshine these tangible bonds of love and affection, wafted by a gentle southern zephyr, cast an irradiance over the scene, which somehow or other completely blotted out the shadow of parting. The troops occupied the bulwarks, swarmed on top of the fore-castle head, mounted the rigging, and answered cheer by cheer, and took up any refrain of song started from the wharf. Now and again the regimental band, stationed in the after-well deck, led the chorus. Sad hearts there were, of course. Here and there a mother, sister, or sweetheart shed a silent tear, but it was astonishing in that great

assemblage to see how predominant was the cheery outlook. Many felt that perhaps they were parting with loved ones for ever, but they did so with the bravest smiles. Shortly after 11 a.m. the troopship, attended by tugboats, hauled away from the wharf, and as the paper ribbons stretched across the ever-widening water the sight presented was intensely inspiring. The last good-byes were shouted from shore to ship, and from ship to shore, until they were mere echoes, as the ship slowly made her way down channel and into the wider waters of the gulf. The 32nd Battalion went away with the determination to uphold the newborn prestige of Australian troops, and they were accorded a farewell which reflected the assurance of South Australians that that resolve would be realized.

[Note.—The publication of the foregoing report was disallowed for one month by the military censors.—Ed.]

A 4385

ORIGINAL
AUSTRALIANRETURN TO AUSTRALIA
MILITARY FORCES.MISSING
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

A Company
32nd Battalion.Name CHOAT Wesley Paul
Unit M. Group B. Coy. "A" COY.
Joined on 12/7/15 32nd BATTALION, A.I.F.

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ...

1. Wesley Paul Choat

2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born?

2. In the Parish of Cherry Gardens
near the Town of South Aust
in the County of South Aust

3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalised British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ...

3. N.B.

4. What is your age? ...

4. 19 1/2 years

5. What is your trade or calling? ...

5. Farm Laborer

6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ...

6. No

7. Are you married? ...

7. No

8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ...

8. (Mother) M^{rs} Alice Mary Choat
Francis Street
Clarence Park, South Aust

9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ...

9. No

10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ...

10. No

11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ...

11. No Exemption

12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ...

12. No

13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ...

13. No

14. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother) ...

14. No

15. Do you understand that a Separation Allowance will be paid to you after enlistment during your term of service? ...

15. Yes

16. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ...

16. Yes17. I, Wesley Paul Choat, do solemnly declare that the above answers made to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.18. And I further agree to abstain from any other of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service.19. the support of my wife and three children20. Date 30-6-1521. Signature of person enlisted, W. P. Choat

22. *This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.

23. †Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

CARD CHECKED

Statement of Service of No. *68*

Name

Choat Wesley Paul

| Unit in which served. | Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c. | Period of service in each rank. | | Remarks. |
|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------|--|
| | | From— | To— | |
| <i>M. Group Base Inf "A" Coy.</i> | <i>as private</i> | <i>12/7/15</i> | <i>15/1/15</i> | |
| <i>32nd BATTALION, A.I.F.</i> | <i>Embarked Adelaide</i> | <i>15-11-15</i> | | <i>Rd 1.</i> |
| MISSING | <i>in Action France</i> | <i>20/1/16</i> | | <i>10/1/16</i> |
| <i>32nd BATTN</i> | <i>Presence of Men in Germany</i> | <i>20-7-16</i> | | <i>prop. 24/1/16</i> <i>CIBL 306</i> <i>X 24405.</i> |
| <i>32nd Bn</i> | <i>Offence on A Service</i> | | | |
| | <i>disobeying as to show a wilful defiance of authority a lawful command given personally by his superior officer in the execution of his office.</i> | | | |
| | <i>Refused to carry a box off busch Parade at Tel-el-Kebir</i> | <i>25-2-16</i> | | <i>R/cas. 633</i> <i>9/3/16.</i> |
| | <i>Award. Profits 5 days pay 14 days. b.b.</i> | | | |
| <i>P.C. from self to Red Cross dated 1/2/15</i> | <i>Prev reptd Pres: of war German. now escaped Holland.</i> | | | <i>6/1/15 3150</i> <i>Rp 98/53352</i> <i>21/1/15</i> |

Arrived England

13/1/18

CIBL 2210

I have examined the above details, and find them correct in every respect.

D.M.R. Coghill

LIEUT. COL.

G.O. 32nd BATTN

106/04

57 Private
CHCAT Raymond Hatten

32nd Battalion
20/7/16.

Killed in Action
(Mother) Mrs. A.M. Gheat.

Particulars Required for the Roll of Honour of Australia in the Memorial War Museum.

1. Name (in full) of Fallen Soldier Raymond Hadden Ghoat
2. Unit and Number (if known) 64. 92nd Battalion
3. With what Town or District in Australia was he chiefly connected (under which his name ought to come on the Memorial)—
Town (if any) Adelaide District State South Australia
4. What was his Birthplace Clarence Park South Australia.
5. Date of Death July 20th 1916.
6. Place where Killed or Wounded France

Particulars Required for the Nation's Histories.

1. What was his Calling Clark in the Railway Department.
2. Age at time of Death 24.
3. What was his School Goodwood Public School.
4. What was his other Training Commercial Training at the University.
5. If born in Britain or Abroad, at what age did he come to Australia—
6. Had he ever served in any Military or Naval Force before Enlisting in the A.I.F. (Please state particulars) No.

7. Any other biographical details likely to be of interest to the Historian of the A.I.F. or of his Regiment—
He always paid strict attention to duty, & soon gained the confidence of his superior officers, and died, as he lived. "Doing his very best."

8. Was he connected with any other Member of the A.I.F. who died or who distinguished himself. (Please state Relationship)—
He was brother to A. P. Ghoat, who was killed the same date July 20. 1916. & also brother to Th. P. Ghoat, who was taken Prisoner July 20th 1916. & escaped from Germany Dec 5th 1918. & was sent Home, arriving July 6th 1918.

9. Name and Address of the Parent or other person giving this information—
Name Alice M. Ghoat
Relationship to Soldier Mother
Address Laurens Street Clarence Park South Australia.

10. Names and Addresses of any other persons to whom reference could be made by the Historian for further information—
Name Mr. Bennett. Railway Paymaster
Address North Terrace Adelaide South Australia

NOTE—This Folder is Addressed to the Secretary, Department of Defence, Melbourne. Please fold in four, and stick down gummed flap so that the addressed portion is outside. The information is required urgently.

106/01.

66 Private
CHCAT Archibald Percy

32nd Battalion

20/7/16.

Killed in Action
(Mother) Mrs. A.M. Choat

Particulars Required for the Roll of Honour of Australia in the Memorial War Museum.

1. Name (in full) of Fallen Soldier Archibald Percy Ghoat.
2. Unit and Number (if known) 6th. 92nd Battalion
3. With what Town or District in Australia was he chiefly connected (under which his name ought to come on the Memorial)—
Town (if any) Adelaide District _____ State South Australia
4. What was his Birthplace Cherry Gardens, South Australia.
5. Date of Death 20th July 1916.
6. Place where Killed or Wounded Pleurbaix

Particulars Required for the Nation's Histories.

1. What was his Calling Farmer's Assistant
2. Age at time of Death 19 years
3. What was his School Gardwood Public School
4. What was his other Training He was a born mechanic
5. If born in Britain or Abroad, at what age did he come to Australia _____
6. Had he ever served in any Military or Naval Force before Enlisting in the A.I.F. (Please state particulars) No.

7. Any other biographical details likely to be of interest to the Historian of the A.I.F., or of his Regiment—

Private Wesley Paul Ghoat was wounded & taken Prisoner the same date July 20th 1916. He escaped from Germany Dec 5th 1918. Taking with him 9. Pitts. They arrived in Holland Dec 9th 1918, after which they were taken care of & eventually sent Home as "Herols" July 6th 1918.

8. Was he connected with any other Member of the A.I.F. who died or who distinguished himself. (Please state Relationship) —
Brother to the above. also brother to Raymond H. Ghoat, who is reported to have been killed on July 20th 1916.

9. Name and Address of the Parent or other person giving this information—

Name Miss Mary Ghoat - Francis St. Clarence Park South Australia
Relationship to Soldier Mother
Address Clarence Park South Australia.

10. Names and Addresses of any other persons to whom reference could be made by the Historian for further information—

Name Lady Duncan's Son Mr. Keith Duncan
Address Gum Creek near Clare. South Australia.

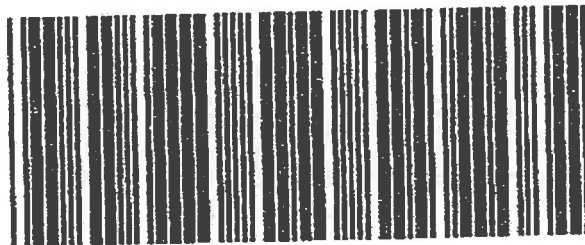
NOTE.—This Folder is Addressed to the Secretary, Department of Defence, Melbourne. Please fold in four, and stick down gummed flap so that the addressed portion is outside. The information is required urgently.

D. 1023/10.11.—C.1676.

Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing
Enquiry Bureau files, 1914-18 War
1DRL/0428

**68 Private
Wesley Paul Choat**

32nd Battalion



0730301E

The Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931), Saturday 23 February 1918, page 8

**THE ESCAPE OF CORPORAL PITTS
AND PRIVATE CHOATE.**

Another letter dealing with the escape from Germany of Corporal J. W. Pitts and Private Wesley Choate has been received by a friend. Writing from Mithras, Holland, on December 30, Private Choate says:—“I made my first attempt to escape on September 30, but was only permitted to see the promised land, being recaptured after three nights' marching, only one mile from freedom, for which attempt I was kept under arms and in the stocks for six weeks. At the expiration of that period I was removed temporarily to an old wash barrack, where we were able to make ourselves fairly comfortable. Later I was informed that all attempted escapees were to be returned to their commands from which they had escaped. This was greatly in my favor, for from what I had learned, and what others told me, I felt confident that my next attempt would have a different issue, and accordingly, as soon as I had recovered from my fast, and had got rid of the taste of bread and water, and had again prepared my clothes, I had another try. This time I took a mate for company, and had to squeeze through a small barrel window, which was 30 ft. high. We let ourselves down by means of a small wire rope which I had captured from the railway. We reached mother earth safely, but with rather a sudden stop, and making a tremendous noise. As it was a clear, frosty night, it seemed even louder. There was two inches of snow lying on the ground. We started off walking towards the town, when who should we meet but one of the men who acted as sentry over us while we were in stock. Fortunately he was with a woman, and did not notice us. On reaching the outskirts of the town we took a car for the railway station, by which means I had intended to cross the Rhine, a large and fast-flowing river, and our greatest difficulty. However, fortune favored us, and I went into the main station and ordered two tickets to a small station west of the Rhine. We were regarded suspiciously, but were asked no questions (on account of the constant fear of the aeroplanes coming over only very few of the railway carriages were lighted). We climbed into a dark carriage, and travelled for an hour, getting a good look at any who might have followed us, but all went well, and we left the train and began our march till we were tired. We then lay down among some bushes and the snow, where we remained until dark. But before that came several showers descended. By nightfall we set out again, developing an enormous thirst. On this night we seemed to get tired sooner, as we had a strong headwind and an overcast cloud with rain. At last our thirst became so bad that we crossed a field to a river, which was frozen over with about two inches of ice. This we broke, and drank greedily. We rested there a couple of hours, and, not feeling like starting again, found a suitable place, and dug ourselves in until darkness. We were hidden in a wood, and upon awakening had a wash, which made us feel 15 years younger. When the night was in we left our hiding place. There was only one main outlet to the wood, so we kept to the marshes. About midnight we entered a large forest, which we knew was right to the border. I had neither map nor compass, so we marched and marched, walking as lightly as possible. We went on, and crossed the border on Sunday morning, December 2—cold, wet, and weary, but with a light heart. We were given refreshments at a house, and were directed to the nearest village, where we fell into suitable hands. We were then advised to go to Venlo and report to the police, and the latter sent us to quarantines for 14 days at Mithras, where we are at present. We are now waiting to get to Rotterdam, where we will receive a suit of clothes and money from the British Consul.”

32nd Battn.
A.I.F.

Choat,
Wesley P. 68

Prisoner of war

Captured Levante 20/7/16

Gef. Dulmen

Cert. by - German List dated 12/8/16. Recd 30/8/16.

London,
4/9/16.

Off. M.

USPY

2150
11/18/17
Sitterd

Holland

11/18/17

✓ Dear Miss Chomley,

I have very great pleasure indeed in informing you that I have, on my second attempt, succeeded in escaping from my captivity in Germany, and am eagerly looking forward to the time when I shall be able to thank you in person for the many kind and invaluable privilege received through you by the Society.

I am yours in obligation,

SS Pte. W. P. UHOAT. J. 2-11

JAN 6 1918

4TH MILITARY DISTRICT
A.D. 68 6 337

630/58/58

Francis Street
Clarence Park
South Australia
Jan 11 - 1918.

for Gully
15/1

To the Secretary, Defence Department
Dear Sir

I received kind permission to present my petition
before you, by this day's mail. No. 64283.

'Oh kind Sir'; if it be possible, I beseech you, to allow our son
Private Thesley Paul Choat, No 68, A. Coy. 32nd Battalion, to be put
in some (safe) corner on Home Service in England, or anywhere, as
long as he is safe, but Sir, I do implore you not to send him back to
the Front please. considering he was seven months in Egypt and
then in the Battle of Loizeers, and then wounded and Prisoner since July 20th
1916, now escaped, and his two brothers Raymond and Archie were
also killed in action on that same 20th of July 1916. They were good
boys to us, and used to do all that lay in their power to help us.

My husband is far from strong; and I fear he will quite collapse, if
Thesley be sent to the Front again. I am not strong myself. I have to have
help with the house-work, our boy 18 years has had much sickness and many
big bills, the next boy 13, has had meningitis, and pneumonia three
times, then there are his little ones, one eight years, and one seven, but if you
will promise the safety of Thesley, and we could feel that he would
some day come home, to help us and look after us. we shall be so
very thankful to you Dear Sir.

I remain

Yours very respectfully

Alice M. Choat.

copy to
PROV/STAFF.

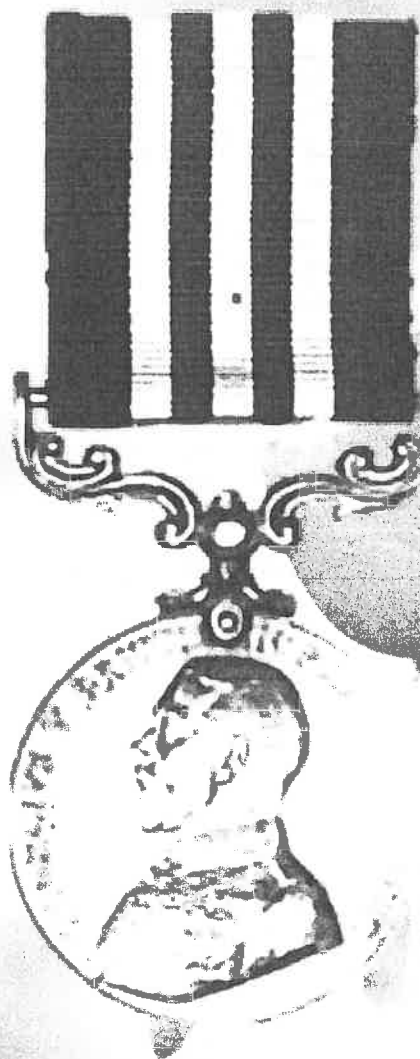
FEB - 5 1918

FEB 6 1918

2 copies

1-3-18

Military Medal



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Student Statement

My interest in history first began on the small rural property in which I spent most of my childhood. The property is an old farmhouse and has a very interesting history, having been built during the time of the Great War in 1915. It is situated near Port Victoria on the Yorke Peninsula. When first moving into the property, we found old documents in the cellar such as old diaries, newspapers and maps. These fascinating historical documents sparked my imagination and ignited my interest in history. I began to research the house and local area and discovered amazing facts about the Yorke Peninsula and its people dating back from settlement onwards.

The enormous sacrifice of Australians in World War One and the tragic losses incurred stood out. As I became a little older, my interest was enhanced further by reading the poetry and stories of the Great War by men such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen; bringing to life horrors our men endured.

Throughout my life, I have contributed to the local community in a variety of ways. With other children, I was involved in visits to an aged care home offering singing and reading. I volunteered at wildlife rescue center. I have been involved in setting up stalls for fundraising for charity, have volunteered as a waitress at community dinners for the elderly and help out at the canteen for my local sports club.

I enjoy sport and am captain of the girl's soccer team at my school and my local Mount Lofty Soccer Club. Other enjoyable hobbies include reading, writing, netball, volleyball, running, water sports and design. I am also currently in the process of becoming an ambassador for SAKKS, which is a charity that supports children with Kabuki syndrome.