

Alfred Ernest Fordham



Private 3816 Alfred Ernest Fordham enlisted in the 5th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division in Melbourne on 7 August 1915. He embarked for Egypt on 23 November, where he was taken on strength of the 5th Battalion at Serapeum on 22 February 1916.

The battalion embarked for France on 25 March and disembarked in Marseilles on 30 March, where they entrained for the 63-hour journey to the Hazebrouck region in the north, where they undertook training for trench warfare. The 5th Battalion entered the front line for the first time at Fromelles on 30 April, where they spent the next two weeks, being relieved on 13 May. During this period, the battalion lost 25 men (five killed).

They re-occupied the same trenches between 28 May – 10 June for the loss of another 25 men (three killed). On 17 June, Pte Fordham was attached to the battalion's grenadier platoon, as he must have demonstrated an aptitude for bomb throwing, as it was called.

After a brief period in Belgium, the 5th Battalion was moved south to the Somme from 12 July and reached Albert on 21 July. The 1st Division was ordered to attack and capture the French village of Pozieres on 23 July. The division achieved its objectives and then had to withstand several fierce counter attacks and the most severe artillery bombardments that any Australian soldiers had encountered to that time. Overall 1st Division casualties between 23 – 27 July totalled 5,285 men. The 5th Battalion accounted for 446 of those, one of whom was Pte Fordham, who was killed in action on 25 July.

He was originally buried near where he fell, however his grave was subsequently lost, and he has no known grave.

Private 3816 Alfred Ernest Fordham is remembered on the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Name: Fordham, Alfred Ernest	
Service Number	3816
Date enlisted	7 August 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 November 1915 HMAT A40 <i>Ceramic</i>
Previous military service or enlistment attempts?	2 nd Lieutenant senior cadets, Footscray, Victoria
Stated age/DOB (if known)	18 years 2 months
Place of birth	Maldon, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Blacksmith
Religion	Methodist
Next of kin and address	Fordham Mr Thomas, father, 83 Buckley Street, Footscray, Victoria
Permanent address in Australia	83 Buckley Street, Footscray, Victoria
Appearance	Medium complexion, dark brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 9 ½ inches, weight – 9 stone, 13 lbs, chest measurement – 33/34 inches
Final Rank	Corporal
Final Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Killed in action
Date and place died	25 July 1916 Poizieres, France
Cemetery details	No known grave. Commemorated on the Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France
Honours/medals	1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Also listed on the Holy Trinity Anglican Church Maldon Roll of Honor, Maldon Methodist Church Roll of Honor and Maldon State School Roll of Honor