

John George Leslie MM



Private (Pte) 4850 John George Leslie enlisted in the 5th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division in Melbourne on 20 November 1915. He embarked overseas on 7 March 1916 and disembarked in Egypt in mid-April, where he joined the 2nd (Brigade) Training Battalion.

He embarked for France on 9 May and disembarked at Marseilles on 17 May, where he was taken on strength of the 5th Battalion, in the field at Bonneville, on 30 July 1916, one of 42 reinforcements that arrived that day.

After a short spell, the 5th Battalion moved to Pozieres on 14 August and slowly advanced towards the heavily fortified Mouquet Farm, however the Germans held firm. After a week, the battalion left the line on 21 August having sustained 198 casualties (36 killed), one of whom was Pte Leslie, who sustained shrapnel wounds to his left leg and shell shock.

He was evacuated to the 1st Canadian General Hospital at Etaples between 23 August – 10 September and rejoined the battalion at Ouderdom on 29 September.

Pte Leslie was hospitalised at Rouen with a skin complaint between 4 March – 18 April 1917 and rejoined the battalion on 10 May, where he was promoted to Lance Corporal on 13 May.

On 14 September, the battalion moved north to Belgium, and then to Zillebeke on 19 September. At 2.30 am on the morning of 20 September 1917 the battalion moved to their starting point near Glencorse Wood where, at 5.40 am, they attacked. Considered a success, victory at the Battle of Menin Road nevertheless came at a heavy cost, and the 5th Battalion alone sustained 279 casualties, including 96 killed or missing.

Between 1 – 8 October 1917 the 5th Battalion manned the line east of Zonnebeke Cemetery and, although not directly involved in the assault on Broodseinde Ridge, nevertheless sustained 173 casualties during this period – mostly due to German artillery bombardments.

Between 15 October – 15 December, L Cpl Leslie was admitted to the 39th General Hospital at le Havre with venereal disease, during which time he was also awarded the Military Medal on 31 October 1917. The citation read:

“During the operations east of YPRES on 20/23rd September 1917, L/Cpl LESLIE brought his section complete to the trenches without loss. During the bombardment on the evening of the 21st a shell burst close by him and buried two men. In spite of heavy shelling he dug them out.”

Following his discharge from hospital, L Cpl Leslie rejoined the battalion on 23 December. On 1 February 1918, he was promoted to Corporal (Cpl) and attended the Corps School at Aveluy from 24 February – 13 March. He then enjoyed two weeks leave in England from 15 – 31 March 1918.

In mid-April 1918, the 5th Battalion was held in reserve during the 1st Division’s defence of Hazebrouck, after which they remained in the area for the next few months. The battalion was manning the front line near Strazeele in early July when Cpl Leslie sustained a shrapnel wound to his right thigh on 9 July. He was initially evacuated to the 2nd Canadian Stationary Hospital from 11 – 14 July and from there via hospital ship to England, where he was admitted to the Central Military Hospital at Weymouth between 15 July – 19 October.

He never fully recovered from his wounds and embarked for Australia on 12 December 1918.

Corporal 4850 John George Leslie disembarked in Melbourne on 1 February, where he was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 11 March 1919.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DA13912

Name: Leslie, John George	
Service Number	4850
Date enlisted	20 November 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	7 March 1916 HMAT A18 <i>Wiltshire</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	21 years 6 months
Place of birth	Queenscliff, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	Leslie, Mr John Miller, father, Noorinbee via Orbost, Victoria
Permanent address	Noorinbee via Orbost, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, dark brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 6 ½ inches, weight – 9 stone, 4 lbs, chest measurement – 34/37 inches
Final Rank	Corporal
Final Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	20 August 1916 Mouquet Farm, France
Nature of wounds	Shrapnel wounds to left leg & shell shock
Date and place wounded (2)	9 July 1918 Strazeele, France
Nature of wounds (2)	Shrapnel wound to right thigh
Date and ship embarked for Australia	12 December 1918 HT <i>Nestor</i>
Date discharged	11 March 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (wounds)
Honours/medals	Military Medal, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 17/3/1958. Also listed on Cann River Honor Roll