

## **David Andrew Leslie Wright**

Private (Pte) 3512 David Andrew Leslie Wright enlisted in the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division in Melbourne on 2 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 11 October and disembarked in Egypt in mid-November 1915, where he was subsequently taken on strength of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Tel el Kebir on 7 January 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. The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion entered the front line for the first time at Fromelles on 30 April, where they spent the next two weeks and lost 25 men (five killed). They then re-occupied the same trenches between 28 May – 10 June for the loss of another 25 men (three killed).

After a brief period in Belgium, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved south to the Somme from 12 July and reached Albert on 21 July. The 1<sup>st</sup> Division was ordered to attack and capture the French village of Pozieres on 23 July. The division achieved its objective but then had to withstand several fierce counter attacks and the most severe artillery bombardments that any Australian soldiers had encountered to that time. Overall 1<sup>st</sup> Division casualties between 23 – 27 July totalled 5,285 men (of which the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion accounted for 446).

The battalion returned 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 a further 198 casualties (36 killed).

Pte Wright was hospitalised with general debility at the 25<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Camiers from 5 – 14 October. Later diagnosed with a blood disorder and boils, he was transferred to England and admitted to the Edinburgh War Hospital from 15 October – 24 November.

He subsequently contracted pleurisy and was hospitalised at the Tidworth Military Hospital from 1 February – 9 March 1917. After his recovery, Pte Wright was transferred to the newly formed 65<sup>th</sup> Battalion, then in training at Wareham Camp in Wiltshire. This battalion was later disbanded due to the lack of new recruits arriving from Australia, and Pte Wright was transferred back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 19 September.

He returned to France on 9 October, where he rejoined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, in the field at Halifax Camp, near Vlamertinge, on 18 October 1917. He was admitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian General Hospital at Boulogne with chilblains in his feet from 12 – 27 December and rejoined the battalion on 9 January 1918.

In mid-April 1918, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion was held in reserve during the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's defence of Hazebrouck, after which they remained in the area for the next few months.

During the Amiens offensive on the Somme, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion helped capture the village of Lihons between 9 – 11 August at a cost of 209 casualties (37 killed). Two weeks later, on 23 August, the battalion participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's successful assault on Chuignes, where the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion alone captured 450 prisoners for the loss of 113 casualties (28 killed).

The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion's last action of the war was as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Division's successful attack on the Hindenburg Outpost Line at Hargicourt on 18 September, which included the old British front lines overrun by the Germans back in March. Total Australian casualties of 1,260 were relatively light as the ground was taken, along with 4,300 German prisoners.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion left the line for the last time on 23 September 1918, after which Pte Wright was granted leave in England from 9 – 25 October. He left France for good on 10 December and was taken on strength of the Army Pay Corps in London the next day.

On 8 March 1919, he married a local girl, Jean Bennett, in London, and she returned to Australia with him on 9 August. They disembarked in Sydney on 3 October, where Private 3512 David Andrew Leslie Wright was discharged from the AIF on 12 December 1921.

Name: Wright, David Andrew Leslie	
Service Number	3512
Date enlisted	2 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	11 October 1915 HMAT A71 <i>Nestor</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	18 years 7 months
Place of birth	West Ham, London, England
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Clerk
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Wright, Mr David, father, 69 Turnmarsh Lane, Plaistow, London, England
Permanent address	Melbourne, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 7 inches, weight – 10 stone, 10 lbs, chest measurement – 36/38 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	Army Pay Corps
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia (with wife)
Date and ship embarked for Australia	9 August 1919 HT <i>Ceramic</i>
Date discharged	12 December 1921
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal