

Rudolph Cazimar Hodgetts



Private 3805 Rudolph Cazimar Hodgetts enlisted in the 8th Infantry Battalion at Stawell on 14 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 23 November and disembarked in Egypt in mid-December.

He was subsequently transferred and taken on strength of the 5th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division, at Serapeum, on 22 February 1916, and promoted to Lance Corporal (L Cpl) on 3 March.

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 5th 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 nearby Belgium, where L Cpl Hodgetts was promoted to Corporal (Cpl) on 7 July, the 5th Battalion moved south to the Somme from 12 July and reached Albert by 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, mostly due to artillery. The 5th Battalion accounted for 446 of those during their time in the line.

After a short spell, during which Cpl Hodgetts was promoted to Lance Sergeant (L Sgt) on 13 August, the 5th 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 Pozieres on 21 August having sustained a further 36 killed and 162 wounded, one of whom was L Sgt Hodgetts, who was gassed on 20 August 1916. He was treated at the 2nd Field Ambulance but rejoined the battalion later the same day.

The 5th Battalion was resting at Ribemont when L Sgt Hodgetts was promoted to Sergeant (Sgt) on 10 November 1916. He was later admitted to the 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital at Doullens with scabies between 1 – 24 April 1917. By late July, the battalion was billeted in Hondeghem, where Sgt Hodgetts was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (2nd Lt) on 28 July.

On 14 September, the battalion moved north to Belgium, and then to Zillebeke on 19 September, where extra ammunition and rations were issued in preparation for an assault the next day. 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 suffered 279 casualties (96 killed).

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 a further 173 casualties, including 54 killed and four missing – mostly due to German artillery bombardments.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E00836

The ruined church at Zonnebeke and the lake alongside which it stood, 5 October 1917

Although things had quietened down by late November, the Australians remained in the Ypres and Messines area for several months, which is where 2nd Lt Hodgetts was promoted to Lieutenant (Lt) on 25 December 1917.

He was sent to the 2nd Brigade School of Instruction on 14 March 1918 and returned on 14 April. The 5th Battalion acted as reserve during the 1st Division's successful defence of Hazebrouck and Strazeele during the German Spring Offensive from 14 – 18 April, and they remained in the area for several months afterwards.

Lt Hodgetts sailed to England on 30 May, where he was seconded for duty with the Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill. He served there for the remainder of the war and, between 1 January – 11 August 1919, performed the role of Brigade Paymaster.

After a period of leave between 12 – 30 August, he was transferred to Sutton Veny Camp where he undertook the role of Paymaster, AIF Depots until he embarked for Australia on 23 September.

Lieutenant Rudolph Cazimar Hodgetts disembarked in Melbourne about six weeks later, where his appointment as an officer in the AIF was terminated on 29 January 1920.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E01812

Outdoor portrait of 5th Battalion officers, 20 February 1918.

Lt Rudolph Cazimar Hodgetts is identified in the back row, standing fifth from the left

Name: Hodgetts, Rudolph Cazimar	
Service Number	3805
Date enlisted	14 July 1915
Place enlisted	Stawell, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	8 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 November 1915 HMAT A40 <i>Ceramic</i>
Previous military service	3 years senior cadets (2 nd Lieutenant)
Stated age/DOB (if known)	20 years 10 months
Place of birth	Landsborough, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Surveying student
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Hodgetts, Mrs Margaret, mother (Draper), Landsborough, Victoria
Permanent address	Landsborough, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, fair hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 4 ½ inches, weight – 8 stone, 12 lbs, chest measurement – 33/35 inches
Final Rank	Lieutenant
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	Gassed
Date and ship embarked for Australia	23 September 1919 HT <i>Ascanius</i>
Date discharged	29 January 1920
Nature of discharge	Appointment Terminated
Honours/medals	1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Listed on the Landsborough War Memorial and Landsborough & District Honor Roll