

Archibald MacQueen

Private (Pte) 2411 Archibald MacQueen enlisted in the 23rd Infantry Battalion in the 6th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Australian Division in Melbourne on 13 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 29 September and disembarked in Egypt in late October, where he was taken on strength of the 23rd Battalion at Tel el Kebir on 11 January 1916, following their evacuation from Gallipoli.

The 23rd Battalion embarked for France on 19 March and disembarked at Marseilles on 26 March and headed north, where they spent time in and out of the line near Armentieres and Fleurbaix in the following weeks.

On 27 July, the 2nd Australian Division, including the 23rd Battalion, took over the attack on Pozieres from the 1st Division. At huge cost, they captured additional ground and withstood several German counter attacks before being relieved on 6 August. During its ten days in the line, the 23rd Battalion lost 476 men, including 123 killed – around half its original strength.

The battalion moved north to the Ypres area in late September, where Pte MacQueen was treated for a septic finger between 7 October – 1 November 1916. He was subsequently hospitalised at the 22nd General Hospital at Camiers with deafness between 5 – 10 November, then at the 26th General Hospital at Etaples from 13 – 15 November, before being transferred to England later the same day.

He was admitted to the Norfolk War Hospital at Norwich from 15 November – 8 December, after which he was granted leave until 15 December. On his return from leave, he was posted to the Perham Downs Camp in Wiltshire, where he spent the next seven months.

On 13 July 1917, Pte MacQueen was transported to Castle Bromwich in the West Midlands, where he was transferred and taken on strength of No. 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC), as an Air Mechanic 3rd Class (AM3), more than likely because of his pre-war occupation.

The squadron moved to France between 16 – 18 December 1917. While the pilots flew their Sopwith Camels across the English Channel, the ground crews sailed across, then entrained to an airfield near St Omer. Four days later, they moved to an aerodrome at Bruay, under the command of the 10th Wing Royal Flying Corps (RFC), and operated in support of the British 1st Army, undertaking offensive patrols and escorting reconnaissance aircraft.

The squadron's first patrol over German lines took place on 9 January 1918, and its first air combat action occurred on 13 January. Towards the end of February, the squadron was increased from 18 to 24 aircraft, which considerably enhanced their operational capacity.

During the German spring offensive in March – April, the squadron was heavily involved in strafing and bombing operations in support of the retreating British ground forces.

Threatened by the breadth of the German advance, the squadron moved to Clairmarais North on 28 April and joined the 11th Wing RFC, part of the British 2nd Army.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Group portrait of the Air Mechanics of No. 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps at the hangars, Clairmarais North aerodrome, 16 June 1918

Due to repeated German bombing attacks on the Clairmarais North airfield, the Squadron moved to Reclinghem on 30 June, where it shared the aerodrome with No. 2 Squadron AFC. Both squadrons formed part of 80th Wing RFC under the British 5th Army.

In July, the squadron was heavily involved in offensive patrols and provided escorts for bombing and reconnaissance missions. Following the allies' Amiens offensive on 8 August, the squadron remained very active in operations against both air and ground targets.

At the end of September 1918, they moved to Serny and in early October was re-equipped with Sopwith Snipes. As the Germans retreated, the squadron relocated several times during the last month of the war and, following the Armistice, was the only Australian unit assigned to the British Army of Occupation. They consequently moved to Bickendorf, near Cologne, on 17 December.

AM3 MacQueen left the squadron on 9 January 1919 and returned to England on 24 January, where he was hospitalised with influenza at Sutton Veny Camp from 26 January – 15 February.

Air Mechanic 3rd Class 2411 Archibald MacQueen embarked for return to Australia on 5 April 1919 and disembarked in Melbourne on 18 May, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 26 July 1919.

Name: MacQueen, Archibald	
Service Number	2411
Date enlisted	13 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	23 rd Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	29 September 1915 RMS <i>Osterley</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	21 years 8 Months
Place of birth	Newham, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Mechanic
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	MacQueen, Mrs Flora, mother, 72 Donald Street, Brunswick, Victoria
Permanent address	72 Donald Street, Brunswick, Victoria
Appearance	Ruddy complexion, dark brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 7 inches, weight – 10 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 36/38 inches
Final Rank	Air Mechanic 3 rd Class
Final Unit	No. 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	5 April 1919 HT <i>Armagh</i>
Date discharged	29 July 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (illness)
Honours/medals	1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Brother of Malcolm MacQueen (SN 2622) & Donald MacQueen MM (SN 4770). Died 7 September 1946.