

Malcolm William MacQueen CdeG

Private (Pte) 2622 Malcolm William MacQueen enlisted in the 7th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division in Melbourne on 14 June 1915. He embarked overseas on 26 August and disembarked in Egypt in late September.

He left Egypt and landed at Mudros on 18 November, where he was taken on strength of the 7th Battalion at Sarpi Camp, Lemnos on 20 November, one of 115 reinforcements received that day. The battalion then returned to Gallipoli on 26 November and served there until the final evacuation four weeks later.

Back in Egypt, Pte MacQueen was subsequently transferred and taken on strength of the 1st Pioneer Battalion in the 1st Australian Division at Serapeum on 13 March 1916. The pioneers were infantry with light military combat engineer skills. Among other tasks, they constructed defensive positions, command posts and dugouts, prepared barbed wire defences and, where necessary, fought alongside the infantry.

The 1st Pioneer Battalion left Egypt on 26 March and disembarked in Marseilles on 2 April, where they entrained for the north of France. They operated around Armentieres and Fleurbaix during May and June, which is where Pte MacQueen was promoted to Lance Corporal (L Cpl) on 10 May.

The 1st Division moved south to the Somme region in late July, where the pioneers constructed the “forming up” trench used by the infantry to enter the Battle for Pozieres on 23 July 1916. Owing to the horrendous casualties incurred, the 1st Pioneers were also committed to the attack on Pozieres village in the ensuing days, where they sustained 176 casualties of their own (including 41 killed or missing).

L Cpl MacQueen was promoted to Corporal (Cpl) on 1 August, following which the pioneers returned to the Pozieres front from mid-August. They repaired structures and trenches that had been destroyed by German artillery, all the while under fire themselves, and eventually left the line again on 22 August, having sustained 116 casualties (25 killed or missing).

Cpl MacQueen was granted leave in France from 21 January – 9 February 1917, following which he was promoted to Sergeant (Sgt) on 8 March.

The pioneers moved north to Belgium in September, in preparation for the 1st Division's involvement in the Third Battle of Ypres later that month. The battalion undertook anti-aircraft duties (manning Lewis machine guns) and also road construction and repair work, often under fire, for the loss of 137 casualties (26 killed) during September, and they remained in the Ypres area until 10 November.

The 1st Pioneers spent the winter months in the Messines sector, during which time Sgt MacQueen also attended the 1st Anzac Corps School at Aveluy between 15 November – 24 December, then proceeded on leave to England from 15 January – 1 February 1918.

For his performance during the operations around Ypres during September – October 1917, Sgt MacQueen was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre on 19 January 1918. Unfortunately, the medal citation is not held in his service record so there are no specific details available.

The German Spring Offensive on the Somme commenced on 21 March and the 1st Division was in the process of moving south a few weeks later, when news of a second offensive in the north meant they had to turn around to face that instead. They arrived back just in time to take up defensive positions around Strazeele and Hazebrouck, and they checked the German advance in fighting between 14 – 18 April. The situation was so uncertain during this period that the pioneers were held in readiness as the 1st Divisional reserve in the event of a German break through, which didn't eventuate.

During the lull which followed these events, Sgt MacQueen was granted leave to the 2nd (British) Army Rest camp between 1 – 16 July.

Following the Allies' offensive from Amiens launched in early August 1918, the pioneers supported the 1st Division's capture of Lihons on 9 August and the exploitation beyond Chuignes later in the month, at a cost of 147 casualties (27 killed). The following month the pioneers followed the infantry advance along the Somme Valley until they were withdrawn from the line for the final time on 24 September.



Sgt Malcolm MacQueen's medal set (Belgian Croix de Guerre on right)

Sgt MacQueen left France on 30 October and was initially attached for duty with the Pioneer Training Battalion in England from 2 November, and then with the Gas School at Chiselden from 18 – 29 November 1918.

Sergeant 2622 Malcolm William MacQueen embarked for return to Australia on 31 March 1919 and disembarked in Melbourne on 12 May, where he was medically discharged from the AIF (no details) on 20 August 1919.

Name: MacQueen, Malcolm William (enlisted as McQueen)	
Service Number	2622
Date enlisted	14 June 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	7 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	26 August 1915 HMAT A68 <i>Anchises</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	30 years 6 months
Place of birth	Romsey, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Seaman
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	MacQueen, Mrs Flora, mother, 72 Donald Street, Brunswick, Victoria
Permanent address	72 Donald Street, Brunswick, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, dark brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 6 inches, weight – 12 stone, 12 lbs, chest measurement – 38/40 inches
Final Rank	Sergeant
Final Unit	1 st Pioneer Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Gallipoli, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	31 March 1919 HT <i>Khyber</i>
Date discharged	20 August 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (no details)
Honours/medals	Croix de Guerre (Belgium), 1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 3 December 1968. Brother of Donald MacQueen MM (SN 4770).