

## Sydney Edward Knapé



*Gunner Sydney Knapé (4<sup>th</sup> from left, back row)*

Gunner (Gnr) 849 Sydney Edward Knapé enlisted in the 36<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Group (HAG) in Queenscliff on 1 November 1916, aged 19 years. He embarked overseas on 10 February 1917 and disembarked in Plymouth on 11 April, where he joined the Heavy Artillery reinforcements at Stowlangtoft Camp.

The group was organised into two batteries, the 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup>, each equipped with six 8 inch Howitzers and 9.2 inch Howitzers respectively by mid-1917. Large and immobile, the guns could not easily be redeployed without lifting equipment and were the largest used by the Australians during the war.

He left England on 5 May and landed in France the next day, where he joined the Royal Garrison Artillery Details at Rouelles on 15 June. He remained there for four months then marched out and was taken on strength of the 54<sup>th</sup> Battery of the 36<sup>th</sup> HAG at Rousdamme on 19 October 1917.

The designation of the group was changed to 36<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Brigade (HAB) in early 1918 and Gnr Knapé was granted leave in England from 17 March – 2 April. Just a week later the Germans commenced the next stage of their Spring Offensive, this time near Armentières, and the 36<sup>th</sup> HAB was involved in continuous defensive fire around Messines, Ploegsteert Wood and Neuve Eglise from 9 – 18 April, when the main threat ended, and the unit remained in the north throughout May – September.

While heavy artillery operations wound down from mid-October as it became obvious a major German withdrawal was underway, the unit advanced east. When the armistice was declared on 11 November, they had reached Tourcoing, on the Belgian border.

Gnr Knapé contracted venereal disease and was treated at the 8<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station from 16 – 22 November, then transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Boulogne from 23 – 27 November. He was later admitted to the 39<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at le Havre between 28 November – 15 December and eventually rejoined the brigade on 13 January 1919.

He left France for the final time on 2 April and embarked for return to Australian on 20 May.

Gunner 849 Sydney Edward Knappe disembarked in Melbourne on 2 July, where he was discharged from the AIF on 9 August 1919.

Name: Knappe, Sydney Edward	
Service Number	849
Date enlisted	1 November 1916
Place enlisted	Queenscliff, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Gunner
Initial Unit	36 <sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Group
Previous military service	Royal Australian Garrison Artillery – 1 year (serving)
Date and ship embarked for overseas	10 February 1917 RMS <i>Osterley</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	19 years 3 months
Place of birth	Newport, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Professional soldier
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Knappe, Mr Richard, father, 34 Ford Street, Newport, Victoria
Permanent address	Artillery Barracks, Queenscliff, Vic.
Appearance	Fresh complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 9 ¾ inches, weight – 9 stone, 10 lbs, chest measurement – 34/37 inches
Final Rank	Gunner
Final Unit	36 <sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Brigade
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	20 May 1919 HT <i>Nestor</i>
Date discharged	9 August 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Surname recorded as Nape on Methodist Church Honor Roll. Died 23 October 1975. Also remembered on the Borough of Queenscliffe Roll of Honor and Royal Australian Garrison Artillery 3 <sup>rd</sup> Military District Honor Roll.

