

Leslie Thwaites

Gunner (Gnr) 6797 Leslie Thwaites enlisted in the 4th Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) in the 2nd Australian Division in Melbourne on 22 September 1915. He embarked overseas on 18 November and disembarked at Suez in Egypt on 15 December.

The brigade departed Egypt on 14 March and disembarked on 19 March, where they entrained north to le Havre to collect their field guns and other equipment. During May – June they operated in the relatively quiet Armentieres and Messines sectors.

In July the brigade moved south to the Somme area, where they provided constant artillery fire support for the multiple Australian attacks at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm between 23 July – 3 September 1916.

The brigade operated around Flers and Gueudecourt in the latter part of 1916 then remained in the Somme sector for several months. At some stage in early 1917, Gnr Thwaites was granted leave in England, during which he became ill with trench feet and was hospitalised at the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital in Dartford from 15 January. There are no details on his discharge, but on 20 March he returned to France, where he rejoined the brigade at Vault on 14 April.

On 3 May the brigade supported the 2nd Division's assault on Bullecourt then moved north to Belgium in July, where Gnr Thwaites was wounded in action near Dickebusch on 24 July (no details) but remained at duty.

He was promoted to Bombardier (Bdr) on 10 September as the brigade operated around Zillebeke for several weeks, including for the 1st and 2nd Division's attack along the Menin Road on 20 September, after which he spent time at a rest camp from 2 – 17 October.

He was granted leave in England from 17 February – 12 March 1918 and, not long after his return, news of the German Spring Offensive on the Somme filtered through. The 4th FAB moved south on 4 April and entered the line near Baizieux on 10 April. They remained there for several months and supported the 6th Brigade's capture of Ville sur Ancre on 19 May, then provided fire support for the 15th Brigade's successful feint from Ville sur Ancre on 4 July, during the Battle of le Hamel further to the south.

Bdr Thwaites was detached to the 2nd Division Signal Company on 7 July then attended the Australian Corps Signals School from 1 August – 20 September, when he rejoined the brigade, which provided fire support for the AIF's last action of the war at Montbrehain on 5 October. The 4th FAB continued to support British and American troops until 19 October.

Bdr Thwaites contracted influenza and was hospitalised at the 9th General Hospital at Rouen between 28 October – 4 November, then transferred to England and admitted to the 5th Southern General Hospital at Portsmouth from 6 – 29 November. He was granted leave from 2 – 16 December, then embarked for return to Australia on 14 January 1919.

Bombardier Leslie Thwaites disembarked in Melbourne on 27 February, where he was discharged from the AIF on 13 April 1919.

Name: Thwaites, Leslie	
Service Number	6797
Date enlisted	22 September 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Gunner
Initial Unit	4 th Field Artillery Brigade
Previous military service	Citizens Military Forces – 3 years
Date and ship embarked for overseas	18 November 1915 HMAT A18 <i>Wiltshire</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	21 years 7 months
Place of birth	Drysdale, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Postal mail motor driver
Religion	Methodist
Next of kin and address	Thwaites, Mr Alfred, father, Wharf Street, Queenscliff, Victoria
Permanent address	Wharf Street, Queenscliff, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, dark brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 7 ¾ inches, weight – 10 stone, 7 lbs, chest measurement – 33/36 inches
Final Rank	Bombardier
Final Unit	4 th Field Artillery Brigade
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	24 July 1917 Dickebusch, Belgium
Nature of wounds	No details (remained at duty)
Date and ship embarked for Australia	14 January 1919 HT <i>City of York</i>
Date discharged	13 April 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914/1915 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 1961. Also remembered on the Borough of Queenscliffe Roll of Honor and the Postmaster General's Department Victoria Roll of Honor.