

Allen Alfred Ash

Private (Pte) 3007 Allen Alfred Ash enlisted in the 21st Infantry Battalion at Geelong on 12 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 18 November and disembarked in Egypt in mid-December, where he was subsequently transferred and taken on strength of the 7th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division on 24 February 1916.

The battalion left Egypt on 26 March and disembarked in Marseilles on 31 March, where they entrained for the north. By 13 May they had entered the front line positions at Fleurbaix, then moved to Ploegsteert Wood where they spent time in the line during June and sustained 47 casualties (9 killed).

On 23 July 1916, the 1st Division entered the Battle of the Somme. They captured the village of Pozieres and held it against several German counter attacks in one of the few “British” successes on the Somme front. The 7th Battalion, in reserve for the first two days, occupied the ruined village on 25 July, then held it against three further counter attacks for the loss of 54 men killed and 275 wounded.

After a short spell, the 7th Battalion returned to Pozieres on 14 August and slowly advanced towards the heavily fortified Mouquet Farm, however the Germans held firm, for the loss of another 241 casualties, one of whom was Pte Ash, who sustained a minor wound on 18 August but remained at duty.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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The heavily fortified cellars underneath Mouquet Farm

Pte Ash contracted dysentery on 6 November and was initially evacuated to the 9th General Hospital at Rouen from 10 – 28 November. He was later transferred to England and admitted to the 3rd Southern General Hospital at Oxford between 1 – 29 December 1916, then discharged to the 1st Convalescent Depot at Weymouth from 29 December – 16 June 1917.

After his recuperation, he joined the Overseas Training Brigade at Perham Downs on 13 August. He then departed England on 17 October and travelled to Belgium, where he rejoined the 7th Battalion in the field near Ypres, on 3 November 1917.

He was detached for work at the 2nd Brigade's supply dump on 6 November, the same day he reported sick to the 3rd Field Ambulance. He was sent to the 66th (British) Division Rest Station between 6 – 12 November, where he was later diagnosed as suffering from the effects of shell shock.

He was subsequently admitted to the 1st New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Wisques from 16 November – 22 December, then spent a week at the 32nd Stationary Hospital at Wimereux between 22 – 29 December 1917. After a further period of convalescence at Aubongue until 18 February 1918, Pte Ash was discharged to duty at the Australian Infantry Base Depot at le Havre, then rejoined the 7th Battalion near La Clytte, Belgium on 16 March.

The 7th Battalion moved into the front line near Hollebeke in late March, where they were subjected to a 90 minute German gas bombardment at midnight on 29 March, after which Pte Ash was evacuated with gas wounds to the 11th Casualty Clearing Station on 1 April.

He was treated at the 54th General Hospital from 3 – 8 April, then evacuated to England and admitted to the Norfolk War Hospital between 8 – 26 April, following which he was granted leave from 26 April – 10 May 1918.

While at Hurdcott Camp, Pte Ash absented himself without leave from 9 – 12 July and was awarded four days' Field Punishment and the forfeit of eight days' pay. He eventually returned to France on 23 August and rejoined the 7th Battalion three days later.

Following the success of the allies' Amiens offensive in early August, the Germans retreated east to their Hindenburg Line defences. The 1st Division participated in the assault on the German Outpost Line east of Roisel, although the 7th Battalion was in reserve for the actual battle on 18 September. The battalion advanced as far as Hargicourt before leaving the line for the last time on 23 September 1918.

Pte Ash returned to England on 6 December, where he was detached for duty with the Australian Postal Corps at AIF Headquarters in London until 16 June 1919. During his period of service in London, he also married Miss Jessie Minnie Butler in Paddington on 29 March.

On 16 June, Pte Ash was detached to the Australian War Records Section in London, where he served until he and his wife embarked for Australia on 23 July.

Private 3007 Allen Alfred Ash disembarked in Melbourne on 11 September, where he was discharged from the AIF on 3 November 1919.

Name: Ash, Allen Alfred	
Service Number	3007
Date enlisted	12 July 1915
Place enlisted	Geelong, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	21 st Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	18 November 1915 HMAT A18 <i>Wiltshire</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	21 years 5 months
Place of birth	Leopold, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Ash, Mr Charles, father, Leopold, Victoria
Permanent address	Leopold, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, light brown hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 2 ¼ inches, weight – 8 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 36 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	7 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	18 August 1916 – Mouquet Farm, France
Nature of wounds	No details (slight). Remained at duty.
Date and place wounded (2)	6 November 1917 – near Ypres, Belgium
Nature of wounds (2)	Shell shock
Date and place wounded (3)	1 April 1918 – near Hollebeke, Belgium
Nature of wounds (3)	Gassed
Date and ship embarked for Australia	23 July 1919 (with wife) HT <i>Canberra</i>
Date discharged	3 November 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Married Jessie Minnie Butler at St Stephens Church, Paddington, London 29 March 1919. Died 18 June 1960. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold & District Honor Roll and Leopold War Memorial.