

William Alfred Dale

Private (Pte) 3081 William Alfred Dale enlisted in the 21st Infantry Battalion in Melbourne on 13 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 18 November and disembarked in Egypt in mid-December, where he was initially transferred to the 60th Battalion on 26 February 1916, and then to the 5th Pioneer Battalion in the 5th Australian Division at Tel el Kebir on 3 March.

Each of the five Australian divisions had a Pioneer Battalion, essentially infantry but also tasked with light engineering duties, attached to them.

The 5th Pioneers left Egypt on 19 June 1916 and arrived at Marseilles on 25 June, where they entrained for Hazebrouck, a rail junction near the Belgian border. They travelled south to Fleurbaix on 10 July where they buried communication cables and constructed a light railway system to facilitate the more efficient movement of supplies.

The 5th Pioneers, while not required to directly engage in combat during the Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916, were however required to salvage equipment, under fire, from the battlefield and to bury their dead 5th Division comrades in the days immediately following.

The conditions in the trenches were atrocious during the northern winter and Pte Dale was one of many who succumbed to trench feet, and he was evacuated on 21 December 1916. He was initially treated at the 1st Anzac Corps Main Dressing Station between 22 – 31 December, then transferred to England and admitted to the 1st Eastern General Hospital at Cambridge from 2 January – 12 February 1917.

He was granted leave between 12 – 22 February where, upon his return, he was detached to the 65th Battalion at Wareham. He was then allocated to the 66th Battalion at Windmill Hill on 28 April, before finally being transferred to the 7th Battalion on 19 September 1917.

Pte Dale subsequently returned to France on 15 October, where he was taken on strength of the 7th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division, in the field near Ypres, on 18 October.

Between 14 – 18 April 1918, the 1st Division helped defeat several strong German attacks east of the rail centre of Hazebrouck. The 7th Battalion, which lost 27 men killed and 73 wounded in that period, then remained in the Strazeele and Messines area for several months, and it was while serving in the line here that Pte Dale sustained a severe shrapnel wound to his right foot during a German bombardment on 4 May 1918.

He was evacuated to the US Army Hospital at Wimereux from 5 – 8 May, then transferred to England and admitted to the County of Middlesex War Hospital between 8 May – 27 June. After a further period of convalescence at Weymouth, his wound had not improved, and he embarked for Australia on 15 September 1918.

Private 3081 William Alfred Dale disembarked in Melbourne on 17 November, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 15 December 1919

Name: Dale, William Alfred	
Service Number	3081
Date enlisted	13 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, 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)	28 years 3 months
Place of birth	Leopold, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Labourer
Religion	Methodist
Next of kin and address	Dale, Mr Herbert, brother, Connewarre East, Victoria
Permanent address	Connewarre East, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, brown hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 3 inches, weight – 8 stone, 10 lbs, chest measurement – 35/38 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	4 May 1918 near Strazeele, France
Nature of wounds	Shrapnel wound to right foot (severe)
Date and ship embarked for Australia	15 September 1918 HT <i>Arawa</i>
Date discharged	15 December 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (wounds)
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 1964. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold & District Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, Barwon Heads & District Honor Roll and Barwon Heads War Memorial.