

John Eba Davis



Private (Pte) 3084 John Eba Davis 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 initially re-allocated to the 60th Battalion on 26 February 1916. He was later transferred to the 58th Infantry Battalion in the 15th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Australian Division at Tel el Kebir, where he was taken on strength on 15 March.

He was evacuated sick and diagnosed with diphtheria on 30 May. Initially treated at the 14th Field Ambulance, he was transferred to the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital at Ismailia from 1 – 5 June, then to the 4th Auxiliary Hospital at Abbassia between 5 – 21 June.

He was discharged to the 5th Division Details on 9 July and embarked for England on 2 August. After a period of training there, he sailed for France on 10 September, where he rejoined the 58th Battalion opposite Fromelles on 30 September, one of 58 reinforcements received that day.

Pte Davis was hospitalised at the 18th General Hospital at Camiers with a fever from 22 – 27 February 1917, after which he spent several weeks convalescing at Etaples before rejoining the 58th Battalion at Mametz on 21 April.

By this time, the Germans had withdrawn their line to new, stronger defensive positions. The allies slowly advanced and, during the Second Battle of Bullecourt, the 58th Battalion successfully defended the gains previously made by the 2nd Division, against numerous German counterattacks between 10 – 13 May, at a cost of 242 men (60 killed or missing).

Pte Davis was granted leave in England from 1 – 15 July, after which the battalion moved north to the Ypres sector in Belgium. On 26 September 1917 they were involved in the Battle of Polygon Wood, generally considered a success, albeit the battalion lost 290 casualties.

In response to the German Spring Offensive, on 27 March 1918 the 5th Division moved south and the 58th Battalion went into defensive positions along the Somme Canal on 31 March.

A month later, on the night of 24 April, the battalion participated in the daring Australian night counterattack that re-captured Villers-Bretonneux two days later, for the loss of 69 casualties (14 killed).

On 4 July, during the attack on le Hamel to the south, the 15th Brigade, including the 58th Battalion, was involved in a feint north of the Somme at Ville sur Ancre. They achieved all their objectives and captured around 30 German prisoners and ten machine guns, for the loss of another 40 battalion casualties, including ten killed.

During the allies' main offensive from Amiens on 8 August, the 5th Division "passed through" the 3rd Division and continued the advance for several kilometres, capturing the villages of Harbonnières and Vauvillers, along with numerous prisoners and guns. The Germans were on the back foot and the Australians continued east in pursuit.

Pte Davis was granted leave to England from 31 August – 16 September then re-mustered as a Driver (Dvr) on 24 September.

By late September, after weeks of continuous fighting the Australians were exhausted, and many battalions were at less than 50% strength. As a result, when the 5th Division reached the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line, a fresh, full strength American division was attached to it for the planned assault.

The 30th American Division attacked on 27 September and progressed well. The 5th Australian Division, including the 58th Battalion, then moved through the Americans on 29 September and continued the assault. They captured the village of Bellicourt and defended their gains the next day, for the loss of 128 battalion casualties, then left the front line for the last time on 1 October 1918.

Dvr Davis left France on 14 February 1919. He landed at Weymouth the next day and subsequently embarked for return to Australia on 13 April.

Driver 3084 John Eba Davis disembarked in Melbourne on 31 May, where he was medically discharged (no details) from the AIF on 5 August 1919.

Name: Davis, John Eba	
Service Number	3084
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)	18 years 7 months (22/11/1897)
Place of birth	Wallington, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Labourer
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	Davis, Mr James, father, Wallington, Victoria
Permanent address	Wallington, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, auburn hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 8 inches, weight – 10 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 38 inches
Final Rank	Driver
Final Unit	58 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	13 April 1919 HT <i>Wyreema</i>
Date discharged	5 August 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (no details)
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 1961. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold & District Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial and Wallington State School Roll of Honor Book