

Jonas Miles

Private (Pte) 234 Jonas Miles enlisted in the 8th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division in Geelong on 20 August 1914. He embarked overseas on 19 October and disembarked in Egypt on 8 December.

The men boarded troop trains to Cairo, and then travelled to the AIF camp at Mena, beneath the pyramids, where they undertook all manner of physical fitness and military training for the next few months.

Pte Miles was hospitalised at the 2nd General Hospital at Mena with influenza between 23 March – 8 May and missed the landing at Anzac and the 2nd Battle of Krithia, but he eventually joined the 8th Battalion on Gallipoli on 23 June 1915.

The 8th Battalion was the 2nd Brigade reserve during the fighting at Lone Pine in early August but nevertheless sustained 150 casualties from several retaliatory Turkish artillery bombardments during 6 – 8 August. They evacuated Gallipoli in late December and arrived back in Egypt on 7 January 1916.

The battalion embarked for France on 26 March, where they disembarked at Marseilles on 31 March and entrained north to Steenwerck. On 11 May they moved into the front line at Fleurbaix for the first time. By the time they were relieved on 29 May, they left the line having sustained 17 casualties (six killed).

They then moved up into Belgium and held the line near Messines from 24 June – 4 July, for the loss of another 85 men, including 19 killed.

The 8th Battalion headed south to the Somme on 10 July where Pte Miles was re-mustered as a Driver (Dvr) on 19 July and attached to the battalion's supply train. They entered the support trenches at Pozieres in the early hours of 23 July, and the village itself that night, where they were subjected to a continuous German artillery barrage for the next four days and sustained 363 casualties (97 killed or missing).

On 18 August 1916, the battalion was ordered to attack the trenches on the flanks of the German stronghold at Mouquet Farm. The assault failed, at a cost to the battalion of another 211 casualties, including 57 killed or missing.

The battalion returned to Belgium in October and spent several weeks in the line near Ypres, before heading south to the Gueudecourt sector on 4 November. As the colder weather set in, the conditions in the trenches deteriorated markedly and many men fell ill.

Following the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in early 1917, the 8th Battalion moved into the front line at Lagnicourt on 16 April, the scene of heavy fighting the previous day and, on 22 April, they conducted a successful raid on the German line opposite. They captured three prisoners and caused many casualties, for the loss of one killed and 14 wounded of their own.

The battalion moved north to Belgium in late September and participated in the Battle of Menin Road on 20 – 21 September 1917, where they achieved all their objectives and captured 300 Germans and 14 machine guns, at a cost of 229 casualties (29 killed or missing).

Two weeks later, they were back in action at Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October, where they again pushed the Germans back and successfully held the captured ground (including 300 prisoners, four field guns and 11 machine guns) for the loss of 201 battalion casualties.

Dvr Miles proceeded on leave to England on 8 January 1918. While there he was seconded for duty with the AIF Postal Corps in London between 21 January – 20 February, when he rejoined the battalion in northern France.

In late March, the 1st Division entrained south in response to the German Spring Offensive on the Somme. When news of a second German breakthrough in the north came through on 5 April, they had to immediately turn around to meet it. They made it back just in time to establish defences and stop the Germans east of Hazebrouck between 14 – 18 April, during which the 8th Battalion lost 129 men (27 killed or missing).

Dvr Miles contracted influenza and was treated at the 64th Casualty Clearing Station between 23 June – 6 July, and he rejoined the battalion on 17 July.

In early August the battalion moved south to join the allies' Amiens offensive. The 8th Battalion captured the villages of Rosieres and Lihons between 9 – 11 August at a cost of 282 men, including 49 killed, then between 23 – 26 August, they participated in the 1st Division's successful assault from Harbonnieres to Chuignes, for the loss of a further 256 casualties.

On 14 September, Dvr Miles was selected for Special 1914 Leave (via a lottery of those men who had enlisted in 1914). He travelled by train to Taranto in Italy, where he embarked for return to Australia on 24 September 1918.

Driver 234 Jonas Miles disembarked in Melbourne on 23 November, where he was discharged from the AIF on 24 January 1919.



Driver Jonas Miles' WWI medal set

Name: Miles, Jonas	
Service Number	234
Date enlisted	20 August 1914
Place enlisted	Geelong, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	8 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	19 October 1914 HMAT A24 <i>Benalla</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	33 years
Place of birth	Leopold, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Orchardist
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Miles, Mr David, father, Leopold via Geelong, Victoria
Permanent address	Leopold, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, fair hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 8 inches, weight – 10 stone, 5 lbs, chest measurement – 35 inches
Final Rank	Driver
Final Unit	8 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Gallipoli, France, Belgium, Italy
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	24 September 1918 HT <i>Kaiser I Hund</i>
Date discharged	24 January 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 1972. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, Leopold & District Honor Roll and Geelong & District Peace Memorial.