

## **Carl Ernest Moller**

Private (Pte) 1242 Carl Ernest Moller enlisted in the 37<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in Melbourne on 15 February 1916, aged almost 42 years. He embarked overseas on 3 June and disembarked in Plymouth on 25 July, where he joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Brigade) Training Battalion.

Almost two months later, he left England on 15 September and landed in France the next day. He was eventually transferred and taken on strength of the 59<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division near Fromelles on 8 October 1916, one of 149 reinforcements received that day.

Pte Moller was treated for influenza at the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Ambulance between 20 November – 2 December, and at the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian General Hospital at Rouen for trench feet and debility between 15 – 19 December. He was then transferred to England and admitted to the Birmingham War Hospital between 19 – 28 December, after which he was granted leave from 28 December – 12 January 1917.

He was discharged to duty at the No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs on 2 March and returned to France on 27 May, where he rejoined the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Rubempre on 21 June.

By 25 September the battalion had moved into Belgium and on to Westhoek Ridge where, at 5.50am the next morning, they successfully participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Division assault on Polygon Wood. The 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion suffered 268 casualties in the attack, one of whom was Pte Moller who sustained slight gunshot wounds to his left thigh and right ear on 26 September.

He was treated at the 10<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station later the same day, then spent the period between 27 September – 26 October at convalescent depots in Boulogne, before he rejoined the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 7 November 1917.

In early 1918, Pte Moller was detached for duty with the 5<sup>th</sup> Divisional Train for work at their fuel supply dump between 1 – 24 February, and then with the 15<sup>th</sup> Field Company Engineers from 10 – 24 March.

As news of the German offensive on the Somme filtered through in late March 1918, the Australian units were put on alert and then rushed south to meet it. The 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion arrived at Corbie on 30 March and established their defences, although the peak of the assault had passed. The Germans however made one more concerted effort on 24 April, and they captured Villers-Bretonneux from the British units that were defending it.

The position needed to be rectified quickly and at 10.00 pm on 24 April 1918, the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Brigades (including the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion) staged a stunning, night-time counterattack at bayonet point and without artillery support. The Germans were completely taken by surprise and, over the course of the next two days, eventually routed, as the Australians re-captured Villers-Bretonneux. Overall 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion casualties numbered 127 (29 killed) while German casualties were significantly higher.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E02434

*German machine gun crew in the aftermath of the Australian counterattack at Villers-Bretonneux 24 April 1918*

On 4 July, during the attack on le Hamel to the south, the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade, including the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion, was involved in a feint north of the Somme at Ville sur Ancre. The battalion achieved all their objectives for the loss of 65 casualties (16 killed).

During the allies' main offensive from Amiens on 8 August, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division "passed through" the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and continued the advance for several kilometres, capturing the villages of Harbonnières and Vauvillers on 9 August, for the loss of 110 casualties, after which Pte Moller was granted leave in England from 16 August – 6 September.

By the time he returned, the Australians were near the end of their tether and many battalions were at less than 50% strength after weeks of continuous fighting. As a result, when the 5<sup>th</sup> Division reached the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line itself, a fresh, full strength American division was attached to it for the assault.

The 30<sup>th</sup> American division attacked on 27 September and progressed well. The 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, including the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion, then moved through the Americans on 29 September and continued the assault. They captured the village of Bellicourt and defended the gains the next day, for the loss of 197 battalion casualties, one of whom was Pte Moller who sustained a shrapnel wound to his arm that resulted in a compound fracture, on 29 September. He was evacuated to the 50<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Tincourt but ultimately died there of his wounds the next day.

Private 1242 Carl Ernest Moller was later buried in the Tincourt New British Cemetery, France.

Name: Moller, Carl Ernest	
Service Number	1242
Date enlisted	15 February 1916
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	37 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	3 June 1916 HMAT A34 <i>Persic</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	41 years 9 months
Place of birth	Clunes, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Moller, Mr Carl, father, “Meadowlands”, Glengarry, Victoria
Permanent address	Glengarry, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 7 inches, weight – 8 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 35/37 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	59 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Died of wounds
Date and place wounded	26 September 1917 Polygon Wood, Belgium
Nature of wounds	Gunshot wound to left thigh, right ear
Date and place wounded (2)	29 September 1918 Bellicourt, France
Nature of wounds (2)	Shrapnel wound to arm (fractured)
Date and place died	30 September 1918 50 <sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station, Tincourt, France
Cemetery details	Tincourt New British Cemetery, France. Plot V, Row F, Grave 3
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Attended Leopold State School. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, Glengarry War Memorial and Stratford War Memorial