

Reginald Emerson Sims



Corporal (Cpl) 998 Reginald Emerson Sims enlisted in the 37th Infantry Battalion in the 10th Infantry Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division in Melbourne on 22 January 1916.

He embarked overseas on 3 June and disembarked in Plymouth on 25 July.

The battalion left England on 22 November and landed in France the next day. They moved north and spent several weeks in the Armentieres and Houplines area, where Cpl Sims was hospitalised at the local Field Ambulance with influenza between 29 January – 12 February 1917, then promoted to Lance Sergeant (L Sgt) on 1 March.

The 37th Battalion's first major engagement on the Western Front occurred on 7 June 1917 at the Battle of Messines Ridge, where the 3rd Division helped to capture the high ground in conjunction with New Zealand and British troops. Battalion casualties amounted to 402 men, one of whom was L Sgt Sims who sustained gunshot wounds to his foot and arm.

He was admitted to the 56th General Hospital at Etaples between 8 – 22 June then transferred to the 5th Convalescent Depot at Cayeux from 27 June – 7 August. He rejoined the 37th Battalion at Blequin on 26 August 1917.

The battalion moved up to the Zonnebeke area on 2 October in preparation for an attack on Broodseinde Ridge, which began at 6.00 am on the morning of 4 October. The 37th Battalion suffered 224 casualties, but all the objectives were achieved, and the battle was considered a success. Then the rain started to fall.

The battalion's next action, an attack on the village of Passchendaele on 12 October (the same day L Sgt Sims was promoted to Sergeant (Sgt), was a disaster. The soldiers were subjected to German artillery fire while they waited then, once the attack commenced, were pinned by machine gun fire and hindered by the deep mud, so made no headway at all, at a cost to the 37th Battalion of 71 men killed and 179 wounded.

Sgt Sims was transferred to the Australian Corps School at Aveluy from 18 October, where he served as an assistant instructor until 19 March 1918, when he was granted leave in England until 6 April.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Infantry training in the use of gas masks at the Australian Corps School at Aveluy, 22 January 1918

He returned from leave and rejoined the 37th Battalion near Morlancourt on 14 April, where they had manned front line positions on the adjoining ridge since 28 March, and they remained in this general area for several months.

The 37th Battalion was 10th Brigade reserve for the allies' Amiens offensive on 8 August and played no active part. It did, however, take part in the unsuccessful attack on Proyart on 10 August, where another 103 casualties were sustained, one of whom was Sgt Sims who was killed in action on the same date. Eyewitness reports stated that he had been shot during the attack and was being stretchered out when the group was hit by German artillery fire.

Sergeant 998 Reginal Emerson Sims was originally buried in the Vaire Wood Cemetery, but his remains were later re-interred in the Heath Cemetery, Harbonnières, France in 1919.

Name: Sims, Reginald Emerson	
Service Number	998
Date enlisted	22 January 1916
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Corporal
Initial Unit	37 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	3 June 1916 HMAT A34 <i>Persic</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	25 years 1 month
Place of birth	Horsham, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Mail sorter (GPO)
Religion	Methodist
Next of kin and address	Sims, Mr John, father, c/- Post Office, Greensborough, Victoria
Permanent address	Greensborough, Victoria
Appearance	Dark complexion, black hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 6 inches, weight – 7 stone, 8 lbs, chest measurement – 31/35 inches
Final Rank	Sergeant
Final Unit	37 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Killed in action
Date and place wounded	7 June 1917 Messines, Belgium
Nature of wounds	Gunshot wounds to foot and arm
Date and place died	10 August 1918 near Proyart, France
Cemetery details	Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, France. Plot V, Row D, Grave 15
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Father was Principal of Leopold State School from September 1895. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, Shenton Methodist Church Honor Roll, Greensborough War Memorial, Eltham War Memorial, Post Master General's Department Honor Roll and Baynton & District Honor Roll