

Alexander Buchanan



Private (Pte) 6285 Alexander Buchanan enlisted in the 22nd Infantry Battalion in the 6th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Australian Division in Geelong on 11 October 1916. He embarked overseas on 23 November and disembarked in Plymouth on 29 January 1917, where he joined the 6th (Brigade) Training Battalion at Lark Hill Camp.

He left England on 9 May and landed in France the next day, where he was taken on strength of the 22nd Battalion, resting at Mametz Camp, on 14 May 1917.

On 12 September, the 22nd Battalion moved north to Belgium to take part in the 1st and 2nd Australian Division's assault at Menin Road, east of Ypres. The dawn attack on 20 September 1917 was successful and the Australians advanced 1,500 metres and captured their objectives, albeit at a cost of over 5,000 casualties. The 22nd Battalion, held mostly in reserve, nevertheless lost 33 killed and 63 wounded.

On the night of 3 October 1917, the 22nd Battalion again moved into front line positions near Zonnebeke, Belgium in readiness for their involvement for the next phase of Third Ypres.

The Australians, including the 22nd Battalion, rose from their shell holes at 6:00 am on 4 October and ran headlong into a German attack that had also just commenced. The Battle of Broodseinde Ridge continued and was a great success. The Germans were routed, and the newly captured ground was consolidated, at a cost to the battalion of 239 casualties, including 82 killed, most of which occurred during the Germans' preliminary bombardment.

Like the bulk of the AIF, the battalion then spent the remainder of 1917 into early 1918 recuperating in the Ypres and Messines area, during which time Pte Buchanan was also treated for a fever at the 6th Field Ambulance between 3 – 9 January 1918.

Following news of the Spring Offensive in late March 1918, the 22nd Battalion rushed south and arrived at Dernancourt on 7 April, where battalion orders were issued and simply read, *“There will be no withdrawal. Every bit of ground will be fought for.”*

On 19 May 1918, the 6th Brigade attacked the village of Ville-sur-Ancre to straighten out the front line around Morlancourt. The 22nd Battalion was heavily involved in the assault which was considered a complete success with 330 Germans and 45 machine guns captured. Overall battalion casualties totalled 195 (including 30 killed).

By 23 July the battalion had moved to the Villers-Bretonneux area and while here it was subjected to several German mustard gas bombardments which caused 50 casualties, one of whom was Pte Buchanan.

He was treated at the 49th Casualty Clearing Station between 24 July – 6 August, when he rejoined the battalion.

In reserve for the offensive from Amiens on 8 August, by 18 August the 22nd Battalion, down to only 120 riflemen, was ordered to capture the village of Herleville. Not surprisingly, the action only partially succeeded, and the battalion lost another 60 men – 19 killed and 41 wounded.

Pte Buchanan was granted leave in England between 21 August – 8 September, and he rejoined the battalion, resting at Cappy, later the same day.

The 2nd Division, including the 22nd Battalion, took over the new front line east of the St Quentin Canal late on 1 October.

Two days later, the battalion participated in an attack on Lamotte Farm, near Beaurevoir and captured 105 prisoners and several field guns, for the loss of 19 casualties of their own, one of whom was Pte Buchanan who sustained a gunshot wound to his forearm (fractured).

He was evacuated to the 5th General Hospital at Rouen on 5 October, then transferred to England, where he was admitted to the Exeter War Hospital from 7 October – 7 December.

After a period of convalescence at Weymouth and furlough in England from 2 – 16 January 1919, Pte Buchanan embarked for return to Australia on 16 March.

Private 6285 Alexander Buchanan disembarked in Melbourne on 15 May, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 5 August 1919.

Name: Buchanan, Alexander	
Service Number	6285
Date enlisted	11 October 1916
Place enlisted	Geelong, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	22 nd Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 November 1916 HMAT A20 <i>Hororata</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	26 years 2 months
Place of birth	Donald, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Shearer
Religion	Presbyterian
Next of kin and address	Langley, Mrs Mary Ann, mother, "Oban House", Donald, Victoria
Permanent address	South Geelong, Victoria
Appearance	Dark complexion, dark brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 6 inches, weight – 9 stone, 12 lbs, chest measurement – 33/36 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	22 nd Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	23 July 1918 Villers-Bretonneux, France
Nature of wounds	Gassed
Date and place wounded (2)	3 October 1918 near Beaurevoir, France
Nature of wounds (2)	Gunshot wound to right forearm (frac)
Date and ship embarked for Australia	16 March 1919 HT <i>Czaritza</i>
Date discharged	5 August 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (wounds)
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Connection to St Leonards is unclear but believed to be shearing on local properties at time of enlistment. Died 25 January 1980. Remembered on the St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll.