

Gordon Buchanan

Private (Pte) 3681 Gordon Buchanan enlisted in the 14th Infantry Battalion in Melbourne on 14 July 1915.

He embarked overseas on 23 November and disembarked in Egypt in mid-December, where he was later transferred and taken on strength of the 46th Infantry Battalion in the 12th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Australian Division on 6 March 1916.

The battalion departed Egypt on 2 June and disembarked in Marseilles on 8 June, where they entrained for the north to the small village of Outtersteene, near Hazebrouck (a major rail junction near the Belgian border). The next few weeks were spent training for the trenches, where they worked on their rifle and grenade skills, simulated gas attacks and familiarised themselves with trench mortars.

The 46th Battalion moved into a “quiet” section of the front line near Fleurbaix on 5 July 1916. After six days they left the line, having sustained casualties of three men wounded.

The 4th Division, including the 46th Battalion, moved south to the Somme with orders to take over the front line at Pozieres on 8 August. While in the support trenches on the preceding day, Pte Buchanan suffered shell shock from the incessant German artillery bombardments and was evacuated for treatment at a local dressing station until 14 August, when he rejoined the battalion. He then had a short spell at the 12th Field Ambulance with influenza between 30 August – 5 September.

After a few weeks’ rest in the north, the battalion travelled back to the Somme, where they manned the front line near Gueudecourt between 12 – 19 November, for the loss of 54 casualties, including 18 killed.

The 46th Battalion undertook a trench raid on the German lines near Gueudecourt on 14 February 1917, and it was here that Pte Buchanan sustained a gunshot wound to his chest the next day.

He was initially treated at the 1st General Hospital at Rouen from 17 – 24 February, then transferred to England and admitted to the Reading War Hospital between 24 February – 2 May, after which he was granted leave until 17 May.

He returned to France on 28 May and rejoined the 46th Battalion, in the field at Reniscure, on 21 June 1917.

The 46th Battalion was the 4th Division reserve for the successful attack at Polygon Wood on 26 September, and they held the newly acquired front line near Zonnebeke until 28 September, although no German counter attacks ensued due to the effective artillery cover.

On 10 October the battalion moved back into the line near Zonnebeke, where it was also in reserve for the attack on Passchendaele Ridge on 12 October 1917. Despite that the battalion nevertheless sustained 137 casualties (13 killed).

Pte Buchanan was granted leave from 1 – 19 March 1918 and returned to the battalion just prior to the German Spring Offensive on the Somme, which began two days later.

The Australians were placed on alert to move at a few hours' notice, and the situation remained unclear even as the 46th Battalion moved 130 km south on 28 March, and into the new front line near Dernancourt, south-west of Albert (now in German hands) on 30 March 1918. The battalion took up defensive positions along 2 km of the railway line embankment that extended from Albert and waited.

Two days later, on 1 April 1918, and without any preliminary bombardment, about 140 Germans tested the Australian line. The resultant defensive fire was so withering that the attack was broken in minutes. Not many of the Germans were observed to make it back, while six were captured, for the cost of four wounded Australians.

On 3 April, the Germans tried again, this time preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment. A “*spirited*” infantry attack followed but was defeated within 10 minutes. Overall, the 46th Battalion sustained around 50 casualties, mostly from the earlier artillery fire, and was relieved later that night.

The battalion moved in and out of the line during May and on 1 June, they relieved the 58th Battalion in garrison posts on the Aubigny Line, to the north of Villers-Bretonneux.

By 1 August the 46th Battalion was well rested. At midnight on 7 August, the men offloaded their surplus gear and collected extra ammunition and rations for 48 hours.

At 4:20 am on 8 August, the Battle of Amiens commenced with a massive creeping artillery barrage and the Australians moved forward with tanks in support. The 4th Division, including the 46th Battalion, which was waiting in front of le Hamel, moved through the 2nd Division, and pushed on. By 10:30 am, they had achieved all their objectives and captured over 100 German prisoners, at the relatively low cost of only 37 battalion casualties, including five killed.

Pte Buchanan was granted leave in Paris from 13 – 23 September and, by the time he returned, the 46th Battalion had already left the line for the last time.

He departed France on 15 January 1919 and spent two months at the Sutton Veny Camp, then embarked for return to Australia on 5 April.

Private 3681 Gordon Buchanan disembarked in Melbourne on 28 May, where he was later discharged from the AIF (exact date not known).

Name: Buchanan, Gordon	
Service Number	3681
Date enlisted	14 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	14 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	23 November 1915 HMAT A40 <i>Ceramic</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	23 years 9 months
Place of birth	South Melbourne, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Draper
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Buchanan, Mr Thomas, father, 336 Clarendon Street, South Melbourne, Victoria
Permanent address	South Melbourne, Victoria
Appearance	Sallow complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 5 inches, weight – 9 stone, 10 lbs, chest measurement – 33/36 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	46 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	8 August 1916 Mouquet Farm, France
Nature of wounds	Shell shock
Date and place wounded (2)	15 February 1917 Gueudecourt, France
Nature of wounds (2)	Gunshot wound to chest
Date and ship embarked for Australia	5 April 1919 HT <i>Warwickshire</i>
Date discharged	Unknown
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Connection to St Leonards is unclear but family is believed to have holidayed in the district and worshipped at St Paul's. Remembered on the St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll and the South Melbourne Honor Roll.