

Henry Childerhus Peacock

Private (Pte) 3377 Henry Childerhus Peacock enlisted in the 5th Infantry Battalion in the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Australian Division at Melbourne on 7 July 1915. He embarked overseas on 11 October and disembarked in Egypt in early November, where he was taken on strength of the 5th Battalion at Serapeum on 22 February 1916.

He later contracted venereal disease and was hospitalised at the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital at Ismailia from 6 – 8 March, then at the 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital at Abbassia between 8 – 29 March, when he returned to duty.

He came down with a fever on 27 April, later diagnosed as Nile fever, for which he was again hospitalised at Abbassia until 19 May.

He embarked for France on 28 May and disembarked at Marseilles on 4 June, where he entrained for the north and eventually rejoined the 5th Battalion on 30 July 1916, just after they had left Pozieres.

The 5th Battalion returned to Pozieres on 14 August and slowly advanced towards the heavily fortified Mouquet Farm, however the Germans held firm. After a week, the battalion left Pozieres again, having sustained a further 36 men killed and 162 wounded.

In mid-April 1917, the battalion operated in the Morchies and Lagnicourt area following the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line.

By early August 1917, crop harvesting was underway in the surrounding district and, given the lack of French manpower available, many Australian soldiers pitched in to help. The 5th Battalion history records that, “... with the aid of the sturdy Australian transport horses, details from each battalion took tyrannical, though good-natured command of the cornfields and soon housed the harvest in the approved “Aussie” way.”

On 14 September, the battalion moved north to Belgium, and then to Zillebeke on 19 September, where extra ammunition and rations were issued in preparation for an assault the next day.

At 2:30 am on the morning of 20 September 1917 the battalion moved to their starting point near Glencorse Wood where, at 5:40 am, they attacked. Considered a success, victory at the Battle of Menin Road nevertheless came at a heavy cost, and the 5th Battalion suffered 96 men killed and 183 wounded, one of whom was Pte Peacock who sustained a gunshot wound to his left elbow.

He was evacuated to the 22nd General Hospital at Dannes from 21 – 26 September, then transferred to England, where he was admitted to the 2nd Canterbury Military Hospital between 26 September – 23 October, after which he spent several months at various camps in Wiltshire.

He was absent without leave between 26 – 28 January 1918, for which he was awarded four days Field Punishment No. 2 (extra work duties) and docked eleven days' pay.

He was again absent from camp between 7 – 12 March. This time he was awarded 15 days Field Punishment No. 1, which involved being fettered for several hours a day. In addition, he forfeited a further 20 days' pay.

Pte Peacock returned to France on 17 April and rejoined the 5th Battalion near Strazeele on 23 April, one of 61 reinforcements received on the day.

The battalion moved south to the Somme in early August. During the ensuing Amiens offensive, the 5th Battalion helped capture the village of Lihons between 9 – 11 August at a cost of 209 casualties (37 killed).

Two weeks later, on 23 August, the battalion participated in the 1st Division's successful assault on Chuignes, where the 5th Battalion captured 450 prisoners for the loss of 113 casualties (28 killed).

The battalion was in the process of being relieved in the front line near Harbonnières on 25 August, when it came under a heavy German mustard gas bombardment and sustained another 40 casualties, one of whom was Pte Peacock.

He was evacuated to the 5th General Hospital at Rouen from 26 – 29 August, then transferred to England and admitted to the Alexandra Military Hospital at Cosham between 30 August – 28 October. He never fully recovered from his gas wounds, and he embarked for return to Australia on 2 January 1919.

Private 3377 Henry Childerhus Peacock disembarked in Melbourne on 15 February, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 14 April 1919.



Private Henry Peacock's WWI Medal Set

Name: Peacock, Henry Childerhus	
Service Number	3377
Date enlisted	7 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	11 October 1915 HMAT A71 <i>Nestor</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	22 years 2 months
Place of birth	Albury, NSW
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Peacock, Mr Henry, father, Coffee Palace, St Leonards, Victoria
Permanent address	St Leonards, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, fair hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 8 inches, weight – 10 stone, 9 lbs, chest measurement – 34/36 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	5 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	20 September 1917 Menin Road, Belgium
Nature of wounds	Gunshot wound to left elbow
Date and place wounded (2)	25 August 1918 Harbonnieres, France
Nature of wounds (2)	Gassed
Date and ship embarked for Australia	2 January 1919 HT <i>Karmala</i>
Date discharged	14 April 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (wounds)
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Brother of Murray and Walter Peacock. Died 13 May 1978. Remembered on the St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll.