

## Walter Oswell Peacock



Private (Pte) 485 Walter Oswell Peacock enlisted in the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division at Albert Park on 18 August 1914. He embarked overseas on 21 October and disembarked in Alexandria, Egypt on 1 December

The men boarded troop trains to Cairo and then travelled by electric tram to the AIF camp at Mena, beneath the pyramids, where they undertook all manner of physical fitness and military training for the new few months.

On 5 April 1915, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked for the island of Lemnos, where they practiced disembarking from the ship and climbing the local hills each day. On the night of 24 April, the troopships departed Mudros Harbour and sailed for Gallipoli.

From 5:30 am on 25 April 1915 the battalion disembarked from their transports into smaller boats and were towed toward the beaches and landed as part of the second wave. They found the beach crowded with troops and wounded men and, between 25 – 29 April, sustained 660 battalion casualties.

On 6 May 1915, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was moved 20 km south by boat to Cape Helles, where they participated in a poorly planned, British led attack on Krithia between 8 – 11 May. The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion sustained heavy casualties in the action, although the exact number is unknown.

Pte Peacock returned to Egypt on 17 May and was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion's transport section, where he would have been receiving and organising stores destined for Gallipoli.

On 5 October, he was re-mustered as a Driver (Dvr) and attached to the Australian Headquarters Transport Section until 7 January 1916, when he rejoined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion transport section embarked for France on 23 March and disembarked in Marseilles on 29 March, where they entrained for the 63-hour journey to the Hazebrouck region in the north. They operated in the Fromelles area during May – June 1916, then moved south to the Somme from 12 July.

They reached Albert on 21 July, where the 1<sup>st</sup> Division attacked and captured the French village of Pozieres on 23 July. The division then had to withstand several fierce counter attacks and the most severe artillery bombardments that any Australian soldiers had encountered to that time, for the loss of 446 casualties. The horse drawn transports and their drivers were not spared, and they too frequently came under direct German artillery fire.

In September, Dvr Peacock developed a hernia, for which he was treated between 18 – 28 September. The hernia subsequently ruptured on 19 October, and he was transferred to England and admitted to the Queen Mary Hospital at Whalley between 22 October – 3 November, then spent two months convalescing.

He was granted two weeks leave from 11 – 24 January 1917, during which time he contracted venereal disease and was admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Dermatological Hospital at Bulford between 24 January – 28 March.

He was treated at Bulford for a second time from 20 June – 16 July, then spent the next few months at various camps before he again embarked for France on 5 February 1918. He rejoined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion transport section, in the field near Locre, on 10 February.

The battalion moved south to the Somme in early August, where the allied offensive from Amiens commenced on 8 August 1918. Following the success of the attack, the Germans retreated east, and the Australians followed. The transports were kept busy re-supplying the infantry with ammunition and all manner of supplies, often across open fields or roads pockmarked with shell craters, which was difficult and dangerous work.

Dvr Peacock sustained burns to his right arm and neck on 16 September, for which he was treated at the 12<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station and the 5<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Rouen between 16 – 21 September. He rejoined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 2 October, after they had already left the line for the last time.

Around this time, many of the men who had served in the AIF since 1914 were granted special leave to Australia. Dvr Peacock was one of those afforded that privilege and he left France on 13 October. After a short stay in England, he embarked for Australia on 23 October 1918.

Driver 485 Walter Oswald Peacock disembarked in Melbourne on 23 December, where he was discharged from the AIF on 21 February 1919.

Name: Peacock, Walter Oswell	
Service Number	485
Date enlisted	17 August 1914
Place enlisted	Albert Park, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	5 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion
Previous military service	51 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion, CMF – 1 year
Date and ship embarked for overseas	21 October 1914 HMAT A3 <i>Orvieto</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	19 years 6 months (17 January 1896)
Place of birth	Albury, NSW
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Rubber worked (Dunlop)
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Peacock, Mr Henry, father, 114 Union Street, Brunswick, Victoria
Permanent address	Brunswick, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, fair hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 5 inches, weight – 9 stone, 2 lbs, chest measurement – 35 inches
Final Rank	Driver
Final Unit	5 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Gallipoli, France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	23 October 1918 HT <i>Durham</i>
Date discharged	21 February 1919
Nature of discharge	Termination of Period of Enlistment
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Brother of Henry and Murray Peacock. Father was manager of Holden's Coffee Palace, St Leonards in 1915. Died 4 February 1970. Remembered on the St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll.