

Cecil Medcalf MM



Private (Pte) 7602 Cecil Medcalf enlisted in the 14th Infantry Battalion in the 4th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Australian Division at Seymour on 6 February 1917.

He embarked overseas on 21 November and disembarked in Southampton on 5 January 1918, after short layovers in Suez, Egypt and Taranto, Italy during the voyage.

While undertaking training at the Codford Camp in Wiltshire, Pte Medcalf absented himself without leave from 13 – 24 February, when he was apprehended by an MP.

On his return to camp, he was awarded 28 days Field Punishment No. 2 (which involved additional work duties, sometimes under restraint) and docked 42 days' pay.

Pte Medcalf departed England on 1 April and landed in France later the same day, where he was taken on strength of the 14th Battalion, in the field at Sailly aux Bois, on 17 April 1918, one of 124 reinforcements received that day.

The great allied offensive from Amiens commenced on 8 August and the 4th Division, including the 14th Battalion, passed through the 2nd Division to continue the Australian assault along Cerisy Ridge and the Morcourt Valley, for the loss of 80 battalion casualties.

The offensive was a great success, and the allies pursued the Germans east. By mid-September, they had reached the Hindenburg Outpost Line, which was essentially the old British trench lines overrun by the Germans back in March 1918.

The 14th Battalion participated in the successful Australian assault on the Outpost Line at Le Verguier, Ascension Wood and Le Grand Priel between 18 – 21 September.

They captured 75 enemy prisoners, 15 field guns and 80 machine guns for the loss of 94 casualties of their own – or about 25% of battalion strength by that stage of the war – then left the line for the final time on 21 September.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Unidentified Australian soldiers near Ascension Farm, the scene of severe fighting during the Australian attacks beyond Jeancourt and Le Verguier, 18 September 1918.

The battalion was resting near Amiens on 30 October when Pte Medcalf learned he had been awarded the Military Medal for his actions on 18 September. The citation read as follows:

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty near ASCENSION WOOD on 18th September 1918. This man displayed great courage and dash. When the enemy second line was reached, he was one of the first to jump into the trench and push along to the left. He encountered several of the enemy who were attempting to place a barricade across part of the trench. Under cover of the intense darkness and rain he jumped out of the trench, worked his way carefully along the top and was able to drop several bombs right in amongst the enemy before they knew of his presence. He accounted for six, five being killed with the bombs, one he shot as he attempted to escape. He is at all times a splendid example.”

He spent a week in hospital at Rouen with pneumonia between 22 November – 1 December, then joined the Australian Infantry Base Depot at le Havre.

While there, Pte Medcalf was charged with being drunk on active service and causing a disturbance at a Harfleur café on 20 December.

Found guilty following a Field General Court Martial held at le Havre on 2 January 1919, Pte Medcalf was subsequently sentenced to 120 days imprisonment with hard labour.

He served five weeks at le Havre Military Prison from 13 January – 25 February, then was transferred to England and spent a month at the Lewisham Detention Barracks. He was finally transferred to H.M. Prison Dorchester on 24 March.

A few weeks later, the final month of his sentence was remitted, and Pte Medcalf was released from prison on 12 April. He then embarked for return to Australia on 3 May.

Private 7602 Cecil Medcalf MM disembarked in Melbourne on 21 June, where he was medically discharged from the AIF (illness not specified) on 14 July 1919.



Name: Medcalf, Cecil	
Service Number	7602
Date enlisted	6 February 1917
Place enlisted	Seymour, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Private
Initial Unit	14 th Infantry Battalion
Date and ship embarked for overseas	21 November 1917 HMAT A71 <i>Nestor</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	19 years 8 months (29 June 1897)
Place of birth	Inglewood, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Labourer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Medcalf, Mr Charles, father, c/- Mr R Menzel, 449 Elizabeth Street, West Melbourne, Victoria
Permanent address	West Melbourne, Victoria
Appearance	Dark complexion, brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 6 inches, weight – 8 stone, chest measurement – 32/34 inches
Final Rank	Private
Final Unit	14 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and ship embarked for Australia	3 May 1919 HT <i>Leicestershire</i>
Date discharged	14 July 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (illness not stated)
Honours/medals	Military Medal, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Died 10 December 1964. Brother of Alwyn Medcalf (RAN) & Alex Medcalf MM.