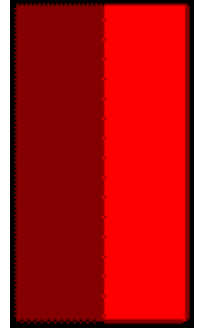




# A Soldier of the Great War

## Private Hansen Woodcock

### 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF



## Hansen Woodcock

Regimental number	3967
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Butcher
Address	67 Packington Street, St Kilda, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	25
Next of kin	Father, H Woodcock, 67 Packington Street, St Kilda, Victoria
Enlistment date	5 July 1915
Rank on enlistment	Private
Unit name	<a href="#">7th Battalion, 12th Reinforcement</a>
AWM Embarkation Roll number	23/24/3
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A40 <i>Ceramic</i> on 23 November 1915
Rank from Nominal Roll	Private
Unit from Nominal Roll	59th Battalion
Fate	Returned to Australia 27 August 1917
Family/military connections	Brother: 3968 Pte Arnold WOODCOCK, 59th Bn, killed in action, 19 July 1916.



## 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion

The 59th Battalion was originally raised as a unit of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in Egypt on 21 February 1916 for service in World War I as part of an expansion of the AIF that took place following the end of the Gallipoli campaign. The battalion was formed through the joining of half of the members of the 7th Battalion with fresh recruits raised in Australia from rural Victoria. Together with the 57th, 58th and 60th Battalions, the 59th formed part of the 15th Brigade, attached to the 5th Australian Division.

After completing its formation, the 5th Division was transferred to the Western Front. Arriving in France on 23 June, the battalion experienced its first taste of fighting on the Western Front in July when it was involved in the Battle of Fromelles, suffering heavy casualties to machine gun fire when it attacked in the first wave. During early 1917, in an effort to shorten their lines of communication, the Germans withdrew to prepared positions of the Hindenburg Line; a brief advance followed as the Allies followed them up. During this phase of the war the 59th Battalion was not committed to any major attacks, but it did play a defensive role at the end of the Second Battle of Bullecourt in May, holding the ground that the Australians had gained earlier in the fighting. Later in the year, the Australians were transferred to Belgium where, in late September, the 59th took part in the Battle of Polygon Wood.<sup>[4]</sup>

The following year, the collapse of Tsarist Russia allowed the Germans to launch a large-scale offensive on the Western Front known as the Spring Offensive, which initially forced the Allies back towards Paris. In late March, the Australian divisions were moved south to help shore up the line,<sup>[5]</sup> and the 5th Division took up a position around Corbie. In the fighting that followed, the 59th Battalion took part in a counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918.<sup>[6]</sup> After the German offensive was halted, a brief period of lull followed during which the Allies sought to regain the initiative, and in early July, the 59th took part in a diversionary attack on the Ancre River during the Battle of Hamel.<sup>[7]</sup> Later in the year, the Allies launched their own offensive, the Hundred Days Offensive, and the battalion took part in the fighting at Amiens on 8 August. A series of advances followed, resulting in further battles: the Battle of Mont St Quentin and Péronne on 31 August and lastly the Battle of St. Quentin Canal on 29 September. In early October, the battalion was withdrawn from the line for rest and reorganisation, having suffered heavily during the earlier fighting. They remained out of the line until the war ended and subsequently the battalion saw no further action, and it was disbanded on 24 March 1919.

During its war service, the 59th lost 795 men killed and 1,619 wounded. Members of the battalion received the following decorations: two Distinguished Service Orders with one bar, 17 Military Crosses, 14 Distinguished Conduct Medals with one bar, 51 Military Medals with four bars, eight Meritorious Service Medals, 24 Mentions in Despatches, and eight foreign awards.

A 36672

Transferred  
59th Battalion

AUSTRALIAN  MILITARY FORCES.

# AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

## Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 13967 Name Woodcock, Hanson John  
Unit 12/14th RFLs 59th Bn  
14  
Joined on 5th July 1915

12th Rein's  
7th Battalion

### Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ... Woodcock, Hanson John
2. In the Parish of ... in or near the Town of N. Adelaide in the County of S. Aus
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ... nat. born British subj.
4. What is your age? ... 25 yrs 4 mos.
5. What is your trade or calling? ... Butcher
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ... no
7. Are you married? ... no
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ... Father, Woodcock, Herbert  
67 Pakington St  
St. Kilda  
Vic.
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ... no
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incorrigible and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ... no
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ... no
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... yes
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... no
14. (For married men, widowers, and children, and soldiers who do not receive a separation allowance will be issued to you after embarkation during your term of service? ... no
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ... yes

I, John Hanson Woodcock do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife,\* † and children.

Date 5th July 1915

John Woodcock  
Signature of person enlisted.

D.37/1.15.—C.62. \* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age. † Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

**Private Hansen Woodcock Number 3967** was born in Adelaide, South Australia and was 25 years and 4 months when he enlisted in the AIF on the 5/7/15 .Before the war he had been a butcher .

He along with his brother Arnold were originally allocated to 9<sup>th</sup> Depot training battalion from 12/7/15 until 22/10/15.

Hansen spent considerable time in hospital during his war service due to sickness and being wounded at the Battle of Fromelles. He survived the Battle of Fromelles with severe wounding to one hand . He would not serve again and would spend time in and out of hospital . One reason for his health issues may revolve around the fact that he may have seen his brother killed in action at Fromelles and emotionally it may have indeed effected him greatly. There eis a strong possibility that they both were in the initial waves of attack. Arnold was killed very early in the battle and Hansen, being badly wounded in the hand may have been able to get back to his lines or rescued as one of the 300 dragged from the battle field.

After initial training he and his brother departed Melbourne on the HMAT Ceramic A40 on the 23 November 1915. They arrived in Egypt as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements on the 26/2/16 at Zeitoun.

He was allocated to the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Tel el Kabir on 26/2/16.

Battalions were reallocated after the Gallipoli evacuations awaiting orders to move to the Western Front and France where the war was not going well.

In early March 1916 he was admitted to hospital with influenza, eventually discharged and was to remain in the field there until the beginning of April when he was again admitted wit exhaustion. He would remain in service until early June.

A decision was finally made that 2 divisions of Australian soldiers were to be sent to help in France.

Both Hansen and his brother Arnold were on one of those first boats that left Alexandrina on the 18/6/16 the "Kinfauns Castle" bound for Marseilles. The left at 10.05am on the 30/6/1916 via Malta.

The 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion finally disembarked on the 29/6/16 in France. They trained to the north and finally detrained at Steenbecque, near Armentieres near the Belgium border where exercises and preparations began in earnest.

Trench warfare had been going on in this area since the beginning of the war and trenches were well constructed especially by the Germans. It was here that the area was known as the "nursery" as it formed a training ground for the new battalions before subjecting them to harder campaigns.

On the 10/7/16 The 59<sup>th</sup> were marched south to Sally Sur La Lys where they were billeted.

They then were to see action in the trenches and relieved the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the area just east of Fleurbaix on the 17<sup>th</sup> July.

Meanwhile the British Commanders had formulated a plan to try and draw the German troops away from the Somme .

*The **Battle of Fromelles** (19–20 July 1916), was a British military operation on the Western Front during World War I, subsidiary to the Battle of the Somme. General Headquarters (GHQ) of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had ordered the First Army and Second Army to prepare attacks to support the Fourth Army on the Somme 80 kilometres (50 mi) to the south, to exploit any weakening of the German defences opposite. The attack took place 16 kilometres (9.9 mi) from Lille, between the Fauquissart–Trivelet road and Cordonnerie Farm, an area overlooked from Aubers Ridge to the south. The ground was low-lying and much of the defensive fortification of both sides consisted of breastworks, rather than trenches.*

*The operation was conducted by XI Corps of the First Army with the 61st Division and the 5th Australian Division, Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF) against the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, supported by two flanking divisions of the German 6th Army. Preparations for the attack were rushed, the troops involved lacked experience in trench warfare and the power of the German defence was significantly underestimated, the attackers being outnumbered 2:1. The advance took place in daylight, against defences overlooked by Aubers Ridge, on a narrow front which left German artillery on either side free to fire into the flanks of the attack. A renewal of the attack by the 61st Division early on 20 July was cancelled, after it was realised that German counter-attacks had already forced a retirement by the Australian troops to the original front line.*

*On 19 July, General von Falkenhayn, the German Chief of the General Staff, had judged the British attack to be a long-anticipated offensive against the 6th Army. On the next day when the effect of the attack was known and a captured operation order from XI Corps revealed the limited intent of the operation, Falkenhayn ordered the Guard Reserve Corps to be withdrawn to reinforce the Somme front. The Battle of Fromelles had inflicted some losses on the German defenders but gained no ground nor deflected many German troops bound for the Somme. The attack was the début of the AIF on the Western Front and the Australian War Memorial described the battle as "the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history". Of 7,080 BEF casualties, 5,533 losses were incurred by the 5th Australian Division; German losses were 1,600–2,000, with 150 taken prisoner.*



## **THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES 19th and 20th July, 1916**

*British Official Communique, 20th July, 2.50 p m.:—*

*"Yesterday evening, south of Armentieres, we carried out some important raids on a front of two miles, in which Australian troops took part. About 140 German prisoners were captured." The Fromelles battlefield lay on one of the lowest parts of the western front. Through it trickled the tiny river, Laies, perhaps four or five feet wide, except where it had been enlarged by shell holes. The battle takes its name from the village of Fromelles, which lay about two miles on the German side of the line. The enemy availed himself of these advantages and of a slight local rise. Owing to its shape and slight elevation, this point had been aptly named the "Sugar Loaf," and it exercised a potent and fateful influence on the fortunes of the fight that was waged around it. On the extreme right of the sector, the lines were separated by 450 yards, but they gradually converged towards the left, until, at the extreme left of the front of attack, No Man's Land was only about 120 yards across. When the Division took over the Bois Grenier sector, the 57th and 58th were sent to the front line, the remaining battalions were kept in reserve. General Elliott at first determined to carry out the assault with them, but the additional fatigue and strain, as well as the heavy enemy artillery retaliation led him to change his plans and relieve the 57th and 58th with the 59th and 60th Battalions. These were the two assaulting battalions of the brigade. The morning of the 19th July was calm and misty, with the promise of a clear, fine day later. The infantry assault was to take place at 6pm. At 2.15pm, there was a marked increase in enemy counter preparation and by 3 p.m., a heavy and continuous volume of fire was falling over the front and support line and the saps leading to them, now filled with the assembling infantry. The 15th Brigade area was being raked with shrapnel. Punctually, at 5.45 pm, deployment into No-Man's Land commenced. The 59th Battalion were scarcely over the parapet before a little desultory musket fire was opened on it, coming chiefly from the "Sugar Loaf." Before the men had gone 30 yards, this fire had grown in intensity. The waves pressed forward steadily, but just as steadily the enemy fire grew hotter and hotter. The losses mounted rapidly as the men pressed gallantly on into the withering fire. Lieut. Col. Harris was disabled by a shell and Major Layh took charge of the dwindling lines which halted in the scanty cover of a slight depression to re-organise. The deployment of the 60th Battalion was attended by similar circumstances. On the extreme left were the enemy trenches entered by elements of the 60th. They sent back a few prisoners, but touch with them was subsequently lost. Thus on the entire front of the 15th Brigade, within half an hour from the time of assault, it was apparent that we had failed to take the "Sugar Loaf" and that it was beyond human power to cross so wide a No Man's Land in the face of the machine gun fire that streamed continuously from it. By 6.30 p m, the remnants of the two battalions were doggedly digging in as near to the enemy parapet as they could get. Thirty-five out of the thirty-nine assaulting officers were already killed or wounded and with them most of the N C O's. In these circumstances the survivors could only hold on determinedly to what they had won. The enemy, on his part, strove by all means to retard its progress. Their machine-guns enfiladed the troops in their shallow defences, and as night closed in, a continuous stream of shells fell over and around the grim, but helpless, line in No Man's Land. The general position on the 5th Divisional front at 7.30 p m. was that the attack was definitely*

held up on the right brigade sector and was successful on the centre and left sectors, where the 8th Brigade had advanced Active operations on the 15th Brigade front terminated at about 1 a m on the 20th General Elliott received official news of the failure at about 7 30 p m , by which time he was also aware that the 59th and 60th Battalions were badly cut up and quite unable to advance without assistance On receipt of the information at 7 52 that he could use two companies of the 58th Battalion to support his attack in conjunction with the attack of the 184th Brigade on the "Sugar Loaf", he took immediate steps to make the necessary arrangements The attack of the 61st Division had been abandoned and the "Sugar Loaf" defences were thus enabled to concentrate the whole of their organised machine-gun fire on the one thin line that now endeavoured to penetrate it. They reached the remnants of the 59th and 60th Battalions, caught them up and carried them on towards the enemy by the impetus of their heroic charge. It was in vain The attack melted into nothingness After a couple of hours the remnants of all three battalions commenced to drift back to their old front lines There they were hastily organised and withdrawn to the rear, and the defence of the brigade front was passed to the 57th Battalion The total casualties from noon, 19th July to noon, 20th July, was 178 officers and 5,335 other ranks. The 15th Infantry Brigade casualties were 51 officers and 1725 other ranks. The infantry battalions that suffered most heavily were the 60th, the 32nd and the 59th, with 757, 718 and 695 casualties respectively The report of the GOC, 5th Australian Division, on the attack carried out on the 19th inst was forwarded by Lieut. Gen R Haking, Commanding XI Corps who wrote— "I think the attack of the Australian Division, which was new to fighting out here, was carried out in an exceptionally gallant manner. The difficulties on the right flank were caused by the failure of the 61st Division to carry the "Sugar Loaf." I am quite sure that on the next occasion when the Division is ordered to attack it will distinguish itself even more than on this occasion." At this time, Major Layh, with the rank of Lieut -Col took over command of the 59th Battalion, and Capt. S W Neale, who had been OC of the 15th Machine-gun Company, resumed duty with his Battalion, the 59th. The Fifth Division remained in the line in the vicinity of Armentieres for nearly three months after the Battle of Fromelles One result of that battle was to reduce the Division to nearly 6000 below its strength By the end of September, the arrival of reinforcements had reduced this deficiency to one of 54 officers and 3371 other ranks. Average casualties were about 300 per month On the 12th October, the tenth and eleventh of a series of raids was carried out, when Captain L L Hornby and Lieuts. Johnston and Gannon lead a fine team of 59th Battalion raiders into the enemy trenches on the old Fromelles battle-front The party returned after the usual destruction of the enemy works. The losses were three slightly wounded, one of whom was Lieut. Johnston. On 18th October, the 15th Brigade left Bailleul by train for the Brucamps area where it was to be billeted The move to the Somme battle area was made by buses along the broad high roads of the Somme Valley on 21st October, the 15th Brigade going into reserve in the vicinity of Montauban, which it had reached after marching from Fricourt on 22nd October The Division was involved in all the preparations for a major operation The most laborious was the digging of assembly trenches on the jumping-off line of the attacking infantry. The work had to be done at night As fast as the trenches were dug, the wet sides crumbled in again The weather grew worse and worse The Division's second tour of duty in the Somme trenches opened on 20th November and closed on 23rd December. The 15th Brigade relieved the 3rd Guards Brigade on 20th November General Elliott had his H Q in Gun Valley, just in front of Delville Wood where the shelling was frequent and heavy. The Brigade at



once set about linking up the shell holes of the front line and otherwise improving its defences The 15th Brigade was relieved in the left sector by the 14th Brigade on 30th November, after a ten days tour and it relieved the 8th Brigade on the right sector on 10th December The Division was finally relieved by the 2nd Australian Division about 20th December, after having done approximately twenty days' service in the front line, and the infantry was moved back to the reserve area, Ribemont, Buire and Dernancourt by train A bleak, wet Christmas, in surroundings that would depress anybody, was spent in the reserve area. Despite disadvantages Christmas Day was made enjoyable. Good dinners were provided, parcels from the Australian Comforts Fund were distributed and Australian mail arrived. The Division left the Vignacourt area about 14th January on its way back to the line In the left brigade sector the 15th Brigade relieved a brigade of the 2nd Australian Division on the 16th January Brigade HQ being at their old position in Gun Valley The 15th Brigade was relieved in the left sector on 15th February by the 8th Brigade, but was brought in again on 24th February to relieve the 45th and 48th Battalions of the 4th Australian Division. On 24th February, the 15th Brigade relieved the 12th Brigade on the immediate left of the 5th Divisional sector There, on the 25th, patrols found Pork and Barley trenches of the enemy front system unoccupied and they were immediately seized and linked up with our old front line The indications of a substantial enemy withdrawal now opened up prospects of a wonderful awakening from the torpor of trench warfare On 7th March, the relief of the 8th Brigade was effected by the 14th and 15th Brigades Bapaume was now right in the path of any advance, the town being barely a mile away On 16th March, it was found that on every brigade front the enemy line was deserted The 14th Brigade was soon in Le Transloy and the 15th were heading fast for Beaulencourt. The 8th was on the point of entering Bapaume A wide screen of Light Horse patrols passed through the outpost line of the Divisional front for reconnaissance With the 59th Battalion as its infantry support, it constituted the vanguard of General Elliott's advanced guard Rapid progress was made Opposition was encountered at Fremicourt, but it was brushed aside by the Light Horse and "C" and "D" Companies of the 59th Battalion who captured a few prisoners and occupied the village. A strong-post at Delsaux Farm about four miles east of Bapaume was more troublesome with machine gun and rifle fire The 59th Battalion was forced to deploy and reduce the position by working round its flanks This was accomplished by "A" and "B" Companies, and among the enemy dead was found an officer whose pocket contained a document of considerable importance It was an outline of the method of the enemy retirement in the sector in which 1 A N Z A C was operating. The 60th Battalion relieved the 59th in the vanguard on the morning of 19th March On the morning of the 20th, heavy fire from Morchies and Beaumetz was encountered At 11 a m., parties of the 59th were advancing on Morchies, which they captured at 1 p m On the 21st, the 59th, now completely tired out by its fine efforts, was relieved by the 30th Battalion. On the 23rd, enemy storm troops advanced on Beaumetz village It met with a temporary measure of success, but was routed by parties of the 29th and 30th Battalions. The village was cleared On the 24th, the 59th and 60th Battalions moved out from Velu and Lebuquiere and completely broke strong enemy opposition on the right front. Hundreds of the enemy were dislodged from these positions and the line was materially improved. The 59th became involved in the Second Division's operations at Lagnicourt and repulsed two counter-attacks that were threatening that village from its right flank The enemy bombarded a much disputed farm north of Beaumetz and occupied it after completely wrecking it Within half an hour a 59th Battalion party had counter-

attacked and retaken the place On the 29th, the 14th Brigade relieved the 15th Brigade as advance guards and the men, thoroughly tired out but in high spirits, passed back to the comparative rest and comfort of the rear The 59th and 60th Battalions had experienced the hardest time So far, the Australian advance guard had completely outfought the rearguards of the enemy, who had been forced to reinforce their rearguards with heavy detachments from the main body. By now six battalions of the 5th Division had been engaged and the operations were commencing to assume the character of a series of pitched battles The enemy rearguard, forced from its strong Beaumetz line of resistance, took up a position of even greater strength on the Louverval-Doignies line The period in reserve near Bapaume passed without important incident On 20th April the 5th Division was relieved in its reserve position by the 20th British Division and moved to "The Dingle" and the camps around Mametz, Fricourt, Bernafay and Montauban The closing April weather was beautiful and the fortnight spent in this area turned out to be a most enjoyable one Apart from relaxation and training, grand Divisional sports were held on 4th May. The guns thundered insistently and everybody knew that a bitter fight was raging in and around Bullecourt. On 8th May, the 15th Brigade travelled to Beugnatre via Bapaume The enemy rearguards had been pushed back into the Hindenburg Line, which here consisted of two parallel lines of extraordinarily well-constructed trenches, about 200 yards apart Each trench was provided with numerous concreted dugouts, machine-gun and Minenwerfer positions The two villages nearest the line on our side were Noreuil and Lagnicourt Bullecourt lay just to the left of the new Divisional sector. The 4th Division, on 11th April, had stormed the Hindenburg Line near Bullecourt and had secured an important sector of the Hindenburg defences The 14th and 15th Brigades took over the central and left sectors of the front line on 9th May A continuous artillery battle raged along the whole front Our front lines and every approach to them were pommelled day and night. Artillery fire on the morning of the 12th was of the heaviest nature and the casualties for the day, in the 15th Brigade sector alone, were 18 officers and 330 other ranks. 59th Battalion H Q. received a direct hit and all the occupants were killed or wounded.

Lieut -Col Layh was one of the wounded and Lieut.-Col. C. C. Mason took over command On the night of 12th - 13th, the 15th Brigade was relieved by the 173rd Brigade of the 5th British Corps, and on its relief was concentrated at Beugnatre, as Divisional reserve On the 22nd it moved to Biefvilliers, where it remained till the end of the month The 5th Division was relieved, between 24th and 26th May, by the 20th Division, and passed to the immediate rear as Corps Reserve with HQ at Bancourt It was over seven months since its arrival on the Somme, and of this time, almost five months had been spent in the front line The new area was a large one, extending some twelve miles west from the vicinity of Albert to the village of Rubempre, at which latter place DHQ and 15th Brigade HQ were established Early in July, the Battalion marched from Rubempre to Mailly Mailly and continued with its training over the areas of Thiepval and Beaumont Hamel It was from this area that the Battalion marched to Corbie and back in two days, some 44 miles, apart from testing our stamina, the object was an exercise in conjunction with Divisional Engineers who had erected pontoon bridges over the Somme We were to test their stability; in doing so one Company Officer stressed on his men that, as they had been out of step for 22 miles, "Now was not the time to suddenly get into step and probably sink everything " Hindsight suggests something prophetic about this manoeuvre, for nine

*months later the Battalion, in a night march over the same route, covered 25 miles, and on completion guarded similar crossings But things, then, looked blue indeed Between the 25th and 29th July, the Division was moved north by train from the Rubempre area to the reserve area of the Second Army in the Blaringhem area The 15th Brigade entrained at Belle Eglise and detrained at Steenbecque From there they moved by route march to their billets at Sercus. They spent seven weeks in this area The weather remained beautiful for the most part. News of the offensive operations in the Ypres sector was eagerly awaited, and it soon became apparent that the defence methods of the enemy were, in that sector, fundamentally different from what they had been on the Somme. Here the Germans had adopted the plan of fortifying whole areas instead of lines, by constructing hundreds of concrete blockhouses, soon known as pill-boxes, which were dotted thickly over his forward area and extended behind it to a great depth Apart from the training, the chief incidents of the period were the march past General Birdwood on 20th August, a similar parade before General Godley on 22nd August, and finally a review by Sir Douglas Haig, on 29th August, Railhead during the period was at Ebbingham, where good baths and a laundry were located.*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1916 , Hansen, Arnold and the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion had relieved the 57<sup>th</sup> in the firing line and experienced heavy bombardments from both sides. This was planned to soften up the enemy for the ensuing battle.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> July dawned it was decided to attack the enemy in 4 waves 5 minutes apart beginning at 6.45pm.

Each soldier was to have 170 rounds of ammunition, an entrenching tool, sandbag and 2 grenades. Upon reaching the enemy trenches the first wave was to deal with enemy positions and machine guns and enable the second and further waves to storm the trenches easily forcing the enemy to retreat. Various battalion members were tasked with wire cutters to clear the path for others.

The first wave of 59<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Battalions was met with intense well placed rifle and machine gun fire. The initial bombardment had achieved very little. The 100 yards of open no man's land was a killing field. Hansen and Arnold were among the first waves of attack.

The attacking battalion was easily disposed of and each successive wave encountered the same fate. A few men reached the trenches and attempted to hold them but eventually were forced to retreat and were killed in the process.

The war diary of the 59<sup>th</sup> battalion states that 269 men were missing, 381 wounded severely 13 killed and 11 died of wounds.

At the end of the 24 hours and subsequently it was found that 5533 men of the 5<sup>th</sup> division had been killed. Arnold was one of these brave men who had been killed in action , 1 year and 6 days after enlisting in the AIF.

At VC Corner on the site of no man's land lie 400 remains of soldiers who died in the battle and who could be buried. There are no headstones but 2 large crosses.

The wall behind holds the names of 1299 who were killed and have no known grave.

A further 250 soldiers remains were located in mass graves and reburied with DNA identification allowing some to be named. This cemetery is at Pheasant Wood.

Hansen was severely wounded in this attack.

92431.-W6490/1535.-2,000,000.-J. J. K. & Co., Ltd.-Forms B, 12M/L. **59 INF. BATTALION A.I.F.** Army Form B. 103. **Casualty Form-Active Service.** *7th Bn. Not Avail.* *3967*

*H 36672*  
 Regiment or Corps *7th Battalion A.I.F. (12th Rpt)*  
 Regimental No. *3967* Rank *Private* Name *Woodcock Henry John*  
 Enlisted (a) *5/4/16* Terms of Service (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Service reckons from (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of promotion to present rank } Date of appointment to lance rank } Numerical position on roll of N.C.Os. }  
 Extended \_\_\_\_\_ Re-engaged \_\_\_\_\_ Qualification (b) \_\_\_\_\_

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 35, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 35, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
<i>23/1/16</i>	<i>1. Aux Hoop</i>	<i>Adm Distal</i>	<i>Cairo</i>	<i>22-1/16</i>	<i>R1157 (244)</i>
<i>27/2/16</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>Quar to Unit</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>21-2-16</i>	<i>R2794 (275) 7021</i>
<i>28/2/28</i>	<i>End T'ing Battn Zeitoun</i>	<i>Allotted to and proceeding to join 59th Bn A.I.F.</i>	<i>Tel-el-Kebir Zeitoun</i>	<i>28/2/16</i>	<i>AP.4620.</i>
<i>11/5/16</i>	<i>C.O. 59th Battn</i>	<i>Taken on strength of 59th Battalion A.I.F.</i>	<i>Tel-el-Kebir</i>	<i>24/2/16</i>	<i>AP5913 B213/3 P.O.1/278</i>
<i>11/3</i>	<i>15th Amb.</i>	<i>Adm Influenza Disch to duty</i>	<i>Tel-el-Kebir</i>	<i>7/3/16</i> <i>10/3/16</i>	<i>C5918 EB 8 204/239</i> <i>204/2300</i>
<i>30/3/16</i>	<i>101. Amb.</i>	<i>Adm. Debility</i>	<i>Semailia</i>	<i>30/3/16</i>	<i>P5514 EB 19.</i>
<i>1/4/16</i>	<i>8th Amb.</i>	<i>Adm. Exhaustion Disch to unit</i>	<i>Senny Post</i>	<i>31/3/16</i> <i>1/4/16</i>	<i>C6089 EB 22 204/2876</i> <i>204/2887</i>

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.  
 (b) s.d., Signaller, Clerking Smith, etc., etc., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties. P.T.O.

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
9/4/16	4th Amb	adm. Debility Tfd to 1st ASH	Serapeum	30/3/16	C6087 EB24.
31/3/16	No 1 ASH	Tfd to Field Amb.	Jenania	31/3/16	B6268 EB30.
18 JUN 1916	OG Troops	EMBKD TO JOIN B EP KINPAUNS CASTLE ALEXANDRIA		18 JUN 1916	A.P.9070
28-6-16	OG Troops	Disembarked	Marseilles	28-6-16	LA-3959
22/7/16	75 Gen Hosp	Adm. G.W. Arm.	France	21/7/16	AT 1880
25.7.16	"	Embkd for England on "S. P. Denis" 25-7-16 G.W. Arm.	Boulogne	25/7/16	AK 211/2 W3083 AO 20/54
"	"	Tfd to England	"	"	AK 211/3
22-7-16	No 2 Accs	Adm. G.W. Hand Tfd to Amb Train	France	20/7/16	AK 211/3
28/7/16	W. Blin.	WOUNDED IN ACTION France 19 7 16			AQ-1816 B213 D-O 20
26/7/16	Kitchener Hosp. Brighton	admitt Wounded (severe)	England	26/7/16	at n. 30628A Do 1089E

Sheet 2  
Casualty Form—Active Service.

1) Regiment or Corps 59th Bn Regimental Number 3964  
 Rank Pte Surname Woodcock Christian Name Thomas  
 Religion \_\_\_\_\_ Age on Enlistment \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months.  
 Enlisted (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Terms of Service (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Service reckons from (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of promotion to present rank \_\_\_\_\_ Date of appointment to lance rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 Extended ( ) Re-engaged ( ) Qualification (b) \_\_\_\_\_  
 or Corps Trade and Rate \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Officer i/c Records \_\_\_\_\_

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c. during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 215, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B. 215, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received				
		Embarked ...			
		Disembarked...			
<u>22.9.16</u>	<u>Kitchener's Mill</u>	<u>Disch: to do 2ALP Weymouth</u>	<u>Brighton</u>	<u>22.9.16</u>	<u>NR390 Nos Ppt</u>
<u>22.9.16</u>	<u>Inst Com Depot</u>	<u>Marched in from Brighton</u>	<u>Weymouth</u>	<u>22.9.16</u>	<u>ER3006</u>
<u>3.11.16</u>	<u>No 3 Com Depot</u>	<u>In. O. to Wareham</u>	<u>Wool</u>	<u>3.11.16</u>	<u>ER6796</u>
<u>6.11.16</u>	<u>do</u>	<u>M.I from No 1 CB, Beham</u>	<u>do</u>	<u>19.10.16</u>	<u>E.R. 8492</u>
<u>6.11.16</u>	<u>No 2 Com Dpt</u>	<u>M. I from No 2 Com Dpt Weymouth</u>	<u>Roamington Woolf.</u>	<u>16.10.16</u>	<u>ER3492</u>
<u>7.3.17</u>	<u>Mil. Hospl.</u>	<u>Adm. Lumbago</u>	<u>Wareham</u>	<u>7.3.17</u>	<u>Do 18. 28. 3.17</u>
<u>12.3.17</u>	<u>No. 4. Com.</u>	<u>Sick to Wareham Mil. Hosp: (Lumbago)</u>	<u>Wareham</u>	<u>7.3.17</u>	<u>Do 19. 2/4/17</u>
<u>22.3.17</u>	<u>Mil. Hospl.</u>	<u>Disch to Depot Wareham</u>	<u>Wareham</u>	<u>22.3.17</u>	<u>Hospl Disch:</u>
<u>26.3.17</u>	<u>No. 4. Com.</u>	<u>M/4 from Wareham Mil. Hos.</u>	<u>Wareham</u>	<u>22.3.17</u>	<u>Do 21. 14. 4. 17.</u>

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.  
 (b) Signaller, Shoemaking, &c.  
 (B99159) W 12612-3156 J. P. & Co., Ltd. Form B. 103. P.T.O.

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form H. 211, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form H. 211, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received				
5-8-17	No 4 Com Dpt.	Pte. M/0 to No 2 Com Dpt. Weymouth.	Codford.	2-8-17	LR 6498.
5-8-17	No 2. Com Dpt.	Pte. M. J. from Codford	Weymouth	2-8-17	LR 6500.
5-9-17	1 B 305 R.	<del>RETURN TO AUSTRALIA</del> Per N.Z.H.T 82. H.S. 8341 R. Ensign	England.	27-8-17	LR 7672. DOBKE. 12-9-17.
14-9-17	No 2 Com Dpt	Monte Video (1522)		11-8-17	LR 7906.
		Discharged ord. b. P. (W.)	30.11.17.	B.R. P. 20/63.	

It is not know whether he saw his brother killed. He himself sustained serious gunshot wounds to the arm and hand and somehow managed to make his way back to his own lines or was rescued in the subsequent actions taken to recover the dead and badly wounded.

The Cobber Monument at VC corner near no man's land is a reminder of the incredible loss of life and the actions to recover the wounded.

No less than 300 men were carried from the battlefield, with the cry of ,help me cobber and don't leave me here cobber being strongly remembered by those who survived.

Pompey Elliot the commanding officer shook the survivors hands as they were returned to the Australian lines and it is claimed that he later retired to his quarters and wept at the incredible and needless loss of life.

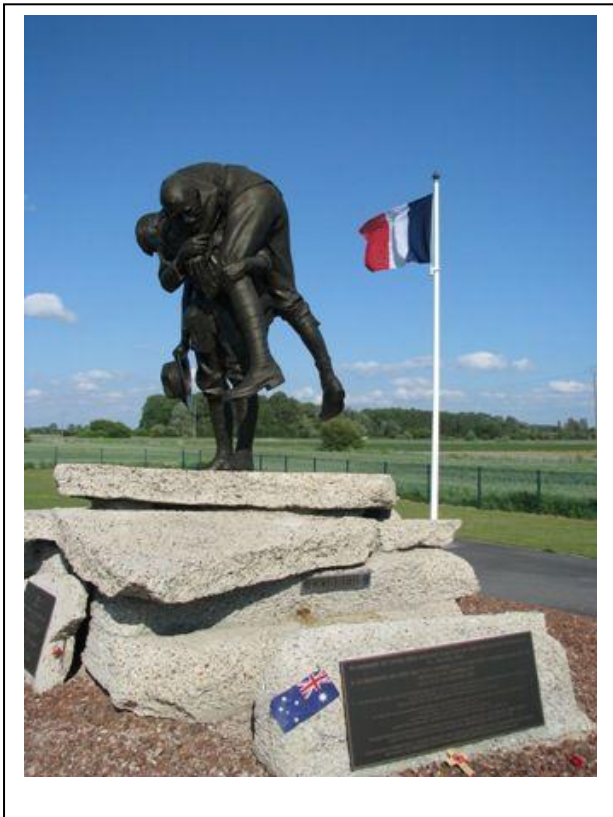
Hansen , through luck or amazing courage had survived. His brother was dead and his final resting place unknown. Hansen was transferred to the 75<sup>th</sup> General Hospital on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July and finally repatriated back to England. He was admitted to Kitchener Hospital at Brighton and Warham Military Hospital and was to recover at

Weymouth where thousands of other Australians would also spend time during the war.

When well enough he was to return to Australia aboard the NZ HT Pakeha on the 22/10/17 and finally discharged from the AIF on 30/11/17.

His war was over . He had lost a brother and he was severely injured for life.

He had left Australia in June 1916 and just 1 year and 6 months later he would return home having taken part in a battle that had resulted in the greatest loss of life in 24 hours. Other battles were to be waged until the Armistice and thousands more would die in support of the Empire and King.





W 35981

Transferred to

WAR EMERGENCY SCHEDULE

31/11/18

129

47

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE CHARGED SECTION

No. 3964

Rank Pte

Name Woodcock H J

Unit 59 Battalion, 4th Ball

Casualty Fistula (mild) Admitted 22.1.16

1st Aux Hosp. Cairo. A/c Cairo 449/4959  
28.12.15. Fistula Admitted 3rd Aux Hpl M6/162/14 Dd Cairo 27.1.16  
2.1.2.16 Discharged to 1st Aux Hosp to unit sub/477/49 to Cairo 1/3/16

59th BATTALION

Wounded. no date. C.S.P. 244/6710 Q dated London 24.1.16

21.7.16 G.H. (mild) admitted 25th Gen Hosp 4/5/16 1/3/67285 2nd London 5/5/16  
Returning to Australia from New Zealand joined transport at 252 Embarked 29/7/16

DATE	PURPORT.	REF. No.
1/2/16	Not advised Admitted to Hospital Cairo	
9 AUG 1916	N.O.K. Advised Wounded	
11.8.16	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital	
SEP 12 1916	N.O.K. Advised Returning to Australia	
30.11.17	Discharged S.O.P.S. 3rd clb 6th	11/11/13076
22.10.17	Ret. Aust. per New Zealand H.T. "Pakeha", G.S.D. Right Forefinger	
30.11.17	Re Discharged from (W) Disembarked 21/11/17	BR15963
10/4/18	W.I.I. to A.A.S. M.D. 3rd. 1630/553	

1814/1810-star issued B.R.M. 43/1229 7/62 W

WAR HISTORY INDEX AB

RETURNED BY 3RD D. S. 10/5/28

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE GRANTED BY L. AUG 15 1918 No. No. 52300



RETURNED BY 3RD D. S. 10/5/28

R.S. Badge, In Store.

5.2.21 B.R.P.F. 44 DESPACHED Marona Rd. Caulfield.