

# A Soldier of the Great War

## Sergeant Archie Boadle

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



Regimental number	3467
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Chaffcutter
Address	Little River, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	19
Next of kin	Father, A Boadle, Little River, Victoria
Enlistment date	23 July 1915
Date of enlistment from Nominal Roll	10 July 1915
Rank on enlistment	Private
Unit name	<a href="#">22nd Battalion, 8th Reinforcement</a>
AWM Embarkation Roll number	23/39/2
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A19 <i>Afric</i> on 5 January 1916
Rank from Nominal Roll	Private
Unit from Nominal Roll	58th Battalion
Fate	Returned to Australia 15 May 1919
Medals	Military Medal Date: 10 October 1919
Other details	War service: Western Front Medals: Military Medal, British War Medal, Victory Medal

***'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during attack by 58th Battalion on PERONNE on 2nd September 1918. Sergeant BOADLE was in charge of No. 5 Platoon, after getting his men through the heavy shelling in PERONNE, he reorganised the platoon in the position of assembly and also assisted in reorganising the company prior to the attack. During the attack he got his platoon forward under heavy machine gun fire, and greatly facilitated the advance of the left flank by covering fire and by neutralising Machine Gun Posts. When the objective had been reached, Sergeant BOADLE reorganised his platoon, and then assisted in reorganising Nos. 6 and 7 Platoons whose N.C.O.s had become casualties. This N.C.O. displayed excellent judgment and leadership throughout the operation, not only dealing with his own command speedily and well but also assisting the remainder of the company at every opportunity.'***

Source: 'Commonwealth Gazette' No. 115

The 58th Battalion was originally raised as a unit of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in Egypt on 17 February 1916 for service in World War I as part of the expansion of the AIF that took place at that time. In order to spread the experience gained through the AIF's involvement in the Gallipoli Campaign, the new units were formed by taking experienced men from other battalions and joining them with new recruits that were sent from Australia. The 58th Battalion drew its experienced personnel from the 6th Battalion while its new recruits came from Victoria. Together with the 57th, 59th and 60th Battalions, the 58th formed part of the 15th Brigade, which was attached to the 5th Australian Division. At this time it was decided that the Australian infantry divisions would be transferred to Europe to fight in the trenches along the Western Front in France and Belgium. As the 5th Division was still forming it did not depart until later in the year and the 58th Battalion arrived in France on 23 June 1916.

The battalion experienced its first taste of fighting on the Western Front in July when it was involved in the Battle of Fromelles, being in reserve and providing medical stretcher parties. The reserve force, about half of the battalion, was committed at the climax of the battle and lost a third of its strength to machine gun fire. 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 58th 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. Later in the year, the 5th Division was transferred to the Ypres sector in Belgium, and on 26 September 1917, the 58th was committed to the fighting around Polygon Wood.

Early in 1918, the Germans launched a large-scale offensive on the Western Front known as the Spring Offensive after the collapse of Tsarist Russia allowed them to transfer a large number of troops from the Eastern Front. As the Allies were pushed back, the Australian divisions were moved south in March to help blunt the attack. The 5th Division took up a position around Corbie and in April the 15th Brigade took part in a counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918, during which the 58th formed the brigade reserve. In early July, the battalion took part in an attack around Morlancourt on the Ancre as part of a feint during the Battle of Hamel. Later in the year, the Allies launched their own offensive, and the battalion next participated in the fighting at Amiens on 8 August. As the Allies gained momentum, this was followed by the Battle of Mont St Quentin and Péronne on 31 August and then finally, the Battle of St. Quentin Canal on 29 September. Placed into reserve again for rest and reinforcement, the war ended before the battalion saw further action, and it was disbanded on 24 March 1919.

During its wartime service, the unit lost 615 men killed and 1,550 men wounded. Members of the battalion received the following decorations: one Victoria Cross, eight Distinguished Service Orders with one bar, one Order of the British Empire, 20 Military Crosses with two bars, 17 Distinguished Conduct Medals with one bar, 71 Military Medals with six bars, 30 Mentioned in Dispatches and eight Meritorious Service Medals.

Source: Wikipedia



**Archie BOADLE** enlisted on 13 July 1915  
in the 22nd Battalion, 8th Reinforcement,  
Australian Imperial Force, with the rank of  
Private, Number 3467.

*This is a certified true copy*

**A** 153707 **AUSTRALIAN**  **MILITARY FORCES**

**AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.**

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 3467 Name Archie Boadle (MM) Unit 8th Reinforcement 22nd Battalion 55th Bn

41 TRANSFERRED TO 55th Bn

Joined on 13 July 1915

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ... Archie Boadle
2. In the Parish of ... in or near the Town of Geelong in the County of Grant
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ... yes
4. What is your age? ... 19 yrs 2 mths
5. What is your trade or calling? ... chaff cutting
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) ... A. Boadle (Father)  
Little River 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 Incurable 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 with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)—Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach eight shillings per day? ... —
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ... yes

I, Archie Boadle 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 13 July 1915 Archie Boadle  
Signature of person enlisted.

D. 377/1-15.—C. 695. 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.

He was later to combine with other enlistees to become the 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division. After initial training at Broadmeadows in Victoria he was ready to deploy overseas.

He departed on the HMAS A19 Afric on the 5th January 1916 bound for the Middle East. The Australian soldiers had just been evacuated from the Gallipoli peninsula and the soldiers were stationed in Egypt awaiting the next orders. Many of the soldiers were at Lemnos in Greece also.

Archie and his new Battalion found his way to Egypt and while there he took part in various training exercises. It was not until late February that he would become part of the newly formed 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion. On the 25/3/1916 while in Egypt, he was admitted to hospital with severe Tonsillitis at Tel al Kabir (about 100 km from Cairo) where many of the Australian forces were camped.

Tel Al Kabir



He rejoined his unit and after recovering he remained on active duty until departing for England. He was promoted to Corporal while serving in Egypt and finally on the 23/3/16 he arrived in Southampton where he was to undertake training with the number 12 camp, 15<sup>th</sup> training battalion at Perham Downs around the Hurdcliffe area of England. He was placed on a supernumerary list while in training.

On the 18/9/17 Archie was finally shipped to France via Southampton disembarking at Le Havre and on the 18/9/17 the battalion was assigned to Steenvorde in Belgium. Here the Battalion was camped in 22 huts at Dominion Camp. It was here that they were to prepare for an offensive being planned at Polygon Wood.

*The **Battle of Polygon Wood** took place during the second phase of the Third Battle of Ypres in World War I and was fought near Ypres in Belgium 26 September – 3 October 1917, in the area from the Menin Road to Polygon Wood and thence north, to the area beyond St. Julien. Much of the woodland had been destroyed by the huge quantity of shellfire from both sides since 16 July and the area had changed hands several times. General Herbert Plumer continued the series of British general attacks with limited objectives. The British attacks were led by lines of skirmishers, followed by small infantry columns organised in depth, (a formation which had been adopted by the Fifth Army in August) with a vastly increased amount of artillery support, the infantry advancing behind five layers of creeping bombardment on the Second Army front.*

*The advance was planned to cover 1,000–1,500 yards (910–1,370 m) and stop on reverse slopes which were easier to defend, enclosing ground which gave observation of German reinforcement routes and counter-attack assembly areas. Preparations were then made swiftly to defeat German counter-attacks, by mopping-up and consolidating the captured ground with defences in depth. The attack inflicted a severe blow on the German 4th Army,*

*causing many losses, capturing a significant portion of Flandern I, which threatened the German hold on Broodseinde ridge. The better weather continued to benefit the British attackers by drying the ground, raising mist which obscured British infantry attacks made around dawn, then clearing to reveal German Eingreif formations to air and ground observation, well in advance of their arrival on the battlefield. German defensive arrangements were changed hastily after the battle to try to counter British offensive superiority. ( source Wikipedia)*

The Battalion was to encounter severe shelling and barrages under cover of thick fog. They would take the front line but at considerable loss. 580 men went into battle with only 290 accounted for at later roll calls. The 4th Australian Division suffered 1,717 casualties. The 5th Australian Division had 5,471 dead and wounded in the period 26–28 September

The 58<sup>th</sup> would be withdrawn and moved to Dickiebusch on the Ypres –Salient . This small village , behind the lines, would have one of the largest concentration of soldiers during the entire war. Archie and his Battalion had the chance to rest and recover and continue training . The would spend time in the Caestre region also not far away and in early October were to report to Westhoek Ridge near where the front line had been established.

They would continue rotation with other Battalions in and out of the trenches also doing the important support work of rebuilding trenches, reinforcing them and supplying the troops on the front line.

Ottawa and Swan camps were again places where the soldiers could rest and recover and prepare and train for the next battle.

Broodseinde Ridge was to be that battle around the town of Zonnebeke. It was high ground that could give an advantage to whoever held it.

The Battle of Broodseinde Ridge was the third operation launched by British general Herbert Plummer as part of the Ypres offensive of 1917. It was a large operation, involving twelve divisions, including those of both I and II ANZAC. The attack was planned on the same basis as its predecessors - the attacking troops' objectives were approximately 1,500 metres deep, the advance would be preceded by a massive artillery bombardment; and a creeping barrage would lead the troops on to their objectives and then protect them while they consolidated their positions.

The attack began before dawn on 4 October 1917. The Australian troops involved were shelled heavily on their start line and a seventh of their number became casualties even before the attack began. When it did, the attacking troops were confronted by a line of troops advancing towards them; the Germans had chosen the same morning to launch an attack of their own. The Australians forged on through the German assault waves and gained all their objectives along the ridge. It was not without cost, however. German pillboxes were characteristically difficult to subdue, and the Australian divisions suffered 6,500 casualties.

After this battle, Archie and his Battalion were withdrawn to Devonshire camp, behind the line near Poperinge.

*Throughout the Great War of 1914-1918 Poperinge, or “Pops” as the British soldiers called it, was used by the British Army as a gateway to the battlefields of the northern Ypres Salient. It was an important rail centre behind the front line and was used for the distribution of supplies, for billeting troops, for casualty clearing stations and for troops at rest from duty in the forward trench areas. Thousands of troops passed through this small town at some time or other.*

*The main square formed the hub of five main roads leading into the town and, therefore, was constantly bustling with military traffic, military personnel and those civilians who had stayed on in the town. Because of its importance to the military behind the front Allied lines, the town was frequently targeted by long range German artillery. During the Third Battle of Ypres (31 July - 10 November 1917) Poperinge and the surrounding area was bombed by German aircraft. Some bombs landed on the Casualty Clearing Stations nearby also. ( AWM)*

Archie was promoted to Lance Sergeant and continued supply and retraining activities.

He and his 58th Battalion were billeted for times at both Kemmel and Dranoutre.

Then on the 30/11/17 they were moved to the Osterverne sector where gassing and artillery barrages were common occurrences.

The Battalion stayed in reserve for much of the winter of 1917 and early 1918 as harsh conditions allowed both sides to regroup and prepare for offences when the conditions improved. Shelling and raids still took place but the trench warfare in this part of the Western Front remained the same for most of the war with little advantage achieved after even large operations as counter offenses soon returned the front line to where it previously was.

During February the 58th Battalion was held in reserve at Gable farm . They experienced severe shelling and constant bombardment but had to be ready to launch attacks in 20 minutes if required

The Battalion moved around spending time at Bailleul , Metteren, Doulliens and Acheux before finally stationed at Bonnay on the Somme not far from Corbie and Villers Brettoneux.

It was here that they were to play a vital role in the defence of the Somme Canal.

Archie would have been involved in and out of the front line over many weeks in action around Bouzencourt and near Corbie as the German's readied for their final offensive.

The Battalion would hold the line around Hamel until April 18 when they were billeted in Fouillooy again close to Corbie and the Somme Canal. Duties in April included communication cable burying and trench digging in the area near Daours and in support of other battalions as the Australian divisions were pushed back. Preparations for an expected enemy advance on Villers Brettoneux were also being contemplated.

The 58<sup>th</sup> would be in reserve during this operation on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1918 but would continue to take part in support as the allied forces began to make headway and push the Germans back to their Hindenberg line and finally break through.

Archie's battalion would take part in the success at Le Hamel where Monash was able to break through and defeat the Germans in just 90 minutes and use warfare methods that would go on to achieve final success of the war.

Success followed Archie also with him being made a Sergeant in early June 1918.

He was to take part in battles during June but on the 20<sup>th</sup> June he was wounded in action with gunshot wounds to the right leg.

He would first be treated in a Field Hospital behind the lines and then transported by train to a Military Hospital in Rouen in Northern France and onto Le Havre for recuperation.

Finally on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918 as the Germans pushed forward again he would rejoin the 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion and resume duty at the front.

He took part in battles around Amiens as the Germans again made a last push.

The Battalion also took part in the Battle of Mont St Quentin and around Peronne and during early September Archie was to be awarded the Military Medal for gallantry.

***'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during attack by 58th Battalion on PERONNE on 2nd September 1918. Sergeant BOADLE was in charge of No. 5 Platoon, after getting his men through the heavy shelling in PERONNE, he reorganised the platoon in the position of assembly and also assisted in reorganising the company prior to the attack. During the attack he got his platoon forward under heavy machine gun fire, and greatly facilitated the advance of the left flank by covering fire and by neutralising Machine Gun Posts. When the objective had been reached, Sergeant BOADLE reorganised his platoon, and then assisted in reorganising Nos. 6 and 7 Platoons whose N.C.O.s had become casualties. This N.C.O. displayed excellent judgment and leadership throughout the operation, not only dealing with his own command speedily and well but also assisting the remainder of the company at every opportunity.'***

Source: 'Commonwealth Gazette' No. 115

*The end of August found German troops at their last stronghold at Mont St Quentin - overlooking the Somme River and the town of Péronne. Mont St Quentin stood out in the surrounding country, making it a perfect observation point and a vital strategic area to control. This area was key to the German defence of the Somme line. As it was such an important area, Lieutenant General Sir John Monash was keen to capture it and thus possess a valuable position.*

*This Australian operation is sometimes regarded as the finest achievement of the AIF. The 2nd Australian Division crossed the Somme River on the night of 31 August, and attacked Mont St Quentin at 5 am, from the unexpected position of northwest. It was a difficult position as it was an uphill fight for the troops, across very open ground where they were vulnerable to attack from the German-held heights above.*

*Rifle grenades and trench mortars were employed to outflank outpost positions. The battalions positioned to the right made a lot of noise to distract the Germans, while the centre and left battalions got a foothold on the hill and in Feuillaucourt.*

*By 7 am, the troops had gained the village of Mont St Quentin and the slope and summit of the hill, by working in small groups. The five German divisions were confused and dispersed, and many had fled. By midnight on 31 August, Monash's troops had captured 14,500 prisoners and 170 guns since 8 August. Allied troops also broke through lines to Péronne by 8.20 am on 1 September.*

*However, the Germans quickly regrouped and launched a counter-attack, and the first day of September saw fierce fighting and heavy losses. Germans attacked and heavily shelled Péronne. Much of the fighting was hand-to-hand combat.*

*The outnumbered Australians were pushed back off the summit of Mont St Quentin, and lost Feuillaucourt. Relief battalions were sent, and with their reinforcement, all the areas were retaken by the Australians, but at the cost of 3,000 casualties.*

*After heavy and exhausting fighting, the Australians established a stronghold on the area and forced the complete withdrawal of the Germans from Péronne. By the night of 3 September, the Australians held Péronne. They captured Flamicourt the next day, and advanced 2 miles to the east.*

*Monash said of the Mont St Quentin and Péronne campaign that it.....*

*furnished the finest example in the war of spirited and successful infantry action conducted by three divisions operating simultaneously side by side.*

*The fight had also included battalions from every Australian state. British Commander General Lord Rawlinson remarked that this feat by the Australian troops under Monash's command was the greatest of the war.*

*Forced out of Péronne, the Germans had to retreat to their last line of defence- the Hindenburg Line.*

*Source AWM*

*Australian Soldiers in  
The ruins of Peronne.*



This was to be Archie's (officially recognised) bravest moment of the Great War and he would survive battles until the end of September when his battalion was again put into reserve.

The 58<sup>th</sup> and Archie and his surviving mates would see no further action and the Armistice would be declared on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

After the end of the war the Australian soldiers were demobilised back to England and Archie spent time in an Aussie enclave in Weymouth that served as a repatriation base for wounded Diggers.

Over 125 000 soldiers had been treated and cared for at Weymouth during the war and for many this would be their last active place of service of the war before returning home.

Archie would finally return home to Australia on the "Orontes" on the 15/5/1919.

He had enlisted in July 1915 and had survived nearly 4 years and some of the greatest battles of the Great War while many of his mates would have been killed, never found and remembered in unmarked graves or monuments to the fallen.

