

Private Wilfred ARGUS (service no. 1956)

Wilfred Honeyball Argus was the son of Samuel and Edith Augusta Argus (nee Hayman). He was born at Devenish, Victoria, on 29th December 1895. During the early part of World War I, he was working as a labourer at Kerang, Victoria.

On 28th February 1916, he enlisted in the 38th Infantry Battalion which was a unit of the 10th Infantry Brigade. Wilfred Argus was a member of the 2nd Reinforcements of the Battalion who embarked from Melbourne aboard the troop transport *RMS Orantes* on 16th August 1916.

The Australian War Memorial website describes the involvement of the 38th Infantry Battalion in the First World War, as follows:

"The 38th Battalion was formed on 1 March 1916 at a camp established on the Epsom Racecourse at Bendigo in Victoria. Early training was disrupted by a severe outbreak of cerebro-spinal meningitis in the camp, as a result of which the healthy members were transferred to a camp at Campbellfield, where the Battalion had to be rebuilt from fresh reinforcements.

After training in both Australia and Britain, the 38th Battalion crossed to France in late November 1916 and moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 1 December. During the harsh winter of 1916-17 the 3rd Division was heavily involved in raiding the German trenches. In February 1917 the 38th Battalion provided 400 troops, with a similar party from the 37th Battalion, to form a special raiding "battalion". After several weeks of training this force staged a single 35-minute raid on the night of 27 February and was then disbanded.

The 38th fought in its first major battle at Messines, in Belgium, between 7-9 June 1917. It fought in another two major attacks in this sector - the battle of Broodseinde on 4 October, and the battle of Passchendaele on 12 October. Broodseinde was a success, reflecting careful planning and preparation, but the 38th still suffered 29 per cent casualties. Passchendaele, however, was a disaster, executed in haste amidst horrendous conditions brought on by torrential rain. It was the 38th's most costly operation of the war, resulting in 62 per cent casualties.

Belgium remained the focus of the 38th Battalion's activities for the next five months, until it was rushed south to France in late March 1918 to meet the German Army's Spring Offensive. The Allies launched their own offensive on 8 August 1918, but the 38th was in reserve on this day and did not play an active role. It was involved, however, in an ill-conceived attack that failed to capture the village of Proyart on 10 August.

It was during this latter action that Wilfred sustained a bullet wound to the right thigh, necessitating his evacuation to England where he was admitted to the Fort Pitt Military Hospital at Chatham in Kent. Upon his recovery, the fighting was over and he was attached to the Australian Base Depot at Havre on the French coast.

On 21st June 1919, he embarked for Australia on the former German ocean liner *Konigin Luise*, disembarking in Melbourne on 13th August