

A Soldier of the Great War

James Vivian Rake 2389



Service Number: 2389

Rank: Private

Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918

Date of embarkation: 21 October 1916

Place of embarkation: Brisbane

Ship embarked on: HMAT *Boonah* A36

James Rake was 21 years old and 6 months when he enlisted in the AIF.

He was originally born in South Australia and had a trade as an engine mechanic. On the 14th July 1916 he enlisted in the AIF in Queensland in the 11th Depot Battalion.

After final enlistment he was allocated to the 4th reinforcements 42nd battalion.

After initial training he left Australia's shores on the "Boonah" on the 21st October 1916. He arrived in Plymouth on the 10th January 1917 and was trained near Fovant on the Salisbury plains. Here he was part of the 9th Training Battalion and managed to attend Signal Training school also.



James Rake seated on the left.

Photo credit- Julie Williams

On the 5th December 1917 he marched into Roules and was finally engaged on the front line by the 18th December 1917. The winter was bitterly cold and the battalion was either on the front line or in reserve, transporting and supporting at the rear.

James and his battalion (and his brother Charles) were to take part in some of the bloodiest of battles including Messines in June. In early July, James was to take part in the Battle of Hamel and here he was to be wounded and repatriated to Dartford Hospital for care. He was to spend a further 36 days in hospital due to gunshot wounds to the right forearm and right hand, and was finally transferred to Weymouth Military Hospital in England. Here he spent the remainder of the war recovering before returning to Australia on the 20th January 191



The man sitting on the left is James Vivian Rake.

Photo credit. Julie Williams

The Battle of Hamel 4th July 1917

Key facts □ 7500 Australians fought in the Battle of Le Hamel □ Australia and the United States suffered 1400 casualties □ The battle lasted just 93 minutes □ First time Australian and US troops fought together in WWI □ The battle was fought using a new strategy

Following the collapse of Russia in 1917, a German offensive on the Western Front began on 21 March 1918. The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was prominent in holding the German advance at critical parts of the front, particularly at Villiers- Bretonneux, France.

In May 1918, Lieutenant-General John Monash was appointed to command the Australian Corps which was holding the front near Villiers-Bretonneux. Monash planned an attack to take Le Hamel, a strongly-fortified, key German defence position which protected the area between the Villiers-Bretonneux heights and the Somme River.

There were three objectives - the fortified village of Le Hamel, the trenches between Le Hamel and Vaire Woods, and a pear-shaped strong point, called Pear Trench by the Australians, which allowed the Germans to fire along the line of any attacker.

Although small in scale, the battle of Le Hamel fought on 4 July 1918, was one of the most important undertaken by the Australians on the Western Front. It tested new offensive techniques, including the co-operation of infantry, artillery, tanks and aircraft which were used a month later on a much larger scale which led to the Allied victory in November 1918.

Monash believed that “the true role of the infantry was not to expend itself upon heroic physical effort, not to wither away under merciless machine-gun fire, not to impale itself on hostile bayonets, but to advance under the maximum possible protection of the maximum possible array of mechanical resources in the form of guns, machine guns, tanks, mortars and aeroplanes”.

To capture Le Hamel, it would need a full division - one fifth of the Australian Corps. Some senior staff officers felt the risk was too great and General Rawlinson, who commanded the Fourth Army which included the Australian Corps, and Monash were about to agree when a succession of supply trains arrived.

On board was the new 13th Tank Battalion fresh from the factories of England. There were fast Whippet scout tanks but, best of all, there were 60 monsters of the latest type - Mark V tanks, faster, better armed and more manoeuvrable than any that had gone before. They would give the Australians a truly modern force and reduce casualties by supporting the infantry in their advance across no-man's-land. Their

commander urged Monash to use the tanks immediately before the Germans began to receive tanks from their factories and the advantage was lost.

Monash also arranged massive artillery support, bringing forward 326 field guns or howitzers and 313 pieces of heavy artillery. These guns were secretly moved into position and camouflaged.

The Australian infantry brigades fought under the command of Major-General Alexander Sinclair MacLagan, commander of the 4th Australian Division.

The ten companies of the 33rd American National Guard Division had been training with the Australian Corps for several weeks and four American companies went into battle on the morning of 4 July. It was the first time that Australians and Americans were to fight together in the First World War.

The attack on Le Hamel was the first operational task planned and executed by Monash as a corps commander. The plan was prepared with extreme thoroughness and detailed care that characterised his command.

The advance was made under the cover of a creeping barrage of high explosives, shrapnel and smoke from French and British artillery units. Arrangements had been made to drop ammunition to the advancing troops by parachute. In addition, 302 heavy and very heavy guns concentrated on the German artillery, firing way beyond the attacking forces to smother all the German batteries which would fire on Le Hamel.

The attack began at 3.10am and was a brilliant success. Artillery crashed into the German positions while the infantry and tanks moved rapidly over no-man's-land. The Germans in their front-line trenches were taken by surprise - for two weeks before they had been subjected

daily to a dawn bombardment by the Australian artillery mixed with gas and smoke and they believed that the dawn attack on July 4 was more of the same. On the morning of the attack, the air force mounted an air raid with large, noisy Handley Page bombers which helped drown out the noise of the approaching tanks.

After capturing the enemy front line, the troops moved into the Vaire and Le Hamel woods. Although the tanks were catching up with the infantry, there was still not enough light to shoot and manoeuvre with accuracy. It was still the infantry's fight.

The third objective was Le Hamel itself and a great many tanks had been allocated to clearing this target but it was heavily fortified and the Australians had to fight for the town street by street, house by house, cellar by cellar.

In 93 minutes the battle was over. Monash had planned that it would take 90 minutes. The Germans lost about 2000 killed or wounded and over 1600 were captured. Australian and United States casualties were some 1400.

The victory of Le Hamel caused jubilation in Paris. Clemenceau, the Prime Minister of France, cancelled his weekly trip to his own battered troops in the front line and went instead to embrace Monash and the Australians.

Source- Dept of Veterans affairs.

42nd Battalion

The 42nd Battalion was raised at Enoggera, on the outskirts of Brisbane, in December 1915 and became part of the 11th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. Due to sharing its numeric title with the famous Scottish regiment the Black Watch, the battalion became known as the "Australian Black Watch". This association was recognised with a bagpipe band.

After training in Australia and Britain, the 42nd deployed to France on 26 November 1916 and entered the frontline for the first time on 23 December. The winter of 1916-17 was horrendous, and the 42nd spent much of it in the front line, the remainder being spent alternating between training and labouring in the rear areas.

In 1917, the operations of the 3rd Division were focussed on the Ypres sector of Belgium. The 42nd participated in major battles at Messines on 7 June, Warneton on 31 July, Broodseinde on 4 October, and Passchendaele on 12 October. Even though the battalion was in a reserve role, the battle of Passchendaele proved particularly costly. It lost over a third of its strength, principally from German gas attacks, and trench foot caused by the sodden condition of the battlefield.

Belgium remained the scene of the 42nd Battalion's activities for the next five months as it was rotated between service in the rear areas and the front line. When the German Army launched its last great offensive in March 1918, the battalion was rushed south to France and played a role in blunting the drive towards the vital railway junction of Amiens.

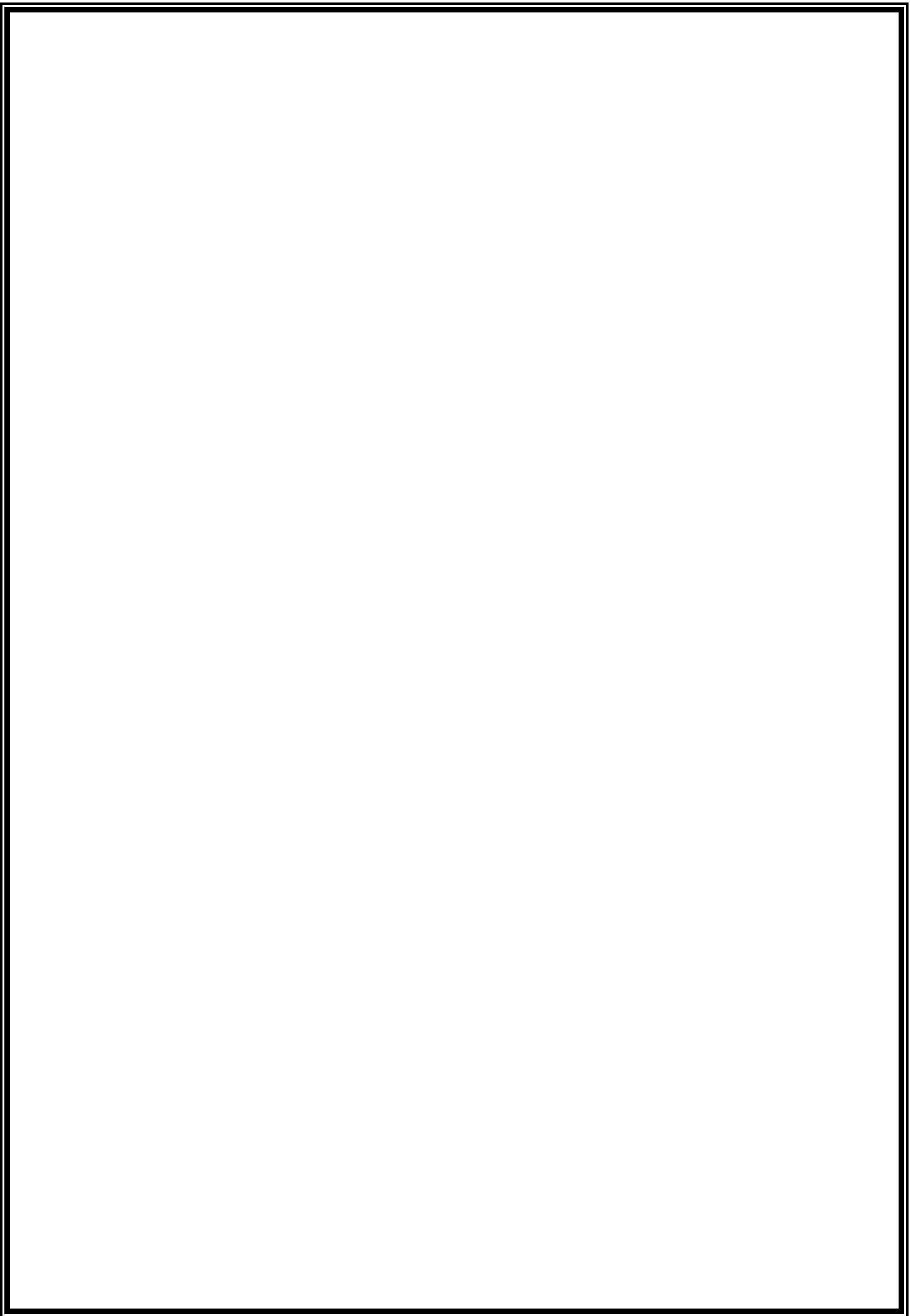
On 4 July 1918, the 42nd took part in the battle of Hamel and captured all of its objectives with only three fatal casualties - demonstrating what a well-planned and supported attack could achieve. The Allies launched their own offensive on 8 August 1918, and the 42nd played an active role both in the initial attack and the long advance that followed.

This advance, though, sapped the strength of the AIF. On 20 September 1918 the 42nd was ordered to disband to provide reinforcements for other battalions. Its men mutinied winning the Battalion a temporary reprieve. It fought its last battle - St Quentin Canal - between 29 September and 2 October. On 2 October the order to disband was once again issued. The men still disobeyed, but pressure from the AIF hierarchy eventually forced compliance. The 42nd Battalion was disbanded on 22 October 1918.

Colour Patch



Source -Australian War Memorial



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100107

Q 9503

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.



AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 2389 Name RAKE JAMES VIVIAN Unit 42nd Bn. 15 Joined on 14/7/1916 42nd Bn.

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

- 1. What is your Name? 2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? 3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? 4. What is your Age? 5. What is your Trade or Calling? 6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? 7. Are you married? 8. Who is your next of kin? 9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? 10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces... 11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army... 12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? 13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? 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... 15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever?

I, James Vivian Rake 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.

James Vivian Rake. Signature of person enlisted.

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 year of age. † Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

8103
20-1-18
2nd 888

Statement of Service of No. 2389 Name RAKE James Vivian

Unit in which served.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Period of service in each rank.		Remarks.
		From—	To—	
11th. Depot Btn.	Private	17.7.16	28/8/16	WTA CPT
5th. Rfts. 42nd. Battn.	"	AUG 28 1918		
	Embarked. Brisbane ..Boonah*"	21-10-16		S.O.9
	Disembarked Plymouth	10-1-17		
	10/11/17 Rm. Plymouth from Australia	long	10-1-17	R7344 705/682E 30-1-17
	He proceeded of sea from St Jorant	St Jorant	4-12-17	R7344 10-12-17 206/62E 5741E
	He left from Great Signal School 19th Coy Rm. Jorant	England	30-11-17	R7344 30-11-17 206/62E 5741E
	He trans to 41st Bn. Alto Anti-Air memo. 16th 9/19-9-17	England	30-11-17	R7344 30-11-17 206/62E 5741E
	Pte 70.S 41st Bn from 4th Rft to 42nd Bn x 3rd ADBD	France	12-12-17	2069/7437 31-12-17
	Pte trans to 42nd Bn. A.S. 7. from 41st Bn.	France	5-1-18	203/458 25/1/18.
	from 40.S of 42nd Bn A.S. 7 from 41st Bn A.S. 7	France	5-1-18	204/429 18/1/18
42nd Bn.	Pte. Detached for duty with 3rd Div Signal Coy		15-2-18	70 19840. 1-3-18.
	Pte. Adv 3rd Southern Gen Coy Oxford. (S. S.W. Rd. Forearm & Hand Sev.)		14-7-18	W.S. 776. HR. 529.
	Pte Wounded in action	France	5-7-18	203/3920 22-7-18
	Pte Invalided to U.K. wounded	"	13-7-18	203/4059 29/7-18
	Pte Attached for 20th S. Coy for farm duty	"	15-2-18	209/223/1 3 18
	Pte Do 20/1/15 of 1918 E. (1918) 29/504.	42nd Bn		
	Warrant Officer (Special Forearm)	England	11-1-19	187.672 L. 7.1608

42nd Bn. 180 144/732 E. (1918)

I have examined the above details, and find them correct in every respect.

Emb Brisbane. (Boonah) 21-10-16

42nd Bn (Spr) DISTRICT ST
M.D. (MV) 2-8-19

4th Battalion A.I.F.
CASUALTY FORM—ACTIVE SERVICE.

Army Form B. 103.

AD
(1)

Regiment or Corps *4th Battalion A.I.F.* 2389
 Regimental No. *2389* Rank *Private* Name *RAKE, James Vivian*
 Enlisted (a) 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.O.'s }
 Extended Re-engaged Qualification (b)

Report.		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., 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.				
	O.C. Troops	A36 th Boonah (Embarked Disembkd)	Brisbane Plymouth	21/10/16 10/2/17	{S.O.9. {15/2/17
<i>2</i>					
<i>14.1.17</i>	<i>B213. 11th Inf Bn</i>	<i>No. 1 from overseas</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>10.7.17</i>	<i>SR 7344 D05E 30.1.17</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Camp 13</i>	<i>Pte transferred to 9th Inf Bn from 11th Inf Bn</i>	<i>Toward</i>	<i>5.11.17</i>	<i>L R 10409 B213 Auths 2410 of 28.10.17</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>9th Inf Bn</i>	<i>Pte. Proceeded overseas France. ex Toward via</i>	<i>5th Hampton</i>	<i>4.12.17</i>	<i>L R 1154 D061 C 5741 10.12.17</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>3rd A.D.B.D.</i>	<i>Marched in Ex.</i>	<i>Rouelles</i>	<i>5.12.17</i>	<i>M 12247</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>3rd A.D.B.D.</i>	<i>Marched out to unit</i>	<i>Rouelles</i>	<i>5.12.17</i>	
<i>9</i>	<i>Ce 11th Bn</i>	<i>Pte TAKEN ON STRENGTH</i>	<i>Zuid</i>	<i>10.12.17</i>	<i>Cross 2011 7037/31.12.17</i>
<i>10</i>					
<i>11</i>	<i>12.10.17</i>	<i>11th Bn</i>		<i>5.1.18</i>	<i>Cross 2011 7037/31.12.17 D.O. 4/479/11.1.18</i>
<i>12</i>	<i>10.1.18</i>	<i>11th Bn</i>	<i>11th Bn</i>	<i>15.2.18</i>	<i>Cross 2011 7037/31.12.17 D.O. 4/479/11.1.18</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) e.g., Signaller, Shoing Smith, &c., &c., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties.

R.P.T.O.

