

# A Soldier of the Great War

## Lance Corporal Leonard ( Len Chaplin)

### 21<sup>st</sup> Machine Gun Company



Lance Corporal Leonard Chaplin



**Service Number .** 397 B

**Rank.** Private

**Other Ranks.** Lance Corporal

**Other Units .**13 M.G.C. (Machine Gun Company), 21 M.G.C.

**Town.** Cooroy

**Date of Birth.** 12 May 1899

**Place of Birth.** Brisbane Queensland Australia

**Date Enlisted.** 12 April 1916

**Ship Sailed On .** HMAT Commonwealth

**Date Ship Sailed.** 19 September 1916

**Ship Sailed.** From Sydney New South Wales Australia

**Date Returned to Australia.** 12 May 1918

**Date of Death.** 06 April 1975

**Place of Death.** Brisbane Queensland Australia

**Age at Death .**75 years

**Where Commemorated .**

Cooroy District Soldiers Poster - No 21 in Returned Soldiers; Cooroy District Honor Roll (Enlistments), Cooroy Memorial Hall, Maple Street, Cooroy; Shire of Noosa Roll of Honor, Shire Council Chambers, Pelican Street, Tewantin

## **A soldier of the Great War - Leonard Chaplin**

Leonard ( Len Chaplin) was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1899 in Brisbane.

His parents, Robert 28 and Jessie 19, were Suffolk born, and along with children Elizabeth 2 and infant Minnie they boarded the “Duke of Sutherland” at London, England on 18 August 1885 and arrived at Brisbane, Queensland, Australia on 18 October 1885. Robert’s occupation was listed as a carman on the passenger list. A carman was someone who was often employed by railway companies for local deliveries and collections of goods and parcels. Also someone who drove horse-drawn trams were called a carman. Robert and Jessie continued their family and had a further 8 children. Their eighth child was Leonard Charles (Len) Chaplin.

Leonard Charles (Len) Chaplin was a young man of 18 years and 3 months when he enlisted for the Great War on 12 April 1916 at Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. His occupation was a farmer at the time. Len stood 5 feet 5 inches (165.1cm) and weighed 130 pounds (59kg). He was described as having a fair complexion with grey eyes and brown hair. Len sported a distinctive scar on his right shin and another on the index finger of his left hand. He noted his religion as Church of England. Len was a single man and listed his mother, who was living at Cooroy, Queensland at the time, as his next of kin.

On 19 September 1916, Private L. C. (Len) Chaplin of 13 M.G.C. (Machine Gun Company) boarded the HMAT “Commonwealth” at Sydney Australia to serve his King and country. He disembarked Plymouth, England on 14 November 1916 and marched in to Details Coy. (Company) at Parkhouse the next day. On 27 December 1916, at A.M.G. Tng. Dep. (Aust. Machine Gun Training Depot) at Grantham, Len was charged with being A.W.L. (absent without leave) from midnight to 7am on 25 December 1916. He was awarded 4 days C.B. (confined to base) and a total forfeiture of 2 days’ pay.

He finally proceeded overseas to France in mid-March and was taken on strength of 21 M.G.C. on 17 March 1917. He was allotted the letter “B” to his service number (397B) due to another soldier from his unit sharing the same number. Boarding the SS Donegal in Southampton he finally arrived in France at Havre on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1917.

A couple of days later, Len was admitted to 39 A.G.H. (Aust. General Hospital) at Havre with scabies. He was discharged to duty on 25 March and marched out to M.G. Corps. Base Depot. Len rejoined his unit in the field around the Albert region of the Somme. He spent time in the field around Dernancourt areas and received gas training in late March 1917.

### **Dernancourt**

For most of the war, Dernancourt had been behind allied lines and had become a village well known to many Australian units during their stay on the Somme between July 1916 and March 1917.

In April he took part in action in the field around Montauban and was on the front line at Bapaume. In early April he was involved in hostile shelling around Dernancourt and took part in action at Lagnicourt, again in the Somme region. In May 1917 he was in the Norieul area and also was part of the capture of Bullecourt on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1917 during the second battle of Bullecourt.

### Bapaume and Surrounds

At the beginning of 1917 victory seemed nowhere in sight. However for a while, from late February, hopes were lifted. Along the Somme front line and elsewhere, the Germans began to withdraw several kilometres to their newly-developed defensive zone which the British dubbed **"the Hindenburg Line"**. This apparent retreat was a tonic for the allies who advanced in pursuit. But it was an illusion; the Germans were just staging a voluntary withdrawal to stronger and better prepared positions. It was against these solid defences at a point near the village of Bullecourt that four Australian divisions, one after the other, were thrown during April and May 1917.

Bapaume was a large German-held town almost within sight of the Australians' trench lines throughout the winter months on the Somme. Suddenly, from 24 February 1917 it became evident that the enemy was retiring. The British advanced after them, and by the morning of 17 March Australian troops reached the outskirts of Bapaume. The soldiers' **heightened spirits were** exemplified by the band of the 5th Australian Brigade playing amid the burning ruins as they marched into the old town square on the 19th. However booby traps and time bombs had been left behind; one exploded in the town hall a week later burying men and killing twenty-five.

From February 1917 the German forces facing the Australians began withdrawing to the Hindenburg Line. The Australians pursued them and there was heavy fighting around a network of small villages. Vaulx-Vraucourt, Morchies and Beaumetz were among those captured. But there was stiffer resistance during the attempts to take Lagnicourt, Noreuil and Hermies; the initial hasty attempt to take Noreuil was repulsed. In some of these sharp actions over three weeks five Australians won the Victoria Cross. Finally, by 9 April the vital string of villages leading up to the Hindenburg Line was in British hands. Before the Australians, and within the broad German line of entrenchments and barbed-wire, stood the fortified village of Bullecourt.

### Second Battle of Bullecourt.

Despite the failure of the first attack on 11 April 1917, a few weeks later General Gough once again tried to break the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt. On 3 May 1917 the 2nd Australian Division attacked with the British alongside. Although the brigade on the right faltered under deadly machine-gun fire, **the 6th Brigade got into the enemy's trenches and, despite heavy** shellfire and counter attacks, bravely held on. The 1st Division relieved the 2nd, and soon the 5th Division took its turn. Finally, after more than a week, the Germans gave up these blood-soaked

fields. Then the depleted Australian battalions were withdrawn to recover. The furious fighting, which in the end only advanced the line a kilometre or so, had been at the heavy cost of another 7,000 Australian casualties.

On 23 May 1917, Len was appointed L/Cpl (Lance Corporal).

He was rotated in and out of the front line with his company for the remainder of May and June again in and around Dernancourt. During July the company diaries note the increase in sickness due to appalling conditions and this effected the strength of the company as a whole.

In July, Len was even present when King George V drove by his company in a vehicle in Albert.

After this time the company was part of reassignment to the salient region around Ypres in Belgium where the Germans were involved in a strong offensive. He was camped at the Anzac Headquartered area at Café Belge around Dickebush that was often shelled heavily. He took part in active duty in the field during The Salient campaign and moved around the Zonnebeke area near Ypres and Messine Ridge as well as Kemmel around 6 miles Southwest of Ypres . Here there was extreme shelling often and again his company was rotated in and out of the front lines. They spent relief time behind the lines during November 1917 at Condette and Davres near Boulogne.

He was admitted to 3 Can. G.H. (Canadian General Hospital) at Boulogne on 03 December 1917 with P.U.O. (pyrexia of unknown origin). The following day, Len was transferred to 111 S.H. (Stationary Hospital) with measles. On Christmas Day 1917, he embarked France aboard H.S. "St. Denis" to England for convalescence. He was admitted to Central M.H. (Military Hospital) with rheumatism and a few days later, he was transferred to 3 Aux. Hosp. (Auxiliary Hospital) at Dartford. Len was granted furlough (leave) in January 1918 and ordered to report to 2 C.D. (Command Depot) at Weymouth.

Len was to see no more action during the Great War due to sickness with rheumatism,

On 10 March 1918, Len embarked England aboard H.S. "Durham Castle" for transport to Australia. Len was discharged medically unfit from the A.I.F. on 15 June 1918.

Len was also to go on and serve during WW2.

A

59763

Depot.

Order

AUSTRALIAN



MILITARY FORCES.

# AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

## Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No.

51009

Name

CHAPLIN LEONARD CHARLES.

Unit

3111 2nd Gun Coy

Joined on

12th. April 1916.

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

1. What is your Name? ... LEONARD CHARLES CHAPLIN.
2. In the Parish of ... in or near the Town of BRISBANE in the County of QUEENSLAND.
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? ... 18 yrs. 3 mths..
5. What is your Trade or Calling? ... Farmer.
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) ... (MOTHER) JESSIE CHAPLIN TYALGUM, N.S.W. Georay Queensland
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 with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of wife and 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.

LEONARD CHARLES CHAPLIN.

I, LEONARD CHARLES CHAPLIN, do solemnly declare that the above answers made 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 to the support of my wife,\*† and children.

Date 12th. April 1916.

*Leonard Charles Chaplin*

Signature of person enlisted.



# CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER.

The foregoing questions were read to the person enlisted in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to by him.

I have ~~examined his naturalization papers~~ and am of opinion that they are correct.

(This to be struck out except in the case of persons who are naturalized British Subjects.)

Date 12th. April 1916.

*MacQuinn*

Signature of Attesting Officer.

## OATH TO BE TAKEN BY PERSON BEING ENLISTED.\*

3. LEONARD CHARLES CHAPLIN. swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from 12th. April 1916 until the end of the War, and a further period of four months thereafter unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed therefrom; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So HELP ME, GOD.

X

*Leonard Charles Chaplin*

Signature of Person Enlisted.

Taken and subscribed at BRISBANE in the State of QUEENSLAND this Twelfth day of April 1916, before me—

*MacQuinn*

Signature of Attesting Officer.

\*A person enlisting who objects to taking an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Act, and the above form must be amended accordingly. All amendments must be initialed by the Attesting Officer.

Description of LEONARD CHARLES CHAPLIN. on Enlistment.

Age 18 years 3 months.

Height 5 feet 5 inches.

Weight 130 lbs.

Chest Measurement 33.34 inches.

Complexion Fair

Eyes Grey

Hair Brown

Religious Denomination C. E.

DISTINCTIVE MARKS.

D6 D6.

Scar right shin.  
" index finger left hand.

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I HAVE examined the above-named person, and find that he does not present any of the following conditions, viz. :—

Scrofula; phthisis; syphilis; impaired constitution; defective intelligence; defects of vision, voice, or hearing; hernia; hæmorrhoids; varicose veins, beyond a limited extent; marked varicocoele with unusually pendent testicle; inveterate cutaneous disease; chronic ulcers; traces of corporal punishment, or evidence of having been marked with the letters D. or B.C.; contracted or deformed chest; abnormal curvature of spine; or any other disease or physical defect calculated to unfit him for the duties of a soldier.

He can see the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs; and he declares he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him fit for active service.

Date 18th. April 1916.

Place BRISBANE.

[Signature]  
Signature of Examining Medical Officer.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.

I CERTIFY that this Attestation of the above-named person is correct, and that the required forms have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him to 5TH RFTS 13TH M G COY

Date 18 SEP 1916

Place SEYMOUR

[Signature] 2 LT  
O C NO 5 COY M G DEPOT  
Commanding



394B.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

CHARLES LEONARD CHAPMAN

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

L. A. Mullen H.



D103 Eng. 16.1.18.  
 List 5. 397 B. Chaplain. L.B.

State	To Hosp. Sick	19.3.17.	20/248 12.4.17
Unit in	Rejoined unit from Hosp. France.	22.4.17.	20/30. 9.5.17.
11th.	Ptli- app. Lt Col.	23.5.17.	20 8/49. 12.6.17.
	2nd Coy <del>1st</del> 2nd Central Mil Hpl Chatham.		
	Rheumatism. H/1220	25.12.17.	B2/10 E 7.1.18.
	" Hpl To Hosp. Sick. France	3.12.17.	B2 34/1126 19/12/17.
	" Hpl sent on "H.L. Denish" England		
	Convalescent hospital.	25.12.17.	B2 34. 8/18.
	21st May. 2 (Bpl) Ret: to Australia per "A.S. Durham Castle" from London.	10.3.18.	20/1 E 1.4.18.
	England (Change) Sub: Rheumatism.		7.8.18 573.

Disinfect 2 for 1 M.D. 12/5/18.



Discharged 1 M.D. M.U. 15/6/18.



100  
 5/13 M.S.C. 19.9.16  
 Army Form B. 103. **Casualty Form—Active Service.**

21<sup>st</sup> M. I. Coy. **Regimental Number** 5547 **597B**

**Regiment or Corps** 5<sup>th</sup> Reconn. 13<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Coy.  
**Rank** Pte **Surname** Chaplin **Christian Name** Leonard Charles  
**Religion** **Age on Enlistment** years months  
**Enlisted (a)** 12.4.16 **Terms of Service (a)** 12 months **Service reckons from (a)** 12.4.16  
**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. 213, 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. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received				
	O.C. Troops	A73 "Commonwealth" Embarked ...	Melbourne	19.9.16	ER.8575
		Disembarked ...	Plymouth	14.11.16	
25-11-16	Aust. M. I. Coy. Report	M. I. Coy. Partaburce	Aust. M. I. Coy. Report	23.11.16	G.R. 6801 Partaburce
16-11-16	Aust. Partaburce	M. I. Coy. Grantham	Partaburce	23.11.16	G.R. 8724 Partaburce
19-11-16	"	M. I. Coy. Aust. Partaburce	"	15-11-16	ER.6705 Partaburce
30/12/16	Aust. Mch	Offence Grantham	Grantham	29/12/16	
	Gun Eng Rep.	Ex sent from mfr.	Grantham	27-12-16	
		to 7. am.		27-12-16	
		Award 4 Days L.P. by		27-12-16	
		Lieut. Sixth L.P.			
		40 days & Days Pay			
		under R. 12.			

(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, Shering Smith, &c.  
 (938). Wt. 15012/3156. 1,000,000. 1/16. P. P. Ltd. Forms B. 103.3. [P.T.O.]



100  
5/13 MSC  
19.9.16  
fll

Army Form B. 103.  
**Casualty Form—Active Service.**

Regimental Number 5547 597B

Regiment or Corps 21<sup>st</sup> M. G. Coy.  
5<sup>th</sup> Reconn. 13<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Coy.

Rank Pte Surname Chaplin Christian Name Leonard Charles

Religion \_\_\_\_\_ Age on Enlistment \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months.

Enlisted (a) 12.4.16 Terms of Service (a) 12 months Service reckons from (a) 12.4.16

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. 213, 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. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received				
	O.C. Troops	A73 "Commonwealth"	Embarked ... Melbourne	19.9.16	ER.8575
			Disembarked ... Plymouth	14.11.16	
25-11-16	Aust. M. G. Coy. Report	M. I. Co. Partaburze	Aust. M. G. Coy. Report	23.11.16	S.R. 6801 Partaburze
16-11-16	Aust. Details	M. O. Co. Grantham	Partaburze	23.11.16	S.R. 8724 Partaburze
19-11-16	"	M. I. Co. Aust. P. S. Commonwealth	"	15-11-16	ER.6705 D. 9-1-17
30/12/16	Aust. Mch Gun Ing Rep.	Offence Grantham.	Grantham.	29/12/16.	
		Ex sent from mfr.		27-12-16.	
		to 7. am.			
		Award 4 Days L.P. by			
		Lieut. Sixth L.P.		27-12-16.	
		40 days & Days Pay			
		under R. 12.			

(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, Shering Smith, &c.

(938). Wt. 15012/3156. 1,000,000. 1/16. P. P. Ltd. Forms B. 103.3.

[P.T.O.]

Lo Reger 27/12/16



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 of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received				
		<del>Proceeding &amp; back to France.</del>			
17.3.17	A. M. S.	via Southampton via Abac.	Grantham	17.3.17	11809
	Col. Ly D.	Gen. Sup. Dep. Grantham			100 65 26.3.17
18.3.17	A. M. S. Ing. dep.	1. C. S. From 13 <sup>th</sup> M. S. Coy.	England	17.3.17	2. 11767
	Grantham	Officer "B" to N <sup>e</sup>			25.3.17
17.3.17	A. M. S. Ing. dep.	Proceeding & back to France			2. 11809
	Grantham	via A. M. S. Ing. dep. (via) Southampton		17.3.17	25.3.17 2/4/17
30.3.17	21 <sup>st</sup> M. S. Coy.	Taken on Strengh			11.19/1
	B. 213	from 13 <sup>th</sup> M. S. Coy	England	15.1.17	100 1/151 18.4.17
30.3.17	"	To Hosp. Sick	"	19.3.17	100 1/245 18.4.17
26.3.17	39 <sup>th</sup> G. Hosp.	Adm. - Scabie	Haute	19.3.17	100 105/19
	W. 3034	To Blatub	"	25.3.17	
31.3.17	M. S. Coy. B. 213	From Hosp.	Caniers	31.3.17	100 105/10
19.4.17	"	Proceeding to join Unit.	"	19.4.17	100 105/19
27.4.17	21 <sup>st</sup> M. S. Coy. B. 213	Rejoined Unit	France	23.4.17	100 1/310 9.5.17
12.6.17	"	Appointed. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	"	23.5.17	100 1/491 12.6.17
9.12.17	"	Sick to Hospital	Field	3.12.17	100 34/126 19.12.17
4.12.17	10 <sup>th</sup> A. F. H.	Adm. - P. U. D.	"	3.12.17	100 196/12
	A. 36	To 3 <sup>rd</sup> Can. G. H.			
3.12.17	3 <sup>rd</sup> Can. G. H.	Adm. - P. U. D.	Boulogne	3.12.17	100 196/15
4.12.17	W. 3034	To 11 <sup>th</sup> S. Hosp.	"	4.12.17	100 196/16

To Serial 2

Index 2

Army Form B. 103.

2nd Sheet.

Regimental Number 3976

## Casualty Form - Active Service.

Regiment or Corps 2nd M.C. Coy.  
 Rank *Lt Col* Surname *Chaplin* Christian Name *Leonard C. Chaplin*  
 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 .....  
 Occupation ..... Signature of Officer .....

Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B.213, Army Form A.36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received			
		Embarked ...		
		Disembarked ...		
4.12.17	14th S. Hosp. } Adm. <i>Measles</i>	Boulogne	4.12.17	HK 1962/16
27.12.17	W 3034 } <i>To England</i>	"	25.12.17	HK 1962/35
25.12.17	St Denis } <i>Lt Col Embarked for England</i>	France	25.12.17	HK 2077/3
	W 3083 } <i>Convalescent Measles</i>			DO 2/34 8.1.18
25.12.17	General & Co H. Adu	Chatham	25.12.17	DO 1 10 E
	Tork Pitt	<i>Rheumatism</i>		7.1.18 HP 1230
28.1.18				
28.12.17	3 ad H. Trans ex Chatham	Barford	28.12.17	HP 2351
10.1.18	hs	<i>Truck from 10/1/18 to 30/1/18.</i>		<i>Truck</i>
		<i>&amp; report to 2 C B Weymouth</i>		
28.1.18	<i>W 2 how best</i>	<i>W 2 how best</i>	28.1.18	LD 1057

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or entered into Section D, Army Reserve, Particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.

(b) Signaller, Shering-Smith, &amp; Co.

\* Fulle

W. 3835 M2733 2000a 917 (3/611) C. P. &amp; S. Ltd., Form B.103 E/1897.

P.T.O.



Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B.213, Army Form A.36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received			
18.3.18	3 B. List 44 <sup>R</sup> Adm H. Qs	London	10.3.18	1. 4 18 No list 573
	"D"	"Gunham Castle" from England (16 range) Sub Pleumation		



# Soldiers of the Great War



**World War 1 The Western Front  
1914-1918**