

A WW1 1918 'SOMME' M.M. TO A PRIVATE IN 55TH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION, WHO ORIGINALLY SERVED IN THE 6TH LIGHT HORSE, SERVED WITH THE ARTILLERY IN EGYPT AND HAD FURTHER SERVICE WITH 56 BATTALION 1937-1944



MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.R. '1570 PTE. E. H. STREET. 55/AUST: INF.'

M.M. London Gazette 14 May 1919.

The original recommendation states:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack on the Hindenberg Line, north of Bellicourt on 30th September and 1st October 1918. While the enemy shelling and machine-gun fire was at its utmost violence Pte. Street carried most important messages between the firing line and Battalion HQ. In the accomplishment of these tasks this runner had to move across an area which was subject to the enemy's shellfire and for the distance of some hundreds of yards to direct machine-gun fire and sniping. Throughout this gallant soldier showed great determination and most unselfish disregard for his own personal safety.'

Edmund Harrington Street, an 18 year old Station Hand from Harrington, New South Wales, enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force, 3 August 1915, having previously served as a Senior Cadet. Street was initially posted to the 6th Light Horse, and then the 2nd Reserve Light Horse Regiment at Maadi, one of the AIF training camps in Egypt, on 1st March 1916.

On 1st April 1916, he transferred as a Gunner to 15th Field Artillery Brigade, serving with unit in Egypt until it Embarked to Europe to join the BEF in August 1916. On 8th of February 1917, Street transferred yet again, this time to the 55th Australian Infantry and would serve with this battalion for the duration of the war.

Street was awarded the M.M. for his gallantry as a company runner on the Somme, 30th September - 1st October 1918. The Battalion War Diary states that the attack was on a heavily defended area and the Germans had countless machine guns. The allied barrage was very weak and that the Battalion came under very heavy fire. The Battalion captured 18 prisoners, one 77mm gun, one 4.2mm gun and 29 machine guns. The Battalion's casualties were 2

officers and 18 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 52 other ranks wounded, with 2 other ranks wounded but remaining on duty.



55TH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION DURING STREET'S SERVICE

'In early 1917 the 55th Battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. It was spared the assault but did, however, defend gains made during the second battle of Bullecourt. Later in the year, the AIF's focus of operations switched to the Ypres sector in Belgium. The 55th's major battle here was at Polygon Wood on 26 September.

With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie. The 14th Brigade took up positions to the north of Villers-Bretonneux and held these even when the village fell, threatening their flanks.

Once the German offensive had been defeated, the Allies launched their own offensive in August 1918. The 14th Brigade did not play a major role in these operations until late in the month, but its actions were critical to the capture of Peronne, which fell on 2 September. The 54th fought its last major battle of the war, St Quentin Canal, between 29 September and 2 October 1918. For his valour during this action Private John Ryan was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The battalion was resting out of the line when the Armistice was declared on 11 November. The progressive return of troops to Australia for discharge resulted in the 55th merging with the 53rd Battalion on 10 March 1919. The combined 53/55th Battalion, in turn, disbanded on 11 April.'

Street returned to Australia, and was discharged 18 July 1919 and became a school teacher. However in May 1937, Street enlisted in the Army again, being posted to Reserve list, 56 Battalion. He was soon after posted corporal, Sergeant in 1939, Quartermaster Sergeant in 1940 and transferred to the Active list 56 Battalion on 2nd September 1941. He was finally discharged, aged 46, on 21st January 1944 on compassionate grounds (family). His discharge notes he resided in Bondi, Sydney.

The portrait photo of Street is held in the AWM collection:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C256519>



Condition VF. Sold with copy service papers on CD. A replacement M.M. was issued in March 1952, however this medal will be the original issue as it isn't marked 'Duplicate', 'Replacement' or similar.