

= 32nd Battalion (Australia) =

The 32nd Battalion was an infantry battalion of the Australian Army . It was first raised in 1915 as part of the Australian Imperial Force and was initially made up of personnel from South Australia and Western Australia . The battalion served in France and Belgium during the First World War before being disbanded in 1919 .

It was re @-@ raised in 1921 as the " 32nd Battalion (Footscray Regiment) " , a unit of the part @-@ time Militia , and between the wars the battalion served as a home defence unit in Victoria . During the Second World War the battalion was merged with the 14th Battalion to become the 14th / 32nd Battalion (Prahran / Footscray Regiment) , serving firstly as garrison troops in Australia and New Guinea before taking part in the fighting during the New Britain campaign . In July 1945 , that battalion was disbanded .

After the war , the battalion was not re @-@ raised in its own right when the Citizens Military Force (the forerunner to the Australian Army Reserve) was formed in 1948 , however , it was raised as an amalgamated unit known as the " 58th / 32nd Battalion (City of Essendon Regiment) " . This unit remained in existence until 1960 when it was subsumed into the Royal Victoria Regiment . The battalion 's honours and traditions are now maintained by the 5th / 6th Battalion , Royal Victoria Regiment .

= = History = =

= = = First World War = = =

The 32nd Battalion was raised on 9 August 1915 in Mitcham , South Australia , for overseas service with the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF) . Its first commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Donald Coghill . While ' A ' and ' B ' Companies were made up of recruits from South Australia , ' C ' and ' D ' Companies were formed in Perth , Western Australia , and underwent training at the Blackboy Hill Training Camp before sailing on the transport Indarra and joining the rest of the battalion in Adelaide at the end of August . Most the battalion 's recruits had previously worked as miners or farmers . After completing basic training , the battalion left Australia in November aboard the HMAT Geelong , bound for Egypt . It arrived amidst the aftermath of the failed Gallipoli campaign , which saw a reorganisation and expansion of the AIF in preparation for its dispatch to France and Belgium to take part in the fighting against the Germans along the Western Front .

In Egypt , the battalion became part of the newly formed 8th Brigade , which was attached to the 5th Division . After a further period of training , the battalion was shipped to France in June 1916 , to join the fighting on the Western Front . The following month , after spending a short period in the Armentières sector , the battalion was committed to the front for the first time on 16 July 1916 . Three days after taking up position in the trenches the 32nd took part in the fighting around Fromelles , being committed as part of the 8th Brigade 's initial assault on the extreme left of the Australian front that was focused around a position known as the " Sugarloaf " , during which it suffered 718 casualties ? a third of the battalion 's total casualties for the entire war ? which equalled roughly 90 percent of its effective strength . As a result of these losses , the 32nd Battalion was used mainly in a support role throughout the remainder of 1916 , during which time , while they were not committed to any attacks in an assault role , they continued to suffer further casualties through the attrition of trench warfare .

After spending a bitter winter undertaking defensive duties on the Somme , during early 1917 the battalion took part in the operations in pursuit of the German forces as they retreated towards the Hindenburg Line , but found itself in the flank protection role during the Second Battle of Bullecourt in May . On 26 September 1917 , the battalion was heavily committed to the fighting around Polygon Wood near Ypres in Belgium during the Battle of Passchendaele ; again they were employed in a support role , as the 8th Brigade 's assault was led by the 29th and 31st Battalions . Following the

assault , the brigade adopted a defensive posture , supporting further efforts around Zillebeke and Anzac Ridge .

For the remainder of 1917 and the first half of 1918 the 5th Division mainly undertook a reserve role and as a result the 32nd Battalion had little involvement during the German Spring Offensive ; after the winter of 1917 ? 18 , the battalion had re @-@ entered the trenches in the Messines sector , occupying positions near Warneton in January 1918 , remaining there until March . In April , the 8th Brigade had been moved to the Somme , taking up defensive positions around the canal between Corbie and Vaux . After the German advance stalled the 32nd Battalion was involved in a series of minor advances along the Bray ? Corbie Road throughout July , taking part in operations around Morlancourt and the Morcourt Valley as the Allies sought to regain the initiative . Later , the Allies launched their own offensive around Amiens beginning on 8 August 1918 . During this offensive the 32nd Battalion took part in operations in the Peronne area throughout August and September as the Allies sought to breach the Hindenburg Line , fighting its final engagement of the war between 29 September and 1 October 1918 as part of a joint Australian and American attack along the St Quentin Canal .

After this , the Australian Corps was removed from the line for rest and training in preparation for further operations . In order to make up for the losses the Australians had suffered during the previous months , a number of Australian battalions were disbanded at this time to provide reinforcements to those that remained . The 32nd Battalion received a large number of reinforcements from the all @-@ Victorian 29th Battalion , which was subsequently disbanded . It was still out of the line when the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918 . During the battalion 's final series of battles , the battalion was led by Major Blair Wark , who was later awarded the Victoria Cross for his leadership and bravery .

Throughout the conflict the battalion suffered 2 @,@ 079 casualties of which 613 were killed . In March 1919 , after most of its personnel had been repatriated to Australia , the battalion merged with the 30th Battalion before subsequently being disbanded . Members of the battalion received the following decorations : one Victoria Cross , one Distinguished Service Order (DSO) , one Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBEs) , three Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBEs) , 27 Military Crosses (MCs) with two Bars , 16 Distinguished Conduct Medals (DCMs) ; 66 Military Medals with four Bars ; seven Meritorious Service Medals ; 26 Mentions in Despatches (MIDs) and 10 foreign awards .

= = = Inter war years = = =

In 1921 , when the part @-@ time Citizens Force (later known as the Militia) was re @-@ organised to perpetuate the numerical designations of the wartime AIF battalions , the 32nd Battalion was re @-@ formed in Melbourne , Victoria , through an amalgamation of the 5th Battalion , 8th Infantry Regiment with part of the 2nd Battalion , 32nd Infantry Regiment , and part of the 29th (Port Philip) Light Horse Regiment . The battalion drew most of its personnel from Footscray and several other south @-@ west and western suburbs of Melbourne and in 1927 , when territorial designations were adopted , the unit came to be known as the 32nd Battalion (Footscray Regiment) . The same year , the battalion motto , Audax Pro Patria , was approved and it formed an alliance with the Leicestershire Regiment . During this time , it was part of the 2nd Brigade , within the 3rd Military District . Initially the battalion 's manpower was maintained through the compulsory training scheme , but this was suspended in 1929 , following the election of the Scullin Labor government , and after this the force was maintained on a volunteer @-@ only basis .

= = = Second World War = = =

Following Japan 's entry into the Second World War in December 1941 , the battalion was called up for defensive duties . Attached to the 2nd Brigade , the battalion provided garrison troops to vital installations around Melbourne until August 1942 when it was transferred to Western Australia , being attached to the 6th Brigade , which was based around Geraldton . In September 1942 , as

part of an Army @-@ wide reduction that came about because of over @-@ mobilisation , the battalion was amalgamated with the 14th Battalion to become the 14th / 32nd Battalion (Prahran / Footscray Regiment) .

In early 1943 , the 14th / 32nd Battalion carried out amphibious warfare training in Queensland before being deployed to the Buna ? Gona area in New Guinea in July . The battalion would remain in mainland New Guinea and New Britain for the next two years , under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Caldwell . The strategy employed by the Australians during the New Britain campaign was one of containment against the much larger Japanese forces in the area . On 18 March 1945 , the battalion took part in its only major battle of the war when it launched an assault on Bacon Hill and captured it . In April 1945 , the 14th / 32nd Battalion was withdrawn back to Australia in preparation for involvement in future operations , however , in July the decision was made to disband the unit as the end of the war became apparent . During the course of the conflict the battalion suffered 77 casualties , of which 31 were killed in action or died of wounds or other causes . Members of the battalion received the following decorations for their service : one DSO , one OBE , two MCs , one British Empire Medal , one DCM , one MM and seven MIDs .

= = = Post Second World War = = =

In 1948 , when Australia 's part @-@ time military force was re @-@ raised under the guise of the Citizens Military Force , the battalion was re @-@ raised albeit as an amalgamated unit . It was linked with the 58th Battalion to become the 58th / 32nd Battalion and was known variously as the Melbourne Rifles , the West Melbourne Regiment and the City of Essendon Regiment . The Australian Army was reorganised around pentropic divisions in 1960 . As a result of this reorganisation the CMF was greatly reduced , as 14 infantry battalions were disbanded altogether , while the 17 that remained gave up their old regional regimental ties and were reformed as part of the six newly raised State @-@ based regiments . As a result of this , the 58th / 32nd was absorbed by the pentropic 1st Battalion , Royal Victoria Regiment , forming ' E ' Company , which was also known as " The Footscray Company " . The battalion received two battle honours for its service during the Second World War in 1961 ; at the same time it was also entrusted with the honours bestowed upon the 2 / 32nd Battalion , which was a separate battalion formed within the Second Australian Imperial Force . After the abolition of pentropic divisions in 1965 , the unit 's honours and traditions became bound up in the 5th / 6th Battalion , Royal Victoria Regiment , a unit which remains in existence today . The 32nd Battalion 's colours were laid up at St John 's Anglican Church in Footscray in August 1970 .

= = Battle honours = =

The 32nd Battalion was awarded the following battle honours :

First World War : Somme 1916 & 18 , Bapaume 1917 , Bullecourt , Ypres 1917 , Menin Road , Polygon Wood , Poelcappelle , Passchendaele , Ancre 1918 , Amiens , Albert 1918 , Mont St Quentin , Hindenburg Line , St Quentin Canal , France and Flanders 1916 ? 18 , Egypt 1915 ? 16 @ , @

Second World War : South @-@ West Pacific 1942 ? 1945 , Waitavolo .

= = Commanding officers = =

The following officers commanded the 32nd Battalion during the First World War :

Lieutenant Colonel Donald Coghill (1915 ? 16) ;
Lieutenant Colonel Robert Beardsmore (1916 ? 17) ;
Lieutenant Colonel Charles Davies (1917 ? 18)
Lieutenant Colonel John McArthur (1918) .