



Private Leon Jacob LENTZ
2828 — 36th Btn, 6th Reinforcements
34th Btn.

Born: 1900 Sydney.

Parents: Norman & Charlotte Lentz

Occupation: Grocer

District Connection: Cumnock

Enlistment Date: 31 Oct 1916, Cumnock.

Enlistment Age: Stated 18yrs, actually 16 yrs.

Embarkation: 25 Nov 1916 - Sydney HMAT A72 *Beltane*

Served: France, Belgium

Fate: RTA 10 Aug 1919

Honour Boards: Cumnock Memorial Gates; Cumnock Public School; & The Great Synagogue, Sydney.

Colour Patches of 36th & 34th Btms AIF



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Biography:

Leon Lentz was born in Sydney in 1900, the son of Norman and Charlotte Lentz.

Norman Lentz was from Austria where he spent 24 years before he travelled around Europe, America, Canada and New Zealand before arriving in Australia with his younger brother Peter in 1890, aged 28 years. Norman married Charlotte Solomon at the Great Synagogue, Sydney, in 1896. He became a naturalised citizen of Australia on 10 Oct 1896, aged 34 years, and stated on his naturalisation document that he was a storekeeper at Binda, in the Southern Highlands near Crookwell, NSW. Leon and Charlotte had two children – Leon born 1900, and Pearl born 1902. They divorced in December 1907.

In 1902, Norman's brother Peter married Florence Michael at Carlton, Victoria. Peter and a Mr Mendelsohn had opened a general store called "The Beehive" at Walcha in 1899. The couple returned to Walcha to live after their marriage.

Norman Lentz and his family moved to Cumnock in August 1908, having purchased Mr Abel Bruton's Beehive Store. In 1909, Norman Lentz married Amelia (Millie) Joseph at Sydney by Rabbi Cohen. They had one child – Philip born 1913.

Leon and Pearl both attended Cumnock Public School and Norman was an active member of the Cumnock Parents and Citizens Association throughout their schooling. Norman was also involved with the following Cumnock organisations – the Cricket Club, the Debating Club, the Progress Association, the Farmers and Settlers Association, the Liberal Association, the United Ancient Order of Druids, and the School of Arts.

Norman Lentz bought Mr Noble Miller's "Dumbarton" property in August 1912 but sold it again in February 1913.

According to the *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* – 3 Sep 1910, p9, Leon experienced a nasty accident of being thrown from his horse on his way to school when he was 13 years old. He suffered a concussion but recovered after a couple of days.

The Hebrew Standard of Australasia, Sydney – 29 Nov 1912, p9, reported:

"Leon Lentz, son of Mr Norman Lentz, of Cumnock, will be called to the reading of the Law at the Great Synagogue next Sabbath."

Leon enlisted in the AIF at Bathurst on 31 Oct 1916. He stated his age was 18 years, but he would have only been 16 years old. His medical examination stated he was 5 feet 6 inches tall, had brown eyes and dark brown hair and a dark complexion. He was of the Jewish religious denomination, a grocer, and his next of kin was his father, Norman.

The Molong Argus – 10 Nov 1916, p4, reported:

“SOLDIERS’ FAREWELL. On Saturday last Ptes. Lentz, Curnow and Jennings were farewelled and made the recipients of a presentation by their district friends. the function took the form of a dance... Each soldier was presented with a shaving and smoking kit. Pte Jennings responded on behalf of himself and comrades and Mr N Lentz on behalf of his son. The soldiers left on the Monday to return to their Bathurst Camp.

Pte Lentz embarked from Sydney on board *HMAT A72 Beltana* on 25 Nov 1916 as part of the 36th Btn, 6th reinforcements. The 36th Btn was part of the 9th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. The troops on the *Beltana* disembarked at Devonport on 29 Jan 1917. The following day Pte Lentz was admitted to a military hospital for an unstated reason. He was discharged on 5 Feb 1917. He then spent some months with the 9th Training Btn at Larkhill, Wiltshire.

Pte Lentz embarked at Southampton for France on 20 Aug 1917 and disembarked at Rouelles the following day. He was taken on strength with the 36th Btn, “D” company, at Ledinghem (Nord-Pas-de-Calais region) on 1 Sep 1917.



The 36th Btn spent most of September practising with rifles and Lewis Guns and formation manoeuvres. The Btn moved on 26 September, arriving in the Passchendaele area on the night 29/30th September to take over a portion of the front line from the Royal fusiliers.

The 36th Unit Diary entry for 6 Oct 1917 stated: “*The Battalion under instructions moved from position East of Bremen Redoubt and marched back through Ypres and embussed near Vlamertinghe and arrived at Winnezele at 6.30pm. Men very exhausted.*” They spent the next three days resting and reorganising until moving in buses to camp at Cavalry Farm, east of Ypres.

The 36th Btn took part in the Ypres Battle, phase 5, Passchendaele, Belgium, on 12 Oct 1917. They had moved to their start point the night before, under heavy enemy shelling with gas, and having to wear respirators. On the morning of the 12th, heavy rain had deluged the battlefield, and thick mud tugged at the advancing troops and fouled their weapons. The unit diary records that “*The first stick-up we had and the most serious was at a dugout (Pill box) which held up portion of the 35th and 36th Battalions for an hour, and which resulted in many casualties.*” The 36th secured its objective but with open flanks and ineffective artillery support, were forced to withdraw.

During this battle the 36th Btn suffered 3 Officers killed, 1 missing and 10 wounded. Other ranks had approx. 110 killed and missing, and 290 wounded. One of the wounded was Pte Leon Lentz with gunshot wounds to the head, neck and shoulder. He spent time at the 6 General Hospital in France before being transferred to the Reading War Hospital, Berkshire, England on 21 Oct 1917. He was discharged from the hospital and then had leave from 5-19 November.

Pte Lentz returned to the 36th Btn, which was then stationed at De Saule, Belgium, on 14 February 1918. He was wounded in action again, just two months later, when he and around 30 other soldiers suffered from the effects of gassing while at Villers Bretonneux on 19 Apr 1918. He was transferred back to England for treatment.

The 36th Btn was disbanded due to depleted numbers on 30 Apr 1918 and its remaining members were transferred to other battalions. Pte Lentz returned to France as part of the 34th Btn in September 1918. He became sick with Influenza on 5 Nov 1918. He had leave in England from 21 Mar to 4 Apr 1919, and then returned to France, before embarking to return to Australia in June 1919.

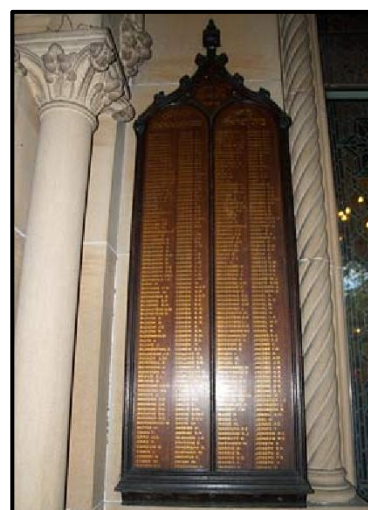
Pte Lentz arrived back in Australia on 10 Aug 1919. He was among 13 local soldiers welcomed home to Cumnock at a function at Leary’s Hall. Each of the soldiers were presented with an inscribed gold medal. The event was published in the *Molong Argus* – 21 Nov 1919, p4. He also received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his service in the AIF.

Norman Lentz suffered a stroke in late 1918 and died on 1 Mar 1920 at home in Cumnock. He was buried in Sydney. The Beehive Store was sold in January 1921, following which Amelia Lentz and her family moved to reside in Sydney. Amelia Lentz died at Coogee in 1952, aged 68 years.

Leon Lentz married Margaret Meek on 12 Jul 1941, at All Saints' Church, Petersham. Leon, aged 41 years, was working as a carrier at the time, while Margaret, aged 34 years, was working as a showroom supervisor.

Leon Lentz died at his residence at Stanmore, on 24 Nov 1966, aged 66 years. The funeral service was held at the Chevra Kadisha Memorial Hall, Woollahra, and was attended by members of the Petersham R.S.L. Club, and members of Lodge Lilyfield, United Grand Lodge of NSW. He was buried at the soldiers' portion of the Jewish Cemetery, Rookwood.

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Above left: The Beehive Store, Cumnock, c1930.

Above right: WW1 Memorial Board, the Great Synagogue, Sydney.

Below left: The War Memorial Gates, Obley Street, Cumnock.

Below right: Cumnock Public School WW1 Honour Board, Crossroads building, Cumnock.

