What Do The Coloured Unit Badge Colours Mean?
Whether, Artillery, Engineers, Infantry, Light Horse, Medical, Pioneers and so on. Every unit had its own colour patch which was worn on the tunic of each of its members. Here is a sketch of the colours worn by many of our Fallen.

In the text below, there are copies of photos of plaques in Hobart, dedicated to the Bruford brothers. They both show a purple and blue diamond shaped symbol. This designates the 26th Battalion; the particular unit they served in. (As also, did Lee.)

26th Infantry Battalion (Qld and TAS) [7th Brigade]
The diamond signifying the 2nd Division comprised of 12 battalions, in 3 brigades. Of these, the blue designates the 7th Brigade and the purple indicates that it is the 2nd of the 4 battalions, comprising it.

By looking at such a patch on a digger’s shoulder, the initiated, thereby knew his unit. This system continued through the 2nd World War; fell out of use and was re-adopted in 1987. Today, if one sees a digger with a slough hat, on the right side of it on the “puggaree” (hatband), will be this unit designation. It often thus, can indicate a unit history, way back to WWI.

Following this system again, for some more of the Old Boys;

Take for example, the First Brigade. Being a NSW unit, one can list a number of ASC members on its strength. This comprised 4 Battalions, each of roughly 1,000 men. These were included among the 12 battalions, in the 3 brigades comprising the First Division. The Divisions shape was a rectangle and a quarter of our fallen Old Boys served in it:

1st Infantry Battalion (NSW) [1st Infantry Brigade]
McKell

2nd Infantry Battalion
Scott.

3rd Infantry Battalion
Holl, Middleton, Munckton,

4th Infantry Battalion
Lewin, McPhillamy (also 19th), H. Thompson (also in 20th 56th) **

So, one could tell from which brigade (green) and the standard black, purple, brown (chocolate) and white, for the respective battalions in it.

(** After Gallipoli, the AIF was “doubled” by halving the men in the existing units and sending “the other half” to the new formations. Reinforcements made up the numbers. So, half of the veteran 4th battalion was sent to the new 56th Battalion.

It was thus possible for a soldier to serve in various units for this and other reasons.

56th Infantry Battalion [NSW 14th Infantry Brigade]
Denny, H. Thompson (4th and 20th)
Note same colours, but with the 5th Division shape, simply being turned on its end.

At the expense of going too far into this detail, readers might be interested in another couple of remarks:

Old Boys were also represented, for example, in two further NSW units in 2nd Division. This, in turn, was designated by a diamond shape:

17th Infantry Battalion [NSW 5th Infantry Brigade]
   Moore, Pearson, J.Thompson.

19th Infantry Battalion
   Blacket, McManamey, McPhillamy (also 4th) Clunies-Ross.

20th Infantry Battalion
   Richards, Thompson (also 4th 56th)

The 5th Brigade is today, a Reserve unit with headquarters at Holsworthy.

Three (1, 2. 5) of the 5 WW1 infantry divisions have been mentioned above. Let us add a battalion from the 3rd Division. It had an egg shape. ("Eggs a cook" was an expression taken from the hawkers of Cairo and used as a nickname).

35th Infantry Battalion (NSW [9th Infantry Brigade]
   Day (also 13th)

Before leaving this section, one should point out the number of Old Boys who were in Light Horse units. Not surprising from a “bush” school. These included:

1st Light Horse Regiment (NSW)
   Oakes

6th Light Horse Regiment (NSW)
   Barton, Carter, Denny, Smith (in 6th at Anzac)

7th Light Horse Regiment (NSW)
   Kendall, Roberts (at Anzac).

12th Light Horse Regiment (NSW)
   McIntosh, Roberts, Smith.

Here again, the system works the same. Light Horse units had their rectangle diagonally divided with the brigade colour at bottom and the “regiment." (Which was roughly, the same as an infantry battalion). The rectangle shape indicated a unit in the Australian Mounted Division.

(Acknowledgement that the above colour patches copied from Ross Mallet’s, “First A.I.F. Order of Battle” Such illustrations are also available from other sources.)