



**Sergeant 1511 George P. John SHERRINGHAM
— 2nd Field Artillery Brigade**

Born: 1885, Molong, NSW

Next of Kin: Anne & Robert Sherringham

Occupation: Stockman

District Connection: Cumnock, Wellington

Enlistment Date: 21 Aug 1914, Albert Park, Victoria.

Enlistment Age: Stated 25 yrs 10 mths (actually 29 yrs)

Embarkation: 19 Oct 1914 - Melbourne *HMAT Marere A21*

Served: Gallipoli, Egypt, Western Front.

Fate: RTA 27 Jan 1919 per HT *Port Hacking*.

Honour Boards: Cumnock School WW1 Honour Board,
Wellington Honour Roll.

Biography:

George Percival John Brown was one of ten children born to Robert & Mary Brown (nee Drew) who were married in 1872 and registered at both Gulgong and Mudgee. Their children were: John B 1872; Thomas B1874; Sarah B1876; Robert Sydney B1878; Alice B1879; Eva B1883; George Percival B 1885; Arthur Oswald B1893; Daphne B1895; Albert Edward Leslie B1897. Robert Brown had a wool and skin buying business in Yeoval.

George was adopted by Anne (nee Shaw) and Robert Sherringham, of Cumnock and his last name changed to Sherringham. Robert Sherringham was the son of Maria (nee Goddard) and Henry Sherringham, who moved to "Norwich," Cumnock, in 1875. Robert married Mary McLachlan in 1879 at Molong. They had one child, a son Daniel, born 1879. Mary, aged 22 years, died in 1881 and Daniel, aged 5 years, died in 1884. Both are buried in the Molong Cemetery.

Robert remarried in 1884 at Molong to Annie Shaw. He owned a 420 acre property called "Frogmore," (later renamed "Homewood.") which he sold in 1904, according to the *Peak Hill Express* - 5 Feb 1904, p3, Cumnock: "Mr Robert Sherringham has disposed of his excellent farming property to Mr W Murray of Yullundry. The purchase money was close on £1500."

Robert and Ann adopted another child, Claire. Robert was also a carpenter and built the "Burrawong" woolshed and a shed on the Cumnock Recreation grounds. George attended the Cumnock Public School (CPS) and is noted on the CPS WW1 Honour Board. The family moved to Wellington in April 1904 when George would have been 19 years old.

When George, known as Jack, enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 21 Aug 1914, at Albert Park, Victoria, he stated on his enlistment form that he was 25 yrs and 10 months old (but would have been 29 years), that he was a stockman, was a member of rifle clubs, and his next of kin was Mr Robert Sherringham, Clive Street, Wellington. His medical examination at Broadmeadows recorded that he was 5 feet 7 inches tall, had a dark complexion and brown eyes and hair. He was of the Church of England religious denomination.

Pte George Sherringham embarked on *HMAT Marere A21* at Melbourne, on 19 Oct 1914. The *Marere* was part of the first detachment of the Australian and New Zealand Imperial Expeditionary Forces that assembled at King George's Sound, Albany, Western Australia, on 1 Nov 1914. There were 38 transport ships in total in the first convoy, with 36 departing from Albany, and 2 departing from Fremantle.

The photo shows troops on a march and the ships assembled at Albany, November 1914.



On the convoy's initial leg to Colombo the Royal Australian Navy had its first victory when Sydney engaged and destroyed the German raider *Emden* in battle off the Cocos–Keeling Islands. Weather conditions in England precluded the Australians and New Zealanders from arriving there, and it was decided to instead base them in Egypt.

The Wellington Times - 1 Apr 1915, p2, published the first of many long letters George wrote to his mother and sister, dated 8 Dec 1914, from Port Said.

Extracts:

Nov 9 - *We are now in the tropics. Weather very hot. German cruisers been sighted. Cruiser escort gone off in search of same, and all hands were called on deck, and given instruction how to act in case of emergency... later we were informed that our cruiser, HMAS Sydney, had engaged the enemy, and sunk the German cruiser Emden. All hands were excited, and three cheers were given for the Sydney.*

Nov 15 - *Sighted Ceylon this morning. Arrived at Colombo about 2 pm. Very beautiful harbour. There are about fifty ships in the harbor and around. Everywhere the natives are out in their catamarans - queer looking boats, with their square sails and outriggers.*

Nov 17 - *Left Colombo at 11 am today.*

Nov 19 - *Having splendid trip, ocean lovely and calm.*

Nov 23 - *Sighted Socotra Island [Socotra is located between the Guardafui Channel and the Arabian Sea, and is the largest of the four islands in the Socotra Archipelago] and sailed along coast of it all day; passed end of same at sunset.*

Nov 25 - *Sighted Arabian coast at 8.30 am and arrived at Aden at 3 pm. Very rough and rocky country, with high rough and rocky shores. Left Aden the following day.*

Nov 29 - *Sunday, half holiday, held sports meeting on board to-day. Egg race, potato race, spoon race, jumble race, also tug of war between four sections of boat... Very good day. Got paid our sea allowance today.*

Dec 1 - *Arrived at Suez at midday. Anchored in close vicinity of canal entrance. It is now evident that we will land in Egypt, and our attention is drawn towards Turkey. Today we were warned to keep well under cover, going through the canal, in case of sharp shooters and snipers, who had been firing on steamers.*

Dec 3 - *On picket last night, but it was a pleasure; all night long Indian troopships and steamers were arriving and departing. We departed at noon, leaving Suez behind.*

Dec 4 - *Arrived in Port Said early this morning, and anchored right opposite the Customs House.*

Dec 9 - *Tonight we left for Alexandria, where we land, and go on to Cairo, in Egypt...*

After training in Egypt at Mena Camp, the 2nd Artillery Field Brigade (AFB) Ammunition column arrived in Alexandria on 9 April and were transported by boat to Port Murdos, Lemnos Island. Further training and disembarkation practice took place before taking part in the landing at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli Peninsular, on 25 Apr 1915.

The standard organisation of Field Artillery took on the form of the Field Artillery Brigade which were formed to support Infantry Brigades. In 1914 and 1915 the First and Second Division each had three brigades. Each Brigade generally comprised three Batteries of four 18 Pounder Mk 1 or II guns. With a range of about 6,500 yards (almost 6 km) they fired a range of ammunition natures including High Explosive fragmentation, Shrapnel, Smoke, Gas, Star (illumination) and Armour Piercing projectiles. At ANZAC, guns were deployed singly purely because of a lack of suitable fire positions. The 18 pounders were the first into action but later an improvised heavy Battery was formed with two 6 inch (150 mm) howitzers and a 4.7 inch (120 mm) Naval Quick Firing gun.

The Wellington Times - 22 Jul 1915, p4, printed a letter from George, dated 6 June, extracts are:

"... I landed the first day and now that things are quietened down and one has time to think over those first few days, and what our boys went through, and what they accomplished, then I am proud that I am an Australian, and prouder still that I am one of the First Australian Expeditionary Force. I have played no very important part in the procedure, still I have done all that was asked of me, and my particular unit... Our particular headquarters are situated on the side of the water's edge... Here, on this hillside, we live in dug-outs; that is a hole or passage cut in the hill, in which we sleep or take cover from the shrapnel shells and bullets that at times rain around our position. Here we live and batch for ourselves, either individually, or in small parties..."

The Wellington Times - 19 Aug 1915, p4, George sent a unique wooden postcard to his sister, Claire.

"My dear sister - I would write to you often only I cannot procure any writing material. This is part of my firewood allowance, but I can go without my billy of tea for your sake. No, this is not part of an army, biscuit, but is out of a case of bully beef. We are being treated extremely well —good food and water, fresh beef and vegetables, etc. I am in very good health and doing well."

Pte Sherringham reported sick with dysentery at Anzac Cove on 7 Sep 1915 and was transferred to No 1 General Hospital at Cairo. He was discharged to Zeitoun ex convalescent hospital, *Helovan*, on 4 Nov 1915 and promoted to acting bombardier at Cairo on 18 November.

On 12 Jan 1916, Pte Sherringham was admitted to the 1st Field Ambulance at Tel El Kebir with diarrhoea and the following day was promoted to Bombardier. On 20 Jan he rejoined his brigade from hospital.

The Wellington Times - 9 Mar 1916, p3, published a letter from Bombardier Sherringham to his sister, Clare. The following are extracts:

"I am at present in the No 1 field hospital. I have been here a week today, am am nearly alright again. I hope to be in the line again in the next few days... We are now in a new camp miles away from anywhere. It is a very big camp. Practically all the Australians are here. All the first division are, or, at least, all who are left of them... I have a lovely new horse, a bonnie hack, so I am just it now."

Pte Sherringham was transferred to the 4th Division Artillery at Tel El Kebir on 27 Feb 1916 and taken on strength with the 21st Howitzer Brigade on 3 March. He embarked at Alexandria on 25 Mar 1916 and disembarked at Marseilles, France, on 1 Apr 1916. On 5 April he was admitted to the 9th Stationary Hospital, Marseilles and spent the next 52 days being treated for venereal disease.

Pte Sherringham joined the 1st Division Artillery Brigade base depot at Étaples on 30 May 1916.

The Wellington Times - 27 Jul 1916, p6, George wrote to his mother from France post hospitalisation:

"... I am out of the hospital again, and I am feeling much stronger on it. I was in hospital for 52 days, and when I came out I guess I looked a wreck. I lost over two stone in weight, but I am now improving nicely... I am at present working in the orderly room as orderly clerk, so that will give me an opportunity of getting fit again... I have seen a good deal of France so far. I had one train trip from Marseilles which lasted from Saturday until Tuesday, and I had a good opportunity of seeing a lot of country..."

On 21 June 1916, Pte Sherringham joined the 1st Division Ammunition Column (DAC), 1st Australian Field Artillery (AFA), 1st Australian Division.

The Wellington Times - 14 Sep 1916, p3, George wrote to his mother, dated 26 July:

"... I am once more with my old unit, now known as the 2nd Section, 1st DAC, 1st Aust. Field Artillery, 1st Aust. Division. During the past few months I have been on several headquarters' staffs, but owing to my last illness I decided to rejoin my old original unit. Very few of the boys who left Victoria with us are now in our ranks. We are at present in action on a very busy front, and every night we are busy taking ammunition to the firing line..."

I have seen the country from Marseilles to the English Channel at Bolougne, from there to the north as far as Lille and Saillis, and now on this unmentioned front. So you see I have had my foot on Belgium as well as French soil, and hope to set foot upon Germany territory..."

My new horse, right from Canada is a real beauty... this is my fourth horse since I left [Australia] ..."

The Wellington Times - 12 Oct 1916, p6, George wrote to his mother, dated 5 August:

"I am at present enjoying the best of health and happiness. We are now enjoying a short rest after a busy time. The weather is perfect, and we have had quite a run of nice warm weather with cool nights. Our camp is situated on the banks of a small streamlet with a lovely wood close by. Adjoining are several small villages, where one can purchase eggs, butter, bread, and groceries... There will be a lot of truth to tell, and a lot of things to be rectified before the 1st Australian Division get the honor and credit they are entitled to. They are certainly getting more than their share of dirty and dangerous work, and very little praise for what they really do. There certainly will not be too many of the original 20,000 left, but still I am proud to be one of that lot, and I am prouder still to doff my cap to the old battalion. Practically all my old pals have been put out of action..."

Pte Sherringham was transferred to the 3rd FAB on 24 Nov 1916 and then on 7 Jan 1917 he was transferred to 1st DAC. He was promoted to Corporal on 26 Feb 1917 while he was in hospital with gastro enteritis. He was transferred to the Royal Surrey County Hospital, England, on 5 Apr 1917. He was granted furlough from 26 May to 11 Jun 1917.



A team of Australian artillery drivers and horses dragging 4.5 inch howitzers into position at the front, Ypres, Oct 1917. AWM C00467

Cpl Sherringham wrote letters to his mother and sister during 1917 which were printed in the *Wellington Times* on 7 Jun 1917, p2, and 29 Nov 1917, p5, which were mostly about personal matters.

On 17 Jul 1917, Cpl Sherringham was admitted to Tidsworth Military hospital with dysentery/colitis and discharged on 22 Aug 1917. He returned to France on 24 Oct 1917 and rejoined the 1st Division Artillery Column on 2 November but was detached to the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade on 4 November, which was then located in Belgium.

George Sherringham was promoted to Sergeant on 18 Mar 1918 and then attended Royal Artillery Cadet School. He was wounded in action on 28 Apr 1918, receiving shell wounds to the back and head. He was treated in the field and then admitted to No 3 Canadian General Hospital at Boulogne, before being transferred to England on 4 May and being admitted to the Military Hospital at Edmonton, North London.

The Wellington Times on 8 Aug 1918, p3. A letter from George to his mother from the Passmore Edwards Hospital, London:

“ ... I have had a bad time of it, but now that is all over. I was wounded about a month ago, and got a nasty shaking up. I got two large wounds in the back, a bad knock in the shoulder, and a hit on the head. My wound in the head has healed up nicely, and my shoulder is practically alright, but the wounds in my back are still open, but are clean and doing nicely. I was very lucky that things were not worse than they were, because the shell exploded right on top of me and dumped me right out, so you can imagine that I had a very narrow escape. Needless to say, I was sore and bruised all over... ”

A further letter from George to his sister was printed in *The Wellington Times* on 17 Oct 1918, p8:

“... I am out of hospital and I am now in No 4 Command, Hurdcott. I am now having massage treatment for my back... My eyes and ears were affected by the blow on the head—but a splendid specialist (Major Brown) at Harefield Park, fixed me up splendidly and now except for a ringing in the ears and a severe headache occasionally, I am tip-top... I will be in England for a long time...”

Sgt Sherringham was granted furlough from 12 Jul - 26 Jul 1918 and then reported to No 4 Command Depot. He was again sick in an isolation hospital from 8 Aug - 15 Aug. He returned to Australia via *HT Port Hacking* and disembarked on 27 Jan 1919. He was discharged on 1 May 1919, and was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

George wrote a long letter to the editor in *The Wellington Times* on 13 Nov 1919, p3, regarding the erection of a war memorial to the fallen soldiers of Wellington and District.

George edited a collection of “The Port Hacking Cough” by Pte Stuart Shaw which was published in 1919. It was a magazine produced on the journey home to Australia on board *HT Port Hacking*. In this publication were drawings, stories, reports, funny anecdotes and poems; things that the soldiers could read, relate to, and enjoy. It can be found on: [The Port Hacking cough \(nla.gov.au\)](http://www.nla.gov.au)

George married Mona Irene McMonigal in 1923 at Canterbury. They had two daughters, Merriel and Lois.

According to the Australian electoral rolls, the couple lived at Campsie where George’s occupation was noted as a packer, from 1930 to 1943. He was also an Organiser for the Storeman and Packers Union.

George died at Canterbury on 6 Aug 1943, aged 58 years. He was interred at the Rookwood Crematorium. His wife Mona died on 6 May 1963 in Darwin, aged 69 years.

1511 Corporal George Jack Sherringham is featured in the book, “Wellington’s Finest” by Trevor Munro & Graeme Hosken, 2005, pages 693 & 694.

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