



In Memory of
Second Lieutenant
GEORGE JOSEPH SHEPPERD, MM
589, 26th Battalion, Australian Infantry
who died age 25
on 3rd July 1918

Son of Samuel George and Annie Mary Shepperd, of "Dawn," South St.,
Toowoomba, Queensland.

Remembered with honour
ADELAIDE CEMETERY, THE SOMME, FRANCE



SECOND LIEUTENANT
GEORGE JOSEPH SHEPPERD
 26TH BATTALION, AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY
 SERVICE NO: 589



George Joseph Shepperd was a 22-year-old school teacher at Roma in western Queensland when he enlisted on 18 May 1915. He was a Toowoomba man, born in the city and educated at the Toowoomba Grammar School. His parents, Samuel George and Annie Mary Shepperd, a brother and five sisters lived at “Dawn”, South Street, Toowoomba. In 1915 he stated that he was in his third year of teaching, having worked at schools in Toowoomba and Roma. George was 5’7” tall and weighed 140 pounds; he had a fair complexion, blue eyes, snowy hair and was of the Church of England religion. His name is misspelt as Sheppard on Toowoomba’s Mothers’ Memorial.

During his short training period at Enoggera George was posted as a private and original member of the 26th Battalion, a Queensland-majority battalion of the 7th Brigade. The 26th embarked in Brisbane on 24 May 1915 aboard the A11 *Ascanius*. After further training in Egypt the battalion landed at Gallipoli on 4 September; it had arrived after the big offensive of August and took over garrisoning the front lines until the evacuation. On 20 November George was wounded by a bomb (grenade) with wounds to the face, including eye damage.

His wounds were described as severe; he was evacuated to Mudros Island and subsequently transferred to a hospital in Egypt. He made a remarkable recovery, with no apparent loss of sight. In March 1916 he was fit enough to join the battalion for its move to France and the Western Front.

In France, George suffered a series of infections that kept him away from the front for several months. This was a blessing in disguise as he missed the terrible trials of the battles at Pozieres in July and August. In mid-November George rejoined the battalion and was made temporary corporal. He endured the harsh winter and became a temporary sergeant in February 1917. About a week after this second promotion he was wounded “second occasion, GSW rt. arm”. This injury was severe enough to be a “Blighty” but it was classed as “mild” and gave him a furlough in England following his treatment at Reading Hospital.

By mid-1917 George was not surprisingly identified as a brave soldier with future leadership capacity. Before he returned to France after his furlough he was sent to the 2nd Army Central School for a five-week course. He rejoined his unit on 17 September – just in time for the Battle of Passchendaele. On 4 October George was awarded the M.M. (Military Medal) for his actions described in this citation: **589 Sergeant (A/CSM)**

Shepperd for gallantry and devotion to duty during the attack at Broodseinde Ridge on 4/10/17. Early in the attack this NCO was severely shaken and dazed by the explosion of a HE shell but pulling himself together with a great effort, continued to attack with determination, and headed the first party to reach the final objective. The spirit he displayed had a very fine effect on his men, and certainly assisted greatly in making the attack a success. George was one of six men in his battalion awarded the MM for that day’s major attack.

Following his efforts in the “Broodseinde stunt” George was selected for officer training. The selection form filled in by his superiors described him as “a very steady man”, twice wounded and away from home for nearly three years. George travelled to Cambridge to join the No. 2 Officer Cadet Battalion. He graduated in May 1918. As a 2/Lieut he was posted to General Infantry Reinforcements, whereupon, perhaps not by accident, a vacancy was found for him back at the 26th. George rejoined the battalion, for the sixth time, on 16 June 1918.

The frightening reality for George was that he was now in one of the most dangerous jobs in the army – a junior infantry officer. The writer Robert Graves, a British lieutenant in 1916, wrote that the life expectancy of an infantry lieutenant on the Western Front was six weeks. George led a patrol into No-Man’s-Land near Villers-Bretonneux on the night of 2/3 July. The battalion diary records that he was hit by “chance machine gun fire” and killed. There were no other fatalities and his men brought his body back with them. George was buried in the Adelaide Cemetery at Villers-Bretonneux (grave I.B.14). He had been a junior officer at the

front for 17 days and was 25 years old when he died. From the Adelaide Cemetery the remains of Australia's Unknown Soldier were exhumed in 1993 for re-interment in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial. George's parents both wrote to the army as his medals were issued and his property arrived back in Australia. There were also letters from a young woman teacher who wrote from her school in Brisbane wanting to know his address to keep in contact.

External Links:

[CWGC](#)

[Australian National Archives Military Records](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 23/43/36 26TH BN July 1918](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)