

**George Stewart
Smith:
Service during
the Great War
1914-1918**





Early Years

George Stewart Smith was born on the 22nd of March, 1888, in Timaru, New Zealand. His parents were Anthony Adrian Smith, and Jane Gellatly, who were both farmers. George was the eldest of 5 children, 4 boys and 1 girl. All 4 brothers served in World War I. The family lived in Timaru until , when they moved to Melbourne. There, George was educated at Scotch College in Melbourne, and participated as a cadet for 2 years. He graduated in 1906? and became a grain buyer. At the time of his enlistment in 1915 George was 5'7", 140 lbs, and single.

Enlistment and Service

George enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on the 9th of April, 1915, in Melbourne, Victoria. He had just turned 27, and was assigned to the 6th Battalion, 14th Reinforcement as a 2nd Lieutenant.

AUSTRALIAN



MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. _____ Name Smith George Stewart
 Unit _____
 Joined on _____

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ... George Stewart Smith
2. In the Parish of _____ in or near the Town of Tamaru in the County of New Zealand
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ... Natural born Brit Subj
4. What is your age? ... 27
5. What is your trade or calling? ... Grain buyer
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ... No
7. Are you married? ... No
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ... Father Anthony Adrian Smith
104 Beverdale Rd
Dawthorn Melbourne
Victoria
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ... No
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ... No
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ... No (School cadets 2 yrs)
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... No
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... No
14. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)—Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued to you after embarkation during your term of service? ... No
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ... Yes

George Stewart Smith do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife,* †

Date 9. 11. 15 P. Stewart Smith
 Signature of person enlisted.

*This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.
 † Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

George Smith's enlistment form.

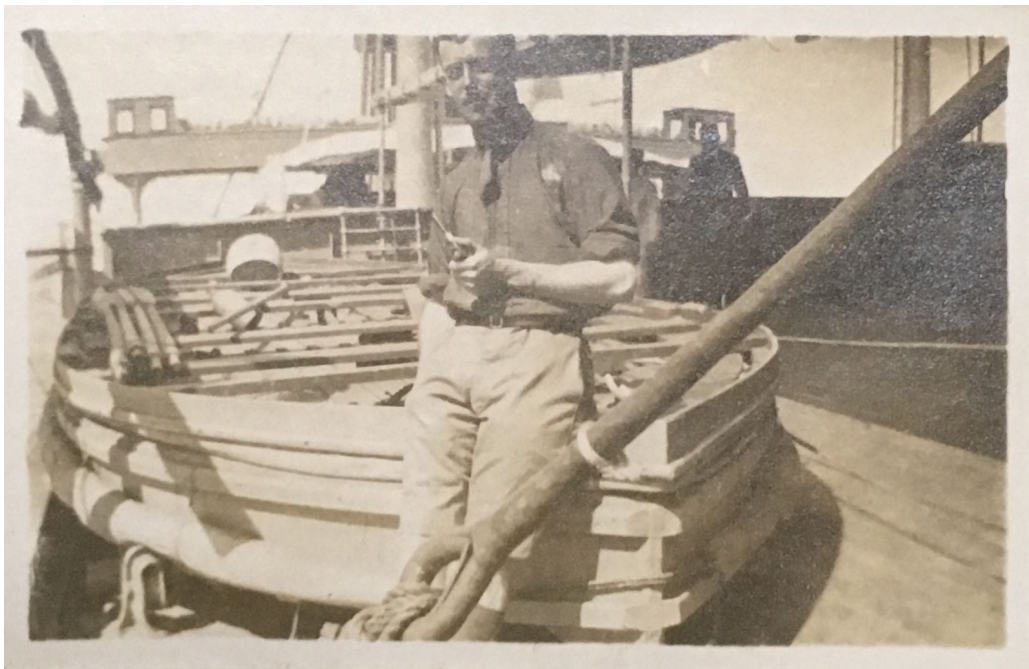
After completing training, 2nd Lieutenant Smith and his unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria aboard HMAT (His Majesty's Australian Transport) A32 *Themistocles* on the 28th of January, 1916. The ship was bound for England, where soldiers would then be transferred to the Western Front, a snaking maze of opposing trenches, and the main theatre of the war. An average voyage to England on *Themistocles*, whose speed was roughly 15 knots, took about 40 days.



HMAT *Themistocles* departs from Melbourne, bound for England. The ship was named after the famous Greek politician and general, who made a name for himself during the Battle of Salamis.

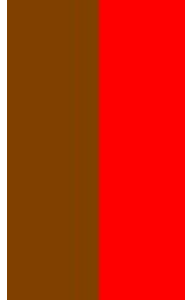


Nurses aboard the *Themistocles*
(Photo taken by George Smith)



2nd lieutenant George Smith
aboard the *Themistocles*

Upon arrival in Egypt on the 25th of March, 1916, George was assigned to the 59th Infantry Battalion, and on the 1st of June, 1916, George was promoted to Lieutenant. His unit soon sailed through the Suez Canal, bound for France and the horrors of the trenches.



The 59th Infantry Battalion Patch



The Suez Canal

(Photo by George Smith)

George was wounded on 2 occasions during the course of the war. The first was in the battle of Fromelles on the 19th of July, 1916.



The original officers of the 59th Battalion
before Fromelles and Pozieres.

George is in the middle row, 2nd from the right

The 59th was one of the first to go over the top, and George led his company into the fight until he was hit with machine gun fire, which shattered his knee. Despite this, he crawled back across the battlefield to the dressing station, refusing aid from the stretcher-bearers. He said that they were needed for worse cases than his.

George spent his recovery period in England, first being nursed at a hospital, and then convalescing at No. 5 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Digswell House in Welwyn, Hertfordshire, UK, where he captured some photos.



Digswell House, home of the Aclands, who converted their home into a place for convalescent soldiers. It was staffed by red cross nurses from the surrounding area. A letter published in 1917 sums up the situation.

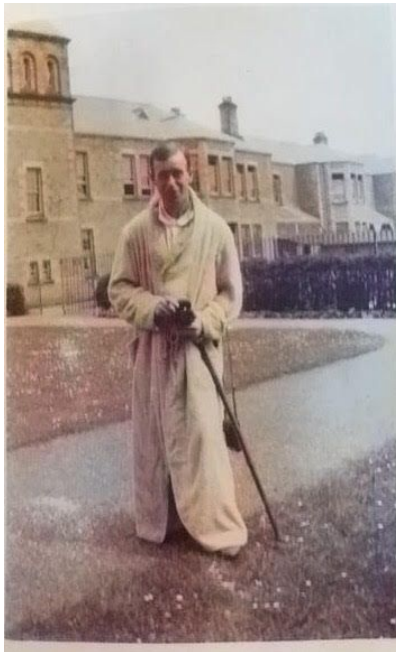
The Hon. Mrs. Acland, owner of Digswell House, has generously given up her home to convalescent Australians, the house accommodating about 25 officers.

Her husband, Colonel Acland, is at the front, also her only son, Lieut.

Acland, with the Grenadier Guards. Her eldest daughter is also nursing in France. Truly a patriotic family! The grounds are very extensive, and include a small lake: Plenty of shooting is available for those able to get about.



Another view of Digswell House



George's first day up and walking
after having his knee shattered by
machine gun fire in France.



George and a fellow officer "Mac" relaxing



Preparing the tennis courts for a game



Knebworth house in Hertfordshire
was a popular picnic destination for the officers.

After 8 months of recovery he was able to rejoin the fighting, just in time for the advance on Bapaume. During his recovery, on the 1st of November, 1916, George was promoted to Captain.

Resources :

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=1778853&isAv=N>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1538452/>

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=279656>

<http://www.murphyswar.com.au/ww1-troop-ships-across-the-indian-ocean/>

http://www.dontforgetthediggers.com.au/gallery/img_large.asp?galID=31&galimgID=180

<http://www.abc.net.au/ww1-anzac/fromelles-pozieres/galleries/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-06/battle-of-villers-bretonneux/5497598>