

John was born in Leamington, Warwickshire on 10th Jan 1889, the son of John and Martha Cookson. In 1906 he joined the Worcester Militia and then on his 18th birthday joined the Royal Navy, #237198. He was aboard the SEALARK on a visit to Australia when he went AWL and was listed as a deserter. He was eventually charged, sentenced to 75 days detention and then dismissed.

On 11th August 1914 he joined the AN&MEF stating that he was a labourer and gave his mother at Midland Cottage, Rose Garden Road, St George, Bristol as his next of kin. He mentioned his previous service, stating that he had purchased his discharge from the Royal Navy!

He returned from Rabaul and was discharged, term expired, on 4th March 1915 having completed 206 days service.

On 8th March 1915 John joined the AIF as part of the 15th Reinforcements of the General Service Regiment and left Australia aboard the ARGYLLSHIRE on 10th April 1915 for the Suez. He was posted to the 2nd Battalion and joined them on Gallipoli on 26th May 1915. He was promoted Corporal on 15th October and after the evacuation he returned to Alexandria and transferred to the 54th Battalion.

On 1st March 1916 he was promoted Sergeant and in August he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DCM); -

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in action. During attacks by the enemy he handled his machine gun with great skill. Though wounded he recovered sufficiently to carry on. He drove back the enemy’s counter-attack with his machine guns, and afterwards brought them back into safety.”

On 29th April 1917 he was promoted to Company Sergeant Major (WO11) and on 15th May was wounded in the hands and legs and hospitalised in the UK. On recovery he was returned to Australia aboard the BORDA leaving on 26th September 1917 and arriving home on 21st November. He was discharged from the AIF as medically unfit on 23rd March 1918.

After convalescing, he again enlisted as a CSM (WO11) on 24th May 1915, regimental number 59949. He left for the UK on 30th July 1918 aboard the GAKA arriving on 13th October 1918. Although subsequently being posted to the 56th battalion, he saw no further action and was discharged in London on 3rd September 1919.

John served two periods in World War 11 with the 17th Garrison Battalion, the first between 2nd October 1939 and 26th Jan 1940, service number V80400 and the second between 26th August 1940 and 30th June 1941, service number V5655.

John died at St Kilda on 19th Jan 1969 at 80 years of age.