

John enlisted in A Company, AN&MEF on 11th August 1914 stating that he was 21, a horticulturalist and single, giving his father, David Gibbs, Couston, Newtyle, as his next of kin. Given his background, on 12th December 1914 he was appointed Foreman Gardener, Rabaul Botanical Gardens.

On 1st Jan 1915 he transferred to A Company, 3rd Battalion, AN&MEF, regimental number 220 and left Rabaul on 21st May 1915 and was discharged in Sydney on 3rd June 1915.

On 27th June 1915 he enlisted in the AIF as part of the 7th Reinforcements, 13th Battalion, regimental number 2510. On 20th August he left Sydney aboard the SHROPSHIRE and was taken on strength by the 13th on 23rd October 1915 before the battalion returned to Gallipoli. He returned to Alexandria on 3rd Jan 1916 before proceeding to France where, on 3rd June he transferred to the 45th Battalion, where he took up duty with the Lewis Gun Section.

On 20th June he was evacuated to the UK aboard the QUINSEY suffering from meningitis and after recuperating was again admitted to hospital on 12th November with bronchitis. On 7th July 1917 he rejoined his battalion and was gassed on 8th Feb 1918, resulting in another evacuation the UK where he was admitted to the Royal Hospital, Surrey.

He rejoined his battalion in France on 13th May 1918 and was transferred to the 13th Brigade. He was again hospitalised on 2nd August 1918 with debility and moved around in various support roles, ending up in the 4th depot Unit of Supply. He returned to the UK and was further hospitalised on 17th October and remained there until he left for Australia aboard the ORITA on 9th August 1918, disembarking in Sydney on 9th August and was discharged, medically unfit, on 24th October 1919.