

Harold George Bretherton



Gunner 19749 Harold George Bretherton enlisted in the 8th Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) in Melbourne on 9 July 1915. Promoted to Sergeant (Sgt) on 1 April 1916, he embarked overseas on 20 May and disembarked in Plymouth on 18 July.

He departed England on 30 December and arrived in France the next day, where he was transferred and taken on strength of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade at Villers au Flos on 31 March 1917. The brigade moved north to Belgium in June, where they operated in the Ploegsteert and Messines sectors.

Not long after that, Sgt Bretherton was transferred to the 4th Divisional Ammunition Column on 25 June, which saw action in the lead up to Polygon Wood in late September 1917.

On 19 October, he was transferred and taken on strength of the 10th Field Artillery Brigade in the 4th Australian Division near Zonnebeke. At the conclusion of Third Ypres, the brigade remained in the Ypres and Messines sectors for several months.

In response to the German Spring Offensive, the 10th FAB moved south to the Somme in late March 1918 and established their batteries around Lavieville, to the west of Albert.

During the Second Battle of Dernancourt on 5 April, the Australian batteries came under heavy German artillery fire, and it was here that Sgt Bretherton sustained a shrapnel wound to his right thigh, and a shell concussion that eventually caused partial deafness.

He was evacuated to the 14th Stationary Hospital at Boulogne from 6 – 8 April then transferred to England, where he was admitted to the Norfolk War Hospital at Norwich between 8 April – 20 May, when he was granted leave until 3 June 1918.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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An 18 pounder gun of the 10th Field Artillery Brigade dug in among the ruins of an old factory near Zonnebeke, in the Ypres Sector, 24 October 1917.

He returned to France on 7 August, where he rejoined the 10th FAB near Harbonnières on 17 August and was promoted to Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) on 28 August.

The brigade moved into the front line near Vraignes on 11 September, where they supported the 1st and 4th Division's successful attack on the Hindenburg Outpost Line on 18 September, for the loss of ten casualties.

Following the capture of the Hindenburg Line itself, the brigade moved forward to Bellicourt on 2 October, then Montbrehain on 8 October, by which stage all the Australian infantry units had left the line.

They provided fire support for British and American attacks forward of Busigny on 13 – 14 October, for the loss of 32 casualties (three killed), then for an American assault on Escaufort on 17 October, which resulted in a further 29 brigade casualties.

The exhausted men on the 10th Field Artillery Brigade had advanced beyond St Souplet by the time they finally left the front line on 26 October 1918.

BSM Bretherton was granted leave in England between 10 – 24 February 1919 then rejoined the brigade in France 3 days later. He returned to England for the final time on 14 March and embarked for Australia on 1 May.

Battery Sergeant Major 19749 Harold George Bretherton disembarked in Melbourne on 8 June, where he was medically discharged from the AIF on 9 August 1919.

Name: Bretherton, Harold George	
Service Number	19749
Date enlisted	9 July 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Gunner
Initial Unit	8 th Field Artillery Brigade
Previous military service	Lieutenant – School Cadets
Date and ship embarked for overseas	20 May 1916 HMAT A16 <i>Medic</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	27 years 8 months (23 November 1887)
Place of birth	Romsey, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	State School teacher
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Bretherton, Mr James, father, Sergeant of Police, Windsor, Victoria
Permanent address	Windsor, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, fair hair, grey eyes, height – 5 feet 6 ½ inches, weight – 10 stone, 4 lbs, chest measurement – 32/36 inches
Final Rank	Battery Sergeant Major
Final Unit	10 th Field Artillery Brigade
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date and place wounded	5 April 1918 Lavieville, France
Nature of wounds	Shrapnel wound to right thigh & shell concussion
Date and ship embarked for Australia	1 May 1919 HT <i>China</i>
Date discharged	9 August 1919
Nature of discharge	Medically Unfit (defective hearing)
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Teacher at St Leonards State School. Home service WW2 (SN V91019). Died 14 July 1967. Remembered on the St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll.