

George Thomas William (Tom) Burkett MC



Gunner (Gnr) 4346 George Thomas William Burkett enlisted in the 1st Divisional Ammunition Column in Melbourne on 25 February 1915. He embarked overseas on 17 April and disembarked in Egypt in mid-May.

He left Egypt in late June and landed at Gallipoli on 2 July, where he was taken on strength of the 102nd Howitzer Battery in the 2nd Field Artillery (FA) Brigade of the 1st Australian Division. He remained with this unit for the rest of the Gallipoli campaign and returned to Egypt on 22 December 1915.

He was transferred to the 2nd FA Brigade Ammunition Column for a short while between 9 – 27 February 1916, then taken on strength of the 12th Field Artillery Brigade in the 4th Australian Division at Tel el Kebir on 7 March, where he was also promoted to Sergeant (Sgt) five days later.

The brigade departed Egypt on 2 June and disembarked in Marseilles on 10 June, then travelled north to le Havre to collect their guns and equipment. They then moved to the Dickebusch area, where they operated for the next five months.

On 12 November 1916, Sgt Burkett was detached from the field artillery and sailed to England to attend the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) School of Military Aeronautics at Oxford. He then attended Exeter College from 19 January 1917, where he graduated with a Commission as a Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) in the RFC on 16 March 1917, the same day he was effectively discharged from the AIF.

While subsequently serving with No. 20 Squadron, RFC on the Western Front, his patrol was engaged in an aerial dogfight with several German aircraft on 27 July 1917. For his actions during and after the engagement, 2nd Lt Burkett was recommended for, and later awarded, the Military Cross. The citation read,

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. With his patrol he engaged a superior force of enemy machines, and although wounded early in the engagement, continued to fight. He brought down two hostile machines and drove off two more whilst returning to our lines with his own machine badly damaged. In spite of this, however, he succeeded in making a good landing. He displayed splendid dash and coolness under very trying circumstances”.

As noted, 2nd Lt Burkett was wounded during the action and received a gunshot wound to his right leg, which rendered him permanently unfit to resume flying, so he was restricted to non-combatant duties thereafter.

At war's end he remained in England, where he studied engineering and later worked for the Lanchester Motor Company.



2nd Lt Burkett's WWI medal set

Name: Burkett, George Thomas William (Tom)	
Service Number	4346
Date enlisted	25 February 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Gunner
Initial Unit	1 st Divisional Ammunition Column
Previous military service	22 nd Battery, Australian Field Artillery
Date and ship embarked for overseas	17 April 1915 HMAT A20 <i>Hororata</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	18 years 8 months (16 June 1896)
Place of birth	Warragul, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Electrical engineer
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Burkett, Mr George, father, 113 Clarke Street, South Melbourne, Victoria
Permanent address	South Melbourne, Victoria
Appearance	Fair complexion, light red hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 11 ³ / ₄ inches, weight – 12 stone, chest measurement – 36/39 inches
Final Rank	Second Lieutenant
Final Unit	No. 20 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps
Theatres of war served in	Egypt, Gallipoli, France, Belgium
Fate	Remained in England
Date and place wounded	27 July 1917 In the air over the Western Front
Nature of wounds	Gunshot wound to right leg
Date discharged (from AIF)	16 March 1917
Nature of discharge	Granted a Commission in the Royal Flying Corps in England
Honours/medals	Military Cross, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Attended St Leonards State School. Remembered on the St Leonards Honor Roll, St Paul's Anglican Church Honor Roll and South Melbourne Honor Roll.