

Walter Hubert DOWNING

Walter Downing was born in Portland on 10th December 1893. He was educated at Scotch College and Melbourne University (Ormond). He was a keen sportsman, and won a Blue in lacrosse as well as Ormond college cricket colours. It is noted on his enlistment papers that Downing had been previously rejected for His Majesty's Service due to his "chest measurement". Downing was a small man at 9 stone and 5 foot 3 inches height.

Downing finally enlisted on 30th September 1915, as a 21 year old law student. He embarked on the *Themistocles* on 28th of January 1916, being initially posted with the 14th Reinforcements, 7th Battalion. He landed at Suez in February 1916, and was allocated to the 57th Battalion, in April. Downing was admitted to hospital with an injury to his right elbow in April and May 1916, but by June 1916 he had landed in France. Downing saw action in all the main Western Front battles with the 57th. He was promoted to corporal in August 1916, lance sergeant in April 1917 and later sergeant in November 1918.

Downing was awarded the Military Medal (MM) for his actions in October 1917 at Polygon Wood, Belgium. The citation notes: "*East of Glencorse Wood during the period 25/27th September 1917, this NCO did excellent work. When the CSM and the platoon Sgt became casualties he did most valuable work in organising and despatching carrying parties under very heavy shell fire. By his coolness and courage under trying conditions he set a fine example to all men who came under his command*", as recommended by Brigadier Harold ('Pompey') Elliott.

After Armistice was declared, Downing enjoyed leave in Italy, at the start of 1919, before he finally embarked for Melbourne on the *Balmoral Castle* on 25th February 1919, reaching Melbourne in April 1919. Upon his return to Australia, Downing wrote two books, the first was *Digger Dialects* (1919), a lexicon of Australian idiom in World War One and in 1920, *To The Last Ridge – The World War One Experiences of W H Downing*. This book won the Melbourne University Dublin prize in 1921.

Downing also returned to university to complete his law degree and was admitted to the Bar on 3rd October 1921. He was partner in a firm by the name of Downing and Williams solicitors, with Hylton Ernest Williams, which was dissolved in October 1928. Downing married Dorothy Louise Hambleton on 11th May 1929 and they had four sons.

He later entered into partnership with 'Pompey' Elliott in a firm named H.E. Elliott and Downing solicitors. There was a brief period where the legal firm was known as H.E. Elliott, Downing & Oldham, in the early 1940s, but H.E. Elliott and Downing continued to advertise from the mid-1940s and into the 1950s.

From 1924-1935 Downing was a legal staff officer in the 4th Infantry Brigade and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel within the Army's legal division. He also worked for Legacy and was the acting consul for Yugoslavia from 1937 until at least 1941. Downing died on 30th October 1965 at Heidelberg.

