

## Harold Edward (Pompey) ELLIOTT

Harold Elliott was born in 1878 in Charlton. He was the son of a farmer and gold prospector who struck it rich in 1890. Harold was educated at Ballarat College and then Ormond College, although his studies were interrupted when he went to the Boer War from 1898-1902. He earned a DCM for his service.

Elliott was admitted to practice in 1906 and started the firm of H E Elliott & Co. He was active with the Militia, becoming Lieutenant Colonel of the Essendon Rifles. He kept this rank when the Essendon rifles became the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the AIF upon the outbreak of war.

Elliott led his men at the landing in Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, although he was wounded later that day and was evacuated to hospital. He returned to Gallipoli towards the end of the campaign and was promoted to Brigadier General to command the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade in France. His first battle on the Western Front was at Fromelles in July 1916. This battle, a 'tactical abortion' as Elliott described it, was the worst 24 hours in Australia's military history. It incurred such devastating losses that CEW Bean's assistant, Arthur Bazely, recalled "*no one who was present will ever forget the picture of him [Elliott], the tears streaming down his face, as he shook hands with the returning survivors*".

Elliott also led his men through the battles of the Somme, Bullecourt, Messines, Polygon Wood and Villers-Bretonneux. He doggedly refused to send his soldiers where he would not go himself and was most content alongside them, sharing all of their dangers and discomforts. He often quarrelled with High Command about the merit, or otherwise, of strategies and attack plans being ordered. Twice at least these protests were successful enough that planned attacks were cancelled.

Elliott's valour and his inspiration as a wartime leader was well recognised. He was mentioned in despatches seven times and received the honours of CB, CMG, DSO, DCM, Croix de Guerre of France and Order of St. Anne of Russia.

Elliott returned to Australia in 1919 and, in 1920, won a seat in the Victorian Senate. He maintained his legal career and, in 1927-8, was the President of the Law Institute of Victoria. He also kept up his military career, still commanding the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and in 1927, was promoted to Major General. He worked tirelessly for the welfare of returned soldiers and was a prolific un-veiler of monuments and honour boards.

Harold Elliott suffered from post traumatic stress after the war. He took his own life in 1931, and was so loved by his men and the community that, as his cortege passed through them, the streets were lined with thousands of mourners. His epitaph concludes with the words "This was a man".



Brigadier General H. E. 'Pompey' Elliott, General Officer Commanding (GOC), 15th Australian Infantry Brigade, standing at the door of a captured German Divisional Headquarters near Harbonnieres.