

Benjamin Walter GRAY

Born in Surrey Hills in 1891, Benjamin Gray had just entered into his articles with his uncle's firm, Abbott and Beckett, when the War broke out. He sought dispensation from his articles in the Supreme Court, in April 1915, so that he could enlist in the army. He received support from his uncle to "break" his articles. Largely because of this case, and others like it, the *Articled Law Clerks (War Service) Act 1915* was enacted to permit a man proposing to enlist for active service to have his military service count in some way to the time he spent on his articles.

Gray enlisted in April 1915 in the 21st Battalion and, by August 1915, found himself at Gallipoli as a sergeant. He survived the fighting at Gallipoli and was evacuated to Egypt in December 1915. From there he arrived in France, in April 1916, now a regimental sergeant. Later he became a warrant officer attached to 3rd Divisional Headquarters. He was mentioned in despatches in June 1917. Promoted to lieutenant in June 1917, he returned to England 'sick', although with precisely what is unspecified in his service records. It is at this time he received news from home that his uncle, to whom he had been articled, was ill and dying and he asked Gray to return home to Australia to settle the family business and Gray's own future. Benjamin Gray's older brother had already been killed during the war and he had responsibility for his widowed mother and younger siblings.

The Australian Army agreed to his return and discharge from the Army in October 1917. He was admitted to practice in June 1919 and continued his uncle's practice as Abbott, Beckett, Stillman and Gray, which continues today as Abbott Stillman. Benjamin Gray died in March 1949.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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