

## JACK SHERRIFFS.

Jack Sherfiffs' father was a soldier in the Northumberland Fusiliers, A regiment based near the Scottish border in the north east part of England. Jack was born on the 29th of November 1902, placed on the unit's ration list and became known as a child of the regiment, that is, the son of a member of the unit. Like most kids he became familiar with his father's profession and learned the drilling and ceremonial procedure, and very adept with military regulations. At the age of thirteen he was the unit's drummer boy when not at school. On one occasion for a special parade he was brought from school by an officer, much against the wishes of his schoolmaster.

As a youth he was in the King's Royal Rifles cadets. He joined the British Army, the Northumberland Fusiliers, as a drummer boy in 1916. Laurie Movley, a long serving treasurer with the North Beach RSL, was in that Regiment also, serving from 1939 to 1946, in the Second World War, in France and Germany. He received the Dunkirk Medal from the French Government. Laurie landed in Normandy with the Northumberland Fusiliers on Day 2, 7th June 1944 Both men experienced shell fire whilst serving in France, but two wars apart, Jack being at Ypres in 1918.

As his Grandparents had migrated to Australia, Jack's father, early 1914, paid a fare to the P.& O. Shipping Company to migrate also. The outbreak of the Great War with Germany delayed that event until 1920. The family then came to Western Australia on the P. & O. troop ship Indarra.

Not long after arriving in Perth Jack was called up for National training. It embraced training on one week night and each Saturday afternoon. On the first Wednesday night of training, as he had showed some slickness with the handling of the rifle, he was called to the office to explain where he had learned the skill of drilling. On perusing his British discharge certificate his officer informed him that he need not train; he was made a sergeant six weeks later. Not long after this promotion he had his first major confrontation. He learned that Australians did not like being drilled by Poms. Darkie was a big raw boned Australian, a shearer by trade, later to be a taxi fleet owner. Jack gave the training squad an order, in his northern English accent. A voice from the ranks, an Australian drawl, was heard. "Wha-jid-ya say?" Talking from the ranks in England is a serious crime, but in Australia things are sometimes different. A short time later the voice again said "Wha-jid-ya sa". Jack realised it was intimidation so invited the fellow to meet him around the back of a hut later in the day. Stripped to his underclothes, Jack, weighing 80 kilograms with his boots on, had the better of the fight. The fellow at last stopped fighting and said 'Yarl do me' for which Jack, misinterpreting the meaning of the words, popped him another one on the jaw. The fellow then explained that he thought that Jack was a suitable fellow to lead and there was to be no more trouble from the ranks. there wasn't.

In 1926 he joined the 11/44th Battalion as a bandsman in Perth. The hat badge was the emblem of a blackboy (tree). Sir Talbot Hobbs was the General Officer Commanding the 13th Brigade based at Karrakatta. In 1928 their annual camp on the show grounds in Northam got flooded out and they had to move to the race course. The 1929 Annual camp was on Jimmy Mitchell's, (later Sir James Mitchell) farm block near Northam. That land later became the Northam Military camp.

When war broke out on the 3rd of September 1939, he was attending the Annual camp at Rockingham. He had a month's respite to wind up his domestic affairs and entered Northam camp as an instructor. On the 3rd of January 1940 he left Western Australia as a member of the 2nd/28th Battalion en route to the Middle East.

During the pre-embarkation march through Perth, he was in the centre of the band, being drum major. The man next to him, Charlie Stirling, was playing the trombone. Charlie's eyes were firmly fixed on a nice looking girl in the crowd near the Esplanade Hotel. His trombone got caught in the leg of Jack's Bombay bloomers (a most unattractive style of shorts), thus causing considerable disruption to a precise demonstration.

One day a bandsman who had been trained at the Kneller Hall School of Music in London, was leading the band. The parade was to turn from St George's Terrace into Mill Street on the way to the Esplanade.

The fellow obviously did not know much about the streets of Perth for on reaching that point the fellow continued walking westwards, twirling the mace, whilst the rest of the old hands turned and proceeded down the hill. Hearing the roar of the crowd the fellow glanced back, realised his mistake, and made a dash down the hill to again lead the parade. There was one bandsman who always gave a salute to his mother as he passed the Fremantle goal, for she was inside doing time for stealing. On another occasion whilst practicing in the streets of Perth the leader was twirling the mace, a flexible Malacca cane, displaying his prowess. On passing under some overhead tramline cables he inadvertently tossed the mace into the air in a whirling display. Alas it caught in the electric wires, vibrating for a few seconds before falling back to earth whilst the band marched on.

A moment of tenseness was in the formation of the band. Jack, as drum-major wanted the men in tiers of five so that there would be room for counter marching in the limited space at the saluting base. The bandsman insisted that the band be in tiers of four. Colonel Lloyd, CO. of the 2/28th, was called, whence Jack explained that the bandsman was only in charge of the music, that the drum-major was in charge of the march, and that there was limited space at the saluting base for counter marching during the ceremony. He won the day.

On board the troop ship Aquatania, sailing for Columbo, Jack was called forward by Colonel Lloyd. He was told that as he knew his work well, he could wear his ribbons, the Peace Medal and the General Service medal. Geoff Cox was the 2 IC of the 2/28th. From Colombo their trip to the Middle East was on the Dutch ship New Zealand. It was not long after reaching the Middle East that Jack joined the 1st Australian Guards Regiment when volunteers were called for. It was a force set up to guard Army Headquarters. He was a member of the Guards Regiment in Tobruk. At the end of hostilities, he held eight medals.

Jack joined the Leederville Sub-Branch of the RSL in 1920. He was a member of the North Beach Sub-Branch during the formative years. He has been a vice President and chaired meetings during the absence of the President. A member of North Beach Bowling Club, he affiliated with the RSL Bowls section and promoted RSL bowls. He was in the RSL State Bowls team which played at Canberra in 1974



North Beach Golden Oldies - Dick Simpson, Paddy Conroy, Jack Sherriffs and Ernie Draper

Jack has attended the Anzac Day Service at various schools, including Marmion. In 1991 he attended the Service at the Newborough School in Scarborough, giving the address there in 1992. His address so impressed some of the adults that he was taken by a lady on an excursion in the Hills. On arriving there he was asked to speak at an Art groups meeting. He declined the invitation as he regarded himself not to be a specialist in that field. One query he makes. Why the Ode, "We that are left Grow Old", is not given at Anzac Day School Services. But then it may not be a Returned Soldier's function, but a service for young citizens. His wife, Gladys, was a Serving Sister, being the Superintendent of No 1 Division of the St John Ambulance Association.

