

George Weir

Born 21 November 1894 in Kiama, NSW, George Ernest Weir grew up at Wesley Park (in Kiama Heights), 'between the hills and the sea'. The farm was very close to 'Bush Bank', the childhood home of his mother, and a short ride from 'Buena Vista' in Gerringong, the home of his father.



A keen rifle-shooter, George enlisted in August 1915 and embarked on 30 Dec.1915.

George was a popular young man, an active church-goer (at Christ Church Kiama) and Sunday School teacher. Before leaving he was farewelled numerous times, from the Church itself, from the Anglican Men's Society, the Girl's Friendly Society, the sporting groups he belonged to, and so on.

PRESENTATIONS.

On Monday evening another very pleasant gathering was held in the Church of England school hall, with what might be termed a dual purpose in a welcome to Mr. and Mrs. George King and to wish "God speed" to Mr. George Weir, (son of Mr. D. E. Weir) who with a patriotism the church and district is proud of, has offered his services for the Empire.

The school room was nicely arranged and decorated with arum lillies and foliage for the occasion in honor of the guests of the evening.

Despite the boisterous evening there was a large attendance, about a hundred braving the elements, many from a distance, to be present. A competition in "Jumbled names" helped to pass the time pleasantly and strange to say the winners of the ladies and gentlemen's prizes for the largest number of successful guesses were Mrs. and Mr. George King.

Previous to making the presentation to Mr. and Mrs. King, the Rev. H. M. Pearce, asked Mr. H. Love to say a few words on behalf of the Church Men's Society.

Mr. Love said it gave him much pleasure to have the privilege on such an occasion to refer to the good qualities of Mr. King, that made him a favourite with all. He felt sure their members give him very hearty wishes for happiness and prosperity and extended a warm welcome to him Mr. George Weir also spoke in kindly eulogy of Mr. King, and expressed good wishes.

In making the presentation to Mr. and Mrs. George King of the gift from the young people of Christ Church, the Rector extended Mr. King a hearty welcome and wished them personally and on behalf of the church people, young and old, many happy years in health and prosperity. In jocular vein Mr. Pearce said there were present many of Mrs. King's old school fellows and companions to welcome her back to Kiama and he was afraid many of Mr. King's old loves too; but they all extended a welcome and good wishes. On behalf of the Girls Friendly Society, he bade her specially welcome. He was sure among the members, she would have no trouble in feeling at home, and though coming into a new church life, the lady members would give her a greater welcome, than the men would her husband.

The gift was a beautiful afternoon tea set on silver salver, with the inscription "presented to Mr. and Mrs. G. King by the young people of Christ Church, Kiama."

Mr. King, in response, said he could not find words to express the appreciation of Mrs. King and himself for their beautiful gifts, and the kind things said and good wishes expressed. He felt sure his wife would have no trouble in feeling at home with them all, and as for himself, he was at home already. They would both be happy to do whatever was in their power to help the work of the church along.

The Rector also presented a very nice wristlet watch to Mr. George Weir, who had volunteered for the front, from the Church and Sunday School, and warmly expressed in doing so, the pride they all felt in the step he had taken and in the patriotism and loyalty to King and country he had shown. Their gift was a small token of esteem and respect, and appreciation of his work in the church and in the Sunday School as a teacher, where he would be missed very much indeed. They wished him God speed and hoped he would be kept safely and they have the joy of welcoming him back again.

Mr. Weir suitably responded. He appreciated their gift and the kind feelings that accompanied it. Whenever he looked at the time he would think of the many friends he left behind. He hoped he would wear the watch in Constantinople and afterwards in Berlin, and be spared to bring it back home again to greet the friends he left behind that evening.

Cheers were given for the guests of the evening, and the National Anthem brought a very pleasant evening to a close.

KIAMA INDEPENDENT. 11 AUG. 1915

He arrived in France in April 1916 (having travelled via Egypt), and joined his company on the Western Front. To his distress he was separated at this point from his boyhood friend (also called George) who had enlisted at the same time, and he tried very hard to be transferred to his 'brother's' company. It is not clear if this happened – in his letters home he asks constantly for news of George (Boniface).



PRIVATE GEORGE WEIR.

Some thing from the pen of Private George Weir will be read with more than ordinary pleasure by the many friends he and his people have in this district. He is right in the heart of things and good wishes go to him in a far off country for safety, in the turmoil of the struggle raging there. The letter is as follows and shows the interest of the son of the land. We steamed into Marseilles last Tuesday (date erased) and after disembarking marched to the railway station where we were soon aboard a train and off, having a splendid journey through France. I only wish I could describe it to you, but that is out of the question. We were delighted with the scenery the beauty of which it would be difficult to surpass, with its beautiful green fields, orchards, and many vineyards. Teams of horses and bullocks were busy with the ploughing, and in some cases a bullock and a cow were yoked together in the plough. Once I noticed five bullocks and one cow yoked together, the cow enjoying the place of honour in the team at the near side of the lead. The cattle are mostly white in colour and seem a bit on the beefy side. The horses we saw working in the fields are good sized draughts of very fair quality. The women are the principal workers in the field, all the eligible men being away at the war. In some cases old men and boys may be seen working in the fields, but they even are in the minority.

The cordiality between the French and ourselves was very much in evidence. The women living near the line all have a cheery smile and a wave for us, but it was like a shadow on our sunshine, when we noticed only too often how the women would start crying, but they soon dashed the tears away again. We were very sorry when night fell, and shut out the view from us.

We had a stop to stretch our legs about 5.30 p.m., afterward continuing our journey until about 10 p.m., when our rations were issued in bulk, and a drink of coffee supplied to us.

Then we settled down to get what sleep we could, but as soon as daylight appeared, we were up and dressed, and at the windows to see as much as we could see. The horses are worked tandem fashion here, you seldom see them abreast and sometimes four work in a team, one behind the other. We stopped for breakfast and got plenty of good hot tea provided by the French Government. All day we again watched the country as we rushed through with unceasing interest. And when night came again we prepared our beds in this unique journey in which we were comfortable enough, fortunate in having only five in our compartment. Four of us "the four brothers" slept on the seats and myself on the floor.

SOLDIERS' LETTERS.

PTE. GEORGE WEIR.

The last mail brought several letters from Private George Weir to his home folk anxiously waiting news from him, after the official announcement received stating he had been wounded and in the hospital. His many friends will rejoice with them in hearing of his well-being, told in the following excerpts from his letters. The first was written July 27th, and says: "I suppose you have heard that I have been admitted into hospital, but there is really very little the matter with me. I stopped a bit of shell with my jaw, and it was only just enough to get me away from the fighting, so don't worry about me. I can tell you it is alright in hospital, the people there are so good to a fellow, I am not in bed all day, I have my meals at a table, which is a luxury in its way, and having a bed to sleep in is like being at home again. I believe George Boniface is also slightly wounded, but I do not know where he is. Jack Hanrahan has been killed I believe, but Bill Bedford was alright a few days ago. I haven't been able to find out anything about Allan Smith or W. Chapman, or Billy Baigent. I don't suppose I will get my letters now for a few weeks but that doesn't matter as I'll get them alright when I rejoin the Battalion. The poor old 3rd Battalion has got a bad thing, I knew such a lot of real good fellows who have gone under. It all happened within a few days, and most of the casualties were inflicted by the artillery of the enemy. To tell you the truth I was glad to get out of it for awhile. If my jaw had been a bit worse I would have got a trip to England with it. Later on August 1st he writes: "I am

George's first serious engagement in the horror that was trench warfare was at Pozieres, which took place 22-28 July 1916. Wounded in the jaw, he wrote home to his family saying (cheerfully) 'If my jaw had been a bit worse I would have got a trip to England with it!' He qualified this by expressing, more soberly, his concerns about his mates, particularly his 'brother' George, and saying 'I knew such a lot of real good fellows who have gone under... To tell you the truth I was glad to get out of it for a while'. As it was, George was deemed sufficiently recovered to rejoin his unit in mid September 1916.

getting on well, and was discharged from hospital yesterday. My face is almost better and in a week or so will be quite healed. There is a bit of a rush on in hospital, and when we are nearly well we are discharged and sent to the rest camp which is just as good as the hospital. There is a large hut here for the use of the soldiers, and I actually had a game of ping pong to-day. What do you think of that? I can tell you it reminded me of the old evenings of the Men's Society and no mistake. There is a coffee bar alongside, where we can buy cakes and sandwiches, coffee and soft drinks. But the worst part about it all I found out last night, when I slept on the hard boards again. But as long as that is all I have to trouble about I will be alright. I am very anxious to hear of my mates—I suppose you will see if any of them have been killed or wounded, in the papers. Always address my letters A Company, 3dr Battalion. It's a belug hot day here, the sweat is droppng off my chin on to the paper. I have none of my old mates with me now, but am chumming up with some of my new acquaintances, for we soldiers soon make friends I can tell you. I'd like to tell you all about what I have seen, but you know I cannot, just wait until I get back, and I'll talk until you stop me. I've been through a good big strip of this country now. There's a ping pong tournament here in two or three days time and I will have a shot at it if I am still here. I have had tea and feel happy in consequence, and am off to the Recreation Hut for a practice. With love to you all.—GEORGE.

George as killed in action on the Somme as the line pushed past Flers on 6 November 1916. According to accounts of the battle, it was bitterly cold, with gale force winds and constant rain. In fact, further action was apparently temporarily halted after 6 November due to the weather.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, NEW SOUTH WALES.

URGENT TELEGRAM.

No. _____

Office
Data Stamp

59

NSW

*This Message has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations.
All Complaints to be addressed in writing to the Deputy Postmaster General.*

STATION FROM, No. OF WORDS, AND CHECK.	REMARKS.
<i>Victoria Barracks Reply 62</i>	<i>5/4 R/P Sec 98 +</i>
<i>Rev Reeves R.A.</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Br. 19001 Officially reported that number 3939</i>	
<i>Private G. E. Weir 3rd Battalion killed in</i>	
<i>action West October please inform Mr</i>	
<i>A. E. Weir Wesley Park Kiama + convey deep</i>	
<i>regret + sympathy of their Majesties the King</i>	
<i>+ Queen + Commonwealth Government in</i>	
<i>loss that he + army have sustained by death</i>	
<i>Soldier Reply paid. Colonel Luskombes</i>	

PTE. GEORGE WEIR,

On Tuesday the sad news came through to Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Weir and family of the death of Pte. George Weir, the eldest son of the family.

As it became known a gloom was spread throughout the district, especially in the Church of England community, where his bright cheery personality had been truly loved and appreciated as a member of the church, the Sunday school and the Men's Society. No heart was felt in the parish's festivities in consequence for the adults interested, since the year previous he had been on final leave and one of the busiest workers "cutting up" and helping to prepare for the children's enjoyment, also assisting with it the next day.

He who fills a hero's grave, some where in France, was a fine specimen of our district lads, a son of the soil, and an honor to it. He went from home and country in a spirit of high endeavour to fight in its service. His letters to the last evidenced the same spirit to, still the anxiety of the dear home folk, telling nothing or little of the sadness and danger of his experiences, but throwing all the pleasure

or comfort he had into the "high light." Everything of interest pertaining to the falling of the soul was intelligently noted, and sent along to interest those at home. He was a worthy representative of a fine old district family and though it has been honored for many fine attributes on the members that bear the name, his death as a hero, is the crowning one, for those whose hearts are torn and just now to feel little else but grief in their bereavement. To them, in the kinship trouble brings, goes a rich measure of sympathy from their fellow district folk, who recognised in whom they mourn, was a credit to his home upbringing, his church, his district and his country. It added to the grief of his people to learn Private Weir had fallen some two months previous to the batmanon, evidently very shortly after he had returned to the fighting line after being wounded at the 11th offensive at Pozieres.

The sad news was taken to the homestead by the Rev. A. Knox, and had to be sent to Mr. and Mrs. Weir away on a holiday trip to the North Coast. Our deepest sympathy is extended to the bereaved family.

George has no known grave, but he is commemorated on the wall of the memorial at Villers-Bretonneux as follows: Pte GE Weir, 3rd Battalion AIF, Service Number 3939. He was just a few weeks short of his 22nd birthday. George's mother (Isabella) and father were visiting family in Clunes (near Lismore) when the telegram arrived advising that George had been killed. The message was delivered in early December 1916 by the local Anglican minister, and caused enormous grief to all in the family, and to the wider community. Isabella never quite recovered – her obituary (in 1923) described her heartbreak at the loss of her boy, and letters between George's father and the War Office (seeking further information and also return of George's personal effects) also stressed their continuing sorrow.



GEORGE ERNEST WEIR

Roll of Honour.

WEIR.—In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte. George Weir, 3rd Battalion, killed in action, France, November 6th, 1916, aged 21 years.

In life we loved him dearly,
In death we do the same.

Inserted by his loving father and mother, sisters Eva, Ethel and Alice, and brothers Harmon, Cyril and Fred (on active service).

WEIR.—In loving memory of Pte. Geo. Weir, Late 3rd Battalion, A.I.F., killed in action on the Somme, France, November 6th, 1916.

Gone but not forgotten.

Inserted by his bosom pal, Lieut. W. Chapman, 3rd Battalion, A.I.F. (on active service).

THE
Kiama Independent
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1918.



"Wesley Park"

Kiama June 12th. 1917.

Major Lean.

Sir.

Would you please let me know if any of Private George E. Weir's effects or belongings have been returned from the Western Front. He was killed in action on the 6th of Nov. 1916. He stated in one of his letters, that his kit bag was left at Etaples; and some extra clothes & curios & his books. His number was 3939. 3rd Bat. We will be grateful to you for any information concerning him, and if anything has arrived please forward on to me and you will have done me a great favour as the loss of a faithful son has been a great blow to us.

Yours Faithfully

David E. Weir.

Wesley Park.

Kiama.

Please address

Do not write re
FORMAL ACKMT.
SEN 18. 17

Ans. Morgan
18/6

George was one of nine children. Three of his brothers and sisters died in childhood, another served in Palestine but was spared to come home. After the war two of the brothers married, as did one of the three remaining sisters. None of the siblings had children.

Thanks to Rosalie O'Neale, G. Weir and M. Weir for their contributions and assistance.



HAPPY VILLA (KENDALL HOUSE) 1915. GEORGE BONIFACE ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR SERVICE DURING WW1.