

My Brother Jack

A four-hour two-part mini-series
based on the book
My Brother Jack by George Johnston

PRESS KIT

Samson Productions Pty. Ltd.

FSA #205

Fox Studios Australia

Moore Park, NSW. 1363

Tel. 61.2.8353.2600

Fax.61.2.8353.2601

email samson@samsonprod.com.au

About the book and the author

Australian author George Johnston's acclaimed novel *My Brother Jack* was first published in 1964. Today, more than 35 years since it first appeared, *My Brother Jack* is considered to have made a major contribution to Australian literature. It was the first in a trilogy written by Johnston – the other books being *Clean Straw for Nothing* and *A Cartload of Clay*.

My Brother Jack and *Clean Straw for Nothing* both won the prestigious Miles Franklin Award – in 1964 and 1970 respectively.

George Johnston was born in 1912 in Melbourne. His working-class parents were both actively involved in the First World War – his father fought in France and his mother was a nurse at the Caulfield Military Hospital.

After leaving school at the age of 14 George worked for a printing firm. Two years later he submitted an article on shipwrecks to the Melbourne *Argus* newspaper and was soon asked to join its staff. George Johnston became Australia's first official war correspondent and covered the fighting in New Guinea and many other fields of conflict.

In 1938, he married Elsie Taylor. They had one daughter, Gae, but the marriage broke down and they divorced in 1947. George later married Charmian Clift, whom he had met during the war while she was in the army stationed in Melbourne. Charmian was a gifted writer and they collaborated on many works – the first being *High Valley*.

After a stint with the Sydney Sun, George was posted to London to head up the paper's bureau. Eventually he realised he couldn't be a novelist and a journalist at the same time, so he left the newspaper in 1954 and he and Charmian took their young family to Greece. They lived first on the island of Kalymnos and then on Hydra. It was on Hydra that George wrote *My Brother Jack*.

In 1964 George returned home to Australia for the launch of the novel. Charmian and their three children followed.

George, who had contracted tuberculosis while in Greece, was beset by major health problems while he was writing *Clean Straw for Nothing* and spent eight months in hospital. In 1969, shortly before the book was published, Charmian took her own life.

George battled ill health and attempted to finish the final volume in the Meredith Trilogy, *A Cartload of Clay*. George Johnston died in 1970, before the manuscript was completed. However, enough had been written for the book to be published.

My Brother Jack is very much George Johnston's story.

The Story

My Brother Jack – Part One

**Screenplay by
John Alsop**

David Meredith is seven years old when his father, Jack, returns home from the battlefields of France. His mother, Min, has struggled to keep the family together. After returning from France where she served as a nurse, Min works as a nurse at the local military hospital. At the family home, “Avalon”, she has been taking in a series of maimed and convalescing soldiers, the latest of whom is Bert.

Life will never be the same for Mr Meredith. Gassed during the war, witnessing sights no person should ever see, he is a changed man. His health is ravaged by the mustard gas, his peace is shattered by nightmares and his temperament is unforgiving of his family’s frailties. Mr Meredith is bitter now and violence seems an outlet for his problems.

David is a bright boy but his father sees no future in an education so, at 14 years old he is apprenticed to a commercial art firm in the city.

Young David Meredith’s hero is his brother – also called Jack. David sees in Jack everything he doesn’t see in himself – bravery, nobility and the courage to stand up to their father.

When Jack leaves home to find work in the Wimmera, David is left to deal with their father alone, coping with his monthly beatings and violent outbursts. The beatings finally end when a doctor has to be called because of the severity of David’s injuries.

David’s sister Jean marries the one-legged boarder, Bert – freeing them both from the nightmare that has become the Meredith family home.

David discovers that while he cannot draw, he has a talent for writing. Dreaming on the edge of the Bay one morning, he sees a clipper in full sail, and he is inspired. He submits a story to The Morning Post, and the paper publishes it – the small beginning of what will become a great writing career.

Jack stays in touch, writing of his new girlfriend, Sheila. The depression hits, Jack loses his job and Sheila falls ill, so Jack returns to the only person he knows will help – Mum. Jack soon leaves again to raise money to get a home for him and Sheila, leaving her with the family. True to his words, Jack comes back and moves into a rented room with Sheila.

To improve his drawing skills David is sent to art school where he meets the flamboyant Sam Burlington, and his beautiful girlfriend, Jessica. When life at home becomes unbearable, David turns to Sam for support. At a party at Sam’s place he meets an aspiring designer, Helen Midgeley.

The Story – Part 1, cont.

A call from the editor of The Morning Post, Bernard Brewster, is a turning point in David Meredith's life – he is offered the chance to write a column a week until he can be freed from his apprenticeship and join the paper's full time writing staff.

With Jacks' encouragement David returns home – much to Min's delight. He calls at Sam's flat to pick up his things, and finds Sam and Jessica in the midst of a furious row. She storms out and Sam asks David to see her home.

Jessica is brutally murdered and the police call on David at work to interview him. Panicking, he fails to support Sam, who has been charged with the murder. Eventually however, Sam is cleared of the charge and decides to leave Australia.

Jack is on the road again and he writes to David that he never believed that Sam was guilty. When he can't get work in Australia he heads for Chile to work on a pipeline. Sheila disappears. Penniless and ill, Jack is shipped back to Australia, a "distressed British subject". Again he heads home to the mother who loves him – on foot. The walk from Sydney to Melbourne nearly kills him. Sheila comes home when David places an ad in the missing persons' column of the newspaper. She brings Jack's daughter Sharon into their lives.

David takes up a job with the Morning Post. After years of searching, David has finally found where he belongs.

My Brother Jack - Part Two

**Screenplay by
Sue Smith**

It is 1937 and David is covering Anzac Day for The Morning Post. His father marches with his old unit, Bert struggles along on his crutches and Min is there, marching proudly with the nurses. Jack and his daughter, Sharon are waving from the road side. David's story on Anzac Day is much admired by the editor of the Post, Bernard Brewster, who holds it up as an example to David's less talented colleagues.

Walking past the local lending library one night, David sees again the beautiful Helen – the girl he met at Sam's party years before. She is politically aware and well read. Helen begins David's education into the world of love and politics.

When sent to cover the arrival of refugees from Europe David realises the extent of human suffering at the hands of the Nazis and the reluctance to help by his own country. It is a major turning point in David's career and his life. As a result of this story, Mr Brewster elevates him to the status of Special Writer. He is to share the Special Writers' Room with Gavin Turley – a talented journalist who will become a true and honest friend.

At Min's 60th birthday party David introduces Helen to the family. The meeting is a disaster with Jack making his feelings clear – Helen is not the right one for his brother, and maybe David has changed and thinks he is too good for his own family. In August 1938 David Meredith marries Helen and the family all attend.

David's life is on the up and up. He is the star writer with The Morning Post, he and Helen have a new home in the suburbs and he is driving an MG. Helen is the perfect hostess and she has become the perfect wife for the rising star – her own life and beliefs on hold. But is that what David Meredith really wants out of life?

A quiet dinner with Gavin Turley and his wife Peggy leaves David feeling unfulfilled. It changes his view of Helen and his marriage and his career as a writer. The next day David's feelings come to the surface leaving Helen lost and confused. David Meredith fears he has mortgaged his soul for a car, a house, and a wife he doesn't love.

War is declared. David and Gavin will be writing about the conflict for the paper. It is a chance for David to hide from his problems at home. Life goes from bad to worse for David and Helen Meredith.

The story – part 2, cont.

For Jack the war is a chance to contribute. He wants to join up – with David, but Brewster believes David will do more for the war effort by staying with the paper.

Jack joins up and he couldn't be happier. But his euphoria is short lived. A training accident leaves him with a broken leg and out of the war. While his mates fight at Tobruk he is working in the Army store.

Everyone is joining up – even Gavin Turley, but Brewster will not have David Meredith enlisting. The reality of war comes home to David when Gavin is listed as missing in action. His wife is killed in a car accident before Gavin escapes from Crete.

The war rages on and David Meredith becomes the Post's first official war correspondent. Jack's shame at not being involved is heightened by David's new role. When Jack is posted to Darwin his relief is palpable but short-lived. Another accident in Darwin puts Jack out of the action – for good.

Before he leaves for New Guinea David Meredith meets AWAS gunner Cressida Morely – it is a meeting that will change his life.

David is a successful war correspondent, filing from New Guinea, New York, London, Burma, Ceylon and Rome.

Back home David can't face Helen and their suburban life. At Mario's restaurant, he finds Cressida Morely and her boss, Gavin Turley. Gavin lost an arm and now has a desk job. He is obviously keen on the beautiful Cressida, but when he sees David with her he knows he has no chance.

David makes the break with Helen. He wants a clean slate before he sees Cressida again.

Their whole life is before them – a life that will take them to the other side of the world.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Andrew Knight made a point of not reading *My Brother Jack* when he was at school “because it was on the recommended reading list”. Once he read the book at university he began a 20-year chase for the television rights. In 1981 he asked screenwriter John Alsop to read the book. John agreed it would make a great television series. Almost twenty years later Andrew acquired the television rights to the novel and commissioned John Alsop and Sue Smith to write the screenplay.

Andrew describes *My Brother Jack* as “the book everyone remembers” and a compelling story about “the world I knew in my childhood”. “It is the Australia I remember – it is everyone’s grand parents.” Andrew was thrilled with John and Sue’s adaptation which he felt not only captured the book but also made the difficult transition to television.

Of George Johnston he says: “He wrote well and elegantly and built his reputation on the Meredith Trilogy – especially *My Brother Jack* and *Clean Straw for Nothing*.”

With Steve Vizard, Andrew co-founded Artist Services one of Australia’s permanent production houses. As a writer he wrote and co-wrote for many productions including *Kangaroo Palace*, *The Fast Lane*, *D-Generation*, *Fast Forward*, *Spotswood*, *Siam Sunset* and latterly *Sea Change*, regarded as one of Australia’s most popular ever television dramas.

Executive Producers, cont.

Tony Virgo has worked on many successful British shows working for both the BBC and ITV Networks, including *Eastenders*, *The Bill*, *Perfect Scoundrels* and *Peak Practice* (Series 1 & 2). In 1996 he was asked to head the BBC's Drama Department in Pebble Mill, Birmingham and was responsible for some of the BBC's most successful drama output including *Dalziel & Pascoe*, *Dangerfield*, *The Locksmith*, *The Heart Surgeon* and *Scarlet Pimpernel*.

During his time at Red Heart / Granada Media International, Tony brought GMI into the financing mix for *My Brother Jack*.

Peter Beilby was formerly the Managing Director of Granada Media International (Australia), the distribution arm of Granada Media. Prior to this he was the Chief Executive of Artist Services Productions for two years. For three years previously, Peter was the Investment Manager of the Melbourne office of the Australian Film Finance Corporation. He resigned from GMI to set up his own production company.

Peter's credits include producer of *That Eye The Sky* and *Bushfire Moon*, and Executive Producer on Red Heart/Artist Services productions including *Mumbo Jumbo*, *Waiting at the Royal*, and *The Farm*.

PRODUCERS

Sue Milliken's first production job at the ABC in the 1960's was as Script Assistant on a documentary written by George Johnston and Charmian Clift. "Through the period of the filming and subsequently I came to know them quite well. The ABC's original production of *My Brother Jack*, adapted by Charmian Clift, had recently been a huge success, and I had read the novel. One Sunday, at their house in Mosman, George read us the opening chapter of *Clean Straw For Nothing*, which he had just started writing.

"These experiences, and the tragedy of their early deaths, made me think a lot about the talented Australians who were forced to leave the country to find work in the post war period. In many ways it formed my own perspective on the creative opportunities which opened up in the seventies, and which I was lucky enough to be part of. If George and Charmian had been born a generation later, their lives, and the outcome, might have been completely different.

"The chance to revisit the world of George Johnston, and to produce such a pivotal piece of Australian drama, was irresistible.

"I was a small child during the second world war. That war and the Depression which had preceded it, defined my parents' lives and thus my childhood. George's beautiful and moving novel was one of the influences which made me feel so strongly about the importance of telling our own stories, which my generation of film makers fought so hard for.

"It was an audacious thing for Andrew Knight to take on the development of *My Brother Jack* for a new television production. Financing classy Australian mini series has been extremely difficult in the last few years. Certainly without the backing of Artist Services/Red Heart, and Network Ten it would have been a Quixotic action. The project was further supported by Granada Media International, Optus Television and the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

"Andrew and I agreed, more or less without discussing it, that Ken Cameron was the right director for the project. Ken's intellectual ability to grasp large themes, his great skill with actors and his experience with high quality television drama made him really the only choice.

"For months before we had the go-ahead I had been thinking about who could play the lead role of David Meredith. Matt Day, with whom I had worked twice before, seemed ideal. He is a fine, intelligent actor with a face which could believably play a range of ages, and the lanky good looks which echoed the young George Johnston. Then I ran into Matt at a Christmas party, and I couldn't resist seeing if he might be interested. To my delight, he was. Fortunately, Ken agreed that he was the perfect choice".

Sue Milliken, cont.

Sue has high praise for the Melbourne production crew. “I’ve seen a lot of productions but I have never worked with a more creative, capable and dedicated bunch than the team on *My Brother Jack*. The designer, Jo Ford, and her Art Department were indefatigable in producing major setpiece after major setpiece in loving and accurate period detail. Partly at least because the book is a Melbourne icon, we were able to do amazing things with locations which would be either impossible or financially prohibitive in Sydney.”

Sue Milliken’s credits as producer include *The Odd Angry Shot*, *The Fringe Dwellers*, *Black Robe*, *Sirens*, *Dating The Enemy*, *Paradise Road* and the TV series *Farscape*. She is a past Chairman of the Australian Film Commission and the Commercial Television Production Fund, and is currently a member of the Board of Screen West. In 1993 she received the Australian Film Institute’s Raymond Longford Award.

Producers, cont.

Andrew Wiseman & Richard Keddie joined the production team of *My Brother Jack* to supervise the Melbourne shooting when Sue Milliken's commitments meant she had to spend a lot of the time in Sydney.

"The book is a terrific read and it was the pre-eminent work of Australian fiction post World War II. I liked its complexity and the two really strong central characters playing out an Australian family saga over a period of 30 or 40 years," says Andrew.

"The one thing that *My Brother Jack* represents for me is the way we, as a culture, have been essentially shaped by war – shaped by the culling of the war, the grief and the misery of that loss and by the anger and inner turmoil that war has created. It tells a story of how that has filtered into our family structures and every nook and cranny of our culture, yet it is something we have never come to terms with," adds Richard.

Andrew and Richard are full of praise for the production team. "The authenticity of the piece comes through everything from the sets to the faces of the extras. Everyone cared and was compassionate about the story and the script."

The cast for the mini-series was built around Matt Day. A strong ensemble of actors was brought together. One of the hardest jobs was casting the young actors to play Jack and David as children. The search for them was extensive with 400 enthusiastic children coming to an open audition.

"The character David Meredith says 'don't let my Australia become a footnote in a history book'. It is important that we make stories like this, based on classics of Australian literature," says Andrew Wiseman.

"It is just so exciting to work on such a great Australian story," adds Richard Keddie.

Richard and Andrew produced the successful telemovie *Waiting at the Royal*. They have also worked as a team directing and producing several documentaries including *Wonder Boy*, *Rite of Passage*, *Outnumbered*, *Chinchilla Dry*, *No Death in Brunswick*, *Fast Forward – Exposed* and *Something Close to Hell*.

WRITERS

Sue Smith & John Alsop

John first read *My Brother Jack* for Andrew Knight in the early 1980s when Andrew was first trying to buy the rights to the book. "He asked me to read it to check that he wasn't mad," says John.

He enjoyed the book so much John recommended that Sue read it. She also thought it was terrific, but neither of them thought any more of a possible screen adaptation until approached by Andrew in 1999.

Both Sue and John agree that the adaptation was difficult because the book covers such a long period of time and contains so much material in a compressed form.

"A lot of the dramatic focus happens inside David's head. You have to enlarge the support roles for that material to be expressed dramatically. We both found ourselves building up support characters. Drama on the small screen is difficult unless it is played out between people," adds Sue.

Sue and John say that autobiographical adaptations, such as *My Brother Jack*, are difficult because they cover a whole life which has to be condensed into four hours. "Wherever possible we have remained authentic. At times it has been more a question of authenticity to the spirit of the thing rather than to the letter," says John. "That is the nature of adaptation."

John hopes that when the mini-series goes to air many people will be encouraged to read George Johnston's books again. Sue hopes that the series will help people understand what their families went through.

Sue Smith and John Alsop have written some of Australia's best and most popular television series including *Brides of Christ*, *The Leaving of Liverpool* and *Bordertown*. They were awarded AFI and Australian Writers' Guild Awards for both *Brides of Christ* and *Leaving of Liverpool*.

DIRECTOR

Ken Cameron first read *My Brother Jack* in the '70s and thought it would be impossible to make a film of it because of the time span covered and the aging of the main characters. He describes as “astonishing” what the crew and cast of the mini-series have achieved.

“I wouldn’t have thought we could do a fraction of it when we set out. When I first looked at the Anzac Day march in the script I thought ‘where can we do that?’ ‘How can we do that?’ At first it looked too big, too ambitious and too crazy! I am very happy with how it has turned out. We had a budget to do things well and a generous schedule allowing three weeks to shoot one hour. None of it would have been possible without that.”

“There is a great love of the book, just as there is a great love of genuine Australian culture. A lot of goodwill flowed towards the production. Everyone knew they were working on something important. It is part of history. We all had a special responsibility to make it right.

“There is always a real pleasure and thrill in recreating the past if that past has some special significance for you. It does for me. My father’s family, in a lot of ways, were like the Meredith family. My grandfather was violent and my father and his brothers were raised in that way. My grandfather went to Gallipoli and my father fought in New Guinea. There was a sense of the life I remember of my grandfather and father from my childhood in the '50s.

“This is an Australia which is in danger of slipping away. We know what was wrong with the Australia of those days, but we also know the Australia we are in danger of losing – the spirit of Jack Meredith.

“We are losing the spirit of the Jack Merediths. It is still out there in the country towns and the back streets but mostly it has gone – never to return. It is lovely to cherish it.”

Ken Cameron is an award-winning director whose extensive credits include *Brides of Christ*, *Bangkok Hilton*, *Bordertown*, *Halifax f.p.* and *The Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*, and the feature films *Monkey Grip* and *The Umbrella Woman* .

THE CAST

Matt Day Is David Meredith

David Meredith is a young man trying to find his place in the world. As a small boy he has to endure a violent father. He idolises his brother Jack yet knows he is different from him. David is intelligent, talented, ambitious and idealistic. As a journalist and writer he finally realises where his future lies.

Matt Day saw producer Sue Milliken at a Christmas party the year before production. She told him about *My Brother Jack* and sent him a copy of the book. He thought it was fantastic. After meeting with director Ken Cameron, Matt agreed to take on the role of David Meredith before even seeing the scripts.

“The best thing about the whole project is the amount of depth in it. The thing that struck me about David is the intelligence of the character. The book uses the two brothers – David and Jack – to expose two very different sides of the Australian psyche. One is at home with the Australian identity of the battler and one is struggling to find meaning and intellectual stimulation.

“For David, not fitting into the ‘she’ll be right’ almost anti-intellectual culture we celebrate makes it difficult to find his own place in the world. For David that meant he had to leave. That is a character a lot of people understand and that is the key to the appeal of the series.”

Preparing for the role Matt read George Johnston’s biography, the second book in the Meredith Trilogy, *Clean Straw for Nothing*, George’s war diaries and some of his earlier novels. He found the Diaries evocative and *Clean Straw for Nothing* a satisfying read.

For Matt it was a long shoot and physically demanding, but it wasn’t arduous because he enjoyed the role so much. “David Meredith was the most complex character I have ever played and the most satisfying. The project had more richness and subtlety and depth to it than any other thing I have worked on. It is very rare to get that depth in any kind of project unless you are doing the classics on stage.”

Matt Day is now based in London. His film, television and theatrical credits are extensive. They include the feature films *Kiss or Kill*, for which he was nominated for an AFI and Critics Circle Award, *Doing Time for Patsy Cline*, *Love and Other Catastrophes*, and *Dating the Enemy*. Some of Matt’s theatrical credits are the stage productions *Fred* and *Six Degrees of Separation* and his television credits include *Farscape* and *The Love of Lionel’s Life*.

Simon Lyndon Is Jack Meredith

Jack is David Meredith's older brother. He is the archetypal Australian "good bloke", full of life and unselfish when it comes to his family and his mates. When the depression hits, Jack isn't prepared to sit back and wait for things to improve. His desire to provide for his family nearly costs him his life. And when war is declared Jack is keen to enlist and get into the thick of it.

Simon Lyndon loved the book and was very happy to have the opportunity to portray the decent Jack Meredith, particularly as his most recent roles have included rapists and violent druggies – as in the feature films *Chopper* and *Blackrock*.

"It was a huge compliment to be cast in the role and a privilege to do it."

Preparing for the role of Jack, Simon took boxing lessons. This was just an extension on his previous martial arts training, which included Tai Kwon Do for the past eight years.

"Jack is so determined. He stands up for his convictions. He goes to such lengths – going to Chile for a job that doesn't eventuate and he walks from Sydney to Melbourne to return to his family."

The novel began Simon's education on Australia in the depression years. He also read other books – all of which made him realise how lucky we are today. Simon's grandfather was an anti-aircraft gunner during WWII. "He has shared his stories with me, but he doesn't boast about it."

Originally from Western Australia, where he graduated from WAPA, Simon now lives in Sydney. He is co-director of a theatre company with Jeremy Cumpston from *All Saints*. He has directed and performed in productions with this company.

When he is not working he enjoys surfing.

Simon won the 2000 AFI Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in *Chopper* and was nominated for an AFI Award for his performance in *Blackrock*. His other film and television credits include *Dogwoman*, *Wildside*, *Roar*, *Sample People* and *The Thin Red Line*.

William McInnes Is Mr Meredith

Mr Meredith returns home from the war a shattered man. He has witnessed horrors that no person should have to endure. His health is ruined after exposure to mustard gas and his job as a tram driver is gone. Bitter and unable to cope, he resorts to violence as a way of dealing with life and his family.

William McInnes read *My Brother Jack* at school. “It has a hold on people’s memories. It is a terribly important piece of Australian history.

It is great that an Australian network is getting behind an Australian classic. I am sure all Australians will be proud of it. It is a story that has captured the imagination of three or four generations of Australians.

“The story has carved a niche in the Australian psyche – Australia’s idea of itself. It is about the struggle of the last century and you only understand yourself when you understand your past. It is an important part of our culture. It was a time when the Australian character was still being sculptured.”

During the story Mr Meredith ages from his 30s to his 70s. This meant hours in the make-up chair for William. He is sure the audience will find the old Mr Meredith as believable as the young man who returns home from the war.

William is one of the most recognised faces on Australian television after appearing in *Seachange* and *Blue Heelers*. He found *My Brother Jack* a pleasant change of pace and something different from his other television work. It was an experience he greatly enjoyed.

A graduate of WAPA, William’s other television credits include *The Lost World*, *Something Stupid*, *Full Frontal* and *The Micallef Program*. His film credits include *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Turtle Beach*, and *Wendy Cracked a Walnut*.

Angie Milliken Is Min Meredith

Min Meredith, David's mother, works at the local military hospital while her husband is fighting on the battlefields of France. On Mr Meredith's return home life changes for Min and her three children. Like so many returned soldiers, Mr Meredith is a changed man. Min must keep her family together and deal with her husband's violence and illness.

Angie Milliken's parents had an original edition of *My Brother Jack*. "I loved it. It was revolutionary for its time. It is timeless."

She was moved by the character of Min because she is so like members of her own family. Angie's grandmother was also a nurse. "Their lives were characterised by sacrifice – sacrifices that women don't make any more. Their lives were driven by hard, physical labour. They were strong and resourceful. The early scenes set in the family home gave me a glimpse into how hard they worked – backbreaking work."

Angie's grandmother began nursing at the end of the First World War. She loved being a nurse and talked to Angie often about the experience. "I had a strong emotional connection with her. She was a strong, independent woman. In her mind men were in charge and she respected them, but in her daily activity she was utterly in charge."

Angie loved the role of Min and admits she found the aging process confronting – imagining how she would be at 50 and 60 years of age. But it was the relationship between Min and her son David that drew her to the role. "The love between her and David is so strong. There are three young men playing David and I had an extremely strong bond with them all. It stirred up something strong and new in me – inextricable love that knows no bounds."

Angie and her friend, Sarah Ducker, have their own film production company, Hoot Productions. She is a member of the Board of the Sydney Theatre Company. She also collaborates with her sister Catherine, a musician, on multi-media projects incorporating music and drama.

Her most recent theatrical credits include *A Month in the Country* and *The White Devil*. While probably best remembered by television viewers for her portrayal of Jo in *Feds*, Angie's more recent television credits include *Farscape*, *Stingers* and *Beastmaster*. Among her feature film credits are *Exile* and *Paperback Hero*, which co-starred Claudia Karvan.

Jack Thompson is Bernard Brewster

Mr. Brewster is the editor of *The Morning Post*. His faith in David Meredith's journalistic ability is pivotal to David's career.

Jack Thompson is one of Australia's most famous and best-loved actors.

George Johnston was a contemporary of his father who was also a journalist and war correspondent. The two men knew each other in Sydney.

"*My Brother Jack* is a tale of my father's generation. In a sense it is a very personal tale, but it is also about the effect the war had on a single family. It is typical of the effect the war had on many people."

Preparing for the role, Jack read the book again, along with a number of books on the period.

"My father encouraged me to be interested in Australian history. To understand who you are as a community you need to know how you came to be and what were the steps along the way".

While the role of Mr Brewster wasn't big in screen time, Jack had no hesitation in accepting the role when approached by Sue Milliken.

"It is a really good part. Brewster has a seminal effect on the young David's life. Brewster is an ambitious man, but he is also ambitious for David. Brewster is the man who opens the doors for a talented young writer. It is Brewster who thinks it is a wonderful idea that David should go off to the war. The accounting of the war was a really horrifying experience.

Jack had never worked with Matt Day before and was looking forward to working with him. "That is the joy of the craft of acting – the opportunity for interaction. There is wonderful opportunity for interaction between the two – the senior man leading this young man along the way."

Since beginning his career with roles in the classic Australian films *Wake In Fright* and *Breaker Morant*, Jack Thompson has starred in more than 40 films, including most recently, *Midnight In The Garden of Good and Evil* and *Star Wars Episode II*.

Claudia Karvan Is Cressida Morley

Cressida Morley is the woman who will change David Meredith's life forever. A chance meeting when she is an AWAS gunner and he a war correspondent leaves a lasting impression on David. Reunited towards the end of the war, David realises this woman will make his life complete.

Claudia Karvan is one of Australia's most popular and accomplished film and television stars. While the role of Cressida isn't large in screen time, it is crucial to the journey which David Meredith embarks upon, and required an actor of great power and presence.

"My Brother Jack is not a sentimental story about growing up in Australia. It is a perceptive analysis of the two sides of the Australian character, and it is still very valid today. It is a moving and honest portrayal."

In preparing for the role, Claudia researched the life of George Johnston's wife Charmian Clift. She read her essays and novels and was moved by her warmth, love of life and humanity and the poetic style of her writing. She also spoke to friends of her parents who knew Charmian Clift and George Johnston.

Claudia's most recent credits include the new Network Ten series, *The Secret Life of Us*, *Farscape* (in which she plays an alien), *Never Tell Me Never*, *Risk*, *Paperback Hero*, *Passion* and *Strange Planet*. She has worked with Matt Day before, in the play *Fred* and the feature film *Dating The Enemy*.

Claudia won an AFI Award for Best Actress in a Television Drama and an Australian Film Critics Award for Best Actress for *Heartbreak Kid*. She was also nominated for AFI Awards in 1998 for *Never Tell Me Never* and 1999 for *Passion*.

Raelee Hill is Sheila

Sheila is the devoted wife of Jack Meredith. She brings laughter and love into his life and provides the strength needed to face the bad times.

Raelee Hill describes herself as “one of those brats who was meant to read the book at school, but didn’t”. When told that she would be auditioning for the role of Sheila she read it in a matter of days.

She looks at Sheila and Jack as the epitome of the Aussie battlers. “And they have so much class about them at the same time.”

The effect the First World War had on Australia and Australians is not lost on Raelee. She has attended every Anzac Day dawn service since she was about 11 years old. “I am very sentimental and nostalgic about Anzac Day. My grandfather, who I was very close to, served in the Second World War.”

Raelee’s grandfather was a Rat of Tobruk and she began going to the Dawn Service with him. As an adult she has continued the family tradition.

Preparing for the role of Sheila, Raelee read some other books on the depression years in Australia but feels that the novel itself is the perfect research material.

Raelee always wanted to act and dropped out of university to pursue her passion... and she hasn’t looked back.

And while she may have avoided reading the classics at school, Raelee is now a huge fan. “Since I discovered the classics I haven’t stopped reading them – Hardy is my favourite. I read *Far From the Madding Crowd* and I was gone. I now read the Bronte sisters and Jane Austen.”

Raelee’s most recent television credits include *Water Rats*, *Shark Bay*, and the US series *Beastmaster*.

Robert Menzies Is Gavin Turley

Gavin Turley is a Special Writer at The Morning Post and influences David Meredith's career and his life. Cultured and intellectual, Gavin sees David as a young man with potential. He is aware of David and Helen's problems – probably before they are themselves. The Second World War shatters Gavin – both physically and emotionally.

Robert Menzies sees Gavin Turley as the truly civilised man. He can see the ambition in David and can see that he is a driven person.

He first read *My Brother Jack* as a teenager. "It is an Australia I remember from my childhood. My father was in the Second World War yet he didn't talk about it. My experience of men of that generation was that they didn't talk about the war within the family.

"I feel like I know the people *My Brother Jack* is talking about. The atmosphere of the book is incredibly familiar to me."

Robert is one of Australia's most respected theatre performers, and his extensive credits include plays with most of Australia's leading theatre companies including the Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company and Belvoir Street, and most recently the Barry Kosky *Oedipus*. His film credits include *Siam Sunset*, *Innocence*, *On Our Selection*, *Lust and Revenge* and *Muggers*, in which he worked with Matt Day. His most recent television credits include *Good Guys*, *Bad Guys*, *State Coroner* and *Wedlocked*.

Attempts at a law degree and then a BA made Robert realise that he should fulfil his life-long desire to act.

Felix Williamson
is
Sam Burlington

Sam is an art student who opens up a new and exotic world to David Meredith. Sam introduces David to the bohemian world between the wars. David is in awe of Sam's relationship with the beautiful artists' model, Jessica. Sam and David are unlikely friends and that friendship is tested when Sam is accused of murder.

Felix Williamson is one of Australia's rising young actors. He has acted extensively in theatre, including *The Merchant of Venice* for the Bell Shakespeare Company, *Pygmalion* for the Sydney Theatre Company/Glen St. Theatre, and *Six Degrees of Separation* for the Sydney Theatre Company. His television roles include feature roles in *Farscape II*, *A Difficult Woman*, *Wildside*, and *Water Rats*. He has appeared in a number of feature films, including *Me Myself I*, *Strange Planet*, *Babe II*, *The Thin Red Line* and *Thank God He Met Lizzie*.

Lucy Taylor
is
Jessica

Jessica is beautiful and sophisticated. She is an artists' model and the sexiest woman David Meredith has ever seen. She is in a tempestuous relationship with Sam whom she loves but does not trust. When Jessica is brutally murdered, David is interviewed by the police and finds he can't be completely honest with them.

Lucy Taylor graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1998. Since then she has appeared in the feature film *The Wog Boy*, and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Pride and Prejudice* for the Melbourne Theatre Company. A gifted comedian, she co-wrote and performed in *Red* at the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 1997 and 1998, and the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 1998

Ellouise Rothwell Is Helen

Helen is bright, well read and politically aware when she meets David Meredith – she seems to be everything he desires and they marry. But Helen becomes the person she believes is the perfect wife for the up and coming journalist. Unfortunately, this isn't the type of wife David wants or needs.

Ellouise Rothwell was discovered by Casting Director Alison Barrett for this, her first major television role.

"Ellouise did an amazing screen test," said producer Sue Milliken. "Helen has to be beautiful, stylish and alluring, but when David realises he doesn't love her, the audience has to understand how he feels. Ellouise encapsulates this ambivalence."

Ellouise always wanted to be an actor but didn't tell anyone of her ambition. At school she turned down roles in the school productions so she could concentrate on her studies. She didn't want people to think she was "crazy". Ellouise told her family that she wanted to be a vet. It wasn't until she landed her first role that she admitted her desire.

Ellouise understood the reluctance of many of the characters in *My Brother Jack*, to discuss their war exploits. Her own father served in the Australian Army in Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam.

"He wouldn't talk to most people about it – it was a taboo subject. He had a photo album but wouldn't talk about the people in the photos. Once I was cast in the series he talked to me – opening up about his experiences. This has brought us much closer together," says Ellouise. "His experiences helped me to understand men like Bert and Mr Meredith."

Since beginning her career as an actor Ellouise has appeared in many short films and co-operative theatre productions.

Nick Russell
Is
David Meredith as a teenager

This is **Nick Russell's** first role in an adult television series and he has enjoyed the experience that he describes as "just being normal", rather than doing scenes with aliens, as he did in *Pig's Breakfast*.

He had to combine his Year 9 studies with *My Brother Jack*. While his mother doesn't want Nick's acting to interfere with his schooling she was very supportive of him being a part of such a quality project.

Nick hopes to work in the industry when he leaves school, hoping to be a director of photography or a director.

Alexander Ramsay
is
David Meredith as a child

My Brother Jack is seven-year-old **Alexander Ramsey's** first professional role.

He has been taking part in classes with 'Drama with a Difference'. It was through this course that Alexander auditioned for the role of the youngest David Meredith.

Alexander says he didn't have trouble learning his lines. "I don't say very much. I only have one line, and I know it!"

Damien Arena
Is
Jack Meredith as a boy

This is 12 year-old **Damien Arena's** first professional role, but he has had roles in many school plays. He has followed in the footsteps of his brother who has appeared in a television series and a commercial.

Damien loves drawing and would like to be a cartoonist when he leaves school. He has already completed portraits of his family and when it is time to do the dishes he can often be found in his room – drawing.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Russell Bacon had read *My Brother Jack* while he was still at school and admits he enjoyed it more the second time he read it – in preparation for the filming of the mini-series.

Sue Milliken and Ken Cameron asked Russell to join them on the project and Russell didn't hesitate. Being a period piece covering three decades it would be a challenge.

"The difficulties were to make each era look different so the audience would pick up on it, and the aging of the cast."

While make-up and hairdressing had a major role to play with the aging process, much of it was done with softening filters and colour changes. The depression years were a lot colder – bluer. The later years are more golden.

"It is quite a moody piece. The changes are subtle and effective."

Russell is proud of *My Brother Jack*. He describes it as an "outstanding piece of Australian television" and hopes there will be more projects of this calibre.

"It is a really good Australian story and it is a great cast and crew. A fantastic time was had by all. It will show up on the screen that we enjoyed it and everyone put in 110 percent."

Russell has an extensive list of credits including *Farscape*, the *Cody* television movies and *Police Rescue*. He worked on *Brides of Christ* and *Secret Men's Business* with director of *My Brother Jack*, Ken Cameron.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Jo Ford loved the novel *My Brother Jack* when she read it years ago. “I knew it was a precious part of our literary history. The scripts were as rich and textured as you can imagine visually. When I re-read the novel I realised it was just like a props list.”

After years of refusing to work on such projects because of family commitments, Jo was enticed back into the world of television drama to work on *My Brother Jack*.

Jo’s work entailed conducting research into 25 years of Australian history – everything from Victorian and Edwardian architecture to pre-Second World War, as well as military and social history.

“Every second person I spoke to said it was their favourite novel and they hoped we were going to do it justice. They didn’t want us to wreck the images they have in their heads.”

Jo knew that would not happen. She says that director Ken Cameron is a visual master who quickly came to the conclusion of what things should look like. It took Jo only minutes to realise they both thought the same about how the whole novel should look and that they both just wanted to put the book on the screen.

“If you had any queries about any particular scene all you had to do was read the book. George had described things in meticulous detail – things that people would remember, things like his mother’s birthday cake and the food that was on the table at the party.”

Melbourne landmarks like Mario’s restaurant were tracked down. The original printing machines George Johnston worked on at the Toedel & Cooper printing firm were found. The Argus banner was adapted for The Morning Post. Jo even located people who worked on the paper with George Johnston and people who knew both George and his brother Jack.

“It has been one of the most exhilarating projects I have ever worked on. There were so many different looks. There was no need for us to put our individual mark on it. It was all in the book.

“It was challenging to get it right and I am hoping when people see it they will feel that we have done George Johnston’s book as richly as it was written. We owe it to George and all the people who love the book.”

Jo Ford’s credits as production designer include *We of The Never Never*, *The More Things Change*, *The Quiet Earth*, *The Damnation of Harvey McHugh*, *Stark* and *The Petrov Affair*.

COSTUME DESIGNER

Terry Ryan saw producing *My Brother Jack* for the small screen as a challenge. He had to give each decade an image to avoid them blending into each other.

“We had to make sure people felt like they had lived these decades with these people. Each decade had to have a distinct look.”

Terry brought together a team of about ten that included milliners, machinists and cutters. He also used the talents of outside milliners, boot makers, and tailors. Many of the costumes were made, but some were sourced. A private collector in Queensland was able to provide the uniforms. He was able to provide everything from Sam Browns to hats.

“The thing I loved was the volume of costumes required. If you are organised it doesn’t have to be any harder than a four-hander. It keeps you on your toes. Being television, we didn’t have the luxury of film, where you dress them all and they are in the same costumes for three days while they shoot that scene. You can use that three days to get the next costumes ready. With television you have to have everything ready because the next scene is up the next day.”

The Anzac Day parade was one of the biggest days for the wardrobe department. More than 400 extras were used. Some were able to provide some of their own wardrobe but most was provided by the production. “The logistics and the attention to detail are the same whether the scene is for television or a feature film,” Terry says.

Terry is an award-winning Costume Designer. He has won four AFI Awards for Best Costumes for *Passion*, *Children of the Revolution*, *Billy’s Holiday* and *Kangaroo*.

His other credits include *Chopper*, *Paradise Road*, *The Ripper*, *A Little Bit of Soul*, *Dating the Enemy*, *The Three Stooges*, *Farscape (Series I-III)* and *Nowhere to Land*.

**MY BROTHER JACK
CAST LIST**

David Meredith
Jack Meredith
Mrs. Meredith
Mr. Meredith
Bernard Brewster
Cressida Morely
Sheila
Helen
Gavin Turley
Peggy Turley
Sam Burlington
Jessica
Curtis Condon
Bert
Old Joe Denton
Mr. Klein
Wally Solomons
Sandra Solomons
Major Brinsmead
Clarrie
Rachel Guttman
Jean
Davy 7 years old
Davy 14 years old
Jack 10 years old
Detective
Doctor

MATT DAY
SIMON LYNDON
ANGIE MILLIKEN
WILLIAM McINNIS
JACK THOMPSON
CLAUDIA KARVAN
RAELEE HILL
ELLOUISE ROTHWELL
ROBERT MENZIES
REBECCA HOWELL
FELIX WILLIAMSON
LUCY TAYLOR
DENIS MOORE
JONOTHAN OLDHAM
ROSS THOMPSON
PETRU GHEORGHIU
MAURIE ANNESE
EMILY LUMBERS
DAVID BRADSHAW
REG GORMAN
LISA HEENAN
SARA COOPER
ALEXANDER RAMSEY
NICK RUSSELL
DAMIEN ARENA
RON STICKLAND
JOHN ARNOLD

**MY BROTHER JACK
KEY CREW LIST**

Executive Producers	ANDREW KNIGHT TONY VIRGO
Producers	PETER BEILBY SUE MILLIKEN ANDREW WISEMAN RICHARD KEDDIE
Director	KEN CAMERON
Scriptwriter Part 1	JOHN ALSOP
Scriptwriter Part 2	SUE SMITH
Production Manager	YVONNE COLLINS
Production Co-ordinator	SERENA GATTUSO
Production Accountant	TREVOR BLAINEY
1st Assistant Director	BRENDAN CAMPBELL
Continuity	PAUL KIELY
Location Manager	STEPHEN BRETT
Director of Photography	RUSSELL BACON
Second Camera/DOP Greece	BRENT COLLINS
Sound Recordist	LLOYD CARRICK
Gaffer	MARTIN PERROTT
Key Grip	IAN FREEMAN
Production Designer	JO FORD
Art Director	BOB HERN
Set Dresser	JILL EDEN
Costume Designer	TERRY RYAN
Costume Supervisor	SANDI CHICHELO
Makeup Artist	KIRSTEN VEYSEY
Hairdresser	PAM MURPHY
Casting	ALISON BARRETT
Additional Melbourne Casting	JO RIPPON
Dialogue Coach	DINA MANN
Editor	NICHOLAS HOLMES
Composer	DAVID BRIDIE
Music Co-ordinator	CHRISTINE WOODRUFF
Titles Designer	BELINDA BENNETTS
Post Production Supervisor	JENNY WOODS
Assistant Editor	JAMES SDRINIS
Sound Post Production	SOUNDFIRM
Laboratory	CINEVEX
Video Post Production	FRAME SET & MATCH
Visual Effects	ANIMAL LOGIC
Unit Publicist	SHIRLEY HARDY RIX
Stills	GREG NOAKES

SUZY WOOD