

## ***4601 CORPORAL Joseph ROWAN***

Joseph Rowan was born at Nirranda in Victoria March 1892, he was the second eldest son of James and Winifred Rowan. Joseph (Joe) spent his early childhood in the Western Districts of Victoria, Joe was a keen marksman, he told the recruiting clerk that he had been a member of the Camperdown Rifle Club prior to enlisting.

As a young man Joseph moved to Burringbar on the far North Coast of New South Wales, where members of his mother's family had land. Joseph worked on various farms, banana plantations and in carrying out scrub clearing. Joe appears to have returned to the Camperdown district (back in Victoria) in order to enlist with his older brother Jack (John).

The Gallipoli campaign had been underway for nearly four months when Joe and Jack made the decision to join up together. The pair did so at Camperdown on 17 August 1915, Joe was 23 years of age, Jack slightly older at 24.

The pair carried out their initial medicals at Camperdown with Dr Desailley, but as often was the case they were re-examined the next day at Melbourne. Joe and Jack would stick together throughout the war, they carried out their early training at a depot battalion near Warrnambool.



In mid-November 1915 the brothers were allotted as reinforcements for the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Joe and Jack were sent to the larger Broadmeadows Camp and initially became part of the 13<sup>th</sup> reinforcements (14<sup>th</sup> Battalion). On 20 December the pair were re-allotted to the 14<sup>th</sup> reinforcements, the pairs regimental numbers were 4601 (Joe) and 4600 (Jack).

The 14<sup>th</sup> reinforcements for the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion numbered just over 200 men (a large draft), the men hailed from all over Victoria, with many hailing from the Western districts. Private's Bamford, Longley, Spearing and Ryan also gave addresses of Camperdown. The photo to the left shows Jack with the 'swagger stick' (**left**) and Joe with his left arm behind his back (**right**), the photo is pre embarkation.

That draft of men left the Port of Melbourne aboard the troopship *Ballarat* on 18 February 1916, their destination Egypt and further training prior to joining the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

The *Ballarat* arrived in Egypt on 22 March 1916, Joe's draft then marched into the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry training Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir.



Joe and Jack were at that training depot when Joe wrote this letter home (dated 2 April 1916), the letter was to a friend, Eugene McMeel;

*Egypt. 2/4/16*

*Dear Gene,*

*Just a bit of a note to let you know I am well. I landed here on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March after 33 days on the boat. We had very calm weather all the way over and very hot most of the time. I was sick the first few days, but Jack did not get sick at all. They treat us well over here, both in the hours of drill and the tucker. We are camped about 7 miles out of Cairo but we will be going to another camp further away in a few days, I think.*

*I have not seen any of the lads from the bush but we might meet them when we go to the other camp. If they have not left for the front, I think you will get news of where they are from the papers before you get this. We get Saturday and Sunday afternoon off here, so we get a good chance to have a look around. I have been to the pyramids and all through Cairo.*

*I can understand now why Clarry said in one of his letters that he would tell you a lot of what he saw in Cairo when he came back. It would not look very good in a letter. The native quarters in Cairo and the natives themselves are as dirty as you could imagine. I had no idea that Egypt was all one big desert, but there is some of the finest country I ever saw here. It is all irrigated from the Nile and grows great crops of barley and Lucerne. The barley is out in ears now and just as good as any about Koroit.*





*I was at the races in Cairo yesterday and bet on the tote for places every race. I backed four winners and finished 3/- so the prices were fairly short. The horses are very small and slow, it takes them about 1.25 to run six furlongs. So if P.J.Neylon brought Tim over here he might win a race yet. I have not seen any Vic papers later than the day we left so I don't know who won the Aust Cup or the Newmarket yet. Well gene it is a cert we won't be back for the trapping at the creek this winter, but I hope we will be there next winter. A day's kangaroo shooting on the grasstree would go well now. Well I think this is about all the news so I will knock off hoping you and Mary are well.*



*I am your sincere friend, Joseph Rowan.*

*P.S. I would like to write to Louie but I am not sure of her address. Remember me to Tommy and all at the creek. JR.*

Joe's letter was written as the newly formed Anzac Provost Corps was coming together at nearby



Abbassia. Initially volunteers had to have seen Gallipoli service to apply. With a lack of suitable men with that criteria the recruitment was opened to the fresh reinforcements arriving from Australia, the selection process was still strict, with standards similar to the state Police Forces back in Australia. The photo (**left**) shows Joe standing and Jack (seated), it was probably taken during their training at Abbassia, note the difference between the pair from their early enlistment photo, the pair now sporting fine 'handlebar' moustaches.

Several of the other men from Joe and Jack's draft also volunteered for the new corps, Joe and Jack were both interviewed and accepted to train, joining the Anzac Provost Corps training school at Abbassia on 12 April 1916. Private's Alderman, Graff, Gray, Gregory and Moore were others from the 14<sup>th</sup> reinforcements (14<sup>th</sup> Battalion) that volunteered to serve as military policemen.



It should be noted that nearly all of the men that joined the Anzac Provost Corps have a 'Taken on Strength' date of 3 April 1916, even though some joined days or weeks later than that date. A small detachment of men from Abbassia was sent to the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks in early May 1916, these men began to take over 'police duties' in Cairo. It's unclear if Joe and Jack were part of this first detachment, or if they spent a few more weeks training at Abbassia before they also joined the Cairo Detachment of the Anzac Provost Corps.





The Anzac Provost Corps were given a section of the English barracks in order to carry out their duties. Joe and Jack spent the remainder of 1916, all of 1917 and several months of 1918 with the Cairo detachment. The following photo was provably taken in 1916, it is unique as it shows an escort almost entirely of Australian military policemen escorting Turkish prisoners through Cairo. Joe is one of the 'dismounted' men, he is shown by an arrow, Jack is probably not far away in the photo.



As can be seen from the photo the military police were expected to be well turned out, although Joe and Jack were actually part of the dismounted section, they also wore bandoliers, although they did wear the wrap around puttees. The NCO's would also wear a leather revolver strap and towards the end of the war most military policemen were wearing a revolver strap and holster and carrying a Webley or Smith and Wesson revolver, the strap would sometimes be mistaken for an officer's Sam Browne (worn the opposite way to the Sam Browne).

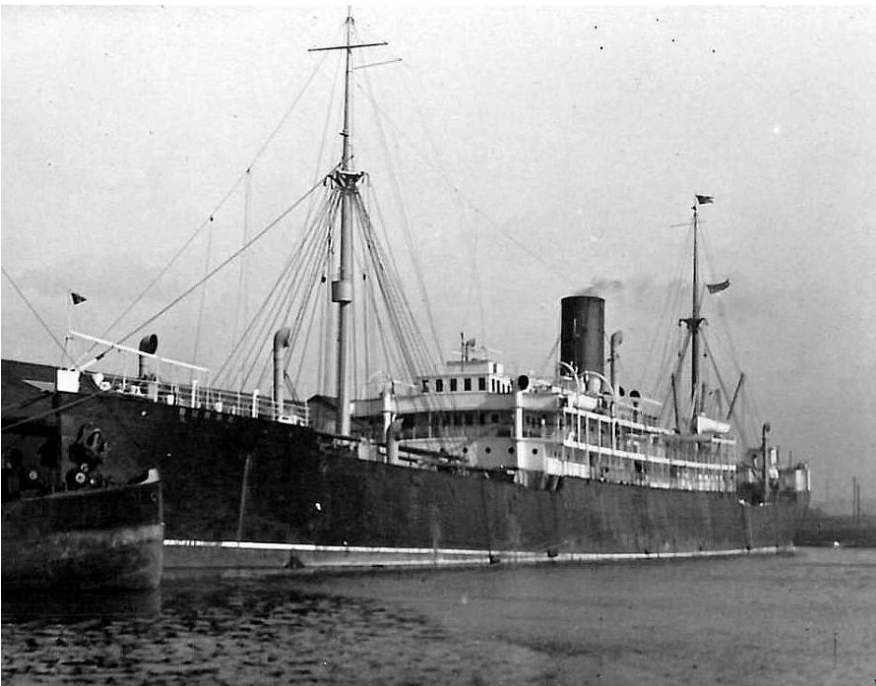
In line with corps policy in March 1918 Joe and Jack were earmarked to join one of military police detachments attached to the Mounted division's now fighting in Palestine. The pair were sent to the Moascar Depot as they prepared to join the Anzac Mounted division. The Moascar Detachment of the [now] Australian Provost Corps now handled the training, assessing and movements of men within the corps in Egypt (Abbassia had ceased that role in late August 1916).

Now formally part of the mounted section of the corps trooper's Joe and Jack rowan joined the Desert Mounted Corps at Jericho on 24 March 1918, the pair became part of the detachment with the Anzac Mounted Division.

Joe was in trouble in May 1918 when he was charged on 25 May for neglect of duty while on duty in Jerusalem. Found guilty of the offence Joe was lucky to be admonished (guilty but no formal punishment). The photo on the next page shows a group of MMP attached to one of the division's the photo is from Sergeant W. McEwan's collection, note the man crouching in the middle, just about to go on or off duty.



Joe's time with the Mounted Division ended in early October 1918, when he returned to the Moascar Depot. On 24 October he was posted to the Suez Detachment for duty. Joe remained at Suez for just under two months, Jack was also posted to Suez at that time, the brothers once again serving together, the pair were now holding the rank of ER corporal (Extra Regimental).



Joe and Jack then rejoined the Cairo Detachment in mid-December 1918, remaining posted to Cairo until they were given their passages home to Australia. That was not until 26 July 1919 that they were given berths aboard the troopship *Burma*, boarding the ship at Kantara. The *Burma* arrived in Sydney on 1 September, Joseph Rowan was discharged from the AIF in New South Wales on 24 October 1919.

Both Joe and Jack appear to have chosen to take their discharges in New South Wales, Jack would only remain in NSW for a few weeks before returning to Victoria. Joe appears to have opted to remain on the North coast of New South Wales, he did briefly return to Victoria to visit his family. Joe leased a farm at Upper Burringbar and began to build up a dairy herd.

In July 1937 Joe bought 12 acres of bananas at Wilson's Creek. 1947 saw Joe's health starting to deteriorate, he died at Toowoomba in May 1956.

