



## **JOHN ROBERT( Jack) DUNN**

### **FAMILY**

Born 1890 at Whakataki ( a small settlement near Castlepoint ) Wairarapa to Matthew and Sarah DUNN who emigrated to NZ from Glasgow in 1876. Jack is named after two brothers who died on the voyage out. We know of one other brother, Mattie. Jack was educated in a one room School in Whakataki and grew up on his father's farm, 'Willowbank'.

### **PRE-WAR**

Jack worked as a reporter for newspapers in Levin, Masterton and Wellington.

1914

Enlisted 20 August and posted to Awapuni Training Camp Palmerston North.No 1 Section 13<sup>th</sup> Platoon Ruahini Coy. Route marches to Highden, Awahuri, Fielding.

25 September Public farewell at Newton Park

Embarked S S *Arawa* from Wellington with first Contingent, Main Body, departing in October. They were joined in Albany by the Australian ships. The fleet was made up of 38 transports and four cruisers - destination Egypt.

1 December Sailing down Suez canal arrived Alexandria.

15 December Zietoun training Camp. Received news that he had been accepted as a permanent machine gunner.

Time off and they had the chance to visit Pyramids, Sphinx Cairo Museum etc.

Holiday races at Ghezira etc.

1915

January expected trouble from the Turks struck camp and dug in, nothing happened, then shifted to Kubri.

By February they were back to Zietoun Camp.

12 April Embarked Alexandria transport A 23 '*Itonus*' and the destination Island of Lemnos, to gather before the attack on Narrow isthmus near Gallipoli.

14 April arrived at Lemnos stayed for ten days visited the island.

Sunday 25 April left for Gallipoli, as they neared they could hear the great guns from the warships. They landed about 5.30pm and could immediately see the dead and wounded lying on the beach from a previous attack by the Anzacs.

### **QUINNS POST**

27 April in sustained action his unit made their way up very steep hill under heavy fire, assisted by Infantry. They mounted the machine guns, several of their men

were killed and the gun jammed on numerous occasions. By this time water was scarce, hygiene less than basic, enteric fever, pneumonia etc were common  
14 May Brother Matt visited Jack today he is also a machine gunner and was wounded the very next day with shrapnel wound to his arm.

16 May Jack was taken by Fleetsweeper ' *Newmarket* ' and admitted to hospital suffering from pneumonia. When he did not improve was taken to Lemnos for treatment, Matt joined him as he had had pneumonia and they were now sharing the same tent.

15 June he returned to duty. Back on the machine guns, they deepened their gun pit and roofed it with iron. Whilst there a shell took part of the roof away and covered them with earth. They made their way to the trenches then back to the pit.

Jack went into hospital again this time with Dysentery but discharged himself keen to get back to his 'Mates'.

Back at the Battalion they were so close to the Turks they could hear them moving around in the trenches, and this was where Jack was on sentry duty. He had not been relieved, he was still sick and unfortunately fell asleep after being warned not to and was discovered by an Officer.

But he was so run down. As another soldier was to say "you are dead on your feet, and at night time when you are standing up you would give your soul for an hours sleep"

At a field court-martial he was charged and he pleaded guilty.

A sentence of death was laid down, Jack would not have known of this at the time he was placed in custody under armed guard. The prison was on a slope near the dressing station and the men of his unit would see him with a guard around him. The judgement was remitted by General Sir Ian Hamilton Commander- in Chief.



This photo discovered at the Australian War Memorial, and reproduced with permission, shows him on 5 August bareheaded, under armed guard and in front of his Regiment being notified of the sentence ' to suffer death by being shot'. This was read out and then remitted, due to his previous good conduct and his health!

He was to be the first New Zealander in World War I to be sentenced to death by Court martial and the only one at Gallipoli.[NOTE a total of 28 NZ soldiers faced this same situation]

He was used as an example to troops who were exhausted and sick, fighting in appalling conditions.

#### CHUNUK BAIR

Jack rejoined his Unit just in time for the last major offensive on Gallipoli. On 8 August three days after his reprieve his Ruahine machine gunners were part of the attack on Chunuk Bair they were briefly successful but the Turks after bitter hand to hand fighting retook it.

700 men of the Wellingtons died that day .Jack being one of them he was shot through the throat and died instantly, he did not come back down the hill.

There was no one to bring down the wounded it was a blazing hot day and no water for them.

His brother Mattie looked through the survivors for his brother Jack, they never found him he was one of many who were unidentified or never found.

This Biography was compiled by Syd Daughtrey from the book about Jack's life written by Pat White who produced an exhibition about this part of the family history.