

## Joe Golsby



### **Gallipoli Veteran Regimental Number 558, 20th Battalion**

Joseph Golsby [known as Joe] was born at Coolabah [near Cobar] on 23rd February, 1894, to William Edward and Elizabeth Margaret Golsby. He moved to Bumbaldry in his late teens, where his father had taken up a 640 acre property he called Hollowood. Joe, his father and his brother Ted, worked at clearing the property using axes as this was before any machinery. He joined the AIF on 19th March, 1915, and was sent to Liverpool, for basic training. He was just 21 years old. He was placed into the 20th Battalion, B Company, 5th Brigade.

The 20th Battalion embarked from Sydney, NSW, on board HMAT A35 Berrima on 25 June 1915; they trained in Egypt from late July until mid-August, and on 22 August landed at ANZAC Cove, as part of the 5th Brigade, 2nd Division, landing into the thick of the war at Monash Gully.

The Turks had quickly realised that the valley running inland from Ari Burnu was a main means of communication between the beach and the front line, and proceeded to shell it incessantly, so this valley was christened Shrapnel Valley. At the head of this valley was a gully that became known as Monash Gully, after the officer commanding the Australians. This was one of the main ways to get to what would become two of the most dangerous places in Gallipoli, Quinn's Post and Courtney's Post. Therefore, Monash Gully was one of the most dangerous places at Gallipoli, and Joe was sent there. For the majority of time that they were at Gallipoli, the battalion was deployed in the defence of Russell's Top. They remained on the peninsula until the evacuation on 20 December 1915.

Joe was first hospitalised on October 1, 1915, with a poison knee [probably due to the deplorable conditions at Monash Gully], then discharged back to duty 25th Oct., he embarked again on 1st November, and returned to his unit at Gallipoli Peninsula, on 11th November, 1915. After the evacuation from Gallipoli, in Dec 1915, the troops were taken first to Lemnos and then later to Egypt to await their next assignment. After further training in Egypt, the 20th Battalion proceeded to France. It entered the trenches of the Western Front for the first time in April 1916 and in the following month had the dubious honour of being the first Australian battalion to be raided by the Germans. Joe was again hospitalised due to war injuries from this battle, on 15th April; returned to active duty in France on 22nd April.

The 20th took part in its first major offensive around Pozières between late July and the end of August 1916, which saw Joe wounded in action on the 5th August, 1916, with multiple gunshot wounds to the left leg. He was then patched up and returned to his unit, now located in Belgium, on the 14th October. After a spell in a quieter sector of the front in Belgium, the 2nd Division, which included the 5th Brigade, came south again in October. The 20th Battalion provided reinforcements for the attack near Flers between 13 and 16 November, 1916, launched in conditions that Charles Bean described as the worst ever encountered by the AIF. Joe here received his second war injury - gunshot wounds to the cheek on 14th November; was again patched up, and re-joined his unit on 2nd December, 1916.

On 3rd March, 1917, he was once more wounded in action, in France, with a gunshot wound to the right leg. At this time he was sent to England for treatment, and on 22nd May 1917 again re-joined his unit, marching in from England to Etaples. Throughout 1917 the 20th Battalion was involved in three major battles as the German Army was forced back towards the Hindenburg Line, seeing action at Bullecourt in May, Menin Road in September and Poelcappelle in October. It would be the Menin Road battle (20-22 September), that would see Joe again wounded in action, for the fourth and thankfully final time. On 22nd September, after a gunshot wound to the right knee, he was once again embarked to England for treatment, and not discharged until 2nd November, 1917.

In 1918, the battalion was involved in repelling the German Spring Offensive, when the 20th was one of many Australian battalions that were hurried in to the line to stop it, and on 7 April 1918, they took part in a very sharp engagement at Hangard Wood. Once the German offensive was defeated, the Allies launched their own, known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which eventually brought about an end to the war.

Joe was returned to Australia via the HMAT Crontes in May 1918, and discharged from the AIF on 12th June, 1918. During the war, the 20th Battalion lost 848 men killed and 3,143 men wounded. Joe would later joke that since all his injuries occurred on the front of his body, it was proof that he wasn't fleeing at the time. The locals called him 'Tin Whistle', due to the number of times he had been shot. Joseph Golsby was awarded the 1914-15 Star [known as the Gallipoli Star], the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He later received the Gallipoli Medallion.

After returning from the war he went to Cumnock to visit his war buddy Pat, who had also served in the trenches at Gallipoli. Whilst there he met Pat's sister, Miss Edith May Reilly, who would become Joe's wife. They married on 12th January 1921, in Cumnock. They returned to Greenethorpe to live and had three children: May, Teddy and Aileen. [Mrs Aileen Friend currently lives in Cowra.]

Ever the entrepreneur, Joe had originally opened a billiard room and fruit store, living behind the store; then sold that and went into the farm machinery business, supplying headers and farm equipment, and especially the necessary spare parts to keep the equipment functional; and he also provided Liverpool, London and Globe insurance – he was the insurance agent for the district. Greenethorpe is in a storm belt, so he was able to insure the local farmers against damage to their crops, amongst other things, and thus was heavily involved in the local community.

During the early 20s he opened the local General Store. At that time, all the groceries and ingredients originally came in bulk, so they had to be weighed and measured and packaged for individual sale: rice, sugar, salt, flour, dates, biscuits, dried fruits, etc., all had to be measured and weighed and presented for sale. There was a lot of hard work and long hours involved in running the General Store, but Joe had never shied away from hard work, and this provided the means to support his family. He ran the General Store from the early 20s until 1959, nearly four decades of providing for the local community. He became very ill from cancer and subsequently died, in 1962. Gone but never forgotten, may this Aussie battler be remembered by all.