

**MICHAEL JOHN (JACK) 1895-1917.** Jack attended the Albury School until 1911. After leaving school he worked on the farm until he enlisted for the war. He was a fast runner and with his friend Keith CALLAGHAN he competed in races in South Canterbury. During the war Captain Keith CALLAGHAN, Jack's superior officer, used Jack as a message runner. Jack enlisted in March 1916 when he was 20 years old. Jack had to wait to go to camp as he had to get new teeth, so on 28 June 1916 he entered Trentham Camp to start his training. Jack was friendly with Maud KENWARD who had lived in Albury until her family moved to Dunedin. Eddie had been killed the year before Jack enlisted.



The following are excerpts from letters Jack wrote to his sister Lizzie:

2-7-1916 Trentham "Just a line to let you know I arrived alright we had tea on the train and supper and breakfast on the boat. We spent Thursday getting issued with Dungarees and blankets etc. We get plenty good food and I can eat like an elephant. How is Spiders lame leg, is it alright yet. I suppose you would get home on Thursday night. Has the chaffcutter been round yet." There were 6 of Jack's friends in his hut.

9-7-1916 Trentham "Sat night was special leave the whole of J coy was in town. The SULLIVAN'S and Bill HIGGS and I were in together. Tell Nellie I got her letter, remember me to the PYES, ROSSES and DILLONS. I will write to Jack KNOTT and Vic CASEY sometime."

26-8-1916 Featherston "We were inoculated last tuesday and were off till Thursday. We are going to be done again next Sat. That first tin of cake went very high. I got two big tins from Mollie the same day. Tell Nellie I got her letter. I will have final leave from wed until the following Tues week, so I will have one Sun at home and one in Dunedin."

21-9-1916 Featherston "We are getting it pretty solid to toughen us up for our march across the Rimutakas next week. Sometimes when some of you are in town it would be a good idea to see if my Insurance is fixed up alright. If any of those send-offs are in the paper you could cut them out and send them over."

Jack sailed on the Tofua which left Wellington on 11 October 1916 and arrived at Plymouth on 29 December 1916.

22-10-1916 On the boat "Nothing to do but read and sleep, we kill time playing football, Boxing, and Tug-of-war. The Maoris are good sports, they are hot stuff on anything they take an interest in. The food is good too and I think I am getting fat. I have never felt better in my life. They will be getting ready to sow rape at home now. That is a good job I have missed. I suppose I will not get a letter until we reach our destination, it is the longest I have gone without a letter since I came to camp. With best love to all I am your loving brother Jack."

7-11-1916 "We are having a good trip and we are not worried with newspapers, and the war may be over for all we have heard about it since leaving. Everyone is looking in the pink of condition. The trip is getting monotonous though. Euchre and Crib are played out, 500 got a good run but we are getting sick of that now. There is a boxing tournament and a draughts tournament on and they help to liven things up a great deal. Well I will close and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

8-2-1917 Sling Camp "Just a line to let you know you welcome cake arrived last night. It was a real good one. I gave everyone in the Hut a piece and I have a good piece left. The Chocolates and cigarettes were alright too, especially as I have just cut out the lot Mollie sent. I have just returned from four days in London and had a great time I had a cobber Frank PERKINS of Dunedin he is a N.Z. Amateur Champ runner and has won several prizes singing. We were around all the places of interest and the third night we heard Harry LAUDER in "Three Cheers" I wrote to Billy BARRET and got an answer about a week ago He is in Codford Hospital a few miles from here. That Charlie McNAB you spoke about is a runner right enough but not a champion by any means. He always got a big start. Bill BARRETT could give him a start. There is about 4 inches of snow here now, and it is mighty cold, but it will be tents instead of huts when we get to France so I guess it will be colder still."

12-3-1917 Somewhere in France "I received your letter the other day written 7th Jan. The harvest must be early this year. I suppose it will be all over by now and the money spent. I believe Mrs NEILL has died in England too, I thought she was good for donkeys years. Jack BARRETT and Wattie BODDYE will know the ins and outs of the goose step by now. I should have been going up the line by now but a silly chump got the mumps and we are all

isolated for 3 weeks. I had a letter from Gertie with yours. She said she was swinging the lead in Timaru.”

1-7-1917/ Somewhere in France “Just a line to let you know I am still in the land of the living. There is a bit of mail the last few days and I am looking out for that parcel, a bit of good cake would go high. Well Lizzie I will have to ring off.”

.23-7-1917 “I am glad you got the scarf alright. I was talking to Tom HONE last night , he was just back from England and was looking very well. Jimmy McDONALD was lookin good. I have only seen Charlie IRVING once. You are lucky to be able to drive Spider again, it is to be hoped he keeps alright. You will miss the gig I suppose.”

1-8-1917 On Active Service, France “Things seem to be alright in the old land and we will all be glad to get back to it. There wont be any holding young Billy now he has started to dance. He wons to hoe in while his luck is in. Wattie BODDYES luck was in. His foot cracked up just in time, he will keep it crook too if he has any sense. I might not be writing again for a while as I may not have time, but I will send a wizzbang. Tell Cissy I got that alright and send mine back. Hoping you are all well as it leaves me at present. Yours Jack.”

6-8-1917 “I wrote this 4 or 5 days ago, but didn't get it posted. I am doing alright and going strong. Hoping you are all well as it leaves me at present. With love to you all, from Jack.”

This was the last letter the family received from Jack and on 11 August 1916 he was killed. So the family would have received the letter some time later as letters took up to two months to arrive.

Jack is buried at Prowse Point Military Cemetery, Belgium. The entry reads:

O'REILLY, Pte John, 28910. "J" Coy, 2nd Bn Otago Regt. N.Z.E.F. Killed in action 11th Aug, 1917. Age 21. Son of Michael and Mary Ann O'Reilly, of Albury, New Zealand.

Eddie and Jack's names are both on the War Memorial at Albury, and their names are also on the pedestal of a statue in the Catholic Church in Albury.

He died--that all he loved might live  
And man his mission might achieve  
He died--for those he held most dear,  
He died--to save the world from fear,  
For faith and liberty and truth  
He offered up his stalwart youth,  
He fell--that peace might come again  
Throughout the tortured world and reign.

And we who loved him should rejoice,  
Though never now we hear his voice,  
That he who joined the glorious band  
Who perished for the Motherland  
Died game--IF it is death to give  
One's life that all one loves may live







Jack O'REILLY'S grave  
Plot No 4, Row A, Grave 4  
Prowse Point Military Cemetery  
Belgium

In Honoured Memory  
of  
Private Michael John O'Reilly  
18th Reinforcements  
Killed in Action in France, August 11th, 1917.  
Beloved Son of Michael and Mary O'Reilly  
Alburg, South Canterbury  
Aged 21 Years  
R. I. P.



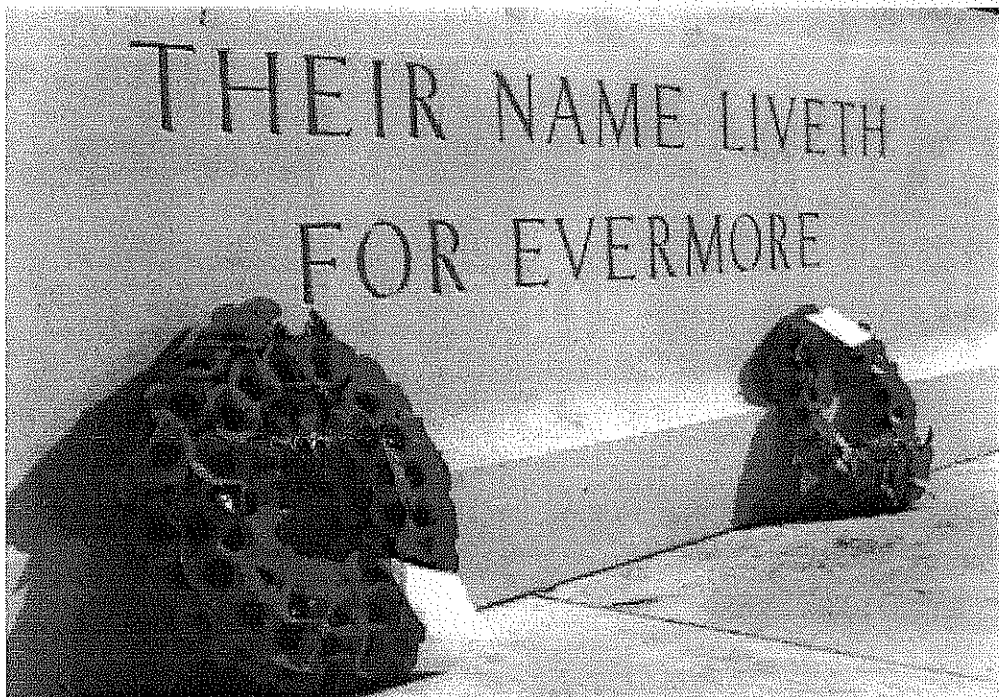
*In Memory of*

***Private JOHN O'REILLY***

*"J" Coy. 2nd Bn., Otago Regiment, N.Z.E.F.  
who died aged 21 on Saturday, 11th August 1917.*

*Private O'REILLY was the son of Michael and Mary Ann  
O'Reilly, of Albury, New Zealand.*

*Remembered with honour  
PROWSE POINT MILITARY CEMETERY, 387, 10.*



*In the perpetual care of  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*