

WWI - John Carrucan

Contributed by Frances James

John, the third child of Peter Carrucan and Hannah Woods, born in Eltham in 1864, married Mary Jane Bregazzi Manley in the "Free Church of Victoria" in Moor Street, Fitzroy on 16th April 1888. As John was brought up Catholic and Mary Jane as Church of England, they probably married in this church because of differences of religion. John gave his address as Kew and Mary Jane as Cranbourne.

At the time of his wedding in 1888, John was listed as a labourer. He later worked as a dray and horse driver for his brother Michael, who had a hay and corn store at 209 High Street, Kew.

During WW1 when John was about 52 years old, he put his age down to 44 to join the army on 25th March 1916. He is listed on his war records as being 6 feet tall, 173 lbs, of fresh complexion with blue eyes and auburn hair.

John embarked from Melbourne on the *Warilda* on 25th May 1916. On the 29th September 1916, he was taken into the 2nd Australian Tunneling Company which perated in the Neuville St Vaast/Vimy area of France on the Western Front. The tunneler's job was to mine under the German lines, place explosives and then blow the enemy up. The tunnelers also worked on digging subways, cable trenches and chambers for signal and medical services etc. In January 1917 the company relieved the Canadians at The Bluff near Ypres.

On the 27th July 1917, John was admitted to the 2/2 W/Lancs Field Ambulance. On the 8th August 1917, he was admitted to the 5th Southern General Hospital in Portsmouth with a strained shoulder, and transferred to the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital on the 14th August 1917. On the 14th September 1917 he was discharged to Weymouth for furlough and recuperation.

On the night of 13th October 1917 at 2230 hrs, John was found in Shipton, about 25kms west of Weymouth, without leave. He forfeited a days pay for this particular adventure.

On the 19th October 1917 John left England to return to Australia and was discharged on the 15th December 1918.

His granddaughter, Aileen, remembers as a child looking at the gorgeous silk, lace and embroidered post cards that he had sent home from France and Belgium during the war.

After Mary Jane's death in 1926, John boarded with a Miss Healey, above the Raebolds Funeral Parlour in Cotham Road, Kew. His daughter Ellen and her family were also living above a Raebolds Funeral Parlour in Malvern, which Ellen was running.

John died at Kew in 1943.