Today I would like to pause and remember 4/878 Lt John Joesph **Moore** **MM**

John was born on the 28 May 1873, the first born of ten children to Michael, a blacksmith, and Maria McMahon, a farmer’s daughter from Greenville. They resided at ‘Red Cottages’ Cahirdown.

John’s father had a well-established business comprising of two distinct elements, black smithing and white smithing more commonly referred to today as metal fabrication.

He commenced his education at the age of eight. After receiving his rudimentary schooling, he commenced work in the family forge, performing mundane tasks. Over time he mastered more intricate ironmongery which is determined in and entry in his military records that record him as a ‘superior blacksmith’.

In Sept 1897, at the age of 24, John applied to join the British Army at Limerick, specifically requested to join the Royal Engineers. His attestation papers stated he had served a seven-year apprenticeship with his uncle, John Moore. During the initial stages of his recruitment, he was tested in his trade, requiring to cut off a length from ½ inch sound bar iron, bend into ring of 5 inches diameter, and weld it complete. Having completed and passed the test, he was deemed fit for service, signing up for 12 years with the regimental number 1202.

He entered the School of Military Engineering at Chatham where he undertook instruction in such topics as field fortifications, siegeworks, mining, bridging, railway work, demolition, lathe work, engine driving, telegraphy, survey, building construction, photography and ballooning. On completion of his training, he was posted to the 7th (Field) Company based in Ireland. By June 1898 John had completed further training in such topics as writing to dictation, arithmetic and regimental accounts.

In the late 1890’s there were unresolved political tensions between British interests in South Africa and the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State, with hostilities breaking out in Oct 1899. John unit was called up for war duty in July 1899 and left camp for the nearby Newbridge railway station. From Dublin, the unit travelled by boat to Holyhead to Southampton before embarking for South Africa onboard the “*Braemer Castle”*, arriving in Cape Town on the 5th August 1899, and disembarked for camp at Wynberg.

The 7th (Field) Company was by then put on war footing with John’s No 1 section moving to Kimberley which they reach on the 21 Sept 1899. Interesting to note this section was commanded by Lt Robert McClintock, the inventor of the Bangalore Torpedo.

In Kimberley the section was engaged in Engineer works during the four-month siege which ended on the 15 Feb 1900. For the remainder of 1900 his company was split up in small detachments all over the country cumulating in the construction of some 240 forts and blockhouses in 1901.

The conclusion of the Boer war in May 1902 saw John back in the UK and promoted to second corporal further training. He sailed for Singapore in Dec 1903, onboard the ship “*Dilwara”,* spending 3 years there involved in the safeguarding of the defences of Singapore.

In Dec 1906 John Moore’s tour of duty to Singapore came to an end and he was posted to Bulford Camp, Wiltshire where he was engaged in the construction of the cavalry school at Netheravon. He continued his education, qualifying as an Assistant Instructor in Musketry as well as other Engineering training. Following this training John was assigned assistant Instructor in Military Engineering to the prestigious posting of the Officers Training Camp at Cambridge University.

He was promoted to Sgt in Sept 1909 while serving with 56th Company then transferred to Moore Park, Kilworth, Co. Cork and posted to 12th (Field) Company.

On 5th Nov 1913, a cablegram was received in the office of the High Commissioner in London from the New Zealand Government stating that four Sgt Engineer Instructors were urgently required for service in Dominion. John Moore was recommended as one of the instructors and had by then been medically examined and found fit for service in New Zealand and held in readiness to embark on receipt of further instructions. During this time General Alex Godley was engaged in the reorganisation and modernisation of the NZ Army and had requested trained instructors to expedite this work. Two Sgts were signallers and two were Field Engineers, one of which was Sgt J.J. Moore.

He signed a contract with the English based, High Commissioner to New Zealand on the 3 Feb for a period of five years with a salary of 180 pounds for the first 3 years and 200 pounds thereafter. Two days later, John and his wife Marion left London onboard the S. S. Athenic, bound for Wellington.

Two months later John arrived in Wellington and was posted to the Otago district to take up work on instructing Engineers which, until then, had been undertaken by Sgt Maj Dollimore.

The reasonability’s and workload of the instructors multiplied following New Zealand’s offer of support to Britain following the declaration of war in Aug 1914. Most of Moore’s work was carried out at Trentham. He took a leading role in the training of novice Sappers in subjects such as musketry and field Engineering including bridge and trench building.

The 1st (Field) Engineers left with the main body and in Feb 1915. A 2nd Field Company was raised to supplement the New Zealand contribution with Moore being attested as a member, at the age of 39 yrs. and six months, with the regimental number 4/881.

On the 17th of April 1915, and just one year after arriving in New Zealand, John Moore paraded with this hastily raised company for final inspection before embarking from Wellington.

On the 20th of May John’s convoy was at Aden. Days later the troops disembarked at Suez before boarding a train for their camp at Zeitoun. Egypt was then used as a staging post for colonial troops being sent to the war. While most expected to serve at the Western Front, the Australians & New Zealand Forces had been, by then, allocated to a new front at Gallipoli.

John and his company landed at ANZAC Cove on the 3 Jun 1915 and took up “quarters” in Monash Gully.

The Engineers work while at Gallipoli included erecting barbed wire entanglements and overhead cover, bomb-deflecting screens, sandbagging the tracks leading to the firing trenches, restoring the front-line parapets, cutting recesses for additional riflemen and reinforcing the loopholes with steel platting, digging pits for trench mortars and providing periscopic rifles.

John’s invaluable contribution was officially recognised with an award of the MM. This award was “*For gallantry and good work in connection with the placing of the defence of Quinn’s Post, during 1915 in an efficient state. This work was carried out in front of our infantry firing line and the working parties were subjected to a heavy rifle and bomb fire. Company Sergeant-Major Moore, by his excellent example contributed largely to the successful prosecution and speedy determination of the works.”*

John’s valiant work resulted in him been promoted to commissioned ranks in 2 Oct 1915 as a 2nd Lt. Conditions on Gallipoli were spartan and John succumbed to illness and was evacuated to the hospital ship Formosa on the 10 Oct 1915. By the 24 Oct he was admitted to the Blue Sisters Hospital Malta for further treatment.Two days later he was shipped on the Oxfordshire to England.

Following his discharged from hospital, John spent time in Ireland and England before rejoining his unit in early Mar 1916.

On the 8 Mar 1916, John along with the engineers embarked on the Ascania at the port of Alexandria bound for France. Landing at Marseilles eight days later, the men had a short break before enduring a sixty-hour train journey to northern France and Armentieres*.*

We catch up with 2Lt Moore at the Battle of the Somme where he his mentioned in the war diary where it notes – “3:30pm the Officer Commanding, along with 2Lt Moore, Sgts Jones and McMaster moved forward to reconnoitre sites S. P. (Strong Points), returning at 7 pm. In the aftermath of the Somme offensive John and his unit returned to the Armentieres sector where they were given a chance to rest and recuperate. The High Command were planning their next offensive which would be cantered on Ypres.

Jan 1917 saw John move to Etaples to serve as an instructor. Etaples was the key training base for British Forces in France. From there he was sent to the reserve depot for New Zealand Engineers at Boscombe. During this time John was fully occupied in the demanding role of adjutant, which included responsibility for training.

In May 1917 a newly formed Engineer Company was inspected by General Richardson where he presented John Moore with the Military Cross and a Serbian Order, awarded for good work on the Western Front.

Due to internal promotions within the Engineers John took over command of No 3 Section 4th Field Company on the 23rd of May 1917. The company entrained at Bournemouth for the short journey to Southampton on the morning of the 29th of May. From Southampton the company disembarked at Le Havre moving further to the Messines district after been reviewed by General Godley.

The engineers played a pivotal role in the subsequent battle, not only constructing light railways allowing over 140,000 tons of ammunition to be stockpiled but also in concealing the ammo from the Germans.

The war diary of 4 Field Company noted on 13th Jul of 1917 one officer and nine other ranks were wounded and three other ranks killed, John Moore being that officer. He remained on duty despite his wounds before been evacuated to No 2 Australian Casualty Clearing Station the following day. From there he was transferred to No 7 Stationary Hospital before been evacuated to England on the 19th of Jul 1917 and admitted to No 2 New Zealand Hospital at Walton.

He remained at Walton for two weeks before been sent to a convalescent home in Brighton on the 4th of Aug.

On the 11th Sept John went before a medical board in London with his injuries listed as gunshot wounds to the arm, back and thigh. The examining doctor noted however that he had been blown up by a shell explosion. Following the examining John was granted an exemption from military service for a period of three months. These injuries meant he avoided the catastrophic horrors of Passchendaele.

During this time of convalescing he took the opportunity to travel back to Ireland. Contrary to reports published in the local Irish papers John’s health was not improving.

He presented himself before another medical board on the 18th Dec at the New Zealand Hospital at Brockenhurst, where he complained of night blindness. Following this medical board, their recommendation was to admit him to No1 N.Z. General Hospital (Brockenhurst) for further assessment. During his time at the hospital, Jan 17th, 1918, John was promoted to full lieutenancy.

Following further examination at the hospital he was granted a further year’s exemption from military duty. His disability was such that he was classified as unfit for war which meant his return to New Zealand.

On receipt of this news, he proceeded to the New Zealand Discharge Depot at Torquay. During his time at the depot, he acted as the adjutant.

Prior to his departure from England, the War Office offered the choice of remaining in England and re-joining the Royal Engineers or taking superannuated discharge. After twenty years of active military service and at the age of 44 John took discharge from the military and returned to New Zealand on the 1st April 1918 from Galsgow *onboard* the *‘Athenic’*. During his passage to New Zealand, he acted as ships adjutant for over 800 military personnel.

After a challenging five-week journey, the “Athenic” finally arrived in Auckland. Upon his arrival, John was once again examined for retinitis and referred as an outpatient to a hospital in Dunedin. His condition had improved significantly by June 21, yet he remained classified as unfit for service for another six months. By July 17, John was back in Trentham, still not ready to retire. The prestigious position of Chief Engineering Instructor had become vacant, and he was a candidate for the role. With Major Fred Waite deemed fit to return to the front, John's appointment was sanctioned in July 1918.

As the war drew to a close in November 1918, John became eligible for demobilisation. However, his new position created an unusual situation. His request for a two-year extension was denied, and because his contract was for the duration of the war, his employment officially ended in November 1918. Having recently purchased land at Mawaihakona, John sought a short-term extension to manage his affairs before returning to the UK, a condition of his contract. This extension was granted until July 1919.

Determined to remain in New Zealand, John applied for a position as adjutant with the North Island Battalion of the Railway Engineers but was turned down. He also submitted his name for consideration for future employment with the N.Z. Staff Corps, which was again declined. A second-class passage was arranged for John and his wife to ensure they would be in London by July 5, 1919.

Before departing New Zealand, John had one final assignment. On April 21, 1919, a coroner's inquest was held at Trentham Camp to investigate the tragic death of 12-year-old Kenneth Waugh. A troop of Boy Scouts had been playing in the trenches and found loose guncotton, which exploded when inserted into a discarded bomb case, fatally wounding Waugh. John was called as an explosives expert, and the coroner determined that the scouts should have been informed of the explosives and instructed to avoid the area.

The inquest delayed John's departure, and he and his bride returned to England by October 1919, with John discharging from the Royal Engineers on October 28, 1919. Upon his discharge, John faced the deteriorating political situation in Ireland, which, been Irish, brought significant challenges for him and his wife, Marion.

By June 1921, John and Marion were residing in Ruislip, West London, where he worked as an assistant foreman of stores at No. 4 Stores Depot, with the Air Force.

In 1924, he was diagnosed with skin cancer affecting his nose and orbits, and his eyesight began to deteriorate. By April 1927, he was working as a clerk and living at "Kia Ora," Priors Gardens Northolt Junction, Ruislip.

By 1930, John's sight had almost entirely failed, and he was referred to the charity St Dunstan’s, which assisted soldiers who had lost their sight during the war. Despite medical treatment, his skin cancer worsened, and by 1931, John was in declining health. He was admitted to the New Zealand Officers’ Convalescent Home at Percival Terrace, Brighton, where he passed away on November 1, 1932, at the age of 59.

John and his beloved wife Marion were laid to rest together in the peaceful setting of Brighton & Preston Cemetery. In a poignant twist, the headstone of this New Zealand hero records his death as November 11, Armistice Day, symbolizing the deep connection to his service and sacrifice.

RIP John

Thank you for your service

E kore warewaretia

Will never forget.

In posting the biography of John Joesph Moore MM I wish to acknowledge the tremendous support of Martin Moore. John is the great uncle of Martin, and this abridged history is from Martin’s book titled *A Kerry Odyssey – The Boer War and Great War Experiences of John J Moore,* which I was fortunate to receive a copy of.

Thank you Martin.