

Lismore man Jo Stratford was the first Anzac to charge on to the beach at what would later be called Anzac Cove on that fateful April 15 dawn in 1915.

“Joe Stratford was the first of Australia’s troops ashore at Gallipoli. Lieutenant Jones was second and I was third,” Private Stu Gahan told a local paper in 1916.

In Roll of Honour documents held by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, a notation authenticates his place in history: “Stated by eyewitness to be first Australian ashore on Gallipoli.”

Letters and records reveal Cpl Stratford claimed two enemy before falling over them dead, riddle with bullets.

It is claimed one officer at the time said Cpl Stratford was worthy of a Victorian Cross medal for his bravery on that morning. He was not alone.

The rising sun over the peninsula that morning revealed the horrors of war and was just the first hours of an eight-month campaign which would claim thousands of lives.

Pte Gahan also wrote a letter to Joe’s parents, Thomas and Alice Stratford, who lived in Conway Street, Lismore.

“There was not a man amongst us who did not love and look up to him. He was far and straight. I felt when he did not answer the roll call that I had lost an elder brother,” he wrote.

According to War Memorial particulars, Joseph Stratford was a 32-year-old grocer who was born at Goolmangar, about 20 kilometres north-west of Lismore, and attended school at Goonellabah.

He was a Sargent in the NSW Scottish Rifles and enlisted with Queensland’s 9th Battalion AIF soon after the outbreak of World War I.

Like many of his colleagues at Gallipoli, the people of Lismore hold Joseph Stratford in the highest regard.

He is truly a local here who never made it home ... but whose name has been etched in stone at the Lone Pine Memorial which honours the fallen at Gallipoli.

Without doubt he was one of the bravest among the brave.