

GREAT WAR STORIES

Hugh Youdale/Dale

Remembering the sacrifices of those with SC connections who served their country 100 years ago.

TED HANSEN

Hugh was born in Guildford, England, on 26 August 1871, the eldest son of Hugh and Eliza Youdale. The family came to New Zealand in 1881 and farmed in the Claremont area. Hugh attended the Timaru Public and Claremont schools.

On April 8, 1896, he married Margaret Jane Armstrong, the daughter of Mathew and Sara (nee Gillies) Armstrong, a local farming family. Hugh and Margaret (Maggie) had attended the local

Claremont School together and were probably in the same class. Hugh followed his father's example and farmed at Southburn near Timaru where he had five children. Before the war he served in the local volunteers and territorial forces with the South Canterbury Mounted Rifles for eight years, reaching the rank of Corporal.

Unfortunately Hugh's wife, Margaret, died on March 27, 1906, and soon after Hugh disappeared from the local scene, most probably to Australia. It is thought that he worked in isolated Winton, in Queensland for a time, then in New South Wales.

He had no contact with his family after 1910 and at one stage they believed he was deceased.

Family legend suggested either he had disappeared somewhere in outback Queensland on an expedition looking for the remains of explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, or that he was killed during the war.

There are, however, records that do put together some pieces of his mysterious jigsaw puzzle life.

On September 17, 1914, after Hugh had assumed the name Hugh

Dale, he enlisted at Marrickville, New South Wales, into the Australian Army.

On his enlistment papers he was described as being Presbyterian, working as a driver, single (in fact, a widower), born in Timaru, aged 39 (actually 43), 5 foot 10 and a half inches tall, with a fair complexion, grey eyes, brown hair with streaks of grey, and a scar on his right wrist. He gave Mr J. Armstrong of Timaru, as his next of kin. Posted as a driver into the 10th Company Australian Army Service Corps, he left for overseas service on October 20, 1914, bound for Egypt.

On August 7, 1915, he embarked from Alexandria for service at the Dardanelles with Australian Forces. After his return to Egypt, on March 3, 1916, he was transferred to the 28th Company Army Service Corps. Over the next three months he was firstly promoted to Corporal, then to Sergeant before embarking to join the British Expeditionary Forces (ex-Alexandria) on June 17, arriving in Marseilles on June 24, 1916. A few months later, in November, the rigours of active



Hugh and Margaret Youdale's wedding in 1896.

service saw him taken sick. Over the four months he was moved from the front to convalescent depots in France, then England.

However, he obviously was not able to fully recover and on May 4, 1917, he left England on HMAT Runic for return to Australia. Following his return Sergeant Hugh Dale was discharged at Sydney from the Australian Army as medically unfit due to bronchitis. He was granted a pension of 17 shillings and threepence per fortnight. After war's end, having served in Egypt, Gallipoli and Western Europe, he was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal.

Hugh appears to have remained aloof from his family as his personnel file also contained copies of letters from the NZ Government Insurance Department (1923) and from the Timaru law firm W H Walton (1926). Both letters were seeking information about his place of residence and record: "He was seen about this time (1915 in Egypt) by a member of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who

was of the opinion that he was then going under the name of Hugh Dale". In 1926 there were also newspaper advertisements in Australian newspapers seeking his whereabouts. The letters probably related to an Armstrong family bequest that had been left to his deceased wife. Hugh was still in Australia, living under his assumed name. Following the war he continued to live in New South Wales working at various times as labourer or station hand.

Hugh had, in fact, remarried in 1922, to Irene Hamilton at Peak Hill, New South Wales. The couple had one son, Hugh Malcolm (1922-1989), who eventually came in contact with Youdales in New Zealand, allowing some of Hugh Youdale/Dale's history to be 'rediscovered'.

Hugh eventually died at Newtown, New South Wales, on November 24, 1945.

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