

GREAT WAR STORIES

Sergeant Rowland Francis Piper

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

CAROL BELL

Sergeant Piper was a farm hand born in Essex, England on 2 October 1892, the son of Frank and Emmeline Piper of Orari, and educated at the English College, Lisbon, Portugal, but his address at time of enlistment on 25 August 1915 was care of R.J McKeowan, Tycho Flat.

At the time of enlisting Rowland was a corporal in the South Canterbury Mounted Rifles. He was 5ft 8in tall, with fair complexion, grey eyes and light brown hair.

He left Wellington with the 8th Reinforcements, Field Artillery on

13 November 1915 for Egypt and thence to Gallipoli, and at the termination of that campaign moved on to the Western Front.

He first went into action in May 1916 and passed through the battles of the Somme, Messines, and the third battle of Ypres.

He was killed in action on 8 December 1917 at Ypres, Belgium and buried at Divisional Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

The *Timaru Herald* noted at the time of his death:

"The friends of the late Sergeant R.F. Piper, NZFA, in the Tycho district and elsewhere, will be pleased to know that word has come to hand since his death that he had been promoted to sergeant,

and that the major of his battery had recommended him for a commission.

He also spoke of him as a particularly good non-commissioned officer, stating that all the men under him were much grieved at his death, as he was one of the most popular men in his battery.

The late sergeant met his death by a shell coming through the roof of a dug-out and killing four of the five men within it, the fifth man being very dangerously wounded.

The four killed were buried next day some miles from the firing line by the Church of England padre, and they lie beside seven others of the same battery.

The late sergeant was of a most



lovable disposition, ever ready to do a good action, and thinking nothing too much for him to do. He is, and will be, greatly missed by his friends and relatives."

This is part of the SCRoll project. You can find SCRoll stories, hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, at museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll

Above: Divisional Cemetery, Ypres, 1919. Right: Talko war memorial.

