

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

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Corporal John (Jack) CRANNITCH, No.8/3225

John Crannitch, known as Jack, was born 17 January 1893 at Timaru, the second child and eldest son of Matthew and Ellen (née St John) Crannitch, of Temuka, this being the only family bearing the Crannitch name in New Zealand. Matthew Crannitch served on the Timaru Borough Council in the 1890s. In 1897 he was a member of the St Patrick's Day Sports Association, and in 1898 elected an executive officer of the Timaru branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union, as well as returning to the council table.

Jack was educated at the Marist Brothers' School in Timaru, and then spent time at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel. There in 1907 he was awarded the next in merit prize for the Second Latin class. Back home at Temuka he was a prize-winner at the English Stall at the very popular United Kingdom Bazaar. At the beginning of August 1911 he represented Celtic 2nd Grade in rugby football, at Temuka, the team travelling by the 1.30 express. The following year he was selected for the Celtic III team to play against Zingari III.

After leaving school, he worked in the office of Messrs Raymond and Revell in Timaru, before going to the North Island. He was a labourer residing at Hastings in 1914 and, when he attested on 24 August 1915, he was living and working at Clive Grange, Hawkes Bay. His next-of-kin was his father Matthew of the Temuka Hotel.

Matthew Crannitch engaged in the hotel industry, firstly at Timaru and then for a time at Kurow after the death in 1904 of Ellen, his wife and John's mother, before going to Temuka. He was a "popular proprietor of the Temuka Hotel", as noted in the frequent advertisements for "Rheumo" throughout the south in the 1914-1916 period. When he renewed his hotel licence in 1915, he was warned that he should provide a meal at any hour for travellers. He was, however, a most popular host. Matthew married Ellen Coll in 1908 and added to his family. Matthew Crannitch was a regular contributor for appeals for war funds. In August 1914 he promised a horse provided his son (John), who had volunteered, was accepted for service, in addition to a monetary donation. In 1916 he gave to the Temuka Branch of the Red Cross Society, and in 1918 to the Temuka Mayor's Relief Fund during the influenza epidemic. Not long before his son's death he presented a trophy for Temuka Territorials Club competition.

Private John Crannitch had left with the Otago Battalion of the 8th Reinforcements on 13 November 1915, destined for Egypt. Not long after embarking for France in April 1916, he spent more than two months attached to the Light Trench Mortar Battery. Early in 1917 he was promoted to the rank of corporal, and just two weeks before his death he joined the 2nd Battalion, Wellington Regiment. Then, on 31 July he was admitted firstly to the No. 3 New Zealand Field Ambulance and next to the

No. 2 Australian Casualty Clearing Station at Trois Arbres, France, where he was to die.

It was on 9 August 1917 that Mr Crannitch received word that his son, Corporal John Crannitch, had died. On 1 August 1917, aged 24, Jack died of wounds – a wound to the abdomen and multiple wounds to the leg, suffered in action in France. He was buried in the Trois Arbres Military Cemetery, Steenwerck, France.

From September 1917 his name appeared in the Roll of Honour published regularly by the Temuka Leader. Jack Crannitch's medals, plaque and scroll were sent to his father. His brother Patrick James also served in World War One, a half-brother Thomas died of wounds in 1944 in World War Two, and another half-brother Matthew James also served in World War Two.

John is remembered, along with his brother Thomas, on the headstone of his father and step-mother in the Temuka Cemetery. His name is inscribed on the Timaru Memorial Wall, the Temuka RSA Roll of Honour, the Temuka War Memorial, and the St Joseph's Church Temuka Memorial. A photo of John appeared in the Otago Witness of 29 August 1917.

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