

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

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George Joseph Enzie Smith No.12274

George Joseph Enzie Smith was the second son of George Burnside and Mary (née McPeak) Smith, of Orakipaoa, Temuka, and later of Ormsby Street, Temuka. His father George had come from Scotland in 1876 and married Mary McPeak in 1886. After some time managing farms, he acquired his own property on the Levels Estate. Born on 29 April 1894 at Seadown, young George was baptised on 21 May 1894 in the Timaru Catholic parish. George junior was educated at Orton, Clandeboye and Cave schools.

Prior to enlistment he was employed in the Mackenzie Country on several sheep stations, and also with the Mackenzie County Council. Standing 5 feet 7½ inches tall and weighing 127 pounds, he was in good health, although his eyesight was defective and he was slightly flat footed. He had already served in the 2nd South Canterbury Regiment.

Having enlisted in January 1916, at Featherston Camp George was appointed temporarily to the rank of lance-corporal with G company of the 12th Reinforcements. He was part of the march over the Rimutaka Hill on 13 April. The soldiers sang to the accompaniment of the Twelfth Reinforcements Band. The trip was described as “a windy, gusty one, with dust blowing and the men holding on to their hats at many of the corners of the road. Yet it was accomplished in good time.” The troops then went into bivouac in the scrub near Featherston Camp and “were astir early next morning.” On reaching the summit they were given refreshments by members of the Wairarapa Patriotic Society. After another stop for lunch and bathing, and one or two more days of marching, they would have reached Trentham.

He embarked with the Rifle Brigade at Wellington on 6 May, his destination being Egypt. But George died on active service while en route on 4 June 1916, just one month after embarking and before reaching his destination. His father had just finished reading a letter from George when the telegram announcing his death arrived. Later information from the commander of troops in Ceylon was relayed to his father with details of his death and burial. George died from double pneumonia on 4 June 1916 in the Military Hospital, Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He was buried the next day with full military honours and a party of his late comrades from the transport was in attendance.

George Joseph Enzie Smith, aged 22, was buried at Borella Cemetery, Colombo. His name is inscribed on the headstone of his parents and two brothers in the Temuka Cemetery. He is remembered on the Timaru Memorial wall, the Temuka RSA Roll of Honour, the Temuka War Memorial and in St Joseph's Church, Temuka.

His medal (British War Medal), plaque and scroll were sent to his father. His brother William James Tayler Smith also served in World War I. Their eldest brother Charles Hay Smith, was called up but not required to serve. George had written to his sister (Euphemia Mary, later Mrs Cunnard) on 5 April 1916 from Featherston. He writes "We will be called on some of these fine days to make a will and to say who we are leaving the farms to that we have . . . We draw 2/- a day after we get on the boat and I shall send the other 3/- a day to you in my will and you can put some in my banking account and have some for yourself and if you don't see me again you can have all of it. The life Insurance will go to Mum & Dad that will amount to £150-0-0." The Public Trustee deemed this to be the last will of George which he had executed while he was in actual military service. The Public Trustee, therefore, administered the estate which amounted to £175.

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