

GREAT WAR STORIES

Stanley Edward Davey

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

TERESA SCOTT

Stanley Edward Davey, born on 9 November 1893 at Temuka, was the youngest son of George Davey and his second wife, Maria Jane (née Finlay). He attended both Winchester and Temuka schools, and also the Temuka District High School.

He scored well in the Junior Civil Service Examination in 1908, and some time after was appointed a cadet in the Native Land Court at Wellington, with whom he spent some years.

He followed this up with three passes in the Senior Civil Service examinations in early 1911.

Stanley had previously been rejected as unfit for military service after an operation for appendicitis. He enlisted, however, on 2 May 1915, at which time he was a farm hand and living at home at Temuka.

His military training was at Trentham Military Camp.

Stanley joined a troop train in Temuka with Lord Liverpool's Own and, having left with the Seventh Reinforcements, he disembarked in Egypt on 18 November 1915.

He went first to Egypt, then in April 1916 to France where he was promoted to Lance Corporal temporarily but reverted to Rifleman on 1 April 1916 at his own request.

Rifleman S.E. Davey was killed in action in the Battle of Flers at the Somme, France on 15 September 1916, and was buried in the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery at the Somme.

Private Davey had written, maybe to his uncle Mr John Finlay of Tokaora, on 6 December 1915, outlining their preparations for the fighting against the Dervishes – “an enemy of 3000 men to face . . . fully armed and equipped . . . ‘ask-for-no-mercy’ tactics.

As Greece is likely to be soon at war against us, we have been warned to put the station in a good state of defence, . . . with everything in a well guarded and barricaded place.

We will be camped around the station



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and can easily take our posts on the sound of the alarm and see that nothing happens to the station and telephone communication. We were sent up here to do this and must not fail in our task, as the lives of many of our comrades are at stake up at Dabba.” [Hawera & Normanby Star, 8 February 1916 (page 4)]

The following extract is from a letter dated August 16th from “somewhere in France” from the late Rifleman Davey to his cousin:

“The night we went up from our billet we just missed being badly knocked about, just getting into the support trench for shelter in time.

The Germans shelled a house opposite the billet we had just left, half an hour after our leaving it, so you can just imagine what we missed in the way of casualties. We went through several bombardments and had some pretty narrow shaves from being wiped out. Our company seems to have a lot of luck behind it.

One night, the hottest I have ever had, we had a raid on, and we had to put up with artillery and trench mortar fire for three hours and a half. None of us in the platoon got a scratch during the whole proceedings. We went back shortly after this into the subsidiary trenches for a rest, and then back into town for awhile until now we have moved here for a rest, for how long we cannot say.

“The country around here is beautiful indeed just now. All around there is a great deal of land with standing ripe crops upon it, and it looks very nice. Some of us are going to do a bit of harvesting for the people, in the course of the next day or two.

We are having route marches every day now to get us fit again, in order to be able to stand what we have to put up with in our next move . . .

Personally I am all right, though at times I feel a bit seedy.” [Hawera & Normanby Star, 10 October 1916]

His name is inscribed on the Timaru Memorial Wall, the Temuka War Memorial; the Temuka RSA Roll of Honour; St Peter's Church, Temuka, Memorial, Temuka District High School Roll of Honour, Opihi College Roll of Honour (created 2015), as well as the Winchester War Memorial.

Brothers Arthur, Francis James and Henry George Davey all also served in World War One.

Of a family of five sons in the Davey family (Temuka) one had been to Gallipoli and wounded, one (Stanley) was killed in France, and two other sons were either on the water or in camp at the time of Stanley's death.

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