

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

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### Adolphus Michael BRENNAN, 8/1941

Adolphus Michael Brennan, known to family as Dolph, was an illegitimate child born on 18 March 1896 at Timaru, to Margaret Brennan and Michael Keller. He was baptised as Michael Keller the following week, on 24 March 1915 at the Timaru Catholic Church. Adolphus was brought up by his maternal grandparents, Francis and Jane (née Kelliher) Brennan. He was educated at Upper Junction School on Mt Cargill, north of Dunedin. He may also have gone to North East Valley School, Dunedin.

Adolphus attested voluntarily on 13 February 1915, joining the Otago Infantry and nominating his mother, Mrs Jane Brennan, as his next-of-kin. At the time he was a farm labourer at Waitati, not yet 19 years old (although he put his age up to 20), single and Roman Catholic. He was in good health in all respects and fit, 5 feet 8 inches tall, of fair complexion, and had blue eyes and flaxen hair; and his teeth were good. He had registered for compulsory military training at Dunedin and was already serving in the Coast Defence Unit. Adolphus was one of the Infantry Territorial men of the Otago quota of the fifth reinforcement who left Dunedin by special train in mid February 1915, heading to Trentham to undergo training until their departure for the front.

“All the arrangements in connection with the departure of the Dunedin men worked with true military precision, despite the fact that the men were closely hemmed in by thousands of citizens who assembled to see the men away,” reported the *Otago Daily Times* of 15 February 1915. The troops fell in at the Garrison Hall before marching to the Queen’s Gardens where the Union Jack and other flags “were floating proudly”. From the bandstand, the mayor bade them farewell and God-speed in their undertaking. Mr Gibson, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, stated that they were “going to take part in a war to uphold the very foundations of civilisation and liberty.” He went on to impress on the men how much the honour of New Zealand lay in their hands, concluding with “Quit yourselves like men, and when the war is over may you be brought back in safety.” Colonel Stoneham of the Recruiting Committee hoped that they would see fighting unless the war was finished before they got to the front, which they all hoped. Following speeches and 10 minutes leave for the men to say their farewells, they marched to the station via High, Princes and Stuart streets, headed by a bugle band and the Dunedin Pipe Band.

But A. M. Brennan was to go no further than Trentham; he was to experience no fighting. Five weeks later he was dead, having celebrated his 19th birthday a few days before his death. Private Adolphus Michael Brennan, Otago Infantry Company,

Fourth Reinforcements, was admitted to Wellington Hospital from the Training Unit at Trentham Camp about 12 March and died there early on the morning of 23 March 1915 from endocarditis and haemorrhaging (epistaxis). Adolphus was buried in Karori Cemetery, Wellington, in a private funeral as requested by his family.

Francis and Jane Brennan suffered severe loss in the war. Adolphus (Dolph) was the first of four sons to die. William (Bill) Brennan enlisted in Australia but being rejected on account of his young age returned to New Zealand to enlist and go to his death in 1916 at the Somme. John (Jack) Brennan was killed in action in 1917 at Ypres. The youngest son Richard (Dick) Mortimer Brennan, seven months younger than Adolphus, was killed in action "somewhere in France" in 1918. Francis (Frank) Brennan, the eldest son, was wounded in action and because of the shrapnel in his leg had to use a walking stick for the rest of his life. In August 1919 Mrs Brennan was to lose her husband and the father of their surviving two sons and five daughters. Margaret, the birth mother of Adolphus, married in 1901.

*This is part of the SCRoll project. You can find SCRoll stories, hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, at [museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll](http://museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll)*