

Waimate Toc H Executive Dies

Staff Reporter Waimate

The death occurred last week of Mr William Henry Mills, who had held various executive positions in the Waimate Toc H movement and was closely involved with charitable works over many years.

Born at Riverton in 1887, he was educated at the Waimate and Studholme schools, and after his marriage to Miss Annie Witt in the North Island moved back to the district to farm at Studholme. He later acted as secretary of the Nukuroa School Committee.

Mr Mills served with A company of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade in the 16th Reinforcements mainly in France and Belgium during the First World War.

He fought in the fierce battles of Messines and Paschendale, emerging from one engagement as the sole survivor of a platoon. Later in the war he was invalided home on the hospital ship, Maheno.

After farming at Willowbridge for eight years he moved into Waimate and he became a foundation member of the Waimate branch of Toc H formed in 1934.

He held the offices of chairman, secretary, treasurer, job master, and pilot, being also a chief instigator of the community sings which were held to raise funds for local charities.

For more than 25 years he served as the local representative on the Leper Trust Board. On his own account after the Second World War, he sent food parcels and clothing to war victims—particularly in Holland and Belgium.

Mr Mills learnt to speak fluently the international language, Esperanto, and by this medium corresponded with penfriends in many parts of the world. Through Esperanto, he was able to sponsor a family of displaced persons in 1950 until they were able to fend for themselves.

At one time when the local scouting movement was at a low ebb, Mr Mills stepped in as scoutmaster until a qualified leader was found.

Each Saturday night for many years he distributed reading material to Waimate hospital patients.

He is survived by his wife, four daughters and two sons.