

William and George Davison

By Alan Mckenzie

William born 1893, and George born 1895 were the sons of James Davison and Sarah Youdale. The Davisons and their seven children farmed at Southburn in South Canterbury and lived on Davisons Road near the Southburn Hall.

Like many other men of those times they enlisted for service and then embarked for war service on the *Ulimaroa* in July 1916.

Initially they were on leave with other troops in London where they had a great time being able to visit the town of Guildford where their mother had spent her childhood. They met family friends of the Youdales and explored the streets of Guildford.

Then they were called up to the front in France and despite the dangers and hardships of the front line their farming background meant they were used to being in all kinds of conditions. They did record in a letter home that they were seldom free from the cold and “that we are both doing fair enough”.

But this was to change when William wrote to his sister Ethel in December 1917 to tell her George had been killed in action. Apparently his column went to get rations and was returning when a shell exploded beside George and his horse. He was killed instantly, his hand still in his pocket holding a box of matches he was about to use to light his pipe. His brother had the sad duty of organising a fence and cross to mark his grave.

Again he wrote to Ethel, “You can’t realise the difference his death has made to me, before there was always comfort in the thought, that we were both out here together, and never far apart, but now I am alone in this part of the world with nothing to look forward to except the finish.” .

George Davison was eventually buried in the Huts Cemetery in Belgium. Brother James returned home. He took up a carrying business working from a yard in King Street in Timaru.

The loss of a son was particularly hard on mothers. In the 1920’s mother Sarah wrote to daughter Ethel setting out a few things she wanted done after her death. Included in the instructions was the request that a small piece of daughter Cecily’s furniture and the framed picture of George should never be sold or given away. Cecily was a probationer nurse and had died in the influenza epidemic of 1918.

George is remembered on the Southburn War memorial and recorded on his mothers stone in the Timaru Cemetery. The cob walls of their farmhouse still stand on Davisons Road.



George Davison