

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

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Maurice Francis BUTLER, No.11812

Maurice Francis Butler was the third son of Francis and Catherine Butler née Griffin, of Coolbane, Killorglin, Co. Kerry, Ireland. Born on 17 March 1884 at Killarney, County Kerry, Maurice came to New Zealand in about 1905. He worked on farms in the Temuka district for two years before going to the North Island. Family who were known to be in New Zealand were a brother William who also served in World War One, his sister Hannah Cecilia who married to John Oliver Manaton in 1910 at Timaru and his sister Catherine Frances who married Herbert O'Connor in 1919 at Fairlie. He also had an uncle, William Butler living at Glen-iti.

Maurice enlisted in the North Island on 11 January 1916. He was living at Waverley and working as a labourer for the Public Works Department, his next-of-kin was his sister Mrs J Manaton, of the Plough Hotel, Rangiora. Having joined the Wellington Infantry Regiment of the 12th Reinforcements, he embarked on 1 May 1916 from Wellington, headed for Suez on the "Ulimaroa". M. F. Butler later transferred to the 1st Battalion of the Otago Infantry Regiment.

Although destined for Suez, Private Butler disembarked at Southampton. From there he was posted to Sling Camp and in October 1916 he left for France and got to join his battalion – 1st Otago Infantry – at Rouen. All his service was in the Messines campaign, until he was killed in action on 17 June 1917 in Belgium, aged 33 years. His was one of 141 deaths recorded in Casualty List No. 606.

His medals – British War medal and Victory Medal - were authorised to be sent to his father at Coolbane, but he too, died in 1917, at home in Ireland. Maurice left no will. It appears that his oldest brother James may have also been in New Zealand as he and William, noted as brothers, were nominated as next-of-kin but their address was not known. His sister Hannah Manaton was the legal next-of-kin.

Maurice Francis Butler is remembered at the Messines Ridge (New Zealand) Memorial, Messines Ridge British Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. His name is also inscribed on the Timaru Memorial Wall and on St Joseph's Church, Temuka, Memorial.

The name of Maurice Butler was heard again on Anzac Day, 1927. A Requiem Mass was celebrated at St Joseph's Church, Temuka. Before the Dead March was played by the organist, the names of those from the Temuka parish who had died "on the field of honour" were read – among them that of Maurice Butler.

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