

*Greymouth Evening Star.* 26 July 1916 (Papers Past) [03/07/2019]

Mr and Mrs Geaney, of Brunner, have received advice from the Minister of Defence that their son, Private "Dan" Geaney, was wounded on July 15th, and three boys in the family are, or have been, in the trenches "somewhere in France," fighting for their King and country.

*Greymouth Evening Star.* 31 July 1916 (Papers Past) [03/07/2019]

We regret to say that among those who have succumbed to wounds received in action in France is Private Dan P. Geaney, youngest son of Mr and Mrs H. Geaney, of Brunner. On Wednesday last the news of his being wounded was cabled out, and it was then reported that he had been admitted to a hospital in England. Evidently the injuries were of a very serious nature, as he only survived them for a few days, intelligence of a fatal termination being received on Saturday. The deceased was a splendid stamp of a man, well known and highly respected, and was a sawmiller by occupation, having been engaged at various mills along the Otira line. He has two brothers serving at the Front. We sympathise with Mr and Mrs Geaney in their sad loss.

## **“SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE”**

### **EXPERIENCES IN THE TRENCHES**

LETTER FROM THE LATE RIFLEMAN P. D. GEANEY.

Rifleman P. D. Geaney, of Brunner, who gave up his life at the war on July 29th ult., in defence of the Empire, wrote to his sister, Mrs. W. Paine, of Cronadun, under date of June 6th, and we have been permitted to make extracts from the letter. He says:—

“I have just finished my first relief in the trenches and passed the ordeal safely. The particular sector of the front we occupy is a comparatively quiet one, that is to say, there is not much offensive fighting or attacking done. Both sides are merely content to sit in their respective trenches and hurl shells and bombs of all sizes at each other. About 90 per cent never hit anyone. Rifles, grenades and machine guns also play a prominent part and the whole performance generally is just ideal for breaking in recruits, and getting them accustomed to bursting shells, bombs, bullets, gas, liquid fire, tear shells, aeroplanes, Zeppelins, and, in fact anything German that tends to scarify a man unless by meditation and mental training he has hardened himself to it beforehand.

“That is approximately the position now and has been for some time. But, of course, it cannot last for ever, and a general ‘smack up,’—or what the Huns call a ‘straafe’—may start any time, in which case it will be war in real earnest, and the Verdun performance with variations will be enacted here.

“I see Jerry very often. The company he is in relieves mine in the trenches, and both are in the same brigade. He is under similar conditions to mine. All the West Coast talen are in easy touch with one another and hear of each others doings regularly. Tom White, from Stillwater, was killed instantly last week by a bullet. He is the only West Coaster so far who has met with a mishap.

“Of course in an attack the position would be reversed, and a fellow would need to have a considerable amount of luck to come out unscathed. He is almost sure to get a mark of some description, even though it be what they call a ‘back-sheeck,’—one that is not bad enough to kill, but good enough to send you home.

“Meanwhile we are having a real good time—plenty of food, clothes and rest, and not too much work. After coming out of the trenches we go through a big bath house. Go in one end, strip off everything, wash ourselves in disinfected warm water and come out the other dressed in new, or at least clean, clothing. No matter how dirty you become in the trenches you are made quite new again.

“There are towns quite close to where we are, to which leave is granted, and amusements of all kinds can be had in abundance, by paying for it of course.

“The civil population hereabouts take life rather seriously, which is not to be

wondered at and, generally speaking, I don't like their style. In other parts, back from the actual war zone, they are different.

“The districts we passed through in the train are really entrancing. Green fields, nothing but green fields and beautiful towns, the inhabitants of which wear a perpetual smile, rippling into laughter, on the smallest provocation. They remind me, by their general manner of Irish people. I believe they are Irish, only they speak the French language.

“Everywhere are manifestations of their religious fervour, while their churches inside are simply magnificent. Even little villages, of the size of say Reefton, have a church that would, in New Zealand, be considered a cathedral and it is a crime what the Huns do with any that are within range. But it doesn't matter much after all. It will all be made good again some day.”

**LIEUT. T. E. Y. SEDDON'S EXPERIENCES.  
WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS.**

**A FRIENDLY DISPOSED ENEMY.**

“August 11 —The Lady Liverpool Committee at Hokitika have sent more socks. They have arrived just at the right time, for the boys will need them now. Well done, the ladies. I must write and acknowledge their kindness.

“There is not a great deal of news since I last wrote. Poor Dan Geaney is reported to have died in the hospital in London. Jerry, his brother, is with me, and we cannot find any trace of Dan, so I wrote to Sir Thomas Mackenzie today. You would be surprised if you knew how little is known by one unit about what goes on in another. In fact, one company doesn't know what happens in the neighbouring company's lines. Any news one gets in the trenches is unreliable somehow.

“I see by the Weekly Press that the Westland Racing Club has arranged to purchase the land adjoining the saddling paddock. If that is really so, I hope the ornamentation of the approach will be attended to. Keep the trees growing. This is the country for trees—such beauties and the gardens are so well laid out.

“My lieutenant friend with the singing voice from New Zealand has arrived. He is in great spirits and his adventures are thrilling. He takes a pleasure in defying the torpedo shells. At one point the New Zealanders have great fun with the Hun. At 5 a.m. they yell out “Fritz, Fritz!” and up goes Fritz's head. Fritz, you will see, is friendly disposed at this particular point, and he happens to belong to a Prussian Regiment too. One day the Huns put a gramophone on the parapet, but it was silenced by one of our bullets, Fritz gets off the English and French swear words, or expressions of contempt.

“I have just had a mail in from the Coast. It was grand. Letters from all parts of the electorate, from Wataroa and Okarito in the south, to the Grey Valley in the north. So I got lots of news. I felt for the time that I was back again in dear old Hokitika. What lots of changes in Hokitika offices—the fellows off to the front.

“Divisional aquatic sports all day tomorrow. Tommies think our fellows are amphibious. I will be on the look-out for the West Coasters at the gathering. I will see Captain Shepherd and the boys and arrange for the last lot of socks to be distributed. I am just off to the trenches. Adieu.”

## **BRUNNER BOY HONORED.**

### **LATE PRIVATE GEANEY.**

#### **AWARDED THE MILITARY CROSS**

When full details are available it will probably be found that the following letter, written by Sergeant Robert Simmers, to his mother at Dannevirke, refers to what happened at the time when, for his conspicuous bravery, the late Private Denis Geaney, of Brunner, was awarded the Military Cross, Sergeant Simmers gives the story in these words:

“The other night I took out a fighting patrol into ‘No Man’s Land’ and had quite an experience. We went out, firstly, to look for a wounded man, and after that to fight any Germans we saw. I believe the enemy used the wounded man as a decoy, for he (the enemy) had a large party waiting for us in the grass and thistles. To cut a short story shorter, he lobbed a score of bombs amongst us, and we could not see where they came from. Five of us remained and found the wounded man - and after three hours’ waiting, with machinegun fire going on over and round us, stretcher-bearers arrived. The five of us were mentioned in despatches.”

The following were the five men referred to:

Sergeant Simmers, Dannevirke.

Sergeant Brister, Christchurch.

Bombardier Kutzt, Palmerston North.

Gunner Millar, Shannon.

Private J. D. Geaney, Brunner (since reported died of wounds).

Private Geaney is a son of Mr. and Mrs Humphrey Geaney, of Brunner, who have two other sons in the firing line in France. The death of their son has been a tremendous shock to them, but the knowledge that he not only did his duty to his King and country but also displayed such conspicuous bravery that he was awarded the Military Cross, will no doubt help to assuage the grief they feel at the loss of their beloved one.

**DIED OF WOUNDS.  
RIFLEMAN DANIEL GEANEY.**

Mr. Humphrey Geaney, of Brunnerstonl, has received word from Lieut. T. E. Y. Seddon, M.P., in connection with the death of his son, Rifleman Dan P. Geaney. Lieut. Seddon. in view of reports that the deceased soldier was not killed, wrote to the High Commissioner's Office in London and received the following reply, dated August 17th, from Sir Thomas. Mackenzie (High Commissioner):---

"I have your letter of the 11th inst, and find out, upon inquiry, that unfortunately No. 26/993, Rifleman D. P. Geaney, died of wounds on July 7th, in the First London General Hospital, Camberwell, London."

In a letter to the deceased's mother, dated August 29th, Lieut. Seddon wrote: "Accept my deepest sympathy in the loss of your dear son. Dan. When I heard he was wounded I tried to find him, but heard he had been sent to England. I asked Sir Thomas Mackenzie to find out, and I am sending his letter, and also your son Jerry's. The latter has been very upset. I made inquiries several times about Dan and always got the very best reports. He did excellent work for the Rifle Brigade and his loss will be severely felt by his comrades. To you and Mr. Geaney I send my sympathy."

*Grey River Argus*. 20 April 1917 (Papers Past) [16/08/2016]

*Greymouth Evening Star*. 20 April 1917 (Papers Past) [03/07/2019]

## **THE LATE PRIVATE GEANEY**

### **PRESENTATION OF MEDAL.**

A very large number of people gathered in front of the Post Office last night, the occasion being the presentation of the Military Medal to Mrs. Geaney, the mother of the late Private D. Geaney who lost his life in France while carrying out a gallant action. Sir James Allen (Acting Prime Minister), who made the presentation, was loudly applauded on stepping to the front of the balcony of Revington's.

It was with mixed feeling, said Sir James, that one came there that night to present the medal to the mother of a gallant lad who had lost his life while serving his King and country, and, he might add, his parents. He was very sorry that the brave lad was not permitted to return and be with them that night to have the medal pinned on him. But he saw in the brave lad's death, hope arising from the fact of his gallantry and devotion to duty.

His Majesty the King had expressly stated his wish that these distinctions should be given in public, so that the people might know that the nation recognises gallantry and devotion by the highest in the land. (Applause.)

Sir James wished to express his sympathy with the parents. The lad's mother was there to receive the medal and she would cherish it all her life. The people would recognise what had been done by the young man. He was sure that there were many cases where services of bravery, worthy of medals, had been performed in this war, but which would never be known. He had heard of many gallant deeds at the front by men in the Ambulance Corps.

The people viewed with pride those medals and honour; pride at being born Britishers; pride in the men and women who were the parents of such brave men; pride in the brave people who had come to this country in the early days and who were the ancestors of our brave boys.

The speaker directed a few remarks to the Territorials and Senior Cadets and pointed out that the medals were representative of the great traditions of the country and of gallantry. He had met in Kumara two Crimean veterans who were very proud of their medals. He did not wish to keep the people too long and he would hand to Mrs. Geaney the medal won by her son, Private Geaney, who had performed such gallant service for his King and country. He was sure that Mrs. Geaney would be proud to remember that her son was the brave son of a brave mother.

Mr. P. C. Webb, M.P, endorsed all that Sir Allen had said. He said that all who knew Private Geaney had known him as a brave man before he went to the front.

He hoped that all the men when they came back would be remembered for their brave work. Sir James Allen then read a letter which he had received from Mrs. Geaney thanking him for the distinction.

Three cheers were heartily given for the Minister, on the motion of the Mayor, followed by three cheers for the late Private Geaney.

*Greymouth Evening Star.* 25 April 1917 (Papers Past) [03/07/2019]

**AT BAND ROTUNDA.** [Greymouth]

**PUBLIC SERVICE.**

A public service, held at the Baud Rotunda this afternoon, was largely attended. The local territorials, National Reserve and Cadets attended in full force and formed a guard of honor to the Anzac men present, the Salvation Army Band heading the procession to the Rotunda.

His Worship the Mayor stated they had assembled to celebrate the second anniversary of Anzac Day. They had present a number of Anzacs whom they desired to honor, at the same time not forgetting those who were absent, some of whom had given their lives on that memorable day at Gallipoli, and many of whom, still in the firing line, they hoped to welcome home again. They had also present Mrs. Geaney, mother of that brave lad who lost his life in France, and to whom Sir Jas. Allen had last week presented the military medal won by the late Patrick Dan Geaney. Mrs. Geaney was received with applause followed by cheers. As the Mayor called the names of the following Anzac present, each stepped forward and acknowledged the complimentary cheers with a salute:

Major Rocheford.

Sergt. Major Armstrong.

Sergt. Major Ritchie.

Lance Corporal O. McLean.

Private Robertson.

Private Hill.

Private Nesbitt.

Corporal Hanb.

Private Findley.

Private Smith.

Sergt. Major Taylor.

Continuing, the Mayor referred to the gallantry of the New Zealanders and Australians who landed at Gallipoli on that memorable day. He could not let the occasion pass without impressing on them the necessity for reinforcements. He



had read in the press that the Australians had been withdrawn from the firing line, lacking supports. Men who refused to go to their help were the biggest scabs in the civilised world. The more men they sent the sooner the dreadful war would be brought to an end. (Applause).

Archdeacon York then led the service, which opened with the National Anthem, followed by the well-known hymn “O God our Help in Ages Past, our hope for years to come.” Captain Gil Inglis (Salvation Army) led in prayer and the Rev. E. D. Patchett read the Scripture lesson, 90th Psalm.

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The proceedings concluded with the singing of “Abide with Me” and the National Anthem

*New Zealand Times*. 20 July 1918 (Papers Past) [03/07/2019]

Mr and Mrs Geaney, of Greymouth, who lost their son, Daniel Patrick Geaney, at the front, on July 27th, 1916, have received the following:—

“Dear Friend,-Just a line to let you know that in connection with the Pilgrimage on Anzac Day to the graves of New Zealand soldiers buried in the country, Mrs Sharp and another Australian lady (Miss Naylor) visited Nunhead cemetery, near London. There we also found the resting place of your loved one and several other New Zealanders who have made the supreme sacrifice. On these graves also we placed floral tributes and planted some pansies. Similar action, was, I know, taken in other centres, and I am hopeful that next year all New Zealand graves in the United Kingdom will be specially visited on Anzac Day. With kind regards, yours sincerely, A. T. Sharp, organiser, Anzac Day Pilgrimage.”