

Smith dies of measles at camp

SCRoll (South Canterbury Roll of Honour), hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, was born out of a vision to develop short biographies of all South Cantabrians who served their country during World War I. They have been compiled to be publicly accessible in order to support the 100th commemoration of World War I. *The South Canterbury Herald* will feature some of the biographies over coming weeks. This week we feature Trooper Ernest Smith.

Trooper Ernest Smith died July 8, 1915 aged 26 at Trentham. He was born 1889, son of Albert George and Mary Ann Smith and is buried at the Linwood Cemetery, Christchurch.

He enlisted on June 12, 1915 and was in Trentham by June 14. His file states he died of malignant measles in July.

He was never given a serial number but his mother was sent a memorial plaque.

Timaru Herald, Volume CIII, Issue 15703, 10 July 1915, Page 2, Timaru Man's Death – Trooper

Ernest Smith: Trooper Ernest Smith, of Timaru, a member of the Canterbury Mounted Reinforcements, died in the Trentham camp hospital on Thursday.

Trooper Smith's mother resides in Christchurch, and it is said only heard through a mate of her son that he was ill.

On Monday morning a telegram was sent to the Wellington Hospital, asking for particulars of the illness, to which a reply was received "Left hospital yesterday".

The telegram was signed by Dr Barclay, and the interpretation put upon it was that the Trooper

was convalescent. On Wednesday Mrs Smith received a telegram from the Trentham camp hospital informing her that her son was dangerously ill, and the mother with two daughters and another son left by the Maori for Wellington that night.

On Thursday morning, between nine and ten o'clock, telegram arrived for Mrs Smith from the camp commandant advising her that Trooper Smith was "in Racecourse Hospital, Trentham, condition serious; advisable relatives come at once".

Trooper Smith died at

12.45[pm] on Thursday.

It is reasonable to suppose that the tardy information given to relatives in this case will be a matter for inquiry by the Royal Commission.

The late Trooper Smith was born at Opawa and educated at the Waltham School.

After leaving school he joined the Railway Department as a cadet and was a long time in Christchurch as a telegraphist.

He was transferred to Timaru, where, before leaving for Trentham, he was in charge of the booking office. He desired to go

away with the Main Force, but could not obtain the necessary departmental leave till a few weeks ago.

While at the Waltham School and in Christchurch, and later in Timaru, he took an exceptional keen interest in swimming and outdoor sports, and won numerous medals and trophies. In physique he was particularly well built, strong and healthy.

■ This is part of the SCRoll project. You can find SCRoll stories, hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, at museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll