

GREAT WAR STORIES

# John Emery Wilds

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

CAROL BELL

John Wilds, born in Timaru on 14 August 1896, was the son of Eliza and John Henry Wilds.

He was 5ft 7½in with a fair complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. He enlisted on 13 April 1917 and embarked at Wellington on 12 June 1917 as part of G Company Reinforcements, NZ Rifle Brigade.

The *Timaru Herald* of 12 April 1918 recorded that Mrs J.H Wilds of Otupua Rd had received private advice that her son, Bugler J.E. Wilds (Johnny), 27th Reinforcements, was wounded on March 27th, dangerously, by gunshot wounds in the left arm; and noted on 1 May that Bugler Wilds had died of his injuries. He

was buried at Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.

There followed: "Late Bugler Wilds: The late Bugler Wilds, whose death was reported in yesterday's issue, was the only son of Mr and Mrs J.H. Wilds, Otupua Rd.

He was born in Timaru and educated at the Timaru Main School. On leaving school he was apprenticed to the carpentry trade, after which he spend a year as conductor on one of the Timaru municipal buses, and became a general favourite among all with whom he had to do.

Following this he returned to his trade in the employ of Shillito Bros, and later left to take employment in Wellington.

He assisted in the fitting up of transports, and when thus engaged visited the principal ports of the Dominion.

Being a good musician, and having a cheerful disposition he was a great favourite wherever he went. He could play any instrument, and was also able to sing well.

He was a bugler when he left school, and joined the Territorials as bugler, under the late Major Grant.

Taking a keen interest in military work he was selected as one of the maxim gun team to represent Timaru at the Auckland exhibition, after which he joined the SC Mounted Rifles as trumpeter.

While still quite young he

enlisted, and on reaching Trentham was made bugler with the 27th Reinforcements.

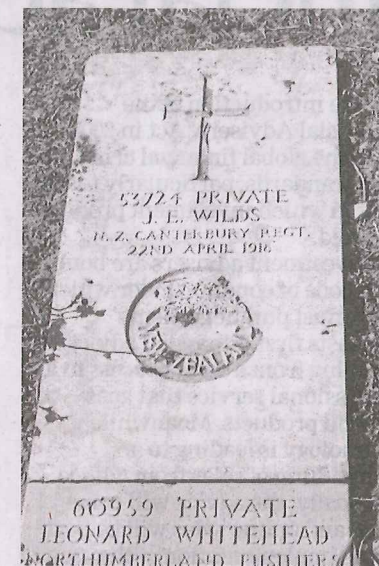
On arrival Home he completed his training at Sling Camp, and was then placed in the Bugle Band for a month. He was then sent over to France and went into the trenches about the middle of December since which time he has been in some heavy engagements.

On March 27 his parents received word that he had been wounded, and he died on April 22.

The deceased was only 21 years of age."

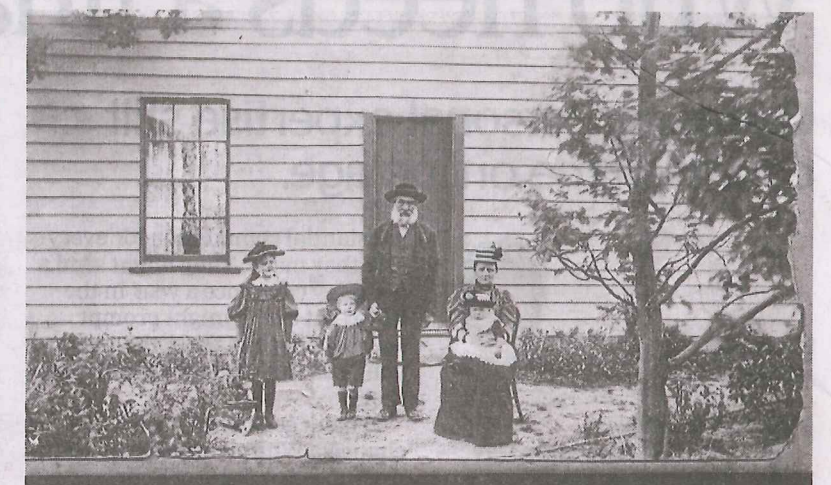
Sadly, on 22 May, a small story commented on a complaint that "the boys overseas" were not receiving parcels sent to them.

They had been asked to acknowledge receipt of such



John Emery Wilds' headstone at Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France.

parcels and a one of the letters "from somewhere in France" stated: "There are quite a number of Timaru boys in my company, and they greatly appreciated the splendid efforts of the Timaru Ladies' Patriotic Society. Mr Hind



Pictured, from left, Ettie Davidson, John Wilds with his grandfather also John Wilds, Mary Annie Davidson holding John Davidson. Bugler John Wilds is seen here as a child holding the hand of his grandfather John Wilds, one of the Deal boatmen who came to Timaru in 1859, at the Wilds' home in North Street on the site of the present Timaru Boys' High School, circa 1896.

PHOTO: CREDIT SOUTH CANTERBURY MUSEUM 2057.

of the TBHS is our second in command, the the rest of the Timaru boys are Mark Davidson, Johnny Wilds, R.P. Kilgour, Tim Kirby, Jack Lyons (Orari), Peter Scollard (Pleasant Point). Our OC is Captain Gillies, a son of Mr

Bruce Gillies of Mt Nessing."

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