

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

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Rifleman Edward Cosgrave, No.25815

Edward John Cosgrave was born on 14 March 1897 at Waimate, the youngest son of Edward Cosgrave and Bridget Mary (known as Mary) née Costigan, who had married at Timaru in 1885. He was baptised Roman Catholic at Waimate on 24 March 1897, his name being entered in the register in Latin - Edwardus Johannes Cosgrave. The eldest child (John) died at three years of age and is buried at Waimate. His siblings attended Makikihi and St Andrews schools before transferring to St Patrick's Convent School at Waimate in April 1899, where it appears Edward may have started school.

Edward Cosgrave Snr was an active member of the Waimate and districts community. In 1891 he just missed out on a position on the Waimate Borough Council. And in October 1893 he was elected to the committee of the Waimate Caledonian Society for the ensuing year, and again in subsequent years. For the December 1900 and 1902 meets he was appointed a jumping judge.

Edward Cosgrave Snr held the licence for the Makikihi Hotel, and when the licence was transferred in June 1899, Edward Cosgrave advertised that he was commencing business as a general blacksmith and he hoped "by Strict Attention to business and Good Workmanship to gain a fair share of Public Patronage". About 1906 the family moved to Hawke's Bay. The father was a blacksmith by trade, which occupation he continued after the move from Waimate to Hastings, until his death in 1916.

In January 1916 young Edward Cosgrave, a pastry cook of Napier, was medically examined at the Napier Drill Hall. He was in good health and free of any illnesses or defects. It appears that Edward may have put his age up by two years to enable him to enlist. In May 1916 he was nineteen years old, but his date of birth is given as 1895, making his supposed age 21. He was a pastry cook living with his mother in Napier. His father had died there on 21 March 1916.

While a member of the 17th Reinforcements at Trentham camp, in August 1916, along with two other Hawke's Bay men, he was successful in gaining the marksman's badge, scoring 140 marks. 130 marks were necessary to win a badge, and the totals were seen as a great credit to the "Hawke's Bay boys". On 25 September 1916 Rifleman Edward Cosgrave embarked with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade for England per the Devon. There he marched into Sling in November 1916, before proceeding overseas in the following January and joining his battalion at Rouen.

The next news, just eight months later, was that Rifleman Cosgrave, 25815, had been killed in action on 19 August 1917 at Ypres, Belgium, a victim of the Western European Campaign after only six months in the field and not yet 21 years old. He was one of 11 of the Rifle Brigade killed in action on 19 August 1917, and one of 19 killed in action whose names appeared in the 665th casualty list. He was buried in the Prowse Point Military Cemetery at Commines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium, described as one of the most beautiful cemeteries in the Ypres Salient and where Edward rests with 41 other New Zealanders. Patrick Cosgrave, a brother of Edward, was listed in the Reserve Rolls, being a married man with two children. Edward's medals – British War medal and Victory medal - were sent to his mother, as were the plaque and scroll in 1921/1922.

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