

**Great War Stories: Remembering the sacrifices of those with SC connections who served their country 100 years ago.**

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**Private George Huntley HAY, 14020**

**By Teresa Scott**

George Huntley Hay was the second child and eldest son of George Hay and his second wife, Helen née Marshall, of 2 Hurdley Street, Timaru. Known as Huntley, he was born on 16 August 1895 at Glenomaru in South Otago, and was most likely educated at the Glenomaru School, with which his father was involved. Huntley was probably in his teens when the family moved to Timaru.

Huntley was a labourer for C. Gamble, East Taieri when he enlisted on 9 March 1916, single and having turned 20 just six months earlier. He nominated his father of Timaru as his next-of-kin. Standing at 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighing in at 154 pounds, George was in good physical condition, although he said that he had suffered from rheumatic pains some years previously. G. H. Hay, a labourer of Taieri, left Otago in early March with the men representing Group 15. He had no vaccination mark when he was medically examined but was vaccinated at Trentham a few months later. On 26 June 1916 he embarked at Wellington with the 14th Reinforcements, Otago Infantry Battalion, destined for Devonport, England. After a month at Sling he proceeded to France and joined his battalion in October at Rouen. He remained with the Otago Infantry throughout his time at the front.

Private George Huntley Hay met his fate on 14 June 1917, killed in action at Messines, Belgium, just one year after leaving New Zealand and aged only 21 years and 10 months. His was one of 155 deaths recorded in Casualty List No. 606 issued on 27 June 1917, the vast majority of the victims killed in action. A death notice appeared in the Timaru Herald of 30 June and in the Otago Witness of 4 July – beloved son of George and Helen Hay, corner Hurdley and Otupua Streets, Timaru.

Thereafter, Huntley was regularly honoured by his family with notices in Otago and Timaru newspapers. In June 1918 his parents, sisters and brothers remembered thus - "He arose responsive to his country's call, He gave himself, his life, his all." In 1919 – "There is a link death cannot sever, Fond remembrance lasts forever." In 1920 the poignant message read "In a distant land he lies, At rest in a soldier's grave, His battle fought, his name enrolled On the scroll of the deathless brave." And for years after, the grief of his loving parents, five brothers and two sisters was quietly expressed, as in 1927 – "Duty called him – he was there To do his bit and take his share; His heart was good, his spirit brave, His resting place a soldier's grave." His resting place was indeed, a raw soldier's grave, he having no known grave. Although the Battle of Messines was a striking success, the New Zealanders paid a heavy price for success – a price paid in the life and future of young

Huntley Hay. He is remembered on the Messines Ridge (New Zealand) Memorial, Messines Ridge British Cemetery, Belgium; and his name is inscribed on the Timaru War Memorial Wall, the Glenomaru War Memorial, and the marble tablet beneath the memorial window in the East Taieri Presbyterian Church.

Private G. H. Hay was survived by his parents, five brothers and two sisters, and one half-brother and one half-sister. His medals (British War Medal and Victory Medal) were sent to his father.

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