

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

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**Rifleman Alexander John Robinson, No.23/2080**

**By Teresa Scott**

Alexander John Robinson, usually known as Alex, was the son of Alfred and Emily (née Drew) Robinson, of Palmerston North, formerly of Waimate. Alfred and Emily had married at Port Chalmers in 1882, soon after arriving in New Zealand from England. Alec was born on 30 July 1893 at the Maori Kaik, Waimate, the sixth son and eighth of 13 children. Alfred, a nurseryman, and Emily resided at Waimate from 1885 until after 1914. The parents and some of the family moved north in about 1915, while some older members remained in the Waimate - Timaru area.

In 1919 Alfred was at Palmerston North and by 1928 at Foxton, probably with his son Thomas. Alec was working as a farm hand at Eltham in 1914. A. Robinson and L. Robinson each promised £1 to the Waimate Patriotic Fund in August 1914. These two were probably Alec's father or eldest brother (also called Alfred) and his brother Lawrence who also served in the war. In July 1916 brother Alf gave £1 to the Hunter Red Cross, and sold roosters for 10 shillings for the same cause, while his wife's chocolate cake was sold for 11 shillings then resold for 10 shillings.

A. J. Robinson was one of sixteen recruits who registered at the Manawatu Patriotic Recruiting Office in mid October 1915, bringing the total number of registrations to 773, but of these only 444 were medically fit. He had previously registered for compulsory military service at Waimate. Alec John Robinson enlisted at Trentham on 16 November 1915, aged 22½ years. He was a labourer, of Church of England allegiance, single, fit and in good health. He nominated his mother Mrs A. Robinson (Mrs Emily Robinson), 34 Main Street, Palmerston North, as his next-of-kin and gave the same address for himself, although he was at the time working for a horse trainer at Awapuni.

He embarked with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade on 4 March 1916 from Wellington, destined for Suez, Egypt. Leaving Port Said on 14 April 1916, he marched into Etaples, France, and joined his battalion in the Field on 29 June 1916, and then rejoined on 16 February 1917 after a time in detention. On 27 January 1917, in the Field, he was awarded 28 days Field Punishment for using improper language to his superior officer, saying "I am

full up with this company and I am going to get out. I have two elder brothers in another battalion." A few months later he was deprived of three days pay for being absent from parade.

Rifleman A. J. Robinson, 23/2080, New Zealand Rifle Brigade, was killed in action on 8 August 1917, at Ypres, Belgium, just 24 years old, and was buried in the Prowse Point Military Cemetery, Commines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium. Alec Robinson is one of 42 New Zealand casualties buried at Prowse Point Cemetery, which is located 1½ miles south of Messines. His name appeared in the casualty lists of many newspapers throughout the country, including the local Manawatu Times and Manawatu Standard, on or about 24 August 1917. These lists named 74 men killed in action in early August. At a meeting on 31 August 1917 the local Patriotic Society passed a resolution sympathising with the relatives of several soldiers killed in action, among them A. J. Robinson.

Three of Alec's brothers served in World War I - Albert Victor and Lawrence who had remained in the Waimate district, and Charles Nicholas who was living in Southland at the time. His eldest brother, Alfred William James Robinson, a farmer at Kohika, Makikihi, was called up in December 1917. On 2 January 1917, Alexander John Robinson made out a short form of will, by which he gave the whole of his property and effects to his mother, Mrs Emily Robinson, C/o Mr McGregor, Manui via Mangaweka, Main Trunk, N.Z. In November 1917 the Public Trustee duly administered the estate – Cash in Post Office Savings Bank £20. LI war gratuity was also to be granted to his mother. Alec's medals – British War Medal and victory Medal – were sent to Mrs E. Robinson, 31 Grey Street, Palmerston North, as were the memorial plaque and scroll. Emily Robinson died in 1937 and is buried at Palmerston North with her youngest daughter, while Alfred died in 1946 and is buried at Papakura with his son Thomas. The name of A. J. Robinson is inscribed on the Palmerston North War Memorial.

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