



William Bowles' medals on display in the 'Hell Let Loose' exhibition.

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# Medals a story of experience

## MUSEUM PIECE

Amongst South Canterbury Museum's display 'Hell Let Loose' is a small group of medals which help tell the story of a local man's experience on World War I's Western Front.

Military medals could be seen as purely ceremonial but in fact they offer clues about the experiences of the wearer.

The medals on display are a Military Medal, a 1914-15 Star, a British War Medal and a Victory Medal, and were awarded to William Bowles. His Star, British

War and Victory medals immediately show that he fought in World War I, but there are other hints of his war within his medals.

For instance his 1914-15 Star reveals that he joined the war early on since it was awarded to people who served prior to 1916. It also tells us he was a volunteer since this was before conscription came into force in New Zealand.

His Military Medal is a gallantry award which shows that during his war he must have been recognized for bravery. In Bowles' case he was awarded the medal for action against an enemy strong point on the Western Front during January 1918.

There is one item missing from the display that would tell us the tragic end to Bowles' service. Bowles was killed in April 1918 and his next of kin would have received a Memorial Plaque to commemorate his death during the war. Bowles' plaque is not held by the Museum but one is on display as part of 'Hell Let Loose'.

Those wanting to see Bowles' medals and the rest of the 'Hell Let Loose' exhibition have their last chance on Waitangi Day. The display will close on February 7 and will be replaced by an exhibition on the local band scene during the 1970s.