

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

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Rifleman Charles SCANNELL, No.21897

By Teresa Scott

Charles Scannell, known to family as Charlie, was born on 20 May 1892 at Kerrytown near Timaru, the seventh son of Daniel and Ellen (née Foley) Scannell, of Lyalldale. He was baptised on 5 June 1892 in the Temuka Roman Catholic parish. Charles was educated at the Kerrytown Convent School, the family in that area before moving to the St Andrews district in the early 1900s. Prior to enlistment, Charles was working as a farm hand at Lyalldale and Waimate.

Charles Scannell contributed to the war effort right from the outset – in September 1914 he gave 10 shillings to the Home Relief Fund for the Poor of Great Britain, Ireland, and Belgium. He was joined by his father, mother and brother Joseph. And in July 1915 Charles, his father Dan and his brother Joe all contributed to the Lyalldale Red Cross Fund. Charles was one of the successful candidates in the examination in first aid to the injured at Lyalldale in February 1916.

Charles and his brother Michael both enlisted with the Sixteenth Reinforcements on 3 May 1916. Charles, a farm hand at St Andrews, was in good physical condition and already belonged to the 2nd South Canterbury Regiment. He named his mother, Mrs Ellen Scannell, as his next-of-kin. A social to bid farewell to Privates M. and C. Scannell and three other locals was held in the Lyalldale School on 20 July 1916. On 21 August 1916 he embarked with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade per the Mokoia, destined for Plymouth, England. It was on this journey that his troubles began when, on 12 October 1916, he broke his thigh. He was taking off a boot whilst attending parade and he fell into the hold, feet foremost (the cover was not in place). Mr and Mrs Scannell received word of his injury and admission to hospital on 19 October. A court found that Scannell's injury was the result of a common accident whilst on duty and was satisfied that there was no skylarking. A few days later Rifleman C. Scannell was admitted to the military hospital at Dakar, seriously ill and suffering from his fractured thigh. On 16 December 1916 at Dakar it was reported that the patient was still in hospital, that his condition was unsatisfactory, and it was feared that a long time must elapse (probably some months) before he would be able to bend the limb or use it freely to support himself. A response was awaited from New Zealand Headquarters as to whether he should be sent to the United Kingdom.

Charles Scannell was, however, being invalided home when he died at a port of call - Durban, South Africa - having contracted an illness. His was one of four deaths from sickness recorded on casualty list 585 issued in May 1917. He died on 28 May 1917 at the Drill Hall Section No. 3 of the General Hospital at Durban, of acute nephritis (uraemia) contracted whilst on active service, aged 25 years. A large circle of friends conveyed their sympathy to his grieving family. Charles was buried in the

Durban (Ordnance Road) Military Cemetery, Kwazulu, Natal, South Africa. His older brother Michael was killed in action on 7 June – just 11 days after Charlie’s death. The names of Charles and Michael James are inscribed on their parents’ memorial stone in the Timaru Cemetery. “Dear Charlie, how we miss you in your grave so far away” was the message in an In Memoriam notice in the *Timaru Herald* of 28 May 1918. For some years after, his parents, brothers and sisters inserted an In Memoriam notice in the *New Zealand Tablet*.

A photo of Michael and Charles in uniform was printed in the *Star* of 19 July 1917. His British War Medal was despatched to his father, and the plaque and scroll to his mother in 1924. With his serious injury on transport to the war arena and his fatal illness, Charles saw no action. Three other brothers - Francis, Jeremiah (Jerry; fit only for Home Service)) and Joseph (Joe) - were called up for service in the war. Two nephews of Charles served in World War Two - Patrick Louis Scannell who was killed in action in 1944 in Italy and Pte John Joseph Scannell who died in 1943 and is buried in Timaru. The name of Rifleman Charles Scannell is recorded on the Lyalldale War Memorial, the Timaru Sacred Heart Basilica Memorial, the St Andrews War Memorial and the Timaru Memorial Wall.

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