

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

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Rifleman Charles Albert CHILDS, No.21791

By Teresa Scott

Charles Albert Childs was born on 31 May 1894 at Pleasant Point, and baptised in St Albans Anglican Church at Pleasant Point on 22 July 1894. He was the eldest son of Albert Edward Childs and Anna née Coleman. He started at Pleasant Point School in 1899 just after his fifth birthday, and returned there in 1904 after almost two years at Waitohi School. His mother died in 1902, before Charles was eight years old. His father Albert married Agnes Young the following year. Albert was an old resident of Pleasant Point and lived there until his death in 1925.

Charles Childs enlisted with the Infantry on 3 May 1916. He was one of thirteen enrolments in March 1916. At the time Charles was a labourer for Mr J. McCormick at Seafield near Ashburton. Just prior to his departure C. Childs, a member of South Canterbury's quota for the 16th Reinforcements, left Timaru by the express for Trentham, after being entertained in the Stafford Tea Rooms by the Timaru Ladies Patriotic committee. After falling in and being addressed at the Drill Shed, the men proceeded to the station, led by the 2nd South Canterbury Regimental Band.

Charles nominated his father, Mr A. Childs, of Pleasant Point, as his next-of-kin. He was single, Church of England, in good physical and mental health, and belonged to the 2nd South Canterbury Regiment. Embarking as a rifleman with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade on the Mokoia on 21 August 1916, he was headed for England. From Sling Camp on Salisbury Plain he proceeded overseas in November 1916. In January 1917 he had a few brief admissions to the Field Ambulance with sickness and an injury to his index finger. For three weeks in March he was attached to the cable burying party. Just two months later on 19

May 1917 at Messines, Belgium, and 12 days short of his 23rd birthday, Rifleman Charles Childs was killed in action. His father received a cable to this effect in early June. Charles was said to be well known in the Temuka district where he was “a great favourite”.

He is buried in Kandahar Farm Cemetery in Belgium (just over two miles from where he was killed in the field), along with 32 other men who served with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. His name is inscribed on the Timaru Memorial Wall, the Pleasant Point War Memorial and the Pleasant Point School Memorial. His medals – British War Medal and Victory Medal - were duly received by his father, as were the plaque and scroll. His father claimed for pay due to his deceased soldier son and declared that he did not intend seeking Letters of Administration

There are very few mentions of this family in the local newspapers, and no headstones in the Pleasant Point cemetery to remember them. At a soldiers' welcome home social held in the Pleasant Point Oddfellows' Hall on 23 January 1918, sympathy was expressed for Mr Childs and his family on the loss of his two sons. And at the February 1918 meeting of the Pleasant Point District High School committee, a vote of sympathy was passed with the relatives of Mr Childs on the deaths of his sons at the front.

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