

SEND-OFFS TO WAIMATE SOLDIERS
9TH REINFORCEMENTS

The following enlisters were given a hearty send-off at the Waimate railway station to-day: —

W. Manson

H. L. Cameron

H. Algar

E. Hampton

J. Emmerson

J. Finlayson

A. Mackenzie

The Brass and Pipe Bands played the men to the station, and a military escort was provided by the 8th Mounted Regiment (now in camp here), under Lieut. Day.

Addressing the men from the railway steps (Mrs Francis the Mayoress being alongside him) the Deputy Mayor (Dr. Hayes) said that the whole community admired the patriotism of the men who were starting out with the 9th Reinforcements to do battle for the Dominion and the Empire. He need not say how very much the services of such men were appreciated. They were going forth to fight the most brutal and tyrannical foe in the whole world — a foe that had no respect or admiration for any of the things that the British people hold dear. The British soldier, whether in Flanders or at the Dardanelles, had made the whole world ring with praise of his bravery, resource, generosity, and humaneness. New Zealanders felt sure that the men of the 9th Reinforcements would follow the example already set, and that when the time to enter the battle-line came they would not be found wanting. In the name of the citizens he wished them God-speed and a safe return.

Cheers were given for the men.

Rev. A. S. Morrison said he stood there to bid the men God-speed. They were going forth to battle in a noble cause — the cause of Liberty. Germany was ambitious, aspiring, cruel and tyrannical. Not so the powers opposed to her. Depending upon the issue of this war, really, was the liberty of the world for years to come. The Empire had called for more men, and here were patriots offering to fight for her once again in her long and chequered career. The men must recognise that there would be trials but he felt sure they would be able to endure hardness. They were going away to fight for the little child that crawled the floor and lisped “mama,” and for the grown men and women also. Although they were going to wage war, they were really, if they came to think of it, going to fight against war. It was against militarism and(?) and ambitions war-making that the Allies were leagued in arms. Moreover, it was a war for Righteousness. He quoted the Psalmist: “In the day when I called upon Thee, Thou answered me and gavest strength to my soul.” He concluded with a verse of Tennyson, enjoining the men to face forth to right wrongs and follow the King.

More cheers were given for the men and one more for “the mothers.”

The train moved off amid a din of cheering and farewell.

**OFF TO TRENTHAM.
ANOTHER CONTINGENT LEAVES TIMARU.
ENTHUSIASTIC FAREWELL.**

The men who left for Trentham yesterday received a very enthusiastic farewell. They assembled at 3 p.m. in the drill shed where they were given afternoon tea by Mrs E. R. Guinness, assisted by Mrs G. Buchanan, Misses Guinness, Irvine, Clifford and Sterndale.

The Ven. Archdeacon Jacob addressed the men prior to leaving the barracks. He said they were to answer the call of duty and to help the brave boys who had gone before them and who were doing such splendid work. One hundred years ago Napoleon had urged his troops on with promises of great glory and victory. Wellington, addressing his troops told them to do their duty. At the present time the Kaiser encouraged his troops with visions of unmitigated glory, while the Allies' officers used Napoleon's motto: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Archdeacon Jacob said they were going to fight for King and country, to fight in the cause of right, and those who had no option but to stay at home felt proud of them. They would carry away with them the good wishes and appreciation of the people of Timaru and South Canterbury. He then gave the men the Church's blessing.

Lieutenant M. M. Weir was in charge of the march down to the railway station where he handed the command over to Sergt-Majors Johnston and Hollands, who proceeded to Trentham in charge of the men. Sergt-Majors Lindsay and Baldwin, of the local staff, assisted in marshalling the men and the 2nd (South Canterbury) Regimental Band pleasantly enlivened proceedings with some soul-striving patriotic airs. A large and enthusiastic crowd lined the streets and cheered the men as they went along.

Addressing the troops from his car, in which the Mayoress sat, at the northern end of the railway station, His Worship the Mayor, in a voice broken with emotion, wished them on behalf of Timaru and South Canterbury farewell, success on their important mission, and a speedy return to these shores. "Brave Lads," he said, "it is my duty and my privilege to wish you farewell on behalf of the town and of the whole district. We all know what those who have gone before you have done; they have our greatest admiration and you, like them will be ever in our thoughts. The New Zealanders have made a name which will live for all time in history, and we have no doubt but that you who are leaving us now will live up to the high standard which has been set you. (Hear, hear.) We are proud of you for the gallant way you have come forward to assist the Empire in its time of need, and we know that you will be a credit to South Canterbury and New Zealand. (Hear, hear.) You are going forward to fight shoulder to shoulder for truth, liberty and justice, and we know that in so doing you will be true to your God, your country and to each other. Once more I wish you all farewell." (Applause.) His Worship then called for three cheers "for the brave lads who are leaving" and the crowd responded with great heartiness.

The Band played patriotic airs while the men were entraining, last farewells were said, and the train drew out of the station to the accompaniment of a salvo of cheers and good wishes.

The following are the men who left: -

MOUNTED.

A. E. Bell, H. W. Black, W. H. Court, R. C. Carter, W. H. Clement, J. Finlayson, C. W. Gosling, E. L. Hampton, S. K. B. McClurg, W. Philp, V. G. Quelch, G. B. Ross. H. L. Thatcher, R. B. Williams. A. E. Wallace.

INFANTRY.

Privates F.W. Alley, F. Armstrong, J. Arrol, H. Algar, T. Barron, H. C. Bray, F. Barbour, W. E. Bishop, S. F. Breach, H. L. Bowden, L. G. Brett, W. S. Brady, W. A. Barret, A. A. O. J.

Bampton, J. H. Butland, J. Blackham, L. R. Collins, H. M. Curline, H. L. Cameron, J. Coll. A. E. Cain, T. P. Connolly, E. G. Claridge, J. A. Dick, B. B. Duke, W. Dwyer, A. R. Dean, J. G. Dunphy, H. G. Dellow. A. C. Dee, W. J. Exton, J. Emmerson, J. E. Eddington, J. S. Fothergill, J. H. Fletcher, E. Farrell, P. Fahey, H. Hickey, J. Hackett, B. B. Harte, G. Hosken, J. A. Harris, R. W. Irving, D. J. Irving, C. E. Jessop, J. Kirby, A. B. S. Keeffe, G. R. Kemp, H. W. Lane, J. H. Lewis, R. Loomes, E. J. Lorgelly, J. M. Laffey, W. H. Martin, W. J. Muldrew, A. Mackenzie, A. Morgan, W. Manson, F. G. Marshall, P. R. Mowatt, A. Macdonald, J. A. Martin, G. H. McCree, J. G. L. McBratney, R. B. McSweeney, J. McG. McRae, T. McAuliffe, T. Neil, J. Nee, J. N. O'Doyle, J. R. R. Owens, J. Pearse, J. Procter W. J. Patching, W. G. Patterson, J. T. Porter, F. S. Pearson, W. Potter, W. J. Roy, W. Ronaldson, C. Rennie, G. J. D. Spillane, W. Stewart, J. A. Scott, F. G. Sumner, A. Stace. D. T. Smith, A. Staff, J. W. Stevens, G. Stringfellow, H. Scarf, J. Thompson, W. W. Tilley, P. Thomas, G. G. Tomlinson, W. H. Terris, G. Unwin, A. Watson, F. Wallace, J. W. B. Watson, J. Wilson.

ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

Privates P. E. Clark (storeman), W. J. E. Keen (baker).

FAREWELL AT WAIMATE.

Early yesterday morning a good display of bunting denoted that something out of the ordinary was astir in Waimate, and when 12 o'clock noon came it seemed as if the whole town was moving towards the railway station. The occasion was the farewelling of the men who were leaving for the Ninth Reinforcements. Headed by the pipe band and the brass band, and escorted by the Waimate Mounted Rifles Squadron on foot, the men of the reinforcements were marched through the town to the station. At the station the men were halted for a few minutes while the Deputy-Mayor (Dr. E. C. Hayes) and the Rev. A. S. Morrison addressed them.

In a few well chosen words the Deputy-Mayor wished them God speed in the name of the people of Waimate, saying that they were going to fight an enemy unscrupulous, without principle, and without honour, and he felt sure they would do as well as the men who had gone before them to the Front. He wished them every success and God speed.

The Rev. A. S. Morrison addressing the men said that they were going to war to prevent war. They were going to war to save those who were left behind and who were dear to them. They were going to save the little children. Justice and right was on their side. He commended to them a few quotations from a very old book which they all knew, and trusted they would keep them in mind. He wished them farewell, and God speed. Three cheers were then given for the men, and cheers for their mothers.

The reinforcements were then marched into the train, and with the cheers and the good wishes of their townsfolk the train containing the Waimate reinforcement draft of twelve men steamed out of the station, whilst the people turned back to their daily work with the firm conviction that though the fight might be long and hard if necessary every man would go until we won.

Oamaru Mail. 14 October 1915 (Papers Past) [05/10//2023]

WAIMATE SOLDIERS DEPART.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

Some hundreds of people assembled at the railway station yesterday to witness the departure of a small batch of men for the 9th reinforcements. The men marched from the Drill Shed through the main street to the railway station, headed by the Brass and Pipe Bands and escorted by the 8th (South Canterbury) Mounted Regiment, who are at present in camp here.

The Deputy-Mayor, Dr Hayes, addressing the men from the railway steps said that the whole community admired the patriotism of the men who were starting out with the 9th reinforcements to do battle for their King and Empire. They were going forth to fight the most brutal and tyrannical foe in the whole world, a foe that had no respect for the things that the British people held so dear. The British soldier, whether in Flanders or in the Dardanelles, had made the whole world ring with praise of his braveness, resource, and humaneness. New Zealanders felt sure that the men of the 9th reinforcements would follow the good example already set. He wished them God-speed and a safe return, and called for cheers for the men.

The Rev. A. S. Morrison then addressed the men, and said that the liberty of the world for years to come was dependent upon the issues of this war. The Empire had called for more men, and here were patriots offering to fight for her once again in her long and chequered career. He quoted the Psalmist: "In the day when I called upon Thee Thou answeredst me and gavest strength to my soul," concluding with a verse of Tennyson. He wished the men God-speed and a safe return to their homes.

More cheers were given for the men and one for the mothers. Following is a list of the men: W. Mason, H. L. Cameron, H. Algar, E. Hampton, J. Emmerson, J. Finlayson, and A. Mackenzie. Another batch is to leave on Monday.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 30 April 1917 (Papers Past) [09/08/2016]

**WAIMATE LAD'S CASUALTY.
J. EMMERSON LOSES AN ARM.**

By the latest mail Private Jack Emmerson informs his father that he has had to say good-bye to his right arm, the doctors not being able to save it. Otherwise he was in splendid health, and he was just leaving for England.

Private Len. Cameron, writing by the same mail, tells how Jack Emmerson got his injuries. During the bombardment Jack had one arm broken, and when the Huns came into our trench they took him prisoner — or thought they did. After being taken more than half-way across No Man's Land he bolted from his captor towards our lines, only to be met by another party of Huns returning, and in dodging these he was shot through the other hand, but managed to reach our front line. A mate who saw him pass to the dressing-station said that altho' he was badly shaken he was quite cheery.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 24 November 1917 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

Private Jack Emmerson, the Waimate boy who had a rather sensational escape from the enemy after being wounded a year ago, has entered the ranks of the benedicts and is remaining in England till February when he expects to embark for New Zealand, where he will receive his discharge. He is minus an arm.

Press. 14 May 1918 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

WAIMATE

Quartermaster S. Evans and Private Jack Emmerson returned from the front by last night's train. The latter is minus an arm, but plus an English wife.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 14 August 1929 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

**SEVERELY DEPRESSED.
WAIMATE MAN'S TRAGIC ACT.
FINANCIAL AND OTHER WORRIES.**

John Emmerson, of Leonard Street, a billiard marker, was found dead in his residence last evening. A gas tube, from which gas was emanating, was lying alongside.

Deceased was about 34 years of age. He served with distinction during the Great War, being mentioned several times in dispatches.

An inquest was held to-day before the District Coroner (Mr G. Dash). Evidence of identification was given by the father of deceased, Malcolm Emmerson, a baker residing in Shearman Street. He stated that deceased was married, his wife residing in England. He last saw him alive last Monday, but he gave no indication that he was going to take his life. The only worry he had had, as far as witness knew, was the taking of the two children from him by the State. Witness did not think his son had been drinking to excess of late. Esther Hawkins, of Leonard Street, stated that she was a neighbour to Emmerson. Yesterday about 8.45, Miss Batchelor left the house for Timaru. She saw Emmerson come out of the house about 9.50 and get some water from the tap, then going back and closing the door after him. About 5.50 Miss Batchelor came to her and said: "Will you come quickly, I believe Jack has done himself in." Witness exclaimed "Never," and went with Miss Batchelor and after seeing the body went to the nearest telephone and asked them to communicate with the police. Alice Batchelor, a single woman, said she had been living with the deceased in Leonard Street. She had four children of whom the deceased was the father. Three of the children had been taken care of by the State and she had the baby. Yesterday morning at 8.15 she left the house and went to Timaru by bus; Emmerson said he was too busy to come with her. Deceased seemed all right when she left, saying "Goodbye, have a good time." She returned from Timaru about 5.45 p.m., and on opening the front door she smelt gas. Going through to the kitchen she discovered deceased lying face downwards on the floor close to the range. Over deceased's head was an old sack and billiard cloth, and the gas was turned full on with the tube near deceased's face. Witness turned off the gas, and called for assistance. There was a note on the table, but it was too dark to read it. The note was produced and witness recognised it. The note read:

"9.55. — I am waiting till 10 keeping quite cool. Just had a good smoke and a whiskey. So cheer up, dear, you will forget. Give them Bobby. Plenty of people about here will take him, if you can't keep him. I hope you will be able to go home again. Ta Ta darling, time's up. — Jack."

Witness stated that a letter to her had also been found on the duchess. She identified the writing of the letter which was produced in Court.

The letter read as follows: — "9 a.m. — Dear Alice, What's made me do this I will try and write to tell you. Don't think that I did not love you, for I loved you from the bottom of my

heart, which has been broken since the kiddies have been taken away. If they had only left them with us until I got my pension back, which I was beat for, I would have been quite happy. And I would have made you happy too. I hope you will try and forget all this, but I am the only one of the family to bring disgrace upon it. Don't think I am doing this on the spur of the moment, for I have been waiting my chance for a long time. If you had gone out that afternoon it would have been all over. At the inquest I suppose they will bring in a verdict of temporary insane, but I am as sane as ever. I have left the milk out for Bobby, and just drove a nail in each window. I am sorry for your sake, but there's better men than me done it. It is just 9.30 now, so it won't be long. And for Dad's sake see someone, and see if they can't take that 15s a week off his shoulders. I could easily have kept them if they had left us alone. Well, cheerio, dear, don't forget I love you. Yours lovingly, Jack."

Witness said deceased had been worrying on account of having to pay maintenance for the children under the care of the state. He gave no indication of intention to take his life. He had not been drinking to excess lately.

Dr Wylie said he had viewed the body of deceased at the house, in company with Sergt. Turner, about 6.20. Life was extinct. Deceased had been dead for roughly about eight hours. At 10 o'clock this morning he again viewed the body at the mortuary. There were no other visible signs of death. He presumed death to be due to poisoning by coal gas.

Sergeant Turner stated that in response to a message at 6 p.m. yesterday, he went to deceased's residence in company with Constable McGettigan. They discovered the body lying face downwards near the range. There was a strong smell of gas in the room. Deceased was in old clothes, in which evidently he had changed in the sitting room. The body had been removed to the morgue. Witness had known the man about twelve months, and he knew he had had difficulty in keeping up the payments for the maintenance of his children, and this had occasioned him a good deal of worry. Deceased also had other financial worries. He had been indulging in liquor during the last month more than witness had seen him before, but he always kept himself respectable and he had never seen him the worse for liquor.

The Coroner said he wished for more evidence in order to arrive at a just decision. Deceased was an incapacitated returned soldier, and he would like to have evidence in regard to his pension.

Duncan Emmerson, brother of deceased, volunteered information in regard to the pension. He stated that deceased had surrendered his pension, the amount of which he did not know, for three years. There were still ten months to go. The three-years' pension which deceased drew he put into a billiard saloon in Timaru. The business turned out to be a failure as far as he was concerned, and he filed in bankruptcy. Deceased had told witness he was "beaten" over the saloon. Deceased had said that in February 1928. In April of this year, witness saw deceased in Waimate, deceased stating then that it would not be long before he got his pension back, and remarking "They might have left the kids with us till then, anyway."

In answer to the Coroner, witness said deceased had been recommended for military honours. Witness said deceased had been well treated by the Pensions Board, he understood, but he had always maintained that he had been fleeced over the billiard business in Timaru, paying more than it was worth.

The following verdict was returned: "That the deceased, John Emmerson, died from the voluntary inhalation of coal gas while suffering severe depression from financial worries caused by an unsuccessful business venture and from the worry caused by the removal to the care of the State of three of his children."

Auckland Star. 14 August 1929 (Papers Past)

WAR HERO FOUND DEAD.

EMMERSON OF MESSINES.

DECORATED FOR BRAVERY.

(By Telegraph.—Press Association.)

WAIMATE, this day.

John **Emmerson**, a billiard marker, was found dead in a room smelling of gas. It is understood he left a letter stating his intention to take his life.

Emmerson distinguished himself in the war and was mentioned in dispatches for bravery at Messines, where he lost an arm. Considerable space is devoted to the incident in General Young's book, "The New Zealanders at the Front."

Timaru Herald. 15 August 1929 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

WAIMATE.

INQUEST.

An inquest was held at the Waimate Courthouse yesterday afternoon before the District Coroner (Mr G. Dasn, J P.), touching the death of John Emmerson, who was found dead at his residence, Leonard Street, the previous evening.

Malcolm Emmerson, a baker, residing at Waimate, gave evidence that the deceased was his son, and was 34 years of age. Deceased was married, and his wife was residing in England. He last saw his son alive on Monday. He gave no indication that he was likely to take his life. Deceased was very worried at having his children taken from him by the Welfare Department. Witness did not think his son had been drinking lately.

Esther Hawkins, residing next door to deceased, said she saw him prior to the 'bus leaving for Timaru, and again at 9.50, when he got some water from a tap and went inside and shut the door. At 5.50 p.m. Miss Batchelor called to witness to go to deceased's house. Witness went into the house, saw the body, and went straight out and rang for the police.

Alice Batchelor, a single woman, said she had been housekeeping for deceased for some years. Three of his children were under the care of the State. On Tuesday morning witness went by 'bus to Timaru. Deceased intended going with witness, but changed his mind, saying he was too busy. Deceased seemed quite all right when she left, and said, "Good-bye, have a good time." On returning witness noticed a strong smell of gas on entering the house, and on going to the kitchen found the body lying on the floor close to the range. There was an old sack and billiard cloth over deceased's head. The gas was turned full on, and the tube was close to

deceased's face. Witness turned off the gas and called for assistance. Witness then read two pathetic letters left by deceased. Continuing, witness said she knew deceased had been worrying over having to pay maintenance for the children, but gave no indication that he would take his life. Deceased had been taking more drink than usual lately.

Dr. T. W. Wylie, Waimate, stated that he was called to see deceased at 6.20 p.m. on Tuesday. Accompanied by Sergeant Turner, witness went to deceased's house, where he had found the body lying face down on the floor, with the gas tubing in the mouth. Life was extinct, and deceased had been dead some eight hours, the cause of death being monoxide poisoning by coal gas.

Sergeant Turner, Waimate, said he had known deceased about twelve months, and knew that he was worrying a good deal about the payments for his children, and other financial matters. Deceased had been indulging recently more than usual, but was very respectable, and witness never saw him the worse for liquor. Duncan Emmerson, Dunedin, brother of the deceased, gave evidence that the war pension granted to deceased had been surrendered by deceased for three years. Deceased received full face value for the pension, and put the proceeds into a billiard room in Timaru. The business turned out an utter failure, and deceased had been compelled to file in bankruptcy. Witness saw deceased in April of this year, when he again referred to getting his pension back, and remarked that they might have left his children with him. Deceased had been recommended for military honours twice by Sir Douglas Hay, and had lost his right arm at the war. It was no fault of the military authorities that his brother had surrendered his pension. The Coroner returned a verdict "That deceased John Emmerson died from the voluntary inhalation of coal gas while suffering severe depression from financial worries, caused by an unsuccessful business venture, and from worry caused by the removal to the care of the State of three of his children."

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 15 August 1929 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

CORRESPONDENCE

WAIMATE'S DISTINGUISHED SOLDIER.

(To the Editor, "Daily Advertiser.")

Sir, —In reading your issue of Wednesday, I was astounded at the evidence published on the inquest of the late Rifleman J. Emmerson. I am sure no more pitiful ease has ever been read by the public of Waimate. I, with others, listened to the speeches of public men and Ministers of the Gospel as the young men of Waimate left to take their part in the defence of these shores, and can well remember the remarks of one minister "That when these men returned we would see that they would be well cared for on their return." Have these promises been fulfilled? I am sure the ease in question makes one think there is a suggestion of forgetfulness. By your report I notice that deceased stated "That it would not be long before he got his pension back." Just how long ago has his pension been taken from him, and by whom, and how has a one-armed man been able to exist without it? The Coroner asks: "I wish more evidence to arrive at a just decision and would also like to have evidence in regard to his pension." By whom was deceased "beaten" (to use his own words)? Surely the Returned Soldiers' Association will take this matter in hand regarding one of Waimate's gamest soldiers, so as the case may be seen in its true colours, —I am, etc.,

JUSTICE.

WAR HERO'S TRAGIC FAREWELL

Up Against It

His War Record

"Ta Ta, Darling, Time's Up" Wrote "Digger" Before Ending His Life

PENILESS AND ROBBED OF CHILDREN

(From "N.Z. Truth's" Waimate Representative.)

To have survived the hazards of the Great War, to be mentioned in despatches on more than one occasion and lose an arm while escaping from his captors was the war record of John Emmerson, of Waimate.

He has now joined the ever-increasing host of suicides, and the circumstances leading to his death make sorry reading.

When Emmerson returned from the war minus an arm, he brought a bride from England with him. New Zealand was too quiet for her, however, and she soon returned to the land of her birth. Emmerson let her go without question. Disabled as he was, Emmerson, with a life pension, took what light work he could get, and secured a job as a billiard marker.

Four years ago he was offered a position as manager of a billiard-room in Timaru which he accepted.

For some time all went well, until one morning Emmerson was confronted with detectives who demanded to know the owner of the saloon.

He thought and acted quickly.

Holding the opinion that his employers would be placed in an invidious position if he named them, he replied that the saloon was run by him (Emmerson) and that nobody else was interested.

Apparently satisfied the detectives said no more, but heaps of trouble was in store for Emmerson.

With no funds, the unfortunate man had to raise a mortgage.

Soon he found the business was impossible; he could not meet the principal and interest of the mortgage. Nearly distracted, Emmerson turned to his former employers.

They advanced the money and, as security, he signed over his war pension.

Shortly afterwards he had to file his petition in bankruptcy. Since that time Emmerson had to live as best he could.

A job in a billiard-room provided the necessaries of life, but with nothing to spare.

As time went on, Emmerson found himself with four young children to keep. With his pension gone and only his small earnings to rely on, he found the going hard, but he contrived to keep his family well-fed and clothed.

Then something in the nature of a bombshell struck their little home.

The Child Welfare Department took the children and committed them to the care of the State.

That this broke Emmerson's heart is borne out in his last letter.

He may possibly have survived that, but what contributed to his decision to take his life by placing a bag over his head and turning on the gas was the action of the Welfare Department in taking proceedings against his old father for the maintenance of three of the children.

The Court made an order against the old man for 5/- per week for each of the children. Their grandfather is an old man who has a family of his own to support, and who, in two years' time, will be able to draw the old age pension.

The Magistrate remarked when making the order that it was cruel, but as the law stood he had no option.

A few days before taking his life, Emmerson told the whole pitiful tale to “Truth’s” representative.

Emmerson said he could stand anything except seeing his old dad penalised for the upkeep of the children. In his letter to the woman who was the mother of his children, he wrote: —

“For Dad’s sake, see if they can’t take that 15/- off his shoulders. I am the only one to bring disgrace upon the family.”

The coolness with which Emmerson met death is, perhaps, without exception in the records of suicides in New Zealand. That it was premeditated is explained in his last letter which reads as follows:—

“9 a.m. Dear Alice, I am writing you to explain why I have done this.

“9.55.: I am waiting till 10, keeping quite cool. Just had a good smoke and a whisky. Cheer up, dear, you will forget. Ta-ta, darling, time’s up. — Jack.”

Another letter was found in which he wrote: — “I love you from the bottom of my heart, which has been broken since the kiddies were taken from us. If they had only left them with us, till I got my pension back, I would have been quite happy.

“I am not doing this on the spur of the moment. I have been waiting my chance for a long time. At the inquest they will say I am insane.”

Indignation was expressed on all sides when it was known that the State had ordered an old man to contribute 15/- a week for the three kiddies.

In a book published after the war, entitled: “The New Zealand Division,” the writer had this to say of Emmerson: —

“During an enemy raid, Private J. Emmerson was separated from his comrades and taken prisoner. He made a break for freedom, but was recaptured by another party numbering 80 strong.

“Watching his opportunity, Emmerson tripped his guard, tore himself free and sprinted for our lines. He was only a few feet from safety when the German machine-gunners opened fire, wounding him severely in the right arm.”

A feature of the suicide was that at least one of the members of the Waimate Returned Soldiers’ Association was against according Emmerson a military funeral, not thinking it necessary that Emmerson should have the Union Jack draped over the coffin.

Had it not been for other members, Emmerson would have gone to his grave without the last salutes of his comrades.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 17 August 1929 (Papers Past) [05/04/2022]

MILITARY FUNERAL BURIAL OF LATE RIFLEMAN J. EMERSON.

A military funeral was on Thursday, accorded the remains of the late Rifleman John Emmerson, who died on Tuesday.

The cortege was headed by a firing party, and the Waimate Silver Band, and following were sixteen cars containing relatives and many returned soldiers.

A large number attended at the graveside where the service was conducted by the Rev. Canon Cocks. Volleys were fired by the firing party, and the Last Post was sounded by Bugler V. Brenton.

The deceased served worthily in the Great War, as a member of the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade. Besides being mentioned several times in despatches, his name appears in several books narrating events of the war.

The incident, arising out of which his right arm was amputated above the elbow, is related in Col. Stewart’s Official History of the N.Z. Division. The Germans had raided the Ploegsteert

Wood sector, in Belgium, which the New Zealanders had just taken over, and our forces suffered considerably. The book goes on: — “When our men on the flanks, penetrating the box barrage, got in touch with them (the Germans) they withdrew without offering resistance, leaving behind them some mobile charges, and stick grenades. Our rifle fire and bombs had killed and wounded some of the enemy, and these, except for one dead man, they took with them, together with their prisoners. One of these, Rifleman J. Emmerson, who had been wounded, escaped, but was again recaptured by a second party, some 80 strong, of the returning raiders. Near the enemy wire, Emmerson saw another chance of making a bid for freedom. He tripped up his burly guardian, wrenched himself free, and in a flash, despite his wound, dashed back for our lines. The Germans opened fire and hit him in two fresh places, but struggling on, he finally succeeded in reaching our lines in extreme exhaustion.” Rifleman Emmerson’s bravery in making his escape against such odds was commended in official despatches at the time.

DECEASED’S PENSION.

STATEMENT BY R.S.A. PRESIDENT.

The president of the Waimate Returned Soldiers’ Association, Mr J. A. Lash, has handed in the following statement regarding the late Rifleman J. Emmerson: — “From the evidence given at the inquest and the contents of “Justice’s” letter in your issue of Thursday, it appears that there is considerable misapprehension regarding this soldier’s finance, and the attitude of the Returned Soldier’s Association.

“The whole position was looked into by the local branch of the Returned Soldiers’ Association some considerable time ago, and while this branch was never entirely in favour of the capitalisation of pensions. and as a matter of fact was largely instrumental in having the practice stopped by the Pensions Department, no room could be found for complaint regarding the particular circumstances under which Rifleman J. Emmerson’s pension was capitalised. Every transaction was thoroughly investigated by the Pensions Department before a pensioner was permitted to complete negotiations. The Pensions Department was particularly careful to ascertain whether or not every proposed proposition had a reasonable chance of success. Where the scheme failed, however, was that in many cases no thought was given to the suitability of the pensioner, and in consequence a number of returned men were allowed to capitalise their pensions to finance undertakings for which they were temperamentally unfit.

“From this you will see that it creates a wrong impression to suggest that this returned soldier was “beaten” by anybody, or that a duty devolves upon the Returned Soldiers’ Association which has not been attended to. Furthermore, I am able to say that Rifleman J. Emmerson was receiving financial assistance from another body which has the welfare of returned soldiers at heart. The assistance was discontinued at the direct request of the soldier himself, who stated that owing to permanent employment he was now no longer in need and up to the date of his death there has been no application for a renewal of the financial assistance.”

STATE'S GROSS CALLOUSNESS
Dead Hero's Aged Father Proceeded Against For Maintenance of
Son's Children
REMEDY THIS SCANDALOUS INJUSTICE
(From "N.Z. Truth's" Special Waimate Representative.)

JOHN Emmerson returned from the war minus an arm and fit only for light work. He received a life pension, and eventually secured a position as a billiard marker, later becoming manager of a billiard parlor in Timaru.

There misfortune overtook him, and he was forced to file his petition in bankruptcy, having already signed over his pension in an effort to raise a mortgage.

As time went on, Emmerson found himself with four young children to keep, and, on his small earnings, he found, the struggle indeed hard and difficult.

But with the bulldog courage and tenacity which had won him distinction as a soldier, he struggled on and contrived to keep his family well-fed and well-clothed.

And then blundering Officialdom stepped in to wreck the little happiness which this war hero had won from life. The Child Welfare Department not only took Emmerson's children and committed them to the care of the State, but also proceeded against Emmerson's father, an old man with a family of his own to support, for the maintenance of three of the children.

His heart broken by the cruel action of Officialdom, John Emmerson, hero in war and peace, gave up the unequal struggle and committed suicide. Undoubtedly, the action of the Child Welfare Department in proceeding against his father was the deciding factor in Emmerson's resolution to commit suicide, and just before his death, after the Department had secured an order against his father for 5/- per week for each of the children, he wrote in a letter to the woman who was the mother of his children:

"For Dad's sake, see if they can't take the 15/- off his shoulders. I am the only one to bring disgrace upon the family."

But Officialdom is not only blundering; it can also be obstinate and harsh. In this case, even though it has acted with perfect legality throughout its actions are indefensible — grossly unjust and tyrannical.

Even Emmerson's tragic death or the remark of the magistrate who granted the order, that it was cruel, but as the law stood he had no option, failed to arouse in the Department the slightest feeling of compassion.

Indeed, instead of dropping the whole proceedings and refusing to enforce the order obtained, the Department has exhibited a determination to secure its "pound of flesh" that is nothing short of disgusting.

Before Mr. Orr-Walker, S.M., last week, it again proceeded against Emmerson's father because he had not complied with the court's order to contribute towards the maintenance of the three children, and old Emmerson was ordered a month's imprisonment if 2/6 per week in respect of each child was not paid off the arrears.

Emmerson is a man of sixty years of age and still works at his trade as a baker. He has a family of his own to keep and in another five years becomes entitled to the old age pension.

In view of the circumstances, "N.Z. Truth" can only regard the Department's action against Emmerson senior as callous in the extreme. Certainly, it is legal, but, as the first magistrate remarked, it is cruel.

Indeed, it is more than that; it is flagrantly opposed to the very principles of justice and is nothing short of a scandalous blot upon the fair name of the Dominion.

There was absolutely no need to proceed against Emmerson's father in the first place, and in taking the initial proceedings, the Department unquestionably blundered.

And since then it has magnified the blunder an hundredfold by callously continuing in its determination to obtain money from Emmerson, sen., or, alternatively, to send him to gaol.

"Truth" has no hesitation whatever in saying that there is not a single member of the paying public who would endorse the Department's action. Indeed, the general public would undoubtedly consider that, in view of John Emmerson's war service, the State should pay the whole of the charges incurred in the maintenance of his children.

There was, therefore, no necessity for proceeding against old Emmerson, and only the stupid and callous foolishness of a State department is capable of such a cruel and heartless act.

The conscience of the Government must be awakened, and "Truth" is more than surprised that the Returned Soldier's Association has not already taken the matter up.

John Emmerson was a returned man, and in justice to his memory and in return for his services to the country, the burden placed upon the shoulders of his aged father should be lifted.

Very obviously, if the Government refuses to do the kindly act of its own accord, it must be forced to perform it, and in this paper's opinion, it is for the Returned Soldiers' Association to take up the cudgels vigorously and unhesitatingly on old Emmerson's behalf.

Justice must be done and the scandal which has been perpetrated entirely removed.

The gross injustice which sometimes occurs when men are sentenced to terms of imprisonment for non-compliance with maintenance orders has frequently been commented upon by "N.Z. Truth," but it is doubtful whether there has ever been such a flagrant miscarriage of justice as that which has been perpetrated in the Emmerson case.

The whole affair, indeed, constitutes a blot upon the administration of justice in the Dominion, and screams aloud for official action. The tragic wrong which has been wrought must be undone; the Government must step in, and see that the order made against the father of the late John Emmerson, Waimate's war hero, is immediately quashed.



Waimate's war hero, John Emmer-son, whose father is a victim of the State's harsh treatment.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 19 December 1929 (Papers Past) [04/10/2023]

**WAIMATE R.S.A.
MEETING OF COMMITTEE.**

REHABILITATION MATTERS DISCUSSED.

The Committee of the Waimate Returned Soldiers Association met last evening, there being present the president (Mr J. A. Lash), Messrs L. V. Brenton, D. S. Chisholm, A. M. O'Brien, d'A. S. Grut, A. Williams, M. J. Friel, A. E. Lewis, S. Bennington, P. G. Berry, W. Richards, A. Cameron, and Dr T. W. Wylie.

Headquarters advised that poppies for next year's Poppy Day should be ordered by December 20 so that the order could be sent to England before Christmas.

The matter was left in the hands of the secretary.

Headquarters forwarded a clipping from the "N.Z. Truth" dealing with the case of the Waimate returned soldier, John Emmerson. It was asked that the Committee forward what information it had on the subject, together with recommendations. The newspaper article referred to the fact that Emmerson's father was being called on to pay toward the maintenance of his son's three children which were in the care of the State, and it characterised the action as cruel and callous on the part of the State Department. The paper expressed surprise that the R.S.A. had not taken up the matter.

On the motion of Mr Grut seconded by Dr. Wylie, discussion was taken in committee. Nothing was reported out of committee.

The main business of the evening, consideration of matters in connection with the Rehabilitation Commission, was proceeded with.

Mr Grut read the evidence he had put before the Commission at its sitting in Christchurch, proposing community settlements as the solution of the problem of the partially disabled returned man. He went on to say the Commission had stated the suggestion of community settlements was not new to them. Though the scheme was excellent theoretically, there had been no experience of such and was feared the scheme might not work well in practice. It was generally felt that the solution of the rehabilitation problem would mean a composite scheme involving a settlement scheme and an industrial scheme. The Commission wished the Association to submit a detail report on a practical community settlement scheme, and it was desired also to advise how many of the Waimate partially-disabled men would be prepared to enter upon a settlement if formed.

The report was received, and Mr Grut was accorded a vote of thanks for the trouble he had gone to in the matter.

At the request of the Committee, Mr Grut agreed to draft the desired report, but it was on the understanding that members of the committee also considered the matter and sent him suggestions, a meeting to be called later finally to adopt the report to be submitted to the Commission.

Truth. 2 January 1930 (Papers Past) [15/08/2016]

War Hero Scandal

AFTER being publicly requested to do something by "N.Z. Truth," the Returned Soldier's Association has made a move to inquire into the scandalous injustice of the State in proceeding against the father of John Emmerson, the Waimate war hero, for the maintenance of his dead son's children.

But even now, when directed by Headquarters to supply them with information on the matter brought to light by this paper, the Waimate Returned Soldier's Association has crept into "committee" to discuss the subject in a voice hushed to the general public.

Having been taken to task on its apparent apathy, the headquarters of the Association has been strong enough to step into the limelight. And yet, in the face of a "please explain" from the parent Association, the small body of individuals who comprise the Waimate Association have taken it upon themselves to exclude the public from its confidence.

"Headquarters forwarded a clipping from "N.Z. Truth" dealing with the case of the Waimate returned soldier, Emmerson, and asked that the Committee forward what information it had on the subject, together with recommendations," says the Waimate paper in its report of the meeting of the local branch of the Association.

There is no insinuation there that Headquarters intends to keep its movements a secret from the public, and yet on the motion of Mr. S. Grut, "discussion was taken in committee, and nothing was reported out of committee."

"N.Z. Truth," in demanding that justice be done and that the scandal which has been perpetrated be entirely removed, has set the R.S.A. moving in the matter, and this paper now declares that there should be no attempt to draw a cloak of suppression around the matter at this late stage.

Having at last taken the matter up, the least the R.S.A. can do now to retain the faith of the public is to let it be seen that it is better, to be late than never.

And a word from Headquarters to the Waimate branch should stop any further attempt to gag the press of this Dominion.