

Clarence V Palmer  
23.9.1895 – 1.10.1984

Clarence (Cal) was born in Christchurch. I know nothing of his childhood. On his enlistment into the army in June 1915 his occupation is described as labourer. I think this was with a Christchurch butchery business.

As a very young child I would have known my grandfather however it was not until about 1970 that I was able to meet him again even though we lived in the same town. All I know of Cal's working life is that he was a cheesemaker for the Temuka Cooperative Dairy Co Ltd. from around August 1921 to 30 June 1931 when the business was discontinued.

July 1932 Cal was at the Waimate Coop Dairy Co Ltd and the next record I can locate gives his occupation as Manager of the company; this was in August 1935. How he traveled there I don't know as there's no family history or story of him ever living there. I'm assuming he would have had a car. (At one point after retiring I know he purchased a new Morris Minor and was very proud of it.)

Cal was enlisted into the army on 14 June 1915 (aged 20 years 9 months) and discharged on 6 June 1919. He served in Egypt, Egypt EF and Western Europe.

From verbal family history, Cal was a gunner on a front line. He lost an eye due to shrapnel. It would need to be proved, but the family story is that Cal was patched up and sent back to the front line. What as I don't know.

As young children beginning around age 10 or so, my brother and I would sneak away to visit Cal and Dolly, (Cecilia) his wife, at their Guise Street home (the house is still standing). We would be enthusiastically welcomed, not with many hugs and kisses (they were not that sort of couple), but with as much to drink as we could take and plenty of biscuits. Occasionally we would ask grandad what the war was like. His reply never really varied. "It wasn't good lad, it wasn't good."

Following his discharge, Cal settled in Temuka with Dolly. They purchased a house on the corner of Guise Street and Domain Avenue. My understanding is that the property was initially a half acre reducing to a quarter acre years later. Cal lived there the rest of his life as did Dolly until she moved to a rest home toward the end of her life. After the trauma of war, all Cal wanted was a quiet life. With maturity, I know now that the sights he would have seen no doubt played a huge part in that. It would probably be known as post-traumatic stress syndrome today. Cal kept his property immaculate. Almost every time I saw him as a youngster, he would be tending some part of his domain.

During the years of the Great Depression, Dolly once told my mother that she could make eggs and milk go further than could be imagined. Although with a half acre, I think she may have had access to much fruit and many vegetables. It did emphasise the point though that both were frugal people.

Growing up in a rural town there was always plenty of work for a youngster. Working with our father, my brother and I picked potatoes for a local grower for years as children and teenagers. Frequently Dad would knock off a bit early in the afternoon to go and pick up Cal

to help out. At the age of at least 75 until into his eighties, Cal would walk the rows of harvested potatoes sewing the sacks and then helping to hoist them on the trailer as the tractor crawled down the rows. He must have been a strong man, although a mechanical hoister in later years made the job more comfortable.

More than 30 years later, I still miss my grandfather and wish I'd known him better.

*Lyle Palmer, October 2018*