

GREAT WAR STORIES



"Greetings to my Gallant soldier [Brother]" - A postcard from Elsie Ross of Seaforth at Washdyke, Timaru, to her brother Alister (Alex) Ross, serving in France, dated 7 July 1918. (Courtesy of F Ross, South Canterbury Museum L2014/021.13)



Alister (Alex) Ross (Courtesy of F Ross, South Canterbury Museum L2014/021.0)

Alister Ross

Remembering the sacrifices of those with South Canterbury connections who served their country 100 years ago.

CAROL BELL

Alex Ross, as he was generally known, was born at Lauriston, near Rakaia in 1896. Later the family moved to The Poplars near Waikakahi in the Waimate District. He was educated at the nearby Ikawai School and later at Washdyke School. His secondary education was completed at Timaru Boys' High School where he gained distinction in academic and sporting pursuits.

Alex enlisted in the New Zealand Army on 2 August 1917, was appointed to the 34th Reinforcement NZ Expeditionary Force and began training in Burnham 20 August. He was posted to the NZ Machine Gun Corps,

34th Specialist Company. His active service commenced on 1 February 1918 in Western Europe. Alex was wounded and admitted to the Rouen Field Hospital, France and later transferred to Brockenhurst in England. He was finally discharged from the army on 28 April 1919 following his arrival back in New Zealand on the troopship Ajana. His duration of service was one year 49 days.

After his return from World War One Alex moved onto the family farm at Seaforth, north of Timaru, where his father had settled in the early 1900s. Following his father's death he took over Seaforth and it still remained in the family at his death in 1966. He was also a member of the Home Guard dur-

ing World War 2.

Alex married Mary (May) Kelman on 2 September 1925 and they had four sons and two daughters who were all raised at the family home of Seaforth. Alex was elected to the former Levels County Council in 1950 and served as a councillor until 1959 during which time he was the representative on the Timaru Airport committee.

Alex Ross was a member of the South Canterbury RSA and also a member of the Timaru High Schools' board of governors for six years until 1962.

He was also an elder of Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Timaru for a number of years. Besides his public body work Alex was also interested in

sports. He had associations with cricket and table tennis and was a keen supporter of the South Canterbury rugby team. In his early days at Washdyke he was prominent in miniature rifle shooting and an able tennis player.

Alex had a wide range of other interests which was reflected in his first class general knowledge. He was well read and well informed on many subjects. In his later years Alex spent his retirement on a small property at Washdyke.

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