

## **OFF TO THE FRONT.**

### **SEVENTEENTH REINFORCEMENTS ENTERTAINED.**

There was a large gathering at the Drill Hall yesterday afternoon on the occasion of the farewell to the Ashburton quota of the Seventeenth Reinforcements. Thirty-eight men comprising the quota were entertained by a number of Allenton ladies. His Worship the Mayor (Mr R. Galbraith) presided.

The Rev. Father O'Donnell said that the men who were now going away were doing so to assist in upholding the ideals of civilisation, and to eliminate the display of brute force as shown by the Germans. They were also going to uphold the principles of right and justice. Britain and her Allies were not engaged in the present conflict for the purpose of adding to territory or for financial gain. The speaker referred to the enormous amount which was being expended daily to carry on the present conflict. The sum of £5,000,000 was daily being spent in the upkeep of the Army and Navy, and such figures would almost stagger imagination. Those enormous sums were being expended so that Germany should not have the right to subjugate other races. They were engaged in the war so that other races should be allowed to live up to their own ideals, and not to be humiliated by Germans. They were also fighting out of respect for scraps of paper wherein nations had pledged their faith. The Germans had broken that breach of faith in the case of Belgium, and the country had been reduced to desolation, the homes destroyed, and wives and families reduced to a state worse than slavery. The men who were going into camp were preparing to uphold the liberties of civilisation, and to enforce such ideals. He felt confident that the Ashburton men would act up to the high standard set them by the Anzacs. During their time of training in camp, the men would be brought up to a state of perfection which would fit them to take their places alongside veterans of the Anzacs whom they would meet in France. They would also be fighting side by side with historic regiments of the British Army. The speaker said that General Birdwood had advocated the necessity of discipline. In camp they would learn to understand the necessity of discipline so that they would act as a compact body. They would have to learn to lay aside their own ideas for the common good. They would, as it were, have to become clay in the hands of their officers, in order to make themselves fit for the work which they would later be called on to perform. The more they learned of the value of discipline, the more they would fit themselves to do their share to safeguard the liberties of civilisation, and of the human race. The speaker said he wanted to take the opportunity of referring to a personal matter. During the morning he had mentioned to a resident that he had been asked to say a few words in farewell to the Ashburton boys. The resident had apparently mentioned the matter to another resident, who replied "that in the face of recent events in Dublin it would be better for Father O'Donnell to keep in the background." The speaker contended that every man was entitled to his own opinion, but at the same time this was not a time for recriminations. It was a time to lay aside such personal ideas and to unite for the destruction of Prussian militaryism. It was not a time for introducing side issues. For his part, when a man had hit him he always tried to hit back, although it might be contrary to what is stipulated in the Book with which they were all familiar, and perhaps not altogether quite in keeping with the cloth which he wore. However, he did not think the reference to turning the other cheek had universal application. When one had the interests of Ireland at heart, it was time to come forward and disclaim any sympathy with that insane piece of lunacy in Dublin which recent events had disclosed. He would, however, go so far as to say that that rebellion had never caused the British Government as much embarrassment as some of the strikes in coal mines and amongst munition workers, and yet they looked upon the latter as a matter of course. He contended that the outbreak in Dublin did not represent the overwhelming majority of the Irish population. These men were revolutionary Socialists, and did not care a

tinker's cuss for Ireland except for their own ideals. Larkin and Connolly were not Irish by birth or by training. The men taking part in the rebellion were simply men in the nature of what would be termed "Red Feds," led by Larkin and Connolly. To condemn the whole of the Irish people for the action of these few irresponsible individuals was most unfair, and unreasonable. He took this as a personal matter, because he was jealous of the honour of his country and his race. He maintained that it was most unreasonable to condemn the Irish for the action of what might be termed a few lunatics. He asked them to judge the Irish by the part they were taking in the present war, and by the Murphy's, Burkes and O'Sheas that they would meet fighting in the British regiments. (Applause). The speaker, in conclusion, stated that those who were left behind would watch with interest the doings of the men who were leaving New Zealand. In wishing the men God-speed, he stated that just as they had honoured the men who had gone before, so they would honour those who were now departing. Their memory would always remain in the minds of those who were left behind, and they would pray for their success. He hoped they would all come back safe, but if any of them had to lay their ashes in a foreign land, they in New Zealand would ever be proud of this fair land that had produced such good men. (Applause.)

Mr W. H. Collins also wished the men every success, and hoped that they would all come back safe. He felt confident that they would acquit themselves as men and uphold the honour of their country. He reminded them of the necessity of discipline, and the doing of their duty for King and country. He contended that it was a great privilege, apart from the terrors of war, to be able to do our duty for the rising generation and for generations to come.

The Mayor, on behalf of the town and district, thanked the men for having volunteered their services and wished them God-speed. He stated that those present were indebted to Mr and Mrs J. Tucker and a large number of Allenton ladies for the refreshments. He also asked the men going away whether they had any dependents in need of assistance, and if so to advise the Patriotic Committee. He reminded them that the funds had been subscribed in the County to assist those in need, and it was their own fault if those in need did not avail themselves of that fund. He did not want the impression to go abroad that Ashburton and County residents were not prepared to do all they could to assist those who were going and had gone to fight for them. At the invitation of the Mayor, cheers were then given for the recruits, Mr and Mrs J. Tucker, and the ladies.

The men were then allowed an interval to say farewell to their friends before the whistle sounded to fall in. Headed by the Citizens' Defence Corps and Salvation Army Bands, they then marched to the station, and were cheered at various corners as they marched along. At the railway station a large crowd took part in the final farewells, and as the train steamed out there was considerable cheering.

The following are the names of the men who left last evening: — D. W. Anderson, G. Ashton, F. P. Body, T. H. Bennett, A. R. Baker, C. McCrenor, T. H. L. Cross, D. Campbell, H. Culverhouse, S. Culverhouso, P. L. Cullen, W. Digby, M. Dahue, R. J. F. Duff, T. M. Devane, J. T. J. Ellen, **G. A. W. Foster**, J. Flynn. M. A. Guthrie, H. Harrison. T. H. Lusk. J. W. Martin. H. H. Mitchell, J. Maidens, R. F. Moore, J. A. McGinn, A. McQuillken, W. Rattray, F. F. Rose. J. Roberts, T. Sullivan, J. L. Strange, W. A. Stone, W. E. Stirgess, G. Trethewey, H. West and R. Young.

*Press.* 1 June 1916 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

#### ASHBURTON QUOTA.

Prior to entraining yesterday, the Ashburton members of the Seventeenth Reinforcements assembled in the Drill Hall and partook of a sumptuous high tea provided by Mr and Mrs Joshua Tucker and the ladies of Allenton. Subsequently brief addresses were delivered by the Rev.

Father O'Donnell and the Mayor (Mr R. Galbraith). Cheers were given for those who had provided the repast, and the recruits, who then marched to the station, headed by the C.D.C. and Salvation Army Bands. Those who went North to camp were: —  
....., **G. A. W Foster**, .....

*Ashburton Guardian*. 17 January 1919 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

**Private George A. W. Foster** has been awarded the Military Medal for bravery on the field of action. Private Foster is the third son of Mr and Mrs G. Foster, of Ruapuna, and left New Zealand with the Seventeenth Reinforcements. Private Foster has one brother returned, and **Private R. J. Foster**, of the Fifth Reinforcements, is still in France.

*Star*. 17 January 1919 [11/03/2023]

**Private George A. W. Foster** has been awarded the Military Medal for bravery on the field of action. Private Foster is the third son of Mr and Mrs G. Foster, of Ruapuna, and left New Zealand with the Seventeenth Reinforcements. Private Foster has one brother returned, and **Private R. J. Foster**, of the Fifth Reinforcements, is still in France.

*Timaru Herald*. 13 Dec 1919 [22/05/2016]

#### MARRIAGES

**FOSTER—SMITH.**—At St. Viglans Manse, on the 9th October, by the Rev. C. E. Duff, B.D., **George Albert Webster**, M.M. (late of the 17th Reinforcements, third son of **George Foster**, Butler Street, Timaru (late of Ruapuna) to **Annie Peter**, second daughter of **Archibald Smith**, 52 Kinnaird Street, Arbroath, Scotland.

*Press*. 11 July 1916 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

Mr George Foster, of Ruapuna, Ashburton has received word from the Minister of Defence that his son, **Private R. Foster**, has been wounded in the legs, and was admitted to hospital on June 26th. Private Foster is the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Foster, of Ruapuna. He enlisted with the Fifth Reinforcements, with **Private W. E. Foster**, who is at present ill in London, and was on active service at Gallipoli. A third son went into camp with the Seventeenth Reinforcements.

*Lyttelton Times.* 11 July 1916 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

**Robert James Foster**, wounded, is the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs Foster, of Ruapuna. He is twenty-one years of age. He enlisted with the Fifth Reinforcements, and. was in active service at Gallipoli (with Private **Walter Edward Foster**, his youngest brother, who has been ill for some time at Hornchurch). Another brother is a member of the Seventeenth Reinforcements. ,

*Otago Witness.* 19 July 1916 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

**Private Robert James Foster** (wounded) is the oldest son of Mr and Mrs Foster, of Ruapuna. He is 21 years of age. He enlisted with the Fifth Reinforcements, and was in active service at Gallipoli with Private **Walter** Edward Foster (second son), who has been ill for some time at Hornchurch. Another brother is a member of the Seventh [sic] Reinforcements.

*Ashburton Guardian.* 14 May 1917 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

Mr G. Foster, of Ruapuna, has been advised that his son, **Private Walter Edward Foster**, is being invalided home, and will arrive in New Zealand towards the end of the month. Private Foster left New Zealand with the Fifth Reinforcements, and was on active service in Gallipoli. He was in hospital in England for a considerable time suffering from shell shock. After recovering he rejoined his company in France, where he was wounded, and returned to hospital in England. Private Foster is the second son of Mr and Mrs Foster. **Private R. J. Foster** is at present in England since he was wounded in France, and **Private George Foster** is on service in France.

*Press.* 15 May 1917 (Papers Past) [17/03/2023]

Mr G. Foster, of Ruapuna, has been advised that his son, **Private Walter Edward Foster**, is being invalided home. Private Foster left with the Fifth Reinforcements, and saw service on Gallipoli.

*Ashburton Guardian.* 3 June 1919 (Papers Past) [23/05/2016]

RUAPUNA.

A welcome home was tendered to **Private R. J. Foster** in the Ruapuna Hall on Tuesday, May 22. Mr Boaler, on behalf of Ruapuna residents, presented Private Foster with a suitably inscribed gold medal, which was pinned on the soldier's tunic by Miss T. Annett. Mr Boaler thanked the guest for his fine service during four years at the front, and wished him the best of success in his future life. Private Foster suitably replied. Supper was handed round by the ladies, and dancing was carried on until the early hours. The music, which was much appreciated, was kindly given by Miss Timms and Messrs Cormack and H. Dellow. **Mr W. E. Foster** acted as M.C.

*Ashburton Guardian*. 13 August 1919

#### RUAPUNA.

On Thursday last, the ladies of Ruapuna held a complimentary dance for the local soldiers, who had previously entertained them similarly. Excellent weather prevailed, and a very large gathering assembled in the prettily decorated hall to do honour to the occasion.

The Mayfield Band played in its usual style, and everything went with a swing from start to finish. The hall was taxed to its utmost capacity to accommodate all the couples who took part in the Grand March, which was led off by Mr Jones, M.C., and Mrs I Ross, the energetic secretary of the Ladies' Dance Committee. Mrs McIlraith's well-trained Coon Family, consisting of Misses Holland (2), Gowers, and Argyle, made a pleasant diversion. Their fantastic costumes, coon songs, and clever dancing, fully merited the vociferous applause which greeted each of their items. Mr Glassey's recitation was also much appreciated.

**Mr Foster**, on behalf of the returned boys, thanked the ladies for the enjoyable evening, and announced that the "mufti" boys will shortly entertain the Ruapuna residents and their friends. Mrs Jones suitably responded.

A beautiful supper, provided by the ladies, was then handed round, shortly after which the proceedings closed with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

*Timaru Herald*. 13 July 1981 (Timaru District Library) [2016]

### Obituary

## **Mr W. E. Foster**

A man who stole some of the highlights of the Golden Shears at Masterton in 1967 from his younger competitors, Walter Edward (Bricky) Foster, of Geraldine, died in Timaru last week.

Walter Edward Foster a Gallipoli veteran at 71 years old he was the oldest entrant to compete in this national shearing competition.

At the age of 19 years, Mr Foster landed at Suva Bay on Gallipoli with the Fifth Reinforcements, Canterbury Regiment in the First World War.

He was educated at Ruapuna School and spent his earlier life as a farm worker and shearer in Mid and South Canterbury areas. Prior to 1937 he lived at Arundel with his wife, who predeceased him, and later came to Geraldine where he spent the late part of his days.

Always a keen sportsman Foster was patron of the Geraldine Rugby football Club serving as its president from 1946 to 1952 and he was elected a life member in 1954. He also served as a coach for the lower grades in the Geraldine club.

Mr Foster served on the executive of the RSA for a period.

Mr Foster is survived by four sons and three daughters, Doug, Graham, Colin, Lyndon and June, Edna and Norma.

*Press.* 15 July 1931 (Papers Past) [23/03/2016]

**OBITUARY**  
**MR. GEORGE FOSTER.**

Many old residents of Mid and South Canterbury will learn with regret of the death of Mr George Foster, in his eighty-second year. He was born in Wellington and was among the first white children born in New Zealand.

After marrying Miss Ann Howell, of Napier, he lived in Oamaru for some years, and later in Burke's Pass. There were seven children of this marriage, but only two survive him, Mrs George Argyle, of Ruapuna, and Mrs J. Painter, of Darfteld. While at Burke's Pass his wife died, and he later married Miss Jean Webster, of Timaru.

He then took up the position of head shepherd for the late Mr J. Ballantyne, of Ruapuna, and later managed the Ruapuna Estate until it was cut up for closer settlement, when he took up land there. He retired to Timaru, but later lived with his son in Arundel, where he remained until the time of his death. There were seven sons and three daughters of his second marriage. Of these, six sons and two daughters, survive him. He leaves a widow. The surviving children of the second marriage are: — Mrs E. E. Allan, of Geraldine; Mrs T. A. Adamson, of Amberley; Messrs R. J. Foster, of Wellington; W. E. Foster, of Arundel; G. A. W. Foster, of Waimate; D. Foster, of Greendale; C. G. Foster, of Wellington; and C. E. Foster, of Waimate. There are fifty-three grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.