

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

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By Ted Hansen

Michael John Dalton. No.29228

Michael, known by his middle name John, or Jack, was born at Temuka on 20 August 1889, the only son of Francis Patrick (1853-1929) and Ella Elizabeth (1850-1916) Dalton. He was educated at the Mackenzie and Temuka Schools where his family had farmed before winning two ballots of 100 acres each when the Cheviot Estate was broken up in the 1890s, and later at the Rangiora High School. He was a keen tennis and rugby player and had few equals as a rifle shot.

When he enlisted on 27 June 1916, he was working with his father on the family farm at Cheviot, and nominated him as his next of kin. He was described as being 5 foot 8¾ inches tall, aged 25 but was in fact 26, as he had put his birth date down as 3 August 1890, weighing 147 pounds, of the Roman Catholic faith, chest measuring 33 – 37 ½ inches, single, having a fresh complexion, grey eyes and brown hair. Private Dalton was posted to C Company, 1st Battalion, Canterbury Infantry Regiment, and on 4 August was promoted to Lance Corporal, then to Corporal on 4 October. In September before he left for the war, he became engaged to Miss Amy Petrie, the eldest daughter of the late Mr & Mrs R.D. Petrie of Christchurch.

He left Wellington with the 18th reinforcements on 11 October 1916, aboard HMNZT 67 SS Tofua bound for Plymouth, England. Further training as a machine gunner followed at Sling Camp, where he relinquished his rank back to Lance Corporal on 29 December. He left for France on 1 February 1917 where he was posted to the 13th Company. From 7 to 15 February he was admitted to the 24th General Hospital with influenza. He again reverted back to Private on 14 March 1917.

On 7 June 1917, during the battle of Messines Ridge, he received a gunshot wound to the hip and was admitted to No 9 Australian Field Ambulance. On 8 June he was transferred to the 3rd Canadian General Hospital and 25 July, again transferred to No 24 General Hospital, before being sent to the Convalescing Hospital in France on 3 August, where he stayed until rejoining his unit on 27 October. He then transferred from the machine gun section to the sniping division. On 13 January 1918, during the battle of Polygon Wood, he was killed in action. Having no known grave, his name is inscribed at Buttes New British Cemetery on the New Zealand Memorial at Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.

After the war his father was living in Auckland and was sent his medals, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal along with a scroll and plaque. John's name is commemorated on the Temuka and Cheviot War Memorials and also on his mother's grave in the Homeview Cemetery at Hurunui.

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