

**Great War Stories: Remembering the sacrifices of those with SC connections who served their country 100 years ago.**

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**Lance Corporal James Taku Strachan, No.23/1204**

**By Teresa Scott**

James Taku Strachan, known familiarly as Jimmie, was born on 22 March 1897 at Timaru, the elder son of George Strachan and Iris Minnie née Cassells. He was the grandson of James Strachan who ran away from the ship "Strathallan" at Port Chalmers and, many years later after travelling much of the country seeking work, came to Pleasant Point where he was very active in the Pleasant Point Presbyterian Church, as well as starting the bathing machines at Caroline Bay. His maternal grandmother was of Irish descent.

Young James was baptised Roman Catholic, as Jacobus Strachan, on 9 April 1897 at Timaru. Jimmie started at Normal School Christchurch, when the family lived there briefly, before continuing his education at Timaru Main School in 1902 and later Timaru Boys' High School. In his teens he was a member of the Caroline Bay Swimming Club and a keen cyclist.

On enlistment in May 1915 James said that he was born in 1895 and was 20 years old, whereas he was born in 1897 and was only 18. He was a telegraphist, serving with the Post and Telegraph Corps. He had joined the Post and Telegraph department as a message boy on 19 October 1911, at the age of 14 earning £31 per annum. In 1913 he became a junior exchange clerk and messenger at Geraldine, before returning to Timaru as a distributor and finally a cadet until he resigned on 25 May 1915 to join up. His address was Telegraph Office, Timaru, and his next-of-kin was his father, a draper in Timaru.

On 9 October 1915, Jimmie left New Zealand for Suez, Egypt, with the 1st Battalion of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, Earl of Liverpool's Own. He saw action in Egypt and France from May 1916. James was appointed a Lance Corporal on 5 October 1916. He had come through heavy fighting unscathed until he was fatally wounded on 7 June 1917. Lance Corporal J. T. Strachan, 23/1204, died of gunshot wounds to his right leg, which caused a compound fracture. On 7 June 1917 he was reported missing in the field; then he was found wounded in action, and admitted to No. 77 Field Ambulance before being admitted to No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station where he died, a victim of the Messines Offensive. He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

His pay book will, dated 19 September 1915, reads - In the event of my death I give to my mother (Mrs) Iris Strachan, all money due to me and all personal effects. The plaque and scroll were sent to his father, his medals (1914-1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal) to his mother, both living in Christchurch where they had moved in 1919. James is remembered on his parents'

headstone in the Bromley Cemetery in Christchurch; and on the Timaru Memorial Wall and the Timaru Boys' High School War Memorial (Library).

This is part of the SCRoll project. You can find SCRoll stories, hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, at [museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll](https://museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll)