

Frank Prestidge was born in Hororata, Canterbury on 2nd Feb. 1896 the eldest of three children born to Charles and Catherine Louisa (Louisa, nee Roper) Prestidge. His brother, Clarence Roper born 30th March 1899 in Hororata and sister, Ivy born Redcliffs, Waimate (now Ikawai) on 16th Sept. 1910 made up the family.

Charles and Louisa lived in Hororata until 1906 when they took up a hill property at Redcliffs. The wild turkeys on the farm roam the hills to this day.

Near the end of 1910 the family moved to Clandeboye on the corner of Rolleston and Canal Roads opposite the factory and school.

By then Frank had finished school and took employment with the Grant Family at Kapunatiki as a farm hand. From there he joined the Army as a foot soldier and left NZ near the end of 1916. He fought through Flanders Fields and into Belgium where, on the 4th October 1917 he was badly wounded and taken to a field hospital on his way to King George Hospital in London where he spent many months in bed. Shrapnel in his head was removed but it left a large 'hole' in his forehead which every child commented on "you have got a hole in your head" It was not possible to remove the shrapnel from his leg with out making the knee stiff so he carried it for the rest of his life and it often caused great discomfort.

To finish off his war service – he served in the Home Guard in the Timaru Showgrounds during the 2nd World War.

Once his health improved sufficiently Frank returned to the Grant farm where he fell in love with the cook, Elsie May Grey, born 24th May 1896 to Frank Darce and Emma Jane, nee Fridd, Grey. They married on 12 Dec. 1923 at Banks St Methodist Church and lived for over 50 years in the same house at 17 Marchweil St. Timaru. A year after their marriage on 23 Dec 1924 their first child Charles William was born. Frank Darce 26th May 1926 and Elsie Jean (Jean) 11 Nov. 1935 completed the family.

Frank died on 12 Dec 1980 at Timaru Hospital and his ashes along with those of his wife, eldest son and daughter in law are in the grounds of Salisbury Park Crematorium. He was loved grandfather to 3 boys and 3 girls.

Frank's main job after the 2nd war was as a grader driver for the Levels County Council where he remained until his retirement.

He was a quiet, gentle man but could show his displeasure if he was really upset at something.

Some of Frank's sayings in relation to war experiences –

'I told them Huns to stop throwing things or somebody would get hurt.'

'We had to polish our boots every morning to go to trenches where we were up to our knees in mud.'

I was peeling spuds on board ship to celebrate my 21st Birthday.

And from the time in Timaru Showgrounds (2nd World War) ‘we will have to stand on the beach and throw stones because we haven’t got any ammo.’

Otherwise he spoke very little about the War.

Compiled by his daughter, Jean Holwell March 2014.