

Timaru Herald. 26 July 1915 (page 4)

SOLDIERS' LETTERS. **SERGEANT H. A. HAMILTON.**

A GERALDINE MAN.

The following extracts from a letter received last week by Canon Hamilton from his son, Sergeant Signaller H. A. Hamilton, will be of interest.

“To-day is the King's Birthday (long may he reign!) and we are flying the grand old flag from a pole made of a stray ship's boat hook. Our regiment is still having a rest from the trenches, and we are living in ‘bivies’ only about twenty yards behind the actual front trenches on the left flank, and our men are employed as fatigue parties for sapping and road building. Our ‘bivies’ are on the back slopes of the ridge we are holding, and thus on what is called ‘dead’ ground, that is ground not swept by fire. Still there is plenty of noise just over our heads, especially when shells burst on the brow or the ridge. The fragments of such shells often pitch clear of the edge, and land somewhere down the gullies. This was how **Hamilton Elmslie** was wounded. He and another fellow were cutting steps in the hillside near the bottom, when a shell burst over the top, and a large piece of shell-casing, about four inches square, struck him across the back, ripping an ugly flesh wound about eight inches long. Fortunately it just missed his spine, and the doctor says it is not at all dangerous, as it cut the thick muscles of the back only. We hope he will soon be all right again. The piece of shell was afterwards picked up, and is being kept for him.

“When I last wrote we were having a quiet time, but on Saturday last things livened up a bit, and shot and shell flew thick. It was then that Hamilton was hit. On Sunday morning Captain Rush-King conducted a service while the din was still going on, and he had to pause occasionally, until he could make himself heard. All that afternoon one of our advanced posts had a warm time. The post was an insecure one, captured by our boys a day or two previously, and as it was subject to fire at close range and could not be made more secure we decided to evacuate it. A squadron of our lads went out to relieve the garrison, and to cover their retreat. Our men had not been in position long before the enemy rushed the place in large numbers, and some fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place, both sides using hand grenades with considerable effect. When all the garrison and wounded had got well away, our boys retired, followed by a yelling mob of the enemy. Just prior to that I had gone out with a party of Head Quarters men to carry water to the post they were retiring on, and we arrived at

the same time as they did. As you may imagine, things were quite lively for a while! Our men immediately took up their new position, and the advancing enemy suffered very heavily. Numbers of them were shot down as they came after us down the valley like madmen. We checked them .completely, and they retired about 2 a.m., leaving a big percentage behind. In one small front alone there remained seven dead, and we brought in one of their wounded with us. By daylight all was quiet again, and has been so since. During the night an occasional grenade is thrown, which becomes a signal for a rapid fusilade at that point by the nervous enemy, but it only lasts about two minutes and all is quiet again. Yesterday our bathers were disturbed by a sniper, who managed to hit a couple.

"Every day the enemy drop a few shells on our position, and our guns return the compliment. It's lots better than the .Moving Pictures to sit outside my 'bivey' and watch the enemy's shrapnel bursting over and in the sea.

"On Sunday I paid a visit to the camp of the Canterbury Infantry Battalion. I saw Alex. Bennington, Leslie Macfarlane. and several old chums whose names you don't know. All the Geraldine mounted men are fit and well, and others I have seen are White and Shiers of the Battery, Bob Patrick and Greyburn."

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OBITUARY

MR HAMILTON ELMSLIE

Advice has been received in Geraldine of the death at Bundaberg, Australia, last Saturday, of Mr Hamilton Elmslie, elder son of Mr W. P. S. Elmslie, of Geraldine. Mr Elmslie's death was the result of a war wound suffered on Gallipoli in the Great War.

The late Mr elmslie was born at Mayfield in 1892 and was educated at the Geraldine School. He joined the staff of Dalgety and Company at Geraldine and left with the Main Body in 1914. On his return from the war he rejoined Dalgety and Company and was a manger of the Geraldine agency for a number of years before leaving for Queensland. Mr Elmslie was widely known and liked in the district where he came in contact with a large portion of the farming community. He leaves a wife and two children.