

— Albert Edward Peck —

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

TED HANSEN

Albert Peck, the sixth son of Mathew Bridgeman (1850-1930) and Martha (nee Stuffins, 1856-1911) Peck, was born at Waimate on 2 February 1895. He received his education at the Morven and Willowbridge Schools.

Albert enlisted for World War One on 15 August 1914.

At the time he was employed as a farmer for Mr H Bennett, and gave his address as Morven. Albert lied about his age on his attestation form, stating he was aged 20 when he was actually still only 19 and too young for overseas service. He gave his father as his next-of-kin, who was living at St Clair, Dunedin at the time.

Later this was later changed to being care of Mrs W Prattley, RMD, Valley Road, Temuka. His enlistment papers also give a wealth of detail on his physical appearance and medical condition. Albert was single, weighed 154 pounds (almost 70 kilograms), 5 foot 8 ½ inches tall, with grey eyes,

dark brown hair, and with good teeth (unlike many men who enlisted at this time).

Albert had some pre-war territorial service with the 8th South Canterbury Mounted Rifles, and so was soon posted to serve with the Machine Gun Section of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.

He left New Zealand with the Main Body from Wellington, on 10 October 1914, aboard HMNZT 4 SS Tahiti, arriving at Alexandria, Egypt, on 3 December 1914. On 9 May 1915, Albert was posted for service on the Dardanelles. On the night of 27/28 August, in the early days of the Gallipoli campaign, he received bomb wounds to his thighs and buttocks.

After passing through the 16th Casualty Clearance Station at ANZAC Cove he was eventually evacuated to England where he passed through several facilities while he recuperated from his injuries.

His wounds seem to have required significant recovery it seems as it was not until 12 June 1917 Albert was posted back to re-join the Canterbury Mounted

Rifles in Egypt.

Albert re-joined the Mounted Rifles who were now active in the campaign in Palestine, having made significant advances in the Sinai.

During the Palestinian campaign the allies conducted a series of raids into Jordan. During this time Trooper Peck was again wounded, on 30 March 1918, this time receiving gunshot wounds to his right foot and head. His unit, part of the ANZAC Mounted Division, was moving east across Palestine into the Jordan Valley.

On the 30 March, during the raid on Amman, the Canterbury Mounted Rifles, along with the Auckland, and two troops of the Wellington Mounted Rifles, attacked Point 3039 in heavy rain.

It was a costly day for the Regiment losing 16 men killed, and 32 wounded, plus another man missing. The raids were generally beaten back by the Ottoman forces and indeed this action was to be Peck's last. Albert was admitted to 27 General Hospital at Abbassia.

Following time convalescing it was decided to evacuate him to

New Zealand. In August 1918 he embarked on HMAT Wiltshire for return to New Zealand, arriving on 9 October. He was finally discharged from the army, as no longer fit for war service due to wounds received in action, on 10 January 1919.

Having served a total of four years and 149 days in uniform, he was later awarded the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. Later in 1967, he was presented with the Gallipoli Badge and Medallion.

In 1919 he had returned to the Waimate area and was working as a labourer at Springston, Willowbridge, but also spent time in the Temuka region.

On 10 October 1923, at Knox Church, Waimate, he married Myrtle Grace Bennett (1897-1981), and they were to have four children. Albert spent time in the Morven and St Andrews area in the 1920s and 1930s where he worked as a ploughman.

But from 1935 to 1942 he was living in Timaru, and was employed by the Public Works Depot at Pleasant Point. When the

Second World War broke out Albert enlisted again in 1940, but did not enter camp until 10 January 1942. He served with 7 Canterbury Regiment until 14 May 1943, then with the 85th Coastal Battery, until 14 October 1944, when he was discharged to Home Service.

Again he had served for 2 years and 279 days, and was awarded the 1939-1945 War Medal and the New Zealand War Service Medal.

After the Second World War Albert and his wife lived at various addresses in Timaru, where he worked as a labourer and packer man. They were living at 51 Maltby Avenue, when he died on 30 December 1972, at the age of 77, and is buried in the Timaru Cemetery. His wife Myrtle later moved to 156 Otupua Road, Timaru.

She died at Talbot Hospital on 29 October 1981, and was buried with husband Albert.

■ This is part of the SCRoll project. You can find SCRoll stories, hosted by the South Canterbury Museum, at museum.timaru.govt.nz/scroll



Albert Edward Peck.

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