

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

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By Ted Hansen

Driver Andrew Gilbert, No.2/1975

Andrew, the fourth son of George (1858-1933) and Edith Mortimer (1865-1926 nee Tatam) Gilbert, was born in Geraldine on 7 June 1894. The family moved to Little River (Bank Peninsula) from Gapes Valley shortly after his birth. Andrew attended the Little River Main School where he was fond of reading, but not of outdoor games. When he enlisted on 19 April 1915, aged 20, he was working on the family farm at Little River and nominated his father as his next of kin.

He was described as being of a sallow complexion, chest measuring 33½ - 36 inches, brown eyes, black hair, C of E, single, and having artificial teeth. Prior to enlisting he had been a Territorial member of K Company, Canterbury. Posted to the NZ Field Artillery as a gunner, he was soon re-classed as a driver in the Divisional Ammunition Company, and left from Wellington aboard SS Willochra (HMNZT 27) on 14 August 1915, with the 6th Reinforcements, bound for Suez, Egypt. On 20 February 1916, while in Moascar, Egypt, he was posted to the 2nd Brigade Ammunition Company, then transferred on 1 March, to the 4th Brigade Ammunition Company and sailed for France on 8 April aboard the SS Haverford.

On arrival in Marseilles Dvr Gilbert went immediately to No.2 Australian General Hospital and by the end of June he was seriously ill and suspected of having enteric fever. In November he was classified 'C' by the medical board, suffering from anaemia and debility following bronchial pneumonia and arthritis of the left hip and it was decided to transfer him to No 1 NZ General Hospital at Brockenhurst, England, where he was admitted on 29 November. Unfortunately his health did not improve and he was classified as unfit in February 1917, and placed on the nominal roll. Andrew died of bronchial pneumonia on 28 February and was buried in the Brockenhurst (St Nicholas) Churchyard, Hampshire, England in Plot A, Row 3, Grave 6.

After the war his parents were sent his war medals, the 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal, along with a scroll and plaque. His name is commemorated on the Little River War Memorial Gates, along with another brother, 17067, Private Samuel William Gilbert, NZ Machine Gun Company, who died in France on 5 June 1917.

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