

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

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Driver Percy Raymond JONES, No.17301

Percy Raymond Jones, born on 20 January 1889 at Timaru, was the younger son of Welsh-born Francis (Frank) Jones and Louisa née Middleton, who hailed from Yorkshire, England. Frank and Louisa must have lived in Timaru for a relatively short time, having previously been in Christchurch and afterwards in Napier. They may have joined Frank's siblings in Timaru – brother Thomas and sister Charlotte (Mrs Chapman). Percy registered for service in Christchurch on 20 January 1916, one of 40 men who registered on a day of brisk recruiting. He had previously registered with the Reserves and he had military experience with E Battery, Christchurch. Percy was called up in 1917, but he had already enlisted on 1 June 1916, at which time he was a shipping customs clerk. Standing at 5 feet 10½ inches tall and weighing 161lbs, he was in good health and fit for service. His nominated next-of-kin was his father, of 139 Waltham Road, Sydenham, Christchurch, where Percy also lived prior to the war.

A quota of 440 men for the 17th Reinforcements, comprising 425 in the infantry draft, 13 in artillery and 2 in signal service, was drafted in mid May 1916. Percy was selected for the artillery where there was a surplus of 15. The Christchurch and Timaru quotas went into camp on 1 June. Gunner Percy Raymond Jones embarked with the Field Artillery of the 17th Reinforcements on 23 September 1916 per the Pakeha, destined for Devonport, England.

After almost two months at Sling Camp he went overseas on 13 January 1917, and the following month he was posted to the Divisional Ammunition Column. The next news came on 13 July 1917 in Casualty List 620. It was initially reported that Driver P. R. Jones, of the Artillery, was missing but very soon amended to "killed in action". He had been killed in action on 29 June 1917 in Belgium, aged 28 years. He was buried in Motor Car Corner Cemetery, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium. Motor Car Corner marked the point beyond which cars were

not allowed to proceed towards the front. The cemetery was begun in June 1917 at the outbreak of the Battle of Messines.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has his name recorded as Percival Raymond Jones. At Sydenham Cemetery, Christchurch, there is a memorial plaque on his parents' grave, the headstone being damaged in the 2010 earthquake and only the plaque in Percy's honour surviving intact.

The British War Medal and Victory Medal were sent to his father in 1921/1922, as were the plaque and scroll. His older brother Francis named a son Francis Raymond Jones, Raymond appearing to be a traditional name in the Jones family. Arthur George Jones, a cousin of Percy, served in World War I, and another cousin, Frederick Wallace Jones, enlisted. In early August 1917 the Public Trust advertised for claims against the estate of Percival Raymond Jones, of Christchurch, "shipping clerk, but at his death a soldier on active service in France".

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