Sun, 3 February 1915 (Papers Past) [02/06/2018]

FROM THE TRENCHES.

CHRISTCHURCH BOY'S LETTER.

FIGHTING GERMANS AND SNOW.

AN HEROIC EXPLOIT.

A very interesting letter from the front has been received by Mr G. Daltry, of the Christchurch Gas Company, from Private Cecil Humphries, who is now serving with the British Forces in the trenches. Private Humphries is well known in the city, being an ex-member of the Christchurch Football Club. The letter is as follows: —

"In the Trenches,
"4/12/14.

"My dear Mr Daltry,—Your letter reached me to the above address, and many, many thanks for your kind messages. It is only ones situated like me that can fully appreciate the value of kind wishes and thoughts. I am always so pleased to hear Christchurch news, and am at present looking forward to a newspaper giving all the latest war news from my own country.

"I suppose I must tell you something of these awful places they call trenches. In fine weather they are not so bad, but in snow and rain, why, the mud is deeper than in some of the Christchurch streets after they have been pulled up a few times by the council and Gas Company. The enemy's trenches are only twenty yards in front of ours, and we can hear them talking and singing quite plainly; and all day long we 'exchange cards' by means of hand bombs, which, by the way, are made of 'bully-beef' tins and jam tins, filled with anything hard, such as metals, nails, and even pieces of grave stone.

"All the fighting is done under the shadow of darkness, and it is generally 'Stand to!' most of the night, and sleep in the day time. My first experience of trench work was a sixteen days' spell without a wash or a shave; and you can understand what I looked like. But it is wonderful what you can stand when needs must, and I am pleased to say I have not had even as much as a cold yet.

"About ten days ago we had a big fall of snow, and two privates and a lieutenant of the Leicesters (next trench to ours) volunteered to go out and cut the enemy's barbed wire in front. So as to try and creep up they disguised themselves by means of sheets, and, dressed completely in white, they crept up and cut the wires, but had got back within 20ft of their own trench when a machine-gun killed one private and wounded the officer, who, stumbling forward, got caught in our own entanglements, and met a terrible death by wounds, barbed wire, and frost.

"While I write, these poor unfortunates lie over the wires in front of us, their bodies rotting, and we are powerless to do anything, as it would mean certain death to anyone who dared to go out to bring them in and give them a soldier's burial. This is one of the little incidents that occur that people never hear anything about.

"A modern battlefield is much different from what most people imagine. Looking through one loop-hole, you can look for miles and not see a single living object; yet, concealed in and around, there may be as big an army as the population of Christchurch. We are well looked after, and have plenty of warm clothing (including a fur coat, which I should think was New Zealand rabbit skins). The food is wonderfully good, and, from the amount of tobacco some of the boys smoke, I think they must be trying to make human chimneys of themselves. The

people of England send luxuries to us, and sometimes most strange parcels arrive. In one I received was some turtle soup — and very nice, too.
"Give my regards to all at the office and to any enquiring friends. —I am, etc.,
CECIL."

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 13 March 1915 (Papers Past)

OLD WAIMATE BOY WINS THE D.S.O.
GALLANTRY IN FACE OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.

London, March 11.
Cecil Humphries, a New Zealander, who joined the Army Service Corps at the outbreak of the war, and later exchanged to the First Manchester, was awarded the Distinguish Conduct Medal and promoted to the rank of sergeant for gallantry on the battlefield.
Sergt. Humphries is an old Waimate "boy," having got his primary schooling in Waimate. Afterwards he joined the staff of Guinness and LeCren. Ten years ago he left Waimate for Christchurch. A Waimate resident received the following post card from Sergt. Humphries a few days ago. It explains the occasion of the awarding of the D.S.O. It is as follows: —
January 9th, 1915. — Your letter of 17th November to hand. By the time this card gets to you the worst of this awful weather should be over. My word, it knows how to rain here, and the trenches are up to your knees in mud and water. Oh, the mud! I have slept in it, eaten it, and am living in it. It is wonderful what the human body can stand. Had a bit of a bust-up on December 20th and 21st last; got hit several times, but was lucky, and got through without a scratch. Have sent my shirt to the mater as a souvenir; it has eight holes in the tail (please don't think I was running away). I happened to be leaning over a poor chap who had "stopped" one, when they turned the machine gun on me, and God knows how I am here with a whole skin; but it's the way of the world, so there you are. Regards to all at home and my enquiring fnends. - Your old pal, Cecil."

Press, 13 March 1915

NEW ZEALANDER DECORATED AND PROMOTED.

CECIL HUMPHRIES DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF.
(Received March 12th. 8.35 p.m.)

LONDON. March 11.
Cecil Humphries, a New Zealander, who joined the Army Service Corps at the outbreak of war, and later exchanged into the First Manchesters, has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to Sergeant on the battlefield.
Brigadier-General Strickland assembled the men and decorated Humphries.
Mr Cecil Humphries is well-known in Christchurch and Canterbury. He was a prominent footballer and represented the province on several occasions. Lately he turned his attentions to golf, and as a member or the New Brighton Golf Club soon became one of the leading players of the club. He was in England at the time war was declared. He has seen quite a large amount of hard fighting, and has experienced all the rigours of the winter campaign. His letters home, however, were always couched in the most optimistic terms, and judging by his own accounts, a soldier's life seemed to suit him admirably. He enjoyed a high reputation here as a thorough sportsman, and his new reputation as a valiant soldier will please his many friends immensely.

Sun. 13 March 1915 (Papers Past) [01/06/2018]

SERGEANT CECIL HUMPHRIES,
Promoted on the battlefield.

Star. 13 March 1915

CECIL HUMPHRIES,

Of Christchurch, who has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to the rank of Sergeant on the battlefield in France.

Star. 13 March 1915

IN THE FIRING LINE.

NEW ZEALANDER HONOURED.

PROMOTED ON BATTLEFIELD.

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LONDON, March 11.

Cecil Humphries, a New Zealander, joined the Army Service Corps at the outbreak of the war. Later he exchanged to the First Manchesters. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to the rank of sergeant on the battlefield. Brigadier-General Strickland assembled the men and decorated Humphries.

(Cecil Humphries was a well-known resident of Christchurch, and for some years was manager of the Excelsior Hotel. He was prominent in athletic circles, being a crack Rugby footballer and a noted swimmer.)

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 13 March 1915 (Papers Past) [01/06/2018]

OLD WAIMATE BOY WINS THE D.S.O.

GALLANTRY IN FACE OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.

London, March 11.

Cecil Humphries, a New Zealander, who joined the Army Service Corps at the outbreak of the war, and later exchanged to the First Manchesters, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to the rank of sergeant for gallantry on the battlefield.

Sergt.Humphries is an old Waimate "boy," having got his primary schooling in Waimate. Afterwards he joined the staff of Guinness and LeCren. Ten years ago he left Waimate for Christchurch. A Waimate resident received the following post card-from Sergt, Humphries a few days ago. It explains the occasion of the awarding of the D.S.O. It is as follows: —

January 9th, 1915.—Your letter of 17th November to hand. By the time this card gets to you the worst of this awful weather should be over. My word, it knows how to rain here, and the trenches are up to your knees in mud and water. Oh, the mud! I have slept in it, eaten it, and am living in it. It is wonderful what the human body can stand. Had a bit of a bust-up on December 20th and 21st last; got hit several times, but was lucky, and got through without a

scratch. Have sent my shirt to the mater as a souvenir; it has eight holes in the tail (please don't think I was running away). I happened to be leaning over a poor chap who had stopped one, when they turned the machine gun on me, and God knows how I am here with a whole skin; but it's the way of the world, so there you are. Regards to all at home and my enquiring friends. Your old pal, Cecil.

Mataura Ensign. 13 March 1915 (Papers Past) [02/06/2018]

PROMOTED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

HONOR TO A NEW ZEALANDER LONDON, March 11

Mr Cecil Humphries, of New Zealand, who joined the Army Service Corps at the outbreak of war and later exchanged to the First Manchester Regiment, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to the rank of sergeant on the battlefield.
Brigadier-General Strickland assembled the men and decorated Sergeant Humphries.
Mr Cecil Humphries was born and educated at Mataura, being a son ol the late Mr Chas. Humphries, at one time proprietor of the Bridge Hotel. Mataura. Up to two years ago Mr Humphries had assisted his step-mother [sic], Mrs C. Rowse, in the management of the Excelsior Hotel, Christchurch. Just prior to the outbreak, of the war Mr Humphries left for a round-the-world trip with his mother. While in London war broke out and Mr Humphries at once decided to enlist. During his stay at Christchurch, Mr Humphries was a prominent member of the New Brighton Golf Club and was also a leading member of the New Brighton Surf Club.

Star. 15 March 1915 (Papers Past) [02/06/2018]

SERGEANT CECIL HUMPHRIES.

The following cable message was sent on Saturday to Mrs Rowse (formerly of the Excelsior. Hotel, Christchurch), mother of Sergeant Humphries: -
"Rowse, Hotel Madrid, 147 Cromwell Road. London.— Christchurch licensed victuallers join with all New Zealand in tendering heartiest congratulations to Sergeant Humphries. As a member of our honourable trade we feel proud of him.—Sutton, president; Nordon, secretary."
The Dunedin correspondent of the "Star" telegraphs that Sergeant Humphries is an ex-Otago High School boy. He was in London with his mother when the war broke out, and joined the Army Service Corps for France, but transferred to the 1st Manchester Regiment in order to be in the fighting line. He is a nephew of Mrs P. Dalrymple, of South Dunedin.

Wanganui Chronicle, 16 March 1915

HIGH HONOUR FOR NEW ZEALANDER.

CECIL HUMPHRIES ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

Mr. Cecil Humphries, who was decorated with the Distinguished Conduct Medal on the battlefield in Northern France by Brigadier-General Strickland, a particularly high honour, is

a nephew of Mrs. G. D. Braik, of Wanganui. The gallant young soldier is the son (by her first marriage) of Mrs. A. R. Rowse, of Christchurch. With his mother he left on a visit to the Continent and the Mother Country in February of last year, and after spending some three months on the Continent they arrived in England shortly before the outbreak of the war. Young Humphries at once joined the Army Service Corps, in which he was given the rank of sergeant, but he relinquished his stripes and joined his present regiment as a private in order to get to the front. The distinguished honour which has fallen to his lot is the first of its kind bestowed on a New Zealander on the battlefield, and in view of the heroic conduct which won him the honourable distinction, it is not surprising to learn from his delightful and interesting letters to his mother (extracts from which we publish below) that he is again the proud wearer of the three stripes. These letters were forwarded to Mrs. Braik by Mrs. Rowse, who, though not originally intending to remain in England, is residing there in order to be in as close touch with her son as possible. It may be added that Sergeant Cecil Frederic Humphries is 27 years of age. He is well known in sporting circles in Christchurch, having been a prominent footballer, swimmer, and golfer. He also secured a place in a Christchurch representative football team which toured New Zealand a few years ago.

Wanganui Chronicle. 16 March 1915 (Papers Past) [02/06/2018]

INTERESTING LETTERS.

THRILLING PEN PICTURE OF A BATTLE

A GALLANT CHARGE, A VICTORY, AND ITS COST.

LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

The first of Cecil Humphries' letters, addressed to "My Darling Mother," is dated "In the Trenches, Dec. 16, 1914 (noon)," and commences: —

Your letter of the 11th I received this morning under most dramatic conditions. Sharp at 8 o'clock our artillery, accompanied by the French, opened up in great style, and the noise was simply awful. This is the first time I have been in reserve when anything startling has been on, so with the aid of a good pair of field glasses and a position well covered in but elevated I had my first view of a real battle in daylight (all the others we had had were at night). This morning it was just like sitting in a picture theatre and watching it all being played, but this theatre had the grim reality about it. After a big bombardment —the noise of shells whistling overhead, the report of the big guns, and the smoke of the bursting shells, earth and timber being blown skywards, the noise added to by the rapid fire or rifles and the incessant crack, crack of' the machine guns—made a din that one could never forget. The French on our right from the other side of the railway line appeared like a lot of flies, and at the double came on the enemy's trenches, which were situated in a mangold field, about one hundred yards away. I could just see the glitter of the bayonets and as they went the dark forms falling to the ground, but on they went and secured the trenches; just before they arrived a big party of Germans were seen using their legs to good advantage. Very few managed to get away after the trenches were taken. The French advanced in parties of 25 as a support to the firing line. I could plainly see them hop over the line, make a dash, and then lie down, and after a brief spell rush on again. The few seconds the men are down they work like madmen making what we call head cover. This is done with a little adze. I could plainly see five rows of supports, and while they lay there, those dark objects on that field, the enemy opened up with shrapnel, and the little clouds of smoke over the brave heads of these Frenchmen told all too well that

the German gunners had got their range, and only those who know the horror of shrapnel could picture the Hell that must be over there. The gallant little crowd stuck to it well, and when they moved and made good the trenches you could see the dark forms still lying that told the deadly tale. Later on going round to my observation post and looking out at the battlefield, it appeared to me as if the brow of a hill had been cleared of trees and fern, and the black trunks of the trees left lying on the ground. This is the picture that met my eye, only the black trunks are those of the brave French who made that gallant charge. I may mention here that the uniform of the French has been changed, and in place of the picturesque and historical red pants and blue coat they have a bluish grey cloth something like the Germans, the cut being the same as their old uniforms. 12-30 p.m.: I have just had another look out, and could plainly see the Red Cross men at work doing their best to relieve those poor creatures who are lying helpless in that little green patch. The day has come over dull again, and we expect some more rain. This little "set to" will mean our keeping a very keen watch on our "friends," as they very likely will try and make a counter attack. I have just heard that our artillery has blown up a bridge over the canal on the left, and a big party of Germans is thereby cut off. I only hope this is true. During the night one of the lads crawled out to the German dead in front and got two or three of their helmets, so some of them are doing a little acting "a la Kaiser" up and down the trenches. The whole picture is somewhat similar to what you see in paintings of battlefields—the green fields with the dark forms which a few hours ago were living men—a mangold field close by with a trench being deepened every moment making a security for the brave men who were lucky enough to dodge all the lead. Right to the back are the smoking chimneys of a huge factory. I wonder if they realise what all this means? The French have captured three trenches - word has just been passed along—the charge a complete success, so some body's darlings, who at this moment are lying out on that field, have paid dearly for those few yards of soil which they have won for France. Our brigade was to have taken part in this affair, and we were all ready, stripped of extra clothing and with bayonets fixed. The splendid advance made by the French had altered the plan.
2-30 p.m. —Things are much as usual again. They are having a set to on our left, the right is quiet. The French are working hard on their new trenches. At the back a big building is on fire, and the big chimney stacks are puffing out smoke as if regardless of all this noise and clatter. In the trenches the boys are hard at work getting some onions and potatoes ready for the old bully stew, and further down two or three are singing (quietly) "Get out and get under," and a real comedian is singing, "Take me back to Yorkshire." Truly these trenches are funny places. I hope and trust the fates will continue to be kind to me. The experiences I have had could not be bought for bags of gold. Well, I think this is all the news to-day, so hoping you are still merry and bright, and keep smiling—you can watch the papers for the above date, and you will see where we are to-day. Kind regards to all, especially New Zealand friends. All my love! Cheer oh! Still as fit as a fiddle. Your loving son, Cecil Humphries.

In a Cowshed,
Having a Rest
Xmas Eve, 10 p.m.

My darling mother, —Your few lines at the back of Harry's letter told me that your Xmas was not going to be one of rejoicing. Mother, you must cheer up! My dear, I am quite all right, without a scratch, and as fit as ever. My diary I sent to you by a wounded London Scottish soldier. I had rendered him first aid. I said if he would do the greatest favour I had ever asked of any man, he would post this to your address. I do not know his name, but said to him that the name of his regiment would, or should, be sufficient guarantee that this little commission would be executed The battle we had the other day you will perhaps nave read about before this. We were paraded to-day and given a very fine address by two generals.

One old man fairly broke down when he ended his speech with this: “Men, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am a Britisher, and thank God you are fighting for a noble cause, and 1 am proud of you all.” I sent you a wire saying “All well,” and wishing you a merry Xmas. I hope you received it. To-day I got your parcel of clothing, and 1 may say I wanted these things very much. If you could only see me now with the knees out of my khaki pants, and also out of my drawers, and mud right up to the eyes you would not feel very proud of your boy, but I got it honourably, and will feel quite happy when I awake on Xmas morning in these rags. I am to receive a new pair of khaki, and with your new underclothing will be all right again. My friend Webster has been with me tonight, and we have had a long talk over our strange Xmas Eve. To-day has been one of the sad ones in my life. I acted as postman, and in going over the names in those bags full of letters the four piles told a most heart-rending tale, in short, here it is—dead, wounded, hospital, in billet. Well, I am sorry to say the three first heaps were greater than the post to be delivered. All my mates have gone, and I am left quite alone in my section. You will have read all about it, and when you get this letter just go down on your knees and thank God He has guided me as He has done. I am forwarding you a few souvenirs—two German helmets, cartridge cases, a French general's sash, and my own shirt with the holes in it, so you will see I had a most marvellous escape. We were in a tight corner. I do not think one like it will happen again for a long time. I only hope not. When I joined this regiment, mater, I had to take down my stripes and go into the ranks as a private. Well, mother, I have won back the three stripes again, and not with a bread-knife, as in the Army Service Corps, but with a battle axe, and no one feels prouder, inwardly, to-night than I do to hear my promotion called out in orders. Outside the carol singers are singing away. Oh! how strange it all is, the French voices, and I am here in a little French village. It is all like a dream. Well, my dear, I cannot write, so please excuse this disjointed epistle. Give my regards to enquiring friends, to you all my love. Your ever loving son, Cecil Humphries.

P.S. —I forgot to tell you that I had lost all my kit in this little “to do” the other day, so should like you to send me as soon as possible, a razor, toothbrush and paste, small hairbrush and comb, a scout knife and fork—knife and fork to fit into each other—shaving brush and soap, aluminium soap holder, folding cup and canteen, a Cardigan jacket. Your other beauty the rotten Germans will have by this time. A couple of handkerchiefs would be most acceptable.

Xmas morning. The ground white with snow, the church bells ringing. I attended church this morning at 8 a.m. What a strange, strange Xmas! but never mind, cheer oh! Sorry to give you all this trouble. Hope I won’t meet this fate again for a while. — Cecil.

Hawera & Normanby Star. 16 March 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Mr Cecil Humphries, who was decorated with the Distinguished Conduct Medal on the battlefield in Northern France by Brigadier-General Strickland, a particularly high honor, is (says the Chronicle) a nephew of Mrs G. D. Braik, of Wanganui. The gallant young soldier is the son (by her first marriage) of Mrs A. R. Rowse, of Christchurch. It may be added that Sergeant Cecil Frederic Humphries is 27 years of age. He is well known in sporting circles in Christchurch, having been a prominent footballer, swimmer, and golfer. He also secured a place in a Christchurch representative football team which toured New Zealand a few years ago.

Wanganui Chronicle. 17 March 1915

A Waimate resident received the following post-card from Sergeant Cecil Humphries, a few days ago, which describes the incident for which he was awarded the D.S. medal: "January 9, 1915: We had a bit of a 'bust up' on deck on the 20th and 21st last. I got hit several times, but was lucky and got through without a scratch. I have sent my shirt to the mater as a souvenir. It has eight holes in the tail (please don't think I was running away), but I happened to be leaning over a poor chap who had 'stopped one,' when they turned the machine gun on to me, and God knows how I am here with a whole skin. But it's the way of the world, so there you are."

Star. 18 March 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

A REAL BATTLE.

GLITTER OF BAYONETS.

DARK FORMS FALLING.

WHAT CECIL HUMPHRIES SAW.

Sergeant Cecil Humphries, late of Christchurch, but now fighting with the 1st Manchester Regiment, who was decorated and promoted in the field for distinguished conduct, and reported yesterday to have been wounded, writing to friends in Christchurch, gives the following graphic account of his experiences:

In the trenches, 16-12-I4. — Your letter I received this morning under most dramatic conditions. Sharp at eight our artillery, accompanied by the French, opened up in great style, and the noise-why, it was awful. This is the first time I have been in reserve when anything startling has been on, so with the aid of a good pair of field-glasses and a position well covered in, but elevated, I had my first view of a real battle in daylight. All the other "goes" we have had were at night, but this morning was just like sitting in a picture theatre and watching it all played, but this theatre had the grim reality about it. After a big bombardment, the noise of shells whistling overhead, the report of big guns, and the smoke of the bursting shells, this with earth and timber being blown skywards, the noise aided on by the rapid fire of rifles and the crack, crack of machine guns, made a noise that one could never forget.

"WE MADE SOME PROGRESS."

This lasted about twenty minutes, when the French on our right, from the other side of the railway line, appeared like a lot of flies, and at the double came on to the enemy's trench, which was situated in a mangel field, about 100 yards away. You could just see the glitter of the bayonets, and as they went, the dark forms falling to the ground. On they went and secured the trench, but before they arrived a big party of Germans were using their legs to good advantage, but few managed to get away. After the trenches were taken the French advanced in parties of twenty-five as a support to the firing lines. I could plainly see them hop over the line and make a dash, then lie down, and after a brief spell rush on again. The few seconds the men are down they work like mad making what we call "head cover." This is done with a little "adze" kind of tool. I could plainly see five rows of supports, and while they lay there, those dark objects in that field, the enemy opened up with their .shrapnel. The little clouds of smoke over the heads of these brave Frenchmen told all too plainly the German gunners had got their range and only those who know the horror of shrapnel could picture the "hell" that must be over there.

THEY "STUCK" IT WELL.

But the gallant little crowd "stuck" it well, and when they moved on and made good the trenches you could see the dark forms still lying which told the deadly tale. The whole picture is somewhat similar to what you see in "paintings of battlefields." The picture: — The green field (grass), with the dark forms which, until a few hours ago were living men, the mangel fields close, by but now with a trench getting deeper every moment, making a security for the brave men who were lucky enough to dodge all the lead. Right to the back is the chimney smoking of a huge factory. I wonder if they realise what all this means? "The French have captured those trenches" has just been passed along, "the charge a complete success," so

those somebody's darlings who now lie out in that field have paid dearly for that few yards of soil which has been won for France. All our brigade was to have taken part in this affair, and we were all ready with bayonets fixed, and myself stripped of extra clothing, such as mufflers, etc., ready to go when orders came. But the splendid advance made by the French has evidently altered the move, and save for a good deal of firing and a few stray bombs from the enemy (that did very little harm) here we are still "at home" and merry and bright. I may mention that the uniform of the French has been changed, and in place of their picturesque and historical red pants and blue coats, they have a bluish-grey (something like the German), but the cut is exactly the same as their old uniform.

Press. 18 March 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

IN THE TRENCHES.

FIGHTING IN MUD AND WATER.

BRITISH SOLDIERS' DAILY LOT.

GRAPHIC STORIES BY SERGEANT HUMPHRIES.

The following graphic pictures of life in the trenches in France during December, are taken from letters received in this city from Sergeant Cecil Humphries, formerly of Christchurch, who is serving in the 1st Manchester Regiment. These stories, of daily happenings in the advanced British trenches, are particularly interesting as coming from a man who was recently promoted on the battlefield, and awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and who is mentioned in this morning's messages as having been wounded during the recent fighting at Neuve-Chapelle.

In the Trenches.

December 1st. 1914.

Here we are again, still merry and bright; the weather conditions have greatly improved, and our feet arc not nearly so cold these last few nights. To-morrow night, all being well, we are off to the "cowshed" for seven days' rest, and well we need it, as we all, more or less, look the worse for this straining vigil we must keep up. My "little home" is nearly complete now, even to a cat. While I was looking through my loop-hole, I heard the pitiful cry of a kitten and coaxed it in. It is now sitting on my knee, playing, regardless of all this noise and clatter. I will take it out tomorrow night and give it to the old lady at the farm.

TANNHAUSER IN THE TRENCHES.

I am afraid 1 cannot give you very much news, but what I do know in this part, we are holding our own; the enemy seems to be putting less vim into their attacks, but the big gun duels are going on with their deafening business. The usual glare in the sky at night tells the tale of some more unfortunate homes gone "west." As I mentioned before, the enemy's trenches are but 25 to 30 yards off in one portion of our trenches, and we can hear them talking quite plainly, and you will hardly believe it, but we had some very fine music in a solo from "Tannhauser," with a jolly good chorus. It does seem strange, all this. After they had finished, by way of our appreciation we sent over two well-directed bombs which stopped the singing.

BOMBS AND BULLY BEEF.

This is the eleventh night and twelfth day in these trenches, but we are all well, and are being relieved tomorrow night. Then for a wash, shave and a change. If you could only see me now,

the dirt is well ground in, and it will need some digging out. This morning a tantalising sniper kept hitting the top of my loop-hole and knocking the earth into my cheese. I was warming up but I let him alone until I had finished, and since then he "has used no other." Our greatest worry at present is bombs. We have men on the look-out, and you will hear them call "ducks" (stands for look-out) right or left, and then it is a case of into the little hole again. This morning some of the boys were sitting round their little bucket of glowing charcoal, when a bomb landed amongst them, but they were fortunate, as all the damage was done to the breakfast, and beyond having their hair singed, they are quite all right, but the language is quite unfit for me to repeat, and I am sure any bullock-driver would feel proud to have mastered such a flow. Tucker on this job is always the first consideration. "1 wonder what we will have for dinner?" How often I have heard you say this. Well, after I finish this little talk I am going to make a "bully stew," consisting of bully beef, a couple of onions the Indians gave me, some bread (allowed a round a day), and a canteen of tea. Not bad, but gets jolly monotonous day after day. I have tried frying it, stewing it, but it's no good, and seems to come out just the same old salt bully.

CHURCH ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

The following are my impressions of my first military church parade under war conditions. We fell in sharp at 9 a.m. in front of our "cowshed," and after a few words of advice in characteristic fashion from our captain, we were marched off to the village church, which is of the old Gothic style, with the graveyard round it. In one corner just as I was going in, I noticed the grave of General Hamilton, marked by a plain wooden cross with the simple epitaph: "Killed in action, October 14th. 1914." A soldier's glory. The Germans here, as everywhere else, have found their marks with several shells, the altar and beautiful stained glass windows at the back were broken and scattered in ruins. Into this quiet little church one thousand British "Tommies" filed, cap in hand —from general down to private—and fully equipped, rifles and extra ammunition. The white-surpliced English clergyman stood beside the ruined altar, conducting service well within reach of shells. In fact, one could plainly hear the rapid fire of rifles, booming of big guns, the screeching of shells, and the buzz of an aeroplane overhead. This was my first service on the battlefield, and it is no wonder the kindly words of advice and warning of our chaplain seemed doubly impressive. "God save the King" was sung with feeling at the close. We then all drew extra ammunition, and, I believe, we are off to the trenches to act as relief to the - - - Regiment. It's a strange world we live in.

DIGGING TRENCHES BY NIGHT.

December 7th —We had a rotten time of it last night; fell in at dusk, and had a seven-mile march with picks and shovels, and in the rain and mud, had to start digging a trench. I have done some hard work lately, but this was really hard labour. Over a thousand of us were at work, but with our equipment on, and extra ammunition, it seemed doubly hard. As the night was dark, we finished our work without being seen by the enemy, and I can tell you it was a weary, wet, and tired band who trudged those seven miles through mud and slush to our little haven of rest —the "cowshed." No bath or change, but I fell into my bunk of straw, wet through and with the blankets over me. I woke the up next morning fit and well, and, above, dry. In ordinary life a thing like this would be enough to give me a "death of cold," but I am as fit as ever, and still ready for whatever comes along. I was sorry last night for some two hundred Territorials, who have just been attached to us. This was their experience of work, and first time under fire. On the march "home" the poor beggars fell out in ones and twos, fairly played cut.

A REAL BATTLE.

In the trenches, 16-12-14. — Your letter I received this morning under most dramatic conditions. Sharp at eight our artillery, by the French, opened up in great style and the

noise—why, it was awful. This is the first time I have been in reserve when anything startling has been on, so with the aid of a good pair of field-glasses and a position well covered in, but elevated, I had my first view of a real battle in daylight. All the other "goes" we have had were at night, but this morning was just like sitting in a picture theatre and watching it all played but this theatre had the grim reality about it. After a big bombardment, the noise of shells whistling overhead, the report of big guns, and the smoke of the bursting shells, this with earth and timber being blown skywards, the noise aided on by the rapid fire of rifles and the crack crack of machine-guns, made a noise that one could never forget.

"WE HADE SOME PROGRESS."

This lasted about twenty minutes, when the French on our right, from the other side of the railway line, appeared like a lot of flies, and at the double came on to the enemy's trench, which was situated in a mangel field, about 100 yards away. You could just see the glitter of the bayonets, and as they went, the dark forms falling to the ground. On they went and secured the trench, but before they arrived a big party of Germans were using their legs to good advantage, but few managed to get away. After the trenches were taken the French advanced in parties of twenty-five as a support to the firing line. I could plainly see them hop over the line and make a dash, then lie down, and after a brief spell rush on again. The few seconds the men are down they work like mad making what we call "head cover." This is done with a little "adze" kind of tool. I could plainly see five rows of supports, and while they lay there, those dark objects in that field, the enemy opened up with their shrapnel. The little clouds of smoke over the heads of these brave Frenchmen told all too plainly the German gunners had got their range and only those who know the horror of shrapnel could picture the "hell" that must be over there.

THEY "STUCK" IT WELL.

But the gallant little crowd "stuck" it well, and when they moved on and made good the trenches you could see the dark forms still lying which told the deadly tale. The whole picture is somewhat similar to what you see in "paintings of battlefields." The picture:—The green field (grass), with the dark forms which, until a few hours ago were living men, the mangel fields close by, but now with a trench getting deeper every moment, making a security for the brave men who were lucky enough to dodge all the lead. Right to the back is the chimney smoking of a huge factory. I wonder if they realise what all this means? "The French have captured these trenches" has just been passed along, "the charge a complete success," so those somebody's darlings who now lie out in that field have paid dearly for that few yards of soil which has been won for France. All our brigade was to have taken part in this affair, and we were all ready with bayonets fixed, and myself stripped of extra clothing such as mufflers, etc., ready to go when orders came. But the splendid advance made by the French has evidently altered the move and save for a good deal of firing and a few stray bombs from the enemy (that did very little harm) here we are still "at home" and merry and bright. I may mention that the uniform of the French has been changed, and in place of their picturesque and historical red pants and blue coats, they have a bluish-grey (something like the Germans), but the cut is exactly the same as their old uniform.

RED CROSS MEN AT WORK.

12.30.p.m.—I have just had another look out, and could plainly see the Red Cross men at work and doing their best to relieve those poor creatures who are lying helpless in that little patch. This little set-to will mean our keeping a very close watch on our "friends," as they will very likely try and make a counter-attack. During the night one of the lads crawled out to the German dead in front and got two or three helmets, so some of the boys are doing a little acting "a la Kaiser" up and down the trenches.

"THESE TRENCHES ARE FUNNY PLACES."

2.30 a.m. —Things are much as usual again. They are having a set-to on our left. The night is quiet, the French are still working hard on their new trenches, while at the back a big building is on fire, and the big chimneystacks are puffing out their smoke as if regardless of all this noise and clatter. In the trench the boys are hard at work getting some onions and potatoes for the old "bully stew," and further down two or three are singing quietly, "Get Out and Get Under," and a real comedian is singing "Take Me Back to Yorkshire." These trenches are funny places. I hope and trust the fates are kind, as the experiences I have had could never be bought for bags of gold.

A CLEAN WHITE SHEET.

A convent at X--- , in reserve, resting, December 18th. —Since my last letter we have been very busy. This change over business takes a lot of details to attend to. Yesterday at about 3.30 p.m. we were relieved by a well-known Irish Regiment and had a march of about nine miles up to this place. We landed dead beat, and spreading my oil sheet on the floor, and my pack for a pillow, I wrapped myself in my blanket, and all was blank until daylight. I am getting quite used to sleeping like this, but there is one thing I cannot master, and that is getting used to a half-wet blanket against one's face and neck. I often long for the feeling of a cold white sheet, and, in fact (you will laugh), some of the boys got some bedding, etc., from one of the rooms, and offered me some. I took a clean white sheet to just see what it will be like to-night—an oil sheet underneath on the floor boards, a sheet and blanket. Of course, we cannot take our clothes off -—just our boots, as we have to be always "in a constant state of readiness," so, after finishing this little letter I am going to bed.

THE ORDER OF THE BATH.

December 19th.—I am still merry and bright, but have a slight cold in the head. I suppose it is on account of my hot bath to-day. It seems strange that I could be wet through night after night in the trenches, and yet come out and get a cold from a bath. "The order of the bath" was a very funny performance. We were all marched down to the English hospital, and on arrival met by the surgeon, who said, "First forty file on upstairs." and we were conducted to a room with a pile of red blankets in the centre, and told to strip off everything, leaving all valuables and anything leather in your cap, then tie your clothes up and hand them to some of the natives, who marched off with them to the fumigator. We were then marched down a passage in "native uniform" to the baths. Two to a bath, and real hot, too—with a big piece of carbolic soap and a floor scrubbing brush, I had a glorious twenty minutes. Then we went back to our room, putting our red blankets round, and squatting a la nature to await the arrival of our clothes. Someone shouted, "Here they come." and about a dozen natives filed in with a bundle of steaming clothes, and threw them on to the floor. We all started grumbling, as everybody thought they were wet, but it was a delusion, and after a good shake out they were bone dry.

WHAT THE GENERAL SAID.

The battle we had the other day you will have read about before this. We were paraded to-day and given a very fine address by two generals. One old man fairly broke down when he ended his speech with, "Men, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am a Britisher and thank God you are all fighting for a noble cause, and I am proud of you all."

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 20 March 1915 (Papers Past) [09 July 2018]

RACY LETTERS FROM WAIMATE SCHOOLED BOY.

LIFE IN THE TRENCHES IN FRANCE

PUNCTUATED ROUTINE OF STUBBORN CAMPAIGN.

The following graphic pictures of life in the trenches in France during December, are taken from letters received from Sergeant Cecil Humphries, formerly of Waimate, who is serving in the 1st Manchester Regiment (Sergt. Humphries came to live in Waimate with his mother and step-father (Mr Rowse, who was teller in the Bank of New Zealand) when the lad was in the Third Standard. He remained here till he had reached the age of 16 or 17, so that he got the most important part of his schooling here.) He was recently promoted on the battlefield, and awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, having been wounded during the recent fighting at Neuve-Chapelle.

In the Trenches.
December 1st, 1914.

Here we are again, still merry and bright; the weather conditions have greatly improved, and our feet are not nearly so cold these last few nights. To-morrow night, all being well, we are off to the "cowshed" for seven days' rest, and well we need it, as we all, more or less, look the worse for this straining vigil we must keep up. My 'little home' is nearly complete now even to a cat. While I was looking through my loop-hole, I heard the pitiful cry of a kitten and coaxed it in. It is now sitting on my knee, playing, regardless of all this noise and clatter. I will take it out to-morrow night and give it to the old lady at the farm

TANNHAUSER IN THE TRENCHES

I am afraid I cannot give you very much news, but what I do know in this part, we are holding our own; the enemy seems to be putting less vim into their attacks, but the big gun duets are going on with their deafening business. The usual game in the sky at night tells the tale of some more unfortunate homes gone "west." As I mentioned before, the enemy's trenches are but 25 to 30 yards off in one portion of our trenches, and we can hear them talking quite plainly, and you will hardly believe it, but we had some very fine music in a solo from "Tannhauser," with a jolly good chorus. It does seem strange, all this. After they had finished, by way of our appreciation we sent over two well-directed bombs which stopped the singing.

BOMBS AND BULLY BEEF.

This is the eleventh night and twelfth day in these trenches, but we are all well, and are being relieved tomorrow night. Then for a wash, shave and a change. If you could only see me now, the dirt is well ground in, and it will need some digging out. This morning a tantalising sniper kept hitting the top of my loop-hole and knocking the earth into my cheese I was warming up but I let him alone until I had finished, and since then he "has used no other." Our greatest worry at present is bombs. We have men on the look-out, and you will hear them call "ducks" (stands for look-out) left or right, and then it is a case of into the little hole again. This morning some of the boys were sitting round their little bucket of glowing charcoal, when a bomb landed amongst them, but they were fortunate, as all the damage was done to the breakfast, and beyond having their hair singed, they are quite all right, but the language is quite unfit for me to repeat, and I am sure any bullock-driver would have felt proud to have mastered such a flow. Tucker on the job is always the first consideration. "I wonder what we will have for dinner?" How often I have heard you say this. Well, after I finish this little talk I am going to make a "bully stew," consisting of bully beef, a couple of onions the Indians

gave me, some bread (allowed a pound a day), and a canteen of tea. Not bad, but gets jolly monotonous, day after day. I have tried frying it, stewing it, but it's no good, and seems to come out just the same old salt bully.

CHURCH ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The following are my impressions of my first military church parade under war conditions. We fell in sharp at 9 a. m. in front of our "cowshed," and after a few words of advice in characteristic fashion from our captain, we were marched off to the village church, which is of the old Gothic style, with the graveyard round it. In one corner just as I was going in, I noticed the grave of General Hamilton marked by a plain wooden cross with the simple epitaph: "Killed in action, October 14th, 1914," A soldier's glory. The Germans here, as everywhere else, have found their marks with several shells, the altar and beautiful stained glass windows at the back were broken and scattered in ruins. Into this quiet little church one thousand British "Tommies" filed, cap in hand — from general down to private—and fully equipped, rifles and extra ammunition The white-surpliced English clergyman stood beside the ruined altar, conducting service well within reach of shells. In fact, one could plainly hear the rapid fire of rifles, booming of big guns, the screeching of shells, and the buzz of an aeroplane overhead. That was my first service on the battlefield, and it is no wonder the kindly words of advice and warning of our chaplain seemed doubly impressive. "God save the King" was sung with great feeling at the close. We then all drew extra ammunition, and, I believe, we are off to the trenches to act as relief to the – Regiment. It's a strange world we llve in.

DIGGING TRENCHES BY NIGHT.

December 7th — We had a rotten time of it last night; fell in at dusk, and had a seven mile march with picks and shovels, and in the rain and mud had to start digging a 'trench. I have clone some hard work lately, but this was really hard labour. Over a thousand of us were at work, but with our equipment on, and extra ammunition, it seemed doubly hard. As the night was dark, we finished our work without being seen by the enemy, and I can tell you it was a weary, wet, and tired band who trudged those seven miles through mud and slush to our little haven of rest —the "cowshed." No bath or change, but I fell into my bunk of straw, wet through, and with the blankets over me, I woke up next morning fit and well, and above all, dry. In ordinary life a thing like this would be enough to give me a "death of cold," but I am as fit as ever, and still ready for whatever comes along. I was sorry last night for some two hundred Territorials, who have just been attached to us. This was their first experience of work, and first time under fire. On the march "home" the poor beggars fell out in ones and twos, fairly played out.

(To be continued).

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 23 March 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

HOW "TOMMY" TAKES HIS BATH.

PICTURESQUE PERFORMANCE.

"I am still merry and bright, but have a slight cold in the head," writes Sergeant Cecil Humphries from "somewhere in France." I suppose it is on account of my hot bath to-day. It seems strange that I could be wet through night after night in the trenches, and yet come out and get a cold from a bath. "The order of the bath" was a very funny performance. We were all marched down to the English hospital, and on arrival met by the surgeon, who said: "First forty file on upstairs." And we were conducted to a room with a pile of red blankets in the centre, and told to strip off everything, leaving all valuables and anything leather in your cap,

then tie your clothes up and hand them to some of the natives, who marched with them to the fumigator. We were then marched down a passage in "native uniform" to the baths. Two to a bath, and real hot ,too — with a big piece of carbolic soap and a floor scrubbing brush, I had a glorious twenty minutes. Then we went back to our room, putting our red blankets round, and squatting a la nature to await the arrival of our clothes. Someone shouted: "Here they come," and about a dozen natives filed in with a bundle of steaming clothes, and threw them to the floor. We all started grumbling, as everybody thought they were wet, but it was a delusion, and after a good shake they were bone dry.

Evening Star. 19 April 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

A THRILLING STORY

BY CECIL HUMPHRIES.

Sergeant Cecil Humphries, a New Zealander who, as is well known, has distinguished himself in the field, sent the following extracts from his diary to his mother, who is in London. The extracts were reposted to relatives in New Zealand, and were kindly supplied to us:

December 22, 1914. In the remains of a home at Givenchy, by a coke fire, room full of Sikhs, a candle, and here I am, 3 a.m.

How I am to relate my experiences since noon on Sunday I am at a loss to know. Well, here goes: After an inspection by the colonel on Sunday morning we all started to get together our dinner, but the order came. "Fall in at once"; blankets to be left behind (something doing)! In a very short time a thousand men were massed in the courtyard, and, with the quick movement of the red hatband brigade (General Staff officers), there was a something doing already, and off we went through the town of Bethune, where we had a brief rest, and on to the village of Beuvey. We could plainly see the shells, and the booming of the big guns told us we were in for it. We were marched, or rather forced-marched, and all along the rapid despatch carriers, with their urgent messages, passed to and fro. It was not until my friend Webster came along with a message, and, spotting me, gave me the following startling news: — "Enemy broken through the natives; captured small village; moving towards canal!" As soon as we heard this our packs seemed to get lighter, and we all had our fighting blood up. On we passed. Then we came across the artillery gunnery reinforcements at the gallop. Along that slushy road at top, a quick order, and a few sharp words of command. Round about the guns, into position, the lamp alongside quickly lighting up the observers up a tree or building, and then the word "Fire!" The big boom, and another message was on its way. Along we went, and if I live to be a thousand years old I will never forget that sight. The poor natives wounded—some slightly, others, poor wretches, with hands off, arms off, legs off. These were on the other side of the canal, and it was a sight I could not picture to you by words from a mere pen. Then the French seemed to me (about 500 or more of them) absolutely in retreat, like a lot of lost sheep, making south, as we were getting a move on as quickly as possible the other way. All were by this time fully aware we were in for a good to do! Strength seems to come to one when it is a case of "have to." Further on we came across a company of the "little Johnnies" (the Gurkhas). They were mud up to the eyes, and by their outward appearance had had a time of it. They were about waist-deep in the canal, washing their rifles to try to get them back into working order again. The other bank of the canal will always remain a dreadful memory.

We were being pushed along with all speed until our arrival at the brewery, where we were told off in single file, and worked from a big factory ready to go across a large field to take a

small village at the point of the bayonet. As we were getting ready, the enemy, spying our massing in the yard, put two well-directed shells plump into ns, and oh! the sight! It is useless for me to try to picture the horror of it all. I counted seven, besides wounded, where that dreadful shrapnel had taken effect.

"File on!" and across that field at the double; run 25yds. and then a breather and on again, all the while the shrapnel making our line smaller every few yards: but on we went until the outskirts of the village were reached. Then another breather, and "Fix bayonets and charge." Now this will have to stop. I must, if God looks over me, tell you the rest by word of mouth. Suffice it to say that we captured the village. The heaps of the enemy's dead in hundreds told of the bayonet's deadly work. On we went, blood full up! The first trench we took. Up again, and the second. Then again, the third, and again the fourth. Our ranks were getting weaker, so we retired into the third and made a stand for it.

We were going to try to make a general advance to absolutely rout the enemy in the morning before daylight. My duty was to take charge of 10 men in the trench and guard all the communications — a very risky job - and to bayonet anyone who came along. Then came the order to advance in a creeping position, as near as possible to the enemy's trenches, ready for the big charge. On our left the other half of the company could be plainly seen by us by the light of two straw stacks lighted by the enemy. The Germans, meanwhile, by the aid of those dreadful night lights, spotted our position, and then a machine gun opened on that thin kakhi line - and oh! the sight! Will I ever forget? The supports woke up to take the place of the fallen, and, taking advantage of whatever cover we could, we crawled along. Our commands were now given by a whisper from one to another, and as a message came along I touched the man next to me, and gave him the order. No reply—dead! I touched the next. No reply- dead! Then I realised the position. Crawling along, and it was just now breaking daylight, I worked my way in some mysterious fashion over to where our captain was, and what I should find! Our captain shot through the head. 1 dragged him under cover, and then made the startling discovery — I was right under the very nose of the German trenches! Getting down under the screen of a communication trench, I did my best to get the captain along, but he was too heavy. I look off my scarf and tied it round his legs, then, putting my head through, tried to drag him along that narrow and mucky trench. I got him along a bit, until I came to the body of a dead native. It was too much for me. I couldn't get his 15-stone deadweight along, so 1 left him, and, poor beggar, long 'ere this he's breathed his last. Going along the trench a comrade by the name of Mick Hunt noticed me, and said: "Charlie (they call me Charlie, as they said Cecil was too swanky for a Tommy), you won't leave me here, will you?" He was lying in the open on the opposite side of a hawthorn fence, with his leg absolutely shattered. I had to fell the hedge with the butt of my rifle (under fire all this time), and, getting him to put his arms round my neck, dragged him with his shattered limb into the trench. Then, with him on my back, we struggled along, stopping every now and again for a breath. I got him safely out, took him to the shelter of a house, cut off his boots, sox, and puttees, and did my best with a bandage. What a terrible leg! The bone was powdered, and presented an awful sight. I just got him finished and laid alongside the building to await the arrival of the stretcher-bearers, when another poor devil staggered along. I gave him a lift to a building near at hand, and his wounds were also gaping ones in the leg, and partly disembowelled. I got some wads of wool and did my best for him, and gave him a little ease until the stretcher-bearers came for him. After this my time was taken up for the next hour in doing small wounds, such as wrists, etc. The road—what a sight! Men limping along and staggering. Shall I ever forget? I got back to the firing line, and had no sooner arrived there when we were opened on by the enemy. Rapid fire and the booming of guns. It was hell! We were expecting a reinforcement up at 2 p.m., ready for an attack at 2.30, and we were to hold on at all costs. The battle raged and raged, getting worse and worse. Two o'clock came. Can we stand? No sight of the

reinforcements. It was awful! The enemy broke through in several places, but we drove them out again and again at the point of the bayonet. 2.30 —no relief. Then the enemy put all its forces against us on our right: our weakest place — and we did our best until 3 p.m., when we were forced to retire. Will I ever forget, that awful sight as we struggled along? No food, and fighting continuously for two days! The enemy opened their deadly shrapnel and mowed down some of the poor chaps. The only way I can describe it is that it was like a blast of hot wind from hell. How I got through it all, God only knows; but I arrived hack with a whole hide[?], and on our way we met the reinforcements going up to keep the position. The whistle went to try and bring that scattered little army together. My section, F., usually 200 strong, could only muster 50 men: and there we stood, asking where So-and-so had gone, and so on. What a sight! I could never picture to you the dreadfulness of all this. I am minus my rifle and all my kit, so only have the ragged clothes I stand up in. We were marched off to the brewery to rest for the night, and I believe go into billet for some days to reorganise, as we have only two officers left out of 14. It seems awful, this dreadful waste of human life.

I have done several things to-day I have not mentioned, as I do not like blowing my own horn. What I have done is not to my discredit or anyone belonging to me. During the whole performance I have been hit three times, most marvellous — one through the puttees (cutting completely to the sock), through the seat of my pants (this done while I was bandaging a wounded man on the field). It went right through my pants and underpants and two shirts, and never drew blood. The third was through my helmet, and only raised a lump on my head. I have been lucky, and all I can say is "Thank God." It is now 5 a.m. The reinforcements will be forming up now to regain those trenches we vacated.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 27 April 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

THE GREAT BATTLE.

SERGEANT CECIL HUMPHRIES'S DIARY.

WHAT THE SOLDIER FEELS.

(Press correspondent).

London, March 19.

By the courtesy of Mrs A. R. Rowse, formerly of Waimate, Gore and Christchurch, and now living in London, I am able to make some extracts from the diary kept by her son, Sergeant Cecil Humphries, during the stirring days of the fighting at Neuve Chapelle and the great British victory there. Sergeant Humphries was wounded on the third day of the battle, and is now in hospital in Kent, making a good recovery. It will be remembered that he enlisted in the Army Service Corps, in which he soon got his sergeant's stripes, and then resigned and transferred to the Manchester Regiment, in which he rapidly distinguished himself, gaining the D.C.M. at Givenchy, and recovering the stripes which he sacrificed to see some active fighting.

The diary begins on Sunday, 7th inst., on which evening, at 10 p.m., the battalion bade farewell to the old French people in the village in which they had been billeted and marched for the front. From their new billets, which were within four kilometres of the trenches, they could see every few minutes the funk lights going up. Wet and tired Sergeant Humphries wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down on the straw to sleep. But the cold kept him awake most of the night, and at five a.m. he had to get up and move about to keep from freezing. All the inmates of the farmhouse were overcome with grief on account of the death of their son, aged 29. "I did my best to sympathise with the people, but my little knowledge of French was not good enough, so all I could do was to look sad myself. All the place seems

upset, and I have just given orders to the boys not to go near the farm. Outside the gate of the farm a cross is made on the side of the road of sheaves of corn with a shovel of mud in the centre and some green brushwood stuck into it. The day is glorious and fine, and our aeroplanes floating about ever since daylight keep watch over us like guardian angels.

That evening most of the men spent in the little estaminet of the village. The mail had come in and they were all merry. "As time went on songs and mouth organs made the noise greater, but the regulars are well behaved, and I have never yet seen anything to take exception to in any soldier's behaviour." The roll was called for the evening with the sound of great guns still only two kilometres distant, and the breath like steam in the cold barn. But a great coat and blanket and two sandbags half full of straw made a comfortable enough bed.

COMING EVENTS.

"The ground was as hard as iron with a severe black frost, but the sun is shining out from a cloudless sky, and if it were not for the aeroplanes overhead and the occasional booming of the big guns, it would be hard to believe that war was on at all. Parade at 10 a.m., and as our platoon commander was away I had charge. If this weather keeps up before long there will be some big surprises for our enemy. All the new troops that are arriving look so well clothed and fine and fit. On every available rise, and in every nook and corner, you see guns poking their noses; so God only knows what kind of a noise there will be going on when we get the word to go for it. Noon: Just received word we are to pack up and to be ready to move off."

Wednesday, March 10th the opening day of the great battle, the 1st Manchesters were marched out to Lacoutre where they arrived at 7.15. At a given signal of two huge guns hell was let loose, and the noise — well will I ever forget the noise and row. Our billet shook like a leaf. What I hear is the bombardment of some three hundred batteries, not guns. I have heard a few rows in my time, but the rumble, rumble while I am writing is awful. Our aeroplanes, as usual, are our guiding angels, and some half a dozen are now doing their best to see the result of this awful hail of lead. All the boys here say "God speed every shell, and may it kill a million" but I am not like that. I can picture to myself the killed and wounded in those trenches, and it is too awful to think of. As I have gone through it all, I know too well what it means.

"8. The battery horses have just come in at the gallop. One of the batteries has been shelled by the Germans, and is shifting its position. We are all stood up, too with ammunition up and packs off. All is excitement. Ammunition, extra carts, cyclists and motor cars all on the move. The civilian population are standing in their backyards with fear and trembling of what is going to happen next. To the left of Richebourg the 7th and 8th divisions and the Canadians are making an attack. I think we are in general reserve to a division, but the huge guns and the row, with the thousand upon thousands of troops about give us all great confidence, and by tomorrow I guess you will have some very sad reading in one sense, but glowing in the other. It is war in its most extreme form, and in its most modern style. Thank God I have lived to hear all this as we are fighting a just battle, and only giving back to those barbarous Huns some of' the awfulness that they had used on these poor and practically defenceless Belgians."

Writing at 10 a.m. Sergeant Humphries said all was quiet except the occasional booming of the big guns. During the bombardment he went to see the big 9.2's. Overhead were aeroplanes directing the fire, and near at hand the wireless operator taking the messages. The shells weighing about 280 lbswere brought up from the pits by four men, washed down, and inserted into the guns by means of hoisting machinery hear at hand. While he was in the pit an officer read a message which said that the first line of trenches had been taken by the Guards Brigade, and the second by the Seventh Division, and that the enemy was in great confusion on the retreat. "Glorious news, and as we stood there amid the war and boom of the various guns, one felt a feeling of "Thank God we are English." By 11 all seemed to be over,

and being able to see behind the scenes, the New Zealander believed the Germans to be on the run. At noon they were quietly having coffee in a cafe when a mounted orderly galloped past, and a minute or two later "a whole column of ammunition carts came past at the gallop, the horses foaming, and seeming as if they were doing their best as they struggled along. The drivers also had their anxious look as they guided them round the corner with their whips going. It is a sight I have not seen before, because we have always been in the trenches. This is the other side among the guns behind the trenches.

"A captain has just come in quite excited, and told us we were quite successful, and the present bombardment is perhaps the greatest one that has taken place. We have taken the church and two lines of trenches, and have got the enemy completely on the run, and taken everything before us. Three cheers for dear old England."

AWAITING DEVELOPMENTS.

After midday the Manchesters were formed up in a field near Richebourg, awaiting developments, with the Ghurkas not far off. Just before they had passed a party of seven officers and about 200 German prisoners "who had been lucky enough to fall into our hands. The prisoners were a very mixed lot and did not look a very formidable enemy. Some were old, others could not be much more than fifteen, and some, I am sure, will never see sixty again. They looked white and frightened and much mud-bespattered." A short distance away the houses once occupied by the enemy were burning. The British artillery were moving up, and all was bustle and excitement, but everything worked so smoothly that one felt confident of a big success. "The sad part of the business is now on. A convoy of our wounded has just passed, but they are mostly only slight arm wounds, and will not be long before they will again be with us. By the number of artillery and 'goods' we have here, I guess the enemy will get something to go on with in the near future." The bombardment livened up again, and another great batch of prisoners was taken through to the rear.

3.03 p.m. —More good news. Have just been shown the map, and we have advanced one thousand yards. The second phase of the advance; we captured Neuve Chapelle and the attack our regiment was to do has already been fixed by the little Ghurkas, so we are ready in this field waiting to give a welcome hand to any of the boys in case they make a counter attack. All the afternoon German prisoners have been trooping past, and some of them look miserable in the extreme. The ambulance waggons and motors are going along to the first-aid where it is sad to see the wounded, some walking, while the more severe cases are kindly handled by the native stretcher bearers. All the boys are in great spirits. The rain has come on again, but now we have the trenches it does not matter so much."

The following day's diary is written actually in Neuve Chapelle, where during the night a great British force was massed. On the March thither Humphries fell into a big shell hole, which meant that he had to spend the night shivering in wet clothes. Orders were to advance at 7.30 a.m., and by seven o'clock all instructions were out, wire cutters collected, and everything ready for a bayonet charge. "I personally am feeling very fit," says the diary, "and will do my best to lead my little section to glory. The great bombardment is now on, and after they finish we have to advance in the hail of lead which the Germans will pour into us. I am trusting to dear old fate to pull me through." 7.20 a.m - "Get dressed, all ready," just given out. My thoughts just now are with you all, my dear pals of New Zealand. Off we go. Good-bye all, and God bless you. I am proud to be a New Zealander, and will do my best in the next few minutes."

At this stage the diary is interrupted. At some later stage of the fight Sergeant Humphries was close to a building when it was hit by a shell, and a brick struck him on the head. He came to find that a wall had collapsed on him and with great difficulty managed to extricate himself from the debris. It was not till some time afterwards that he felt conscious of pain in his hip, and on making enquiry, found that he had been hit by a fragment of shrapnel so as to be

incapacitated for further service just now. A day or two later he was in England, and he is now in hospital at Sevenoaks.

LETTER FROM MRS ROWSE.

Mr B. Nordon, secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, has received a letter from Mrs A. R. Rowse, mother of Sergeant Humphries, from the Hotel Madrid, London, in which she writes:— "I am most grateful to you and to your Association for your kindly cable of Congratulations on Cecil's great honour. I felt sure you would all be proud of him. Will you please thank every member for me. I regret that I have to tell you that he was wounded at Neuve Chapelle. We are both thankful that his life was spared. It was a most desperate charge. His wound is in the thigh, and is reported to be slight, but only to-night I heard he was not so well. I have seen him twice, on the 15th and 17th March. He is at a place in Kent, called Wilderness, at Seven-Oaks, placed at the disposal of the War Office by the Dowager, Lady Hillingford, where all the nurses are titled ladies. Needless to say he is in good hands, and wants for nothing."

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 30 April 1915

SERGEANT CECIL HUMPHRIES

MEDAL FOR CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY.

The special correspondent of the Evening News, Christchurch, writes, under date London, March 16: -

"There is a New Zealand name in the list of warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men who have just been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry in the field. It is that of Lance-Corporal (Acting Sergeant) Cecil F. G. Humphries of Christchurch, who is attached to the 1st Manchester Regiment, Indian Expeditionary Force.

"The medal was awarded for gallantry at the battle of Givenchy, on December 20th and 21st, when the Indian force was hard pressed, but Sergeant Humphries only heard of his good fortune on February 28th when Brigadier-General Strickland pinned the Ribbon on his breast. The War Office record of the incident is: "For conspicuous gallantry and coolness at Givenchy in the attack of December 20th and 21st, and for endeavouring to bring into cover the body of his company commander who had been killed."

Sergeant Humphries was wounded at the recent battle of Neuve-Chapelle, and is now in hospital at Sevenoaks.

"This young New Zealander has had several narrow escapes. Once his putty was shot off his leg; another time, while attending a wounded man, a bullet passed through the back of his clothes; and a third time a bullet went through his cap, but did no damage.

"Among the trophies sent to London by Sergeant Humphries are the sash of a French General, a rifle, some helmets, and other interesting odds and ends."

Hastings Standard. 7 May 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

A SOLDIER'S LETTER.

MR. CECIL HUMPHRIES IN HOSPITAL.

Mr. A. Murley, of Hastings, has received the following letter from Sergeant Cecil Humphries, the first New Zealander to receive the D.C.M. in the present war. Mr. Humphries is now in

Lady Hilington's [Hillingdon's] Hospital, Seal, Seven Oaks, as a result of wounds received in action.

"Here I am in hospital gradually going through the different stages of a soldier's life. Although I do hope I do not get a smack big enough to send me out altogether, as after the experiences I have had I should like to live to be able to look back and see the results of all this awfulness. Anyway, I have been very lucky and have had more than one close call. You will have learnt long ere this that I have been able to do what I set out for. I have no regrets in joining the fighting unit, and how any single able-bodied men can stay at home and see the long list of casualties every day, beats me. You will have seen also that I have been presented with the D.C.M. I value this decoration more as I believe I am the first New Zealander to gain this honour on the battlefields of France. I can tell you I am not a little proud of old Maoriland, and I am doing my best to advertise our country whenever I get the chance. Our last bit of a go at Neuve Chapelle was when I got this wound. Again I was lucky, as I was hit three times during the charge, which was in the morning, but it was not until dusk that I found out I had enough to go to the first aid with. You will have heard about our great victory, and to tell you the truth I am d—sick of hearing about War! War!

The hospital I am in is part of the huge mansion owned by Lord Hilington, and the nurses - oh, the nurses —they are nice, too."

Otago Daily Times. 8 May 1915 (PP) [14/07/2018]

When Sergeant Cecil Humphries, D.C.M., of the 1st Manchester Regiment, reached Boulogne the other day, amongst the wounded from Neuve Chapelle, he encountered Nurse M'Leod, of Southland, who has been on duty there for some months past. He was the first New Zealand patient that Miss M'Leod had met with in the course of her duties. Sergeant Humphries is now making a good recovery in hospital at Sevenoaks, Kent.

Southland Times. 11 May 1915

NEWS OF N. Z. SOLDIERS AND NURSES

NEWS OF N.Z SOLDIERS & NURSES

(From Our Lady Correspondent).

LONDON, March 19.

Acting-Sergeant Cecil F. G. Humphries, of Mataura, who was promoted from Private on the field, and who was recently awarded the D.C.M. for conspicuous coolness and gallantry at the battle of Givenchy, where he carried his company commander's body off the field under heavy fire, was wounded at Neuve Chapelle, and is now in hospital in Sevenoaks, in Kent. He is in the 1st Manchester Regiment, having transferred from the Army Service Corps.

Otago Witness. 12 May 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

ALIEN'S LETTER FROM ENGLAND

March 11.

. . . . . .

To-night's Evening News gives a picture of the Australian Contingent that shows without doubt by their bearing and expression that they are going in to win; and from the same journal I cull a notice that New Zealanders will be proud to read: —"The first New Zealander with the double distinction of gaining the Distinguished Conduct Medal and of being promoted from private to sergeant on the battlefield is Cecil Humphries, a young man who was on a visit to London when war broke out. Joining the Army Service Corps as clerk, he was made a corporal, and shortly after a sergeant before he was sent to France. Humphries's ardent desire to 'have a go' at the enemy prompted him to apply for a transfer. By forfeiting his stripes and better pay he was able to join the 1st Manchesters, and was soon in the thick of it. In his subsequent letters to his mother Humphries tells very modestly of how he regained his stripes and afterwards carried off the D.C.M. 'I would rather not tell you how it was done,' he writes. 'I am only proud for your dear sake, and feel happy to know that, as a New Zealander, I have done my little bit for my King and country.' Brigadier-general Strickland assembled the men and, dismounting from his horse, shook hands with Humphries and congratulated him. Then amid hearty cheers the coveted ribbon was pinned on his breast."

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 4 June 1915 (PP) [10/07/2018]

Dr Barclay, in a private letter from Woolwich, writes on April 15, stated that he was spending a few days at Margate to try and get rid of a cold contracted at Lemberg. He just escaped, by

an hour, a bomb dropped on a railway, station in the latter neighbourhood. He had visited Mrs Rouse, (formerly of Waimate), and had seen Sergeant Humphries, who was recovering from a wound, and was on furlough. Sergt. Humphries was applying for a commission (which the papers now state that he has received), but there was a little difficulty about furnishing a certificate of satisfactory education. As an old Chairman of the Waimate High School Board, Dr Barclay was very glad to be able to help him out of that difficulty. Dr Barclay is impressed with the strenuous nature of this world struggle that is going on, and the necessity of every member of the Empire realising this, and giving every assistance in his power. Dr Barclay is engaged with hospital duties, but is waiting every day for orders to go to the front.

Otago Daily Times. 8 June 1915 (PP) [06/2018]

Sergeant Cecil Humphries's award of the D.C.M. is thus described in the Gazette: "For conspicuous gallantry and coolness at Givenchy, during the attack on December 20-21, 1914, and also for gallantry in endeavouring to bring into cover the body of his company commander, who had been killed in the engagement."

Sergeant Cecil Humphries's award of the D.C.M. is thus described in the Gazette: "For conspicuous gallantry and coolness at Givenchy, during the attack on December 20-21, 1914, and also for gallantry in endeavouring to bring into cover the body of his company commander, who had been killed in the engagement."

Press. 23 June 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

LIEUTENANT HUMPHRIES, D.C.M.

Mr E. Nordon has received a letter from Mrs A. R. Rouse, mother of Lieutenant Cecil Humphries, D.C.M., from which the following extracts are taken:—"Hotel Madrid, May 2nd, 1915. Dear Mr Nordon,—Cecil made light of his wound, and it was only last week that he would let me see it, and I was surprised that it had been so severe; the shrapnel had gone right through the buttock, but, fortunately, did not touch the bone. I could not understand why they kept him in hospital for five weeks if it was so slight as he tried to make out, but when I saw it for myself six weeks after it happened, then I knew. There is no doubt he has been brave, and very, very lucky to have escaped with his life."

Sun. 7 October 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

RELICS OF WAR.

AN INTERESTING COLLECTION.

FORWARDED BY CECIL HUMPHRIES.

An interesting little collection of mementoes of the battlefields of France has been forwarded by Lieutenant Cecil Humphries, formerly of Christchurch, to a friend in this city to be cared for until his return. It includes two Germany infantry helmets of thick leather. One has a hole in it made by a British bayonet. The other has over it a grey-green cloth cover. There is also a Bavarian infantryman's cap. A particularly interesting item in the collection is a clip of German rifle cartridges, each of which has the bullet reversed. It is clear that the bullets were reversed when the cartridges were filled, and so the clip is a silent witness to the truth of the stories that the Germans have used such cartridges so as to inflict very hasty wounds upon their opponents. There is also a German machine-gun cartridge—of larger calibre than a rifle cartridge – with a bullet which has been so cast that the nose is blunted and slightly hollowed – a "dumdum."

One of the Christmas gifts which accompanied by cards, were sent to troops by Princess Mary is included in the collection. It is a neat metal box bearing a medallion portrait of the Royal donor and her monogram and containing a packet of tobacco and another of cigarettes. There is also a French general s tri-colour sash, which was taken from a Prussian officer. Some shoulder-straps taken from the uniforms of dead German soldiers show the colours—blues and greys—of some of the German uniforms. One of the water bottles used by the Indian forces is in the collection. An object of more personal interest is a khaki shirt which was worn Sergeant Humphries—as he was then—and which has several bullet holes in it, illustrating the narrowness of an escape from wounds. There are also some minor articles in the collection, which might be placed on view in Christchurch shortly.

Cecil Humphries was in the 1st Manchester Regiment when he won the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Givenchy. He now holds a commission in the 13th Highland Light Infantry. Writing on August 15, he said that he expected to leave again for the front in a fortnight's time.

Sun. 22 November 1915 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Lieutenant Cecil Humphries, D.C.M., of Christchurch, whose exploits and rapid promotion are well known, is now at Stobs Camp, Scotland, where he is instructing young officers in trench warfare. Previous to proceeding to Stobs Camp, Lieutenant Humphries was for a long time in hospital recovering from wounds received in action in France.

Press. 17 January 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]

WITH INTEREST.

POUNDING THE GERMANS.

LETTER FROM LIEUTENANT HUMPHRIES.

Writing from the trenches in Flanders under date of November 30th, Lieutenant Cecil Humphries, of the Manchester Regiment, who is well known in Christchurch, says:

Your big, newsy letter arrived at a most dramatic time. We were having a two hours' "hate" by artillery, and the noise was helped on by aerial torpedoes, mines, bombs, rifle grenades, and all the other inventions to stop one another breathing well. I cannot picture to you what all this means, but the noise, why, it is terrific.

Poor old "Fritz," he is just getting back with real good interest some of the awfulness that we had to put up with at the first of the war. You need not be afraid of John Bull being asleep now, he has at last started to growl, and our guns seem to say as they growl, "Munitions, munitions." The way things have improved since I was last here is simply marvellous; plenty of everything at our disposal, and no limits put on bombs or any of the other devices that this method of warfare has brought into vogue. What a fine feeling it is to hear our guns day after day growing louder and louder, as if the bulldog was growing more angry every day. As regards our aeroplanes, we have simply got the air to ourselves, and if a Boche happens to put in an appearance, he's watched as if some strange and stray bird had come in amongst us. The part of the line I am in now —well, to tell you the truth, I am writing this letter to you sitting in a German dug-out that was captured in our advance of September 25th last. This place is just one sea of trenches. As we are dug in in the chalk, with a coating of mud and chalk over us, you can guess we are a queer-looking colour.

The weather is bitterly cold, but frost is not so bad; it is the rain that makes things get into such an awful mess. As usual the Government is doing all in its power for the comfort of "Tommy," and this winter we have rubber boots reaching to our hips. They keep us dry, but are very, very cold. Frostbite or "trenchfoot," has been pretty bad already, but plenty of whale oil and some new anti-frostbite preparation keeps us from the ravages of the cold fairly well, and as the "Tommy" says, if "Fritz" can stick it, so can we. Every day now we bombard the enemy from his front line to his billets in the rear. We term these little bursts "frightfulness," "his strafe," and "hate." Yesterday was the "Little Willie's" birthday. I do not know whether we were trying to show how we had grown since November, but our "hate" yesterday was the most severe I have listened to. The enemy only replied with a few pip-squeaks and whiz-bangs. In this sector our trenches are all named, and sign-posts, just the same as at the cross roads, are met everywhere. One notice rather amused me to-day. It read: "Do not congregate round this place, as it is dangerous." As if the other places are quite safe!

The trench the Germans are in in front of us to-night is called "Big Willie," or, as the Kaiser terms it, "his iron wall," which the British will knock themselves to pieces against. Wait and see.

Timaru Herald. 26 January 1916 (Papers Past) [07/01/2019]

"STRAFING" THE ENEMY.

BRITISH SUPERIORITY IN ARTILLERY.

NEW ZEALAND OFFICER'S RACY EPISTLES.

Two breezy letters, written in the trenches in France, have just been received in Wellington by Mr David Collins, from Lieutenant Cecil Humphreys [sic]. D.C.M., of' Christchnrch, who

has several times distinguished himself by his bravery in the firing line. Lieut. Humphreys was badly wounded in the thigh, but ignoring his injuries, he continued to fight for twelve hours afterwards, and was eventually invalided to England. He has now returned to the front. In one of his letters, dated 24th November, he says:—

"Here I am again still merry and bright, in what Tommy calls the 'queer place,' but, oh, how so different. In place of getting huge 'strafings' by the Boches' artillery, we have the pleasure of sitting in our trench and hearing the result of Lloyd George's great munitions campaign. What I noticed most when coming back to the front, as I said before, was the complete mastery of our artillery, and the huge amount of ammunition at our disposal. Our aeroplanes, as usual, are our guiding angels, and they earn V.C.'s every hour of the day by their daring in observing the enemies' movements, when quite within anti-aircraft and machine-gun distances. The mud is simply awful, and some of the trenches after the last fall of snow are in a horrible mess. The organisation of everything is well-nigh complete, even to the doctor in the trenches, and, as usual, clothing of the very best, and the Government try to supply everything possible to give a little comfort to these poor Tommies who are doing their little bit, and keep the dear old flag flying. . . . All the officers of this battalion I knew before I came out, and they gave me a right hearty welcome on arrival. I have a good set of boys, real Glasgow lads, hard as iron and always willing to go on with the game. Well, the rotters have just been 'strafing' us again with a few bombs, so will have to arrange a little reprisal — I think that is the proper way of putting it, but in reality I am just going to see if we can send some more of the Huns to join the 'aerial scouts.'"

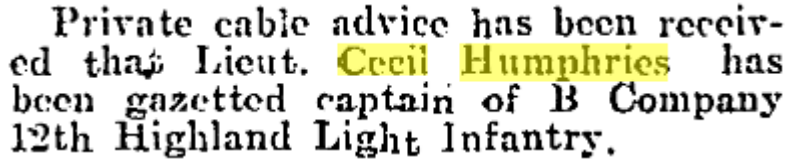
In another letter written the following day, and headed "Somewhere in France, In the Trenches," Lieutenant Humphreys says: "'l am alone in my dugout. with a brazier giving out a cheery glow, a candle, and thoughts of New Zealand, with its peaceful surroundings and sunshine, while here it is white with snow, bleak, cold, and miserable, with nothing but ruins and desolation surrounding us, and now and again the not altogether pleasant smell of dead Huns. Since I was last in France the position has changed, and instead of sitting in a trench and getting 'strafed,' we have turned the tables on our friends across the way. We had a rather exciting fight between a Taube and one of our aeroplanes this afternoon. They went at it hammer and tongs, and when our chap put him out of mess there was a cheer right alone the trenches from the lads in khaki, who had been most interested spectators. The organisation of everything is simply wonderful now, and although John Bull often sleeps, he is right awake now. We have the regimental bands to play us o..(? out?) of the trenches. They come just out of danger, and we march home with the bands playing. Even if you are wet through and mud all over, it does lift your spirits up, and the boys sing 'Keep the Home Fire Burning,' 'Who Were You With Last Night?' and 'When the Beer is on the Table We'll be There.'

"An orderly has just arrived, and reported that the enemy have put three 'pip squeaks' into the trench on my right. We were lucky—nobody hurt, only the sand bags out of place a good deal, but will not take long to remedy that. I have just telephoned the artillery and told them about the 'whizz bangs' and 'pip squeaks' coming across, and to have a little reprisal. My order was 'Two batteries;' we'll have a thirty minutes' frightfulness at 4 p.m. So I guess the poor old Hun will hear plenty about munitions before long. It's really funny now, as if we have any trouble with our friends and give the artillery the target we simply 'strafe' them, so with the superiority in artillery we are naturally having a much easier time of it. I suppose you have heard of 'weeping shells' or 'tear shells.' Well, it's quite true. It makes your eyes water so that it is impossible to see to take a sight on a rifle. The remedy was not long in coming, and a pair of glasses, something like pince-nez, and a little vaseline round the eyes and nose exclude the gases. You can imagine what we look like in all the strange gear. It's a strange world, that all this kind of thing is necessary."

Press. 16 March 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Lieutenant Cecil Humphries (Christchurch), whose service in the war dates back to the first month, and includes terms with the Army Service Corps, the Manchester Regiment, and the Highland Light Infantry, in which he now holds a commission, is back again at the front, in the portion of the line which we have recently taken over from the French. Talking of the change which has come over the face of things since he was last there, Lieutenant Humphries writes: — "Poor old Fritz gets a bad time of it these days. We have heaps of munitions, guns galore, and men everywhere. If he strafes us we give him twice as much back, and the way the tables are turning on him is simply wonderful. John Bull perhaps was asleep, but I think he had one eye open all the same, the way our Army has grown and improved. . . We have so many batteries that some are called retaliation batteries, and only fire when the Huns try to do a little 'hate' on our lines. In my belief the greatest thing to overcome is the common old barb-wire. The enemy have in places got as much as twelve yards of thick, heavy barb in front of the trenches, and if we could get something to shift this we would be quite all right."

Press. 28 April 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]


Private cable advice has been received that Lieut. Cecil Humphries has been gazetted captain of B Company 12th Highland Light Infantry.

Press. 19 June 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Writing to Mr E. Nordon from "Somewhere in France," Captain Cecil Humphries, who is well known in Christchurch, says: — "It really does seem too bad to be fighting and putting up with all these hardships, and pick up the paper and read of all this turmoil in Ireland. While the riots were at their height the Irish Division —a splendid lot of men they are—were fighting with great gallantry to keep the Germans back. It shows how cunning the Germans are, as they attacked the Irish Division so as to coincide with the outbreaks in Ireland, expecting no doubt that they would prove traitors to the flag, but the reception they got with bayonet and bomb showed that the true Irishman is in his right place, fighting side by side with his English and Scotch brothers."

Press. 11 July 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]; *Otago Daily Times.* 10 July 1916

Twice within the last week the cablegrams have mentioned the dashing work of the Highland Light Infantry - on the Western front. It is interesting to note that the ex-Otago High School boy, Captain Cecil Humphries (who was for some time resident in Christchurch) is attached to the 12th Highland Light Infantry. He was in London when war broke out, and joined the Army Service Corps with the rank of sergeant; quickly resigned this rank, and joined the Manchesters, Indian Expeditionary Force, as a private, won the D.C.M. and was promoted to sergeant; was wounded at Neuve-Chapelle. Invalided to England, Sergeant Humphries soon recovered, and was promoted to lieutenant, and later on to captain. He writes as follows from "Somewhere in France," under date May 8th, to his sister (Mrs S. C. Wilson, Musselburgh, Dunedin): — "The last few weeks the fighting has been most severe. The Huns used their

poison gas on us for an hour and a half a few days ago; then followed it up with an attack, expecting no doubt to find us all half-dead, or dead, when they came over. But our new helmets are absolute protection against all their gas, and when they left their trenches they found we were very much alive. We inflicted great loss on them, and they never gained a footing anywhere in our trenches. Lately we (our regiment) have been holding the Hohenzollern redoubt, and a rough place it is too—all mine craters —and one never knows the moment he is going to join the 'aerial scouts.' Leave is open again, and I am expecting to go over home any day now. Naturally the seven days we get are looked forward to by the boys as the happiest of happy times. . . . Cheer O!"

Mataura Ensign. 24 August 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Captain Cecil Humphries, of Christchurch, who has been wounded in action in France, was a well-known Christchurch footballer and swimmer. He managed the Excelsior Hotel for his mother, Mr. Rowse. Cecil Humphries was in England when the war broke out, and he promptly enlisted in the Army Service Corps. Then he exchanged into the First Manchesters. In March of last year he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted on the battlefield to be sergeant, Later he was wounded in the hip and invalided to England. On recovery he was granted a commission in a Highland light infantry regiment, and for some time was engaged on instructional duty in Scotland. After returning to France he gained promotion to his present rank. Mr Humphries was born at Mataura, where his father (now deceased) kept the Bridge Hotel.

Press. 9 October 1916

Captain Cecil F. G. Humphries, of the Highland Light Infantry (Christchurch), has again been wounded, and is now in London. The whole of the fifteen officers of his battalion who took part in the charge, were injured, three being killed. Captain Humphries received a bullet wound through the muscle of the arm, but was not aware of it till some time later. It is not likely to have any serious result.

Press. 15 December 1916 (PP) [02/06/2018]

Captain Cecil Humphries (Christchurch), of the Highland Light Infantry, has rejoined his battalion at Leith, having made a complete recovery from the wound he received in the Somme offensive.

Press. 14 July 1917 (PP) [03/06/2018]

A Press Association cable message states that Captain Cecil S.[sic] Humphries, of the Highland Light Infantry, has been awarded the Military Cross. His name will be familiar to readers of "The Press," for in the earlier part of the war we published a number of very interesting letters written by him, describing his experiences at the front. Captain Humphries is a native of New Zealand, and was a very prominent Christchurch footballer, being a member of the Christchurch Football Club. He was also an enthusiastic golfer, and, indeed, being a man of fine physique, took part in all kinds of sport, and gained great popularity. In the early part of 1914 he left New Zealand on a trip to the Old Country with his mother, Mrs Rowse, who prior to her departure was licensee of the Excelsior Hotel. Shortly after their arrival in London war was declared, and Cecil Humphries enlisted as a private in the Army Transport Corps. He was therefore the first, or one of the first, New Zealanders to land in France with the British Army. For some time he remained in the A.T.C., but as he found the life not sufficiently active for him, he later resigned from the corps, sacrificing the sergeant's stripes which he had gained, in order to join a fighting unit. In this he commenced as a private, but shortly after joining he was, for conspicuous bravery on the field, promoted on the spot to the rank of sergeant and awarded a military decoration. Very soon after this he was again promoted, this time to a lieutenancy. After acting as military inspector at the military camp at Hawick, Scotland, he rejoined his regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, at the front.

Otago Daily Times. 17 July 1917 (PP)

MILITARY CROSS WINNERS

Captain Cecil S.[sic] Humphries, of the Highland Light Infantry, who has been awarded the Military Cross, was born at Mataura, and was a very prominent Christchurch footballer, being a member of the Christchurch Football Club. He was also an enthusiastic golfer, and, indeed, being a man of fine physique, took part in all kinds of sport, and gained great popularity. In the early part of 1914 he left New Zealand on a trip to the Old Country with his mother, Mrs Rowse, who just prior to her departure was licensee of the Excelsior Hotel in Christchurch. Shortly after their arrival in London war was declared, and Cecil Humphries enlisted as a private in the Army Transport Corps. He was therefore one of the first New Zealanders to land in France with the British Army. For some time he remained in the A.T.C., but as he found it not sufficiently active for him, he later resigned from the corps, sacrificing the sergeant's stripes which he bad gained, in order to join the Manchester Regiment of the Indian Expeditionary Army. In this he commenced as a private, but shortly after joining he was, for conspicuous bravery on the field, promoted to the rank of sergeant and awarded the D.C.M. Very soon after this he was again promoted, this time to a lieutenancy. After acting as military inspector at the military camp at Hawick, Scotland, he rejoined his regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, at the front.

New Zealand Herald. 27 August 1917

Capt. Cecil F. G. Humphries, Christchurch, who has been awarded the Military Cross, commenced his military career as a private in August, 1914, and won the D.C.M. at an early stage of the war. He has been twice wounded, the last time as an officer of the Highland Light Infantry. Returning to France he was given command of a Labour Battalion, and his services in this capacity have been recognised by the M.C.

Evening Post. 21 December 1917

At Buckingham Palace on the same occasion Capt. Cecil F. G. Humphries, Labour Corps (Christchurch), received his Military Cross, as also did Lt. Claude Harrison, N.Z. Engineers.

('this week')

Wanganui Chronicle. 27 December 1917 (PP) [03/06/2018]

A NEW ZEALAND HERO.

Our cables some time ago stated that Captain Cecil Humphries, of Christchurch, was awarded the Military Cross for an act of bravery on June 5th. Further information contained in a private letter shows that the circumstances under which the decoration was won were as follows (the quotation being an extract from the commanding officer's despatch):

"An ammunition train was being bombed by aeroplanes, and Captain Humphries, commanding No. 10 Labour Company, arrived on the scene and took charge of the party. Under this officer's guidance and help eight trucks were salved. The eighth was uncoupled by Captain Humphries and Sergt.-Major Harland, while the ninth truck was burning fiercely, and its load of shells was exploding freely. This remarkably gallant piece of work was carried out under a hail of shell and fragments, any one of which could have exploded the contents of the trucks which were being moved. I consider, from my observation of the explosion, that Captain Humphreys and the other members of the party are deserving of the highest praise, and I have the honour to bring to your notice their gallant and valuable work."

Captain Humphries, who is also the holder of the D.C.M., is one of the "Old Contemptibles," as those who went to France prior to November, 1914, are known.

Star, 22 January 1918 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

SNAPSHOT AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE on December 1, the picture showing (left to right), Miss Humphries, Mrs Rouse, Harry Williams and Captain Cecil Humphries (Military Cross). Latest advices state that Captain Humphries has been asked to report to the Commander of the Duke of Connaught's Light Infantry. Harry Williams, well known in Christchurch swimming and hockey circles, was recently reported to have been wounded in the knee.

Photo lent by Miss Knight, Cashel Street, Christchurch.

Lake Wakatipu Mail, 12 February 1918 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

A NEW ZEALAND HERO.

Our cables some time ago stated that Captain Cecil Humphries, of Christchurch, was awarded the Military Cross for an act of bravery on June 5th. Further information contained in a private letter shows that the circumstances under which the decoration was won were as follows (the quotation being an extract from the commanding officer's despatch):

"An ammunition train was being bombed by aeroplanes, and Captain Humphries, commanding No. 10 Labour Company, arrived on the scene and took charge of the party. Under this officer's guidance and help eight trucks were salved. The eighth was uncoupled by Captain Humphries and Sergt.-Major Harland, while the ninth truck was burning fiercely, and its load of shells was exploding freely. This remarkably gallant piece of work was carried out under a hail of shell and fragments, any one of which could have exploded the contents of the trucks which were being moved. I consider, from my observation of the explosion, that Captain Humphries and the other members of the party are deserving of the highest praise, and I have the honour to bring to your notice their gallant and valuable work."

Captain Humphries, who is also the holder of the D.C.M., is one of the "Old Contemptibles," as those who went to France prior to November, 1914, are known.

Press. 29 May 1918

Captain Cecil F. G. Humphries, M.C. (Christchurch), of the Highland Light Infantry, has been serving for the last few months on the Italian front attached to a battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He has now been recalled to Flanders.

New Zealand Herald. 31 May 1918

GALLANT NEW ZEALANDER.

RAPID RISE IN RANK.

Australian and N.Z. Cable Association.

(Recd. 7.45 p.m.) LONDON, May 29.

Major Cecil F. G. Humphries, of the Cornwall Regiment, a New Zealander, has been awarded a bar to the Military Cross and promoted lieutenant-colonel. He has risen from the ranks during the war.

Lieut.-Colonel C. F. G. Humphries, of Christchurch, commenced his military career as a private in August, 1914, and won the D.C.M. at an early stage of the war. He has been twice wounded, on the latter occasion as an officer of the Highland Light Infantry. Returning to France, he was given command of a Labour Battalion, his services in this capacity having been recognised by the award of the Military Cross.

Wanganui Chronicle. 31 May 1918 (PP) [03 June 2018]

Of the New Zealanders who have "made good" in the war, Lieut .-Col. Cecil Humphries is a notable example. He was in England when war broke out, and immediately joined up going to France with the Army Service Corps of the "Old Contemptibles." He relinquished his sergeant's stripes to get into the front line, and has been in the fighting ever since, except when in hospital recovering from wounds. Early in the war he gained the D.C.M. and was given a commission on the field. Subsequently he got the Military Cross, to which, as our cables this morning state, has now been added an extra bar, while he has been promoted to Lieut.Colonel. The latest information was to the effect that he was with the British troops in Italy. Lieut.-Col. Humphries is well-known throughout New Zealand, particularly in Christchurch. He is a nephew of Mrs Braik, of Wanganui.

Sun. 31 May 1918 (PP) [03 June 2018]

UP FROM THE RANKS.

MAJOR C. HUMPHRIES PROMOTED

NOW A LIEUTENANT-COLONEL.

A Press Association cablegram from London states that Major Cceil Humphries, M.C., D.C.M., of the Cornwall Regiment, has been awarded a bar to the Military Cross and has been promoted to be lieutenant-colonel. He has risen from the ranks during the war.

An old Christchurch boy, Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries is a son of Mrs Rouse, formerly licensee of the Excelsior Hotel, but now living in England. He was in England when the war broke out, and he promptly enlisted in the Army Service Corps. Becoming desirous of a transfer into a combatant arm, he relinquished a sergeantcy in order to exchange into the 1st Manchester Regiment, with which he went to France. In March, 1915, he distinguished himself in the battle in which the British took Neuve Chapelle, and he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and promoted to be sergeant. Later, he was wounded in the hip and invalided to England. On recovering he was granted a commission in the Highland Light Infantry, and for some time was engaged on instructional duty in Scotland. Not long after his

return to France he was promoted to be captain. Subsequently he won the Military Cross. In November of last year he went with his regiment to Italy.
Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries is well known in sporting circles in Canterbury. He was a prominent member of the Christchurch Rugby Football Club, in which he was an excellent forward, and he represented Canterbury in 1910 and 1911. He was also an enthusiastic member of the New Brighton Golf Club.

Mataura Ensign. 31 May 1918 (PP) [03 June 2018]

Cecil Humphries, of the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment, has been awarded a bar to the Military Cross and promoted lieutenant-colonel (states a London cable). He has risen from the ranks during the war. Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries was born at Mataura and went to school there for some time, after which, with his mother and other members of the family, he removed to Christchurch, where he completed his education at Christ's College. It will be remembered that early in the war in France Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries wrote a series of most interesting articles. The New Zealander was a keen sport, being right at the top in golf, football, swimming and surf-bathing, and was a most enthusiastic volunteer.

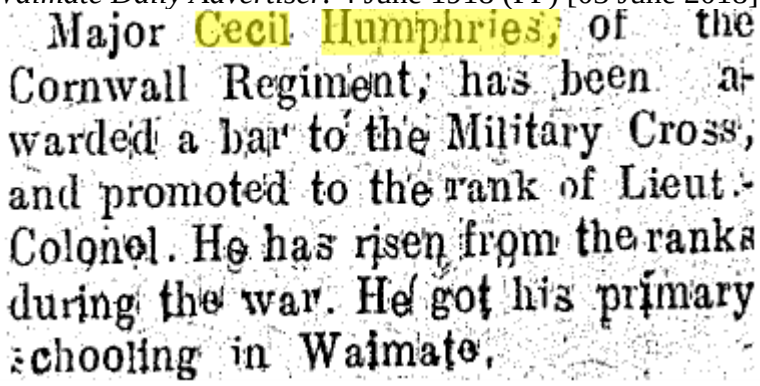
Evening Star. 31 May 1918 (PP) [21/08/2021]

GALLANT NEW ZEALANDER.

LONDON, May 28.

Major Cecil Humphries, of the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment, and formerly of Christchurch, New Zealand, has been awarded a bar to the Military Cross and promoted lieutenant-colonel. He has risen from the ranks during the war. [Lieutenant-colonel Cecil Humphries is a son of Mrs Rowse, formerly licensee of the Excelsior Hotel, Christchurch. Prior to that she was a resident of Gore. Lieutenant-colonel Humphries is well known in Dunedin. He was in England on the outbreak of war, and immediately enlisted in the Army Service Corps. Wishing to transfer into a combatant branch of the service he sacrificed his sergeant's stripes, and joined an infantry regiment, and at the battle, of Neuve Chapelle he won the distinguished conduct medal and a commission. Later he was promoted to captain, and won the Military Cross. Last November he went with his regiment io Italy. Lieutenant-colonel Humphries was some years ago a prominent member of the Christchurch Football Club, and as a forward represented that club in the Canterbury Rugby Union's senior competition. He also represented Canterbury. He was a keen golfer.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 4 June 1918 (PP) [03 June 2018]


Major Cecil Humphries, of the Cornwall Regiment, has been awarded a bar to the Military Cross, and promoted to the rank of Lieut.-Colonel. He has risen from the ranks during the war. He got his primary schooling in Waimate.

Evening Post. 10 August 1918

Major Cecil F. G. Humphries, M.C., D.C.M., D.C.L.I. (Christchurch), has been awarded a bar to his Military Cross.

The further distinction of promotion has been accorded him in that he is now Acting-Lieutenant-Colonel to the 1st Battalion of his regiment. Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries has been on continuous service since the very beginning of the war. He has in turn been attached to the Army Service Corps, the Manchester Regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, and the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He recently returned to the Western front from Italy.

Ashburton Guardian. 30 August 1918

DUNEDIN, August 29.

A private cablegram received in Dunedin states that Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Humphries, D.S.O., M.C., D.C.M., son of Mrs Rowse, formerly of Christchurch, has been killed in action. He was 29 years of age.

Evening Star, 30 August 1918 (Papers Past) [01/06/2018]

A GALLANT SOLDIER

LIEUT.-COLONEL HUMPHRIES, M.C.

KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE.

A private cable was received in Dunedin yesterday stating that Lieutenant-colonel Cecil Frederick George Humphries, a native of Otago, had been killed in action in France. The deceased had a wonderful record as a soldier. He was in London with his mother (Mrs A. Rouse] spending a holiday when war was declared, and several days later he joined the rush of volunteers for the Army, being appointed a sergeant in the Army Service Corps. He crossed to France with this division, but as they were about 150 miles from the fighting line, he considered that it was "too slow for a healthy young New Zealander who wanted to be doing things," so he handed in his sergeant's stripes and joined a line regiment, the 1st Manchesters, attached to the Indian Contingent, which had just then arrived in France. He was through all the desperate fighting round Laventie, Neuve Chapelle, Givenchy, and Lille, and for gallantry in an engagement, when the Manchesters drove the Germans out of Givenchy, he was awarded the D.C.M. and promoted sergeant, the decoration being pinned on his breast on the field by Brigadier-general Strickland. He received a shrapnel wound in the thigh in this engagement while lying on the parapet watching the Gurkhas in action. He was invalided to England, and was some months there convalescing. On his recovery he was

recommended for a commission, which he sat for at Stirling Castle, receiving it on June 25, 1915. He was made first lieutenant on September 20, 1915, and went to Stob's camp, Scotland, instructing young officers. He was then attached to the 12th Highland Light Infantry, and later recrossed to France with that regiment. He was wounded in the arm at Pozieres, and again returned to "Blighty." When he had recovered he crossed the Channel in charge of a labor division as captain. His division was stationed at Ballieul, and it was here that he won the Military Cross, A German aeroplane bombed a trainload of heavy ammunition going up to the trenches. This was exploding freely — there were 90 trucks in all—and he and a sergeant-major belonging to his corps rushed forward and uncoupled the burning trucks, allowing the greater part of the munitions to be salved. Shortly after this he was sent across to the Italian front. He was there for a time, and was attached to the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He was in a motor car accident, but escaped with nothing more serious than a damaged elbow. He was next heard of again in Flanders. His latest promotion was lieutenant-colonel and a bar to his Military Cross. No details of this have yet come to hand. He had been wounded four times in all. The deceased soldier was what is now known as one of the "Old Contemptibles." He was decorated by His Majesty the King at Buckingham Palace on October 31, 1917.

The late Lieutenant-colonel Humphries had a most cheery disposition, and always looked on the bright side of things. A younger brother, only 17 years of age, is a sergeant in the British Army. He ran away and enlisted.

Lieutenant-colonel Humphries was 31 years of age. He was born at Mataura, and received part of his education at the Otago Boys' High School. His parents then went to live in Christchurch, where his mother was the licensee of the Excelsior Hotel. He was a keen player of golf, and represented Canterbury on the football field against Otago some years ago. He also held a life-saving medal for swimming. His mother is at present living in London. Mrs S. C. Wilson, who is well known on the Dunedin concert platform, is a sister, and an aunt, Mrs V. Dalrymple, lives at Musselburgh.

It is a somewhat remarkable coincidence that the many incidents in the deceased's life since leaving New Zealand were associated with the number 13, a number which is generally considered to be very unlucky. He left New Zealand on the 13th day of a month, the number of his bunk on the vessel making the homeward voyage was 13; he joined up with the British Army on the 13th day; the number on his rifle was 13, and he discarded this rifle on the field of battle and picked up another rifle which was also numbered 13.

Sun, 30 August 1918 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

Gallant career ended.

LT.-COL. C. HUMPHRIES KILLED

NEW ZEALANDERS RECORD.

The death in action of Lieut.-Colonel Cecil Humphries, D.S.0., M.C., D.C.M., robs New Zealand of one of its most promising soldier sons. The son of Mrs Rowse, a former licensee of the Excelsior Hotel, Lieut.-Colonel Humphries at the outbreak of war was on a visit to the Old Country. Two days after the outbreak of hostilities he presented himself at a London recruiting office and by sheer merit and acts of individual bravery, rose from the rank of private to the command of an Imperial infantry battalion. His first military venture was in the Army Service Corps, in which he promptly rose to the rank of a sergeant. On August 27, 1914, his company arrived at Havre, but the possibilities in a non-combatant arm of the

service did not appeal to the young New Zealander. He therefore relinquished his three stripes in order to exchange into the 1st Battalion, Manchester Regiment. In the long winter that followed, he spent a time of "hairbreadth 'scapes" in the front line trenches, culminating with an exploit in dragging a wounded comrade under heavy fire at Neuve Chapelle, which gained him the Distinguished Conduct Medal. In the following year, by which time he had regained his sergeantcy, he was wounded in the hip and was invalided to England. There he was awarded a commission in the Highland Light Infantry, and spent a period of instructional duty in Scotland. However, France claimed him again in due course, and a captaincy fell to his lot a few weeks after his return. Subsequently he won the Military Cross, and not long ago the Distinguished Service Order. With the Cornwall Infantry he left for the Italian front, and in May last he was transferred back to France with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel, incidentally gaining a bar to his Military Cross.

The late Lieut.-Colonel Humphries gained prominence on the athletic field in New Zealand. Belonging to a type of manhood of the robust order he was one of the mainstays of the Christchurch Football Club's senior front division what time the team possessed such football giants as F. C. Fryer, W. G. Brown, G. Denniston, and others. In 1910 and 1911 he represented his province. As a golfer he also was considerably above the average, heading the club list of the New Brighton Golf Club. He was born 29 years ago, at Mataura, and was of Hebraic origin. His education was obtained at the Otago Bovs' High School.

Mataura Ensign, 30 August 1918 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

FOR THE EMPIRE.

DEATH OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HUMPHRIES.

D.S.O., D.C.M.

MATAURA'S GALLANT SON.

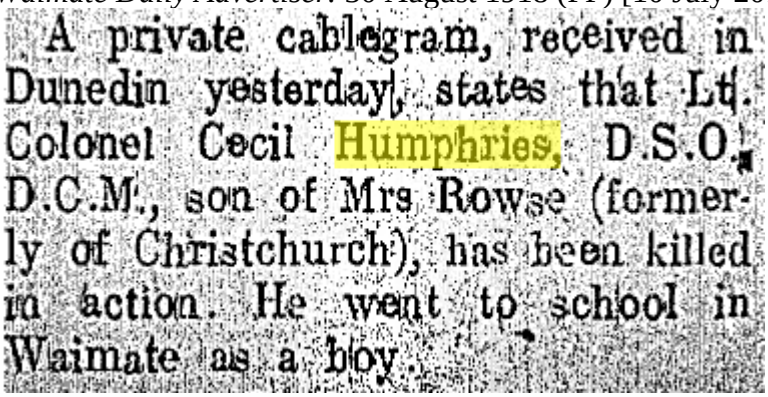
A private cablegram received in Dunedin states that Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Humphries, D.S.0., M.C., D.C.M., son of Mrs Rowse, formerly of Christchurch, has been killed in action.

The late Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries has been more in the public eye than any other soldier son of Southland. Born at Mataura 27 years ago, the youngest son of the late Mr Charles Humphries, one of the oldest residents, and of his second wife (now Mrs Rowse), he spent his early school days there. He also attended the Otago Boys' High School, subsequently removing with his mother to Christchurch, where he completed his education at Christ's College; and afterwards removed with his mother, sister and half-brother to London, where he was located when the great war broke out. He promptly enlisted in the Army Service Corps, but soon becoming desirous of a transfer into a combatant arm, he relinquished a sergeantcy in order to exchange into the 1st Manchester Regiment, with which he went to France. In March, 1915, he distinguished himself in the battle in which the British took Neuve Chapelle and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (the first gained by a Southlander), was promoted to sergeant, and subsequently given a commission on the field. Later

he was wounded in the hip and invalided to England. On recovering he was granted a commission in the Highland Light Infantry, and for some time was engaged on instructional duty in Scotland. Not long after his return to France he was promoted to be captain. Subsequently he won the Military Cross and gained his majority, won a bar to the Military Cross, was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel and awarded the D.S.O. and by serving since 1914

became entitled among some 70 New Zealanders to the 1914 Star. In November of last year he went with his regiment (the Cornwalls) to Italy but we understand afterwards returned to France.
When on the Italian front, and while travelling in a motor-car, he was run down at a crossing by a train and thrown out, escaping without a scratch, the only damage being that the sleeve was torn from his coat — one more narrow escape, as he wrote, from joining the "aerial scouts." Altogether he had been wounded four times.
The late Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries was well known in sporting circles in Canterbury. He was a prominent member of the Christchurch Rugby Football Club, in which he was an excellent forward, and he represented Canterbury in 1910 and 1911. He was also an enthusiastic member of the New Brighton Golf Club and was prominent in surf club and swimming circles and in volunteering. His mother is at present living in London. Mrs S. C. Wilson, who is well known on the Dunedin concert platform, is a sister, and an aunt (Mrs Dalrymple) lives at Musselburgh. Widespread sympathy will be extended to Mrs Rowse in the loss of her gallant son.

Waimate Daily Advertiser. 30 August 1918 (PP) [10 July 2018]


A private cablegram, received in Dunedin yesterday, states that Lt.-Colonel Cecil Humphries, D.S.O., D.C.M., son of Mrs Rowse (formerly of Christchurch), has been killed in action. He went to school in Waimate as a boy.

Otago Witness, 4 September 1918 (Papers Past) [20/08/2021]

KILLED IN ACTION.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HUMPHRIES, M.C., D.C.M.

Word was received in Dunedin on the 29th of the death—killed in action—of Lieutenant-colonel Cecil Humphries, a native of New Zealand, who had a wonderful record as a soldier—if not the most wonderful of that of any man from the dominion. The deceased soldier was in England with his mother (Mrs A. Rouse), spending a holiday when war broke out, and he at once joined the rush of volunteers in London, being appointed a sergeant in the Army Service Corps and going at once to France. After a few weeks in the Army Service Corps, Sergeant Humphries applied for a transfer, and joined up as a private with the Manchesters, forming a part of the Indian Expeditionary Force which had just then arrived in France. He was through all the desperate fighting round Laventie, Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, and Lille, and for gallantry in an engagement when, as he himself described it, the battalion in which he was serving was put in to stop a German Army Corps, he was awarded the D.C.M., and promoted sergeant, the decoration being pinned on his breast on the field by General Willocks. On several occasions he deemed himself highly honoured by being selected from his company to take part with other selected men in night raids across No

Man's Land. In 1915 Sergeant Humphries was wounded in the thigh by a piece of shrapnel while lying up on the parapet watching the Gurkhas in action, and was invalided to England. At the base hospital it is recorded that the doctor became much interested in Humphries and his record as a soldier, and though the wounded man made light of his wound the doctor ordered him to take a holiday. Later he was promoted to lieutenant, and was attached to the Highland Light Infantry, and spent some time acting as instructor in Edinburgh. Writing to his relatives in Dunedin he stated that he could not sometimes help smiling to himself when he remembered that a year previously he had hardly known the difference between the butt and the barrel of a gun, and here was acting as an instructor. Later on he returned to France with the Highland Light Infantry, and was again wounded, being shot through the arm, and was awarded the Military Cross. He was invalided back to England, and was again promoted, to captain, and transferred to the Duke of Cornwall's regiment. A cablegram received a few weeks ago stated that he had been promoted to lieutenant-colonel. He also served on the Italian front, and while travelling in a motor car was run down at a crossing by a train and thrown out, escaping without a scratch, the only damage being that the sleeve was torn from his coat — one more narrow escape, as he wrote, from joining the "aerial scouts." Altogether he had been wounded four times.

Lieutenant-colonel Humphries was 27 years of age. He was born at Mataura and received part of his education at the Otago Boys' High School. His people then went to live in Christchurch, where his mother was the licensee of the Excelsior Hotel. He was a keen player at golf, and represented Canterbury on the football field against Otago some years ago. His mother is at present living in London. Mrs S. C. Wilson, who is well known on the local concert platform, is a sister, and an aunt, Mrs Dalrymple, lives at Musselburgh.

Evening Post, 9 September 1918 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

BRILLIANT CAREER ENDED

"WILL WILLINGLY LAY DOWN MY LIFE"

THE LATE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL C. HUMPHRIES.

Much regret has been expressed at the death of Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Humphries, late of Christchurch, who has laid down his life in the great cause. His brigadier wrote of him, "He was without exception the bravest man I ever saw." Fuller particulars of his brilliant career in the army have been supplied to The Post. Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries was a New Zealand boy who won distinction in France since the commencement of the war. He joined the British Army - being attached to the Manchester Regiment— on the outbreak of the war, when he was in London on a holiday, and left for France as a private with the first company of his regiment, which formed part of Sir Douglas Haig's division, He was with the British troops in the retreat from Mons. When the Manchesters drove the Germans from the little village of Givenchy in 1914, he won the D.C.M. for saving his captain and two privates, and was promoted to sergeant. On the battlefront, Brigadier-General Strickland assembled the troops and decorated Humphries. In the battle of Neuve Chapelle he was twice wounded, arid was given a commission. After a period in hospital in England, he was attached to the Highland Light Infantry, and returned to the front. He was commended for distinguished conduct at the battle of Loos, and was promoted to captain. A wound sustained in the battle of the Somme necessitated his being sent back to England. In 1916, Captain Humphries was detailed for special service in Italy. Subsequently being transferred to France, he won the Military Cross on 5th June, 1917. On this occasion the report to headquarters was: — "Ammunition train

had been blown up. Captain Humphries arrived and took charge of the party. Under this officer's guidance and help, eight trucks were salved. The eighth was uncoupled by Captain Humphries and Sergeant-Major Husband while the ninth was burning fiercely and its load of heavy shells was exploding freely. This remarkably gallant piece of work was carried out under a hail of shells, any one of which might have exploded the contents of the trucks. I consider; from my observation of the explosion, that Captain Humphries and the other members of the party are deserving of the highest praise, and I have the honour to bring to your notice their gallant and valuable work."

Captain Humphries, writing to a friend in New Zealand on the occasion of his receiving the Military Cross, said: — "It's all luck; we just happened to be there, but the rotten part of it all was that I had ten killed and thirteen wounded."

Through 1917 he continued to serve in France, and was with the Fifth Army at Cambrai, and won a bar to his Cross there. He was promoted lieutenant-colonel in command of a battalion of the Norfolk Regiment: and died of wounds received in the last offensive on 2nd August, just after four years of active service.

Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries had a keen sense of duty. Writing to a friend in New Zealand last year, he said: — "After seeing the outrages of the Hun since 1914, I would willingly lay down my life to protect British women arid children from this dreadful German." Lieutenant-Colonel Humphries was 29 years of age.

Press, 16 October 1918 (Papers Past) [01/06/2018]

September 2.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil F. G. Humphries, M.C., D.C.M., whose death from wounds is announced this week, received his wounds in the fighting on August 21st and 22nd, in which his brigade was very heavily counter-attacked, and he died a few days later. His commanding officer, Brigadier-General Oldman, writing to Mrs Rowse, says: "He was without exception the bravest man I have ever met, and his loss to me as commanding officer is irreparable. He died leading his men in a very difficult position, where we had been heavily counter-attacked. His example of coolness and courage was magnificent. I admired him immensely both as a friend and a commanding officer, as did all the officers serving under him. I feel his loss the more as he was commanding my own regiment."

Press, 10 January 1919 (Papers Past) [01/06/2018]

"He was, without exception, the bravest man I have ever met, and his loss to me as commanding officer is irreparable," was the way in which the late Lieut.-Colonel Cecil F. G. Humphries, M.C., D.C.M., was described by his Brigadier. Lieut.-Colonel Humphries, who was 31 years of age, was a very well-known Christchurch boy, being particularly prominent in football circles. He played for the Christchurch Club and for Canterbury. He was a son of Mrs A. R. Rowse, formerly of the Excelsior Hotel, and was visiting Europe with his mother when war broke out. He went to France in August, 1914, with the A.S.C., as a sergeant, but in order to join a combatant unit, gave up his stripes and transferred to the Manchester Regiment as a private. He won the D.C.M. in December of the same year, and in addition was promoted sergeant for his gallantry at Givenchy. He was wounded at Neuve Chapelle, and on recovering was given a commission in the Highland Light Infantry. In September, 1917, he was awarded the Military Cross, to which he received a bar later on, and gained rapid promotion in rank. He saw service for some months on the Italian front, and on returning to

France was given the command of a battalion of the Norfolk Regiment, with which he was serving when he met his death.

Evening Post. 11 February 1919 (PP) [21/08/2021]

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER
Having taken his objective, the late Lieutenant-Colonel C. F. G. Humphries, M.C., D.C.M., Duke of Cornwall's L.I., attached 1st Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, reorganised his battalion, and, on hearing that the attack on the final objective was held up, he went forward under heavy fire and reconnoitred the whole position, after which he led the battalion forward. Later, he personally controlled his men during a very determined counter-attack by the enemy under the heaviest machine-gun fire. His courage inspired confidence throughout the operations. The award of the D.S.O. was posthumous.

Mataura Ensign, 16 March 1920 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

Mrs C. Rouse, formerly of Mataura and mother of one of New Zealand's greatest soldiers, Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Humphries, was a visitor to Mataura last week, and was the guest of Mr and Mrs R. Winning. Mrs Rouse had with her a collection of decorations won by the deceased soldier and war trophies these being greatly admired by the family's numerous friends at Mataura. Mrs Rouse, who returned to Dunedin on Saturday, intends to remain in the Dominion.

Timaru Herald, 4 May 1920 (Papers Past) [03/06/2018]

A SOLDIER'S MOTHER.

The Prince to-night caused to be presented to him Mrs Rowse, mother of the late Lieutenant-colonel Cecil Humphries, one of New Zealand's most illustrious soldiers. Colonel Humphries, who was holidaying in England when war broke out, enlisted immediately and went to France as a sergeant in the A.S.C. A week or two later he threw in his stripes and was transferred to the Manchesters as a private. Thence his career was meteoric. He was given a commission and decorated with the D.C.M., being the first New Zealander to gain the decoration on the field. Subsequently he earned the M.C. and bar and D.S.O., the latter being earned at Achiet le Petit. On the day of his death he was recommended for the V.C., and his General declared that he was the bravest man he had ever known.

Timaru Herald, 10 May 1920 (Papers Past) [21/08/2021]

"THE BRAVEST MAN."

To the Editor of the "Timaru Herald."

Sir,—I read your valuable paper each morning, and I expected to see some comment by you on a telegram conveying news of the Prince of Wales's doings in New Zealand, which mentioned that he caused Mrs Rouse (the mother of the late Cecil Humphries) to be presented to him, Cecil Humphries being described as "the bravest man I ever met." It seems to me that if brave Cecil Humphries had been a scholar or a preacher, we should be enlightened as to who he was. May I state briefly that he was born in a public house, reared in a public house, and managed an hotel for his mother right up till the eve of his departure from the colony. I hold no brief for publican or parson, and I never enter an hotel, but mine host of the Mataura Hotel, the late Cecil Humphries' father, was a good man, though a publican. Like father like son, and it seems there are some good and brave publicans.—I am, etc.,

ANDREW GRAY.

The Times (London, England), Monday, September 2, 1918 (The Times Digital Archive) [09/07/2018]

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL CECIL F. G. HUMPHRIES, M.C., D.C.M. Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, who has died of wounds at the age of 31, was a New Zealander and the son of Mrs. A. R. Rowse, now of 38, Fernwood-avenue, Streatham. Colonel Humphries was visiting Europe with his mother when war broke out, and at once enlisted, proceeding to France with the A.S.C. in August, 1914. Wishing to be in a combatant unit, he surrendered his sergeant's stripes and transferred to the Manchester Regiment, and in December was awarded the D.C.M. and promoted sergeant for gallantry at Givenchy. He was wounded at Neuve Chapelle, and on recovering got his commission in the Highland Light Infantry. He was again wounded at the Somme. In September, 1917, while attached to the D.C.L.I. he was awarded the Military Cross. He was then for some months on the Italian front, and on returning to France was awarded a Bar to his Cross. At the time of his death Colonel Humphries was commanding a battalion of the Norfolk Regiment. His brigadier writes:—"He was without exception the bravest man I have ever met, and his loss to me as commanding officer is irreparable. He died leading his men in a very difficult position, where we had been heavily counter-attacked. His example of coolness and courage was magnificent. I admired him immensely, both as a friend and a commanding officer, as did all the officers serving under him. I feel his loss the more as he was commanding my own regiment." Colonel Humphries was a well-known Rugby football player in New Zealand, and for some years represented his province, Canterbury.