

Private Arthur Watson

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

TERESA SCOTT

Arthur Watson was the son of late James (stepfather) and Annie Watson. He was born Arthur David Pankhurst Cattle on 11 July 1891 at Reefton, the son of Phoebe Annie Cattle. Annie Cattle married James Watson in 1892 and had two more children – James born in 1895 and Annie Marion born in 1902. Arthur was a linotypist in Greymouth in 1912, but by 1914 he was working for the Timaru Post Co in Timaru, his next of kin his brother James Watson.

Arthur had already registered for compulsory military training at Greymouth. From the Territorials, he enrolled and passed the examination on 12 August 1914. He was amongst the earliest volunteers in Timaru, going with the infantry contingent from the South Canterbury district in mid August.

The South Canterbury infantry arrived in Addington Camp on the night of 17 August embarking with the Canterbury Infantry Btn for the Front on 16 October 1914.

Thereafter there is no mention of Arthur until after his death on 29 April 1915 when he was killed in action at the Dardanelles. News of his death would be received in his native Greymouth with genuine sorrow.

He was said to be of a bright, cheery disposition, an unassuming young fellow, very popular among his fellow employees, and was well liked by the many friends he made wherever he went.

Arthur was highly esteemed by his employers and companions in the office of the "Post", and the news of the death of their "boy" at the Front caused deepest sorrow. His death was noted in the 27th annual report of the Canterbury Typographical Association, of which he had

been a member, in February 1916. As late as 18 May 1915 the mail from Egypt had brought letters and cards from the late Private Watson to his personal friends in Timaru. When the medals were to be sent, it was to James Watson, his brother, at Elizabeth Street, then of Brown Street, and finally of 16 Cliff Street, Timaru.

A communication to Expeditionary Force Records Branch, Head Quarters, N. Z. Military Force, Wellington, dated 24 May 1916, says that it "appears he (Arthur Watson No. 6/571) was an only son and that both his parents are dead, but that he has a step father living and also a half brother and two half sisters. There is about 60 pounds belonging to him in the Post Office Savings Bank, and there is probably some allotment of pay due to him."

His stepfather was residing in Greymouth when Arthur was killed. There is no indication whether the accompanying questions were answered, e.g. the name and address of nearest of kin of the deceased, whether any will made.

The Public Trust administered his estate early in 1917, after publishing a notice in the Timaru Herald of 13

November 1916, regarding the "Estate of Arthur David Pankhurst Cattle, commonly known as Arthur Watson, of Timaru, Linotype Operator, but at his death a soldier on active service".

The value of his estate was £105.18s.7d, consisting for the most part of cash in the bank – a good amount for a young man.

Arthur is remembered on the Timaru Memorial wall, the Greymouth War Memorial and the Lone Pine Memorial in the Dardanelles. His half-brother James also served in World War One (service number 73028), enlisting in 1917 at Greymouth.

He was discharged in 1919 and intended to return to Cliff Street, Timaru. James died in 1950 at Timaru.

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

