

GREAT WAR STORIES

Sergeant John Calder

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

CAROL BELL

John Calder was a Scotsman living in New Zealand when he enlisted in May 1915, having previously served a year with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

He was working as a labourer for Orr Bros at Waitohi, living at their property. He was the son of Grace and James Calder of South Berbiston, Lennoxton, Stirlingshire, Scotland, born 20 October 1889, 5ft 6in tall, with dark complexion, brown eyes and brown hair.

Private Calder embarked with the 2nd Battalion, NZ Rifle Brigade for Suez on 9 October 1915, spending time at Ismailia on the west bank of the Suez Canal at the end of the Gallipoli campaign before embarking once again for the Western Front.

He was appointed lance corporal at Rouen in October 1916, then promoted to sergeant a year later on 1 October 1917, just 12 days before being killed in action at Ypres, Belgium.

The Timaru Herald of 23 January 1918 reported: Ma Waro Man Killed at the Front: Mr T. Groundwater of Ma Waro has

received from Bella C Calder of South Gurliston, Stirlingshire, a letter dated November 17 giving his news of the death of her brother, who left Ma Waro for the war and was killed in France on October 12th.

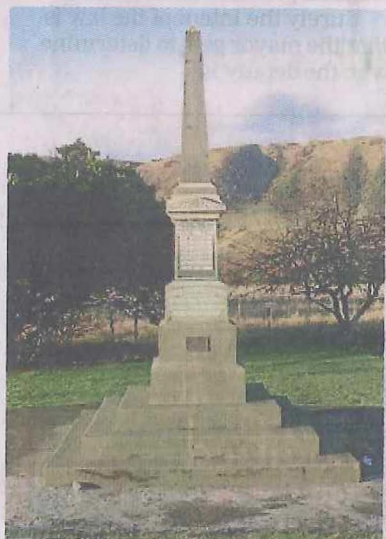
“He had been home twice on leave, and had been back in France six weeks after his second leave and only four days at the front when he fell. He was trying to rescue a wounded comrade who was lying under heavy machine-gun fire. He had almost reached the cover of a shell hole when he was struck in the forehead with a machine-gun bullet and killed instantly. He died as he had lived, thinking of others before himself. I have had several letters from friends of his in his battalion, whom I have never seen, and they all say he was the finest and bravest man they ever met. Mother has lost a good son, and I have lost one of the best brothers that ever lived ...”

Sergeant Calder was buried at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

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



John Calder's headstone at Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium. PHOTO: SUPPLIED



John Calder is remembered on the Albury War Memorial. PHOTO: SUPPLIED