

ANZAC DAY 2014 - Commemoration

The Christchurch earthquakes have shaken our lives and our memories. They have also unearthed many stories and it is thanks to the vigilance of a demolition crew that they did not throw away the tattered scrapbook found in the debris of a house last year but returned it to its family. That scrapbook provided the basis for the commemoration today.

Lieutenant Cyril Fuller Carey

Died of wounds

November 7th 1916

Sling Camp, Salisbury Plain, England

Cyril Fuller Carey was born in 1891, the second son of Mr and Mrs A F Carey, owners of Carey's Ready Money store in Christchurch with Mr Carey being a well-known draper.

Cyril attended Christchurch Boys' High School in 1906 and 1907 and left school to join the Union Steam Ship Company as a cadet on the training ship Dartford. He trained at sea for several years and in 1912 left to follow 'farming pursuits near Blenheim'.

The outbreak of war saw Cyril join up, and while little is known of his training, he is listed as a Second Lieutenant in the 12th(Nelson) Infantry Regiment which left New Zealand in March 1916 as part of the 10th Reinforcements of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

The regiment spent a brief time in Egypt before moving to England to a camp on the Salisbury Plain known as Sling Camp. This was home to over 4000 NZ troops and served as a training ground for troops being sent to France and as a rehabilitation centre. The site is now overlooked by the Bulford Kiwi, carved by the soldiers into the limestone hill above the camp.

Cyril Carey's leadership skills saw him appointed to the Instructional Staff as a bombing officer, training soldiers to prepare, use and throw hand held bombs and grenades. He was twice sent to France in charge of detachments of men he had trained.

At Sling Camp it is noted that, on at least three occasions, Lieutenant Carey is described as saving lives through his courage and natural instincts when exercises had gone wrong – at one stage picking up a live bomb and throwing it to safety when it had initially landed among a group of thirty men.

At 11am on November 7th 1916, Lieutenant Carey was instructing a nervous young private in a throwing trench. The grenade was primed and the private threw the bomb. It is believed the grenade landed on the lip of the trench and stuck in the mud. Lieutenant Carey tried to grab it and throw it away but could not reach it. He pushed the soldier down to the bottom of the trench and lay on top of him. When the grenade exploded, both men were struck by shrapnel, but Lieutenant Carey's wounds proved fatal and he died that night in Codford Hospital – 18 miles away.

His obituary in the Chronicles of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force records:

“He was always cheerful and enthusiastic, and earnest about his duty....his loss is hard to bear, and his place hard to fill. The whole camp from Colonel to private mourned his loss and as a fitting tribute to the memory of so brave an officer, every available man attended his funeral, making for a column one mile long.”

Lieutenant Carey was survived by his wife, Elsie, whom he had married barely a year before. The cable to her indicated he was to be recommended for a posthumous award. It is unclear whether this ever occurred.

6/3959 Lieutenant Cyril Fuller Carey

Sailor, soldier, son, husband, uncle of Alistair Carey who is with us today, saver of lives and old boy of this school

Died of wounds aged 25

Buried in Tidworth Military Cemetery, England

Altiora Peto

Rest in Peace