

CHRISTOPHER GEORGE CHALLIS (1873 - 1934)

By Wendy Duncan

Christopher Challis was born in London, England, to William Challis (1833 -1885) and Jane Ann Jeffrey (1841-1924)¹. He was the youngest of four boys. His brothers were Alfred William Challis (1867 - 1908), William Charles Challis (1869 - 1917) and Arthur Amos Challis (1872 - 1937).

His father, who was born in Woodham Ferris, Essex, England, was a blacksmith and gas fitter in London who employed two men. In the 1881 Census the family are listed as living on Ropemaker Street, St. Giles Without Cripplegate, London ².

Christopher's mother, Jane Ann (nee Jeffrey), was born in Brenchley, Kent, England.

In March 1885, Christopher's father, William, was killed in a tragic accident. The circumstances surrounding his death were the subject of an inquest documented in *The Kent and Sussex Courier*, March 6, 1885. William had been invited by his brother-in-law, George Huntley, to go rabbit shooting in the Tunbridge Wells area. At the end of the day William was standing with another man from the hunting party, Alfred Weller. At the inquest Alfred testified that he had been showing William his grazed hand/finger which he had a handkerchief around. When Alfred, who was holding a doubled-barreled loaded shotgun, turned away, his gun went off shooting William in the hip. It was thought that perhaps the handkerchief had caught on the trigger. All who testified said that the shooting was an accident. William was buried in the "New Cemetery" in Tunbridge Wells. The article about the inquest states that as William was dying he said, "...Oh dear, what shall I do for my wife and family?"

Following the death of his father, Christopher's family were separated. His mother, Jane Ann, re-married to a young seaman by the name of Thomas Jeffrey (her cousin). Jane Ann, Thomas Jeffrey and Christopher, emigrated to Australia. William, Christopher's brother, emigrated to New Zealand. Alfred and Arthur, remained in England.

It appears Christopher first arrived in Melbourne from London on the ship, Hubbuck, on September 10, 1887, with his mother ⁴. It is unclear when he arrived in New Zealand from Australia. The earliest record of him in New Zealand is found in the 1898-1899 New Zealand City and Area Directory in Katea, Otago where he is listed as a nurseryman ⁵.

Christopher served in the Boer War with The Tenth Contingent. In the Poverty Bay Herald, Volume XXIX, Issue 9408, April 7, 1902, Christopher is listed among those men selected to serve. He is described as being “*aged 25, 5ft 5 3/4 inches, chest 36 1/2, weight 10.10.*” The article states that the Gisborne men selected to serve in the Boer War “*are certainly a fine lot of young men likely to do credit to the colony*”.

According to the Poverty Bay Herald of April 7, 1902, prior to departing for the Boer War, Christopher was charged with riding a bicycle without a light. The newspaper indicates, “*Leave to withdraw the information was granted, on the application of Sergeant Siddles who stated that defendant had left last evening for Wellington as one of the Tenth Contingent.*”

When Christopher signed up for the Boer war, he listed his mother as still living on Ropemaker Street, London. Perhaps she had intended to return to London. In fact, Jane Ann, lived many years in the Geelong area of Victoria, Australia, where she had relatives. She died in Geelong on December 12, 1924, and is buried in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.

On his return from the Boer War, Christopher married Grace Rose Gordon in 1910 ⁶. They settled in Wellington.

In early 1912 their only son, Gordon Christopher Ernest Challis, was born ⁷.

Between 1912 and 1916 Christopher worked as a laborer and as a storeman with Wilson and Cahan.

On May 29, 1916 he signed up to serve in World War 1. He served as a Private (#25466) with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, 17th

Reinforcements, Wellington Infantry Battalion, B Company. The troops embarked on September 27, 1916. His military records indicate that he was stationed in Codford, England.

Shortly after his return in 1917 his son, Gordon, was run over and killed on Molesworth Street, Wellington. Gordon was only 5 ½ years old. (He is buried in the Karori Cemetery, Area 08, Block G, Row 06, Plot 021).

For the remainder of his days Christopher lived with his wife, Grace, in Wellington and worked as a laborer/waterside worker.

Christopher died in Wellington on December 5, 1935, of multiple myeloma of the spine. He is buried at the Karori Cemetery in Wellington.

Christopher's nephew, William Charles Challis (#51087), also appears on the Online Cenotaph. He served in World War One.

VOLUNTEERS FROM POVERTY BAY WHO SERVED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR.		
1899	1902	
OFFICERS COLONEL T. W. PORTER C.B. COMMANDED 7 TH & 9 TH CONTINGENTS. CAPTAIN- B. ARTHUR. VET. SURGEON CAPTAIN- C.R. NEALE. LIEUT. PAYMASTER- W. PITT. LIEUTENANTS- W.E. LANGFORD R.H. TROTTER G.B. CARTER. F.S. BARTON. E.A. REES. C.A.C. SIMPS.	HOSPITAL STAFF NURSE- NELLIE DEAN REDSTONE. NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS SERGEANT- MAJORS- G.C. JOHNSTONE. T.R. PORTER. SERGEANTS- G.B. BOUGEN. A.T.W. GANNON, A.E. HAYDON. J. LANGHAM D.S.M., J.N. LESLIE. M. PICKETT, J. WALKER. C.G. CHALLIS, T. TASKER.	FARRIER-SERGEANT- J.W. PARKER. SADDLER-SERGEANT- W. TAYLOR. CORPORALS- J.D. CAMERON. W. COOPER, W. MAXWELL. R.G. PORTER, H.R. SIMEON. C.B. DE LATOUR, R. BARWICK. F. MC CABE. LANCE-CORPORALS- W.L. CATO, C.J. DENNY. E.C. HURREY, J. HACKETT.
TROOPERS		
ALLEN O. AISLABIE A., ASHDOWN A., ASHDOWN S.J., BRUCE F.O., BRUCE D.S., BURCH F.C., BEATSON H.D., BROWN W.J., BRADY P., BREINGAN S.C., BRIFINGAN R.S., BUSNELL H., BUCKLEY D., BLACK A., BROWN W., BAKER F.C., BOUGEN W., BENNETT B., BOYD A., BLOWS O., CARLYLE T.F., RICHARDSON E., OGDEN T.,	CUNNINGHAM T., CAMPBELL K., COOK R.E., COOPER A.J., CAMPBELL A., CUNNINGHAM J., CLARK F.W., CAIRNS J.I., DAVIDSON J., DRISCOLE H.J., DAULTON T.M., DAVITT A., DUNN J., DWYER M., FOULDS A.W., FRASER R.H., FRASER T., FERRIS J.S., FERRIS J.H., FILE E., FAIRLIE H.H., GORDON J.,	GRAYSON J.M., GUILFORD E.A., GRAHAM W., GILES C.W., GLASS C., GREEN A., CREGG E., HURREY J.A., HURREY IRVINE S. (KILLED IN ACTION), HUMFREY C., HUMFREY H.F., HANLON J., HIGGS F., HARRIS H.J., HAMILTON T.S., HARVEY M.W., HOWE L.T., JOHNSTONE R.W., JOHNSTONE G., JOHNSTONE J.H., JOHNSTONE R.
TROOPERS		
JONES E.J., JONES A.A., JONES R.H., KENNY E., KIRKMAN H.R. (DIED OF FEVER), KIRK A., LAW A., LAW N., LITTLE W.J., LARSEN C.A., LAWRENCE F.H., MOORE J.A., MORRIS W., MARTIN H., McKINLEY J., McBURNEY W., McCOUCH R.H., McGOVERN M.M., McIVOR R., NELSON A.,	NICOL R., NURSE C.F., O'NEIL L., POYNTER J., PHILLIP A.B., PEAKMAN F.C., PARKER E., PARKER J.R., PARKER E.C.W., PARKER G., PARKER W.J., PARTRIDGE E., PASCOE R.O., RICHARDSON R., ROGERS J.A., RYAN M., RYAN J., ROBSON C., REED B., RUSSELL R.,	SHARP F.C., STEPHENS E.J., STEVENS R.J., SWARBRICK J.G., SKEET E.A., SOMERVELL J.W., SWARBRICK J., THOMPSON J.F., TEESDALE P.W., TAYLOR J.R., TAYLOR P., TARDEAU E.A., THIRD W., THOM R., WOOD A.A., WOOD T.M., WILLIAMSON C., WEBB A.J., WHITEHEAD J.J., YARDLEY H.

At the **Gisborne War Memorial Theatre** you can find Christopher Charles Challis' name outside the clubrooms where there are three marble tablets listing the names of volunteers from Poverty Bay who served in the South African War.



Christopher Challis is buried at the Karori Cemetery in Wellington with a headstone marked "Great War Veteran".

REFERENCES

1. London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1917.
2. 1881 England Census – Class:RG11; Piece 373; Folio:20; Page: 34; GSU roll:1341081.
3. The Kent and Sussex Courier, March 6, 1885.
4. Victoria, Australia, Assisted and Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1839 – 1923; Series: VPRS 7666; Series Title: Inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) [Microfiche copy of VPRS 947].
5. New Zealand, City & Area Directories, 1866-1954; Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory, page 453.
6. New Zealand, Marriage Index, 1840 – 1937, Folio #375.
7. New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840 – 1950, Folio #889.