

# CARROL JAMES COULTON (1894-1936)

PRIVATE | SERVICE NUMBER 10/3225 | 8TH REINFORCEMENTS



**CARROL JAMES COULTON** volunteered for service in the New Zealand armed forces on 22 May 1915, aged 20 years 8 months. His medical examination describes him as being 5' 4" tall, weighing 140 lb and having a fair complexion, bluish-grey eyes and brown hair. His religious denomination was Roman Catholic. He

had no distinctive marks and was assessed as being fit 6/12.

At the time of enlistment Carrol was single. He listed his date of birth as 1894 and birthplace as Wellington. He gave his occupation as a self-employed farmer at Strathmore, Taranaki and listed his father, Andrew Coultou of Strathmore as his next-of-kin.

Carrol was one of 23 Taranaki men who departed from Stratford on 28 May 1915 to entrain at the Trentham Camp. Following his attestation at Trentham on 25 August 1915 he was assigned to the 8th Reinforcements of the Wellington Infantry Brigade as a Private. His enlistment number was 10/3225.

The 8th Reinforcements of 2,585 soldiers departed from Wellington on the Willochra & Tofua bound for Egypt on 13 November 1915. The troops disembarked at Suez on 18 December, 1915. By this time the Gallipoli campaign was almost over and the Anzacs were evacuated from Gallipoli on 20 December. New Zealand troops had

three months of training and acclimatisation as they waited to go to the Western Front in France.

Carrol was hospitalised with measles for 12 days on 9 February 1916 at the Auxiliary Hospital, Abassia. During this time the New

Zealand Division was formed and Carrol was posted to the Second Battalion of the Wellington Regiment on 1 March 1916.

On 9 April 1916 Carrol's regiment embarked on the "Llandoverly Castle" from Alexandria arriving at Marseilles, France on 18 April. The NZ Division moved into front line trenches on May 13 near Armentieres.

New Zealand's first major engagement on the Western Front was The Somme Campaign on July 1. The New Zealand Division fought for 23 days and suffered nearly 5500 wounded and over 1500 killed. The winter of 1917/1918 was spent in the Ypres sector around the Polygon Wood area.

Carrol sustained a "defence wound" on 23 October 1916 and was admitted to the No 1 New Zealand Field Ambulance for two days before being "discharged to duty".

In February 1917 Carrol is punished for "loss by neglect of 1 spoon". This event occurred in the field and his record shows he lost a spoon of a fellow comrade and was ordered to pay 2d for the spoon.

Carrol was admitted to the New Zealand Field Ambulance on 7 April 1917, but his record does not show what he is treated for. In this instance it may disguise the fact that Carrol was possibly gassed during the Allied offensive. He rejoined the Battalion after 14 days on 20 April. By June 1917 the New Zealanders were involved in the Battle of Messines.

Carrol received long awaited leave of 10 days from 7-16 November, 1917 and visits Paris. Known to be "a bit of a gambler" he was caught playing Crown & Anchor on 3 December 1917 and had to "forfeit three days gross pay".

18 days leave to the UK was granted to Carrol from 17 February - 6 March 1918. Ten days after rejoining his Battalion he was promoted to Corporal on 16 March 1918 and transferred to Battalion HQ possibly in Rouen. As a Corporal, Carrol achieved the rank of a Section Commander of a platoon of 10-12 soldiers.

On 5 July 1918 Carrol was "evacuated sick", rejoining his battalion after 7 days on 12 July 1918. During this time Spanish influenza broke out around the world.



Carrol's father, Andrew Coulton, passed away on 14 July 1918, aged 70. It is not known whether Carrol knew his father was ill or received advice of his father's death. The Taranaki Daily News reported Andrew's death on 16 July 1918 - *"The death is announced of an old and esteemed settler of Huiakama - Mr Andrew Coulton, aged 70. Deceased arrived there in the early 80's, and remained there ever since. He leaves a widow and two sons - Carol (in the trenches) and Con"*.

Carrol was wounded in action with a gunshot wound to the neck on 24 August 1918, possibly during the second Battle of Bapaume. It was the last time he would see action in the trenches. He was transferred to the Stationery Hospital No 6 GH Rouen, France on 25 August 1918 where he spent two days before being evacuated to Britain by hospital ship on 27 August 1918, arriving at the No 1 New Zealand General Hospital in Bathurst on 28 August 1918.

Back home in New Zealand casualty lists were printed in local papers. News of Carrol's injury appears in the Taranaki Daily News, on 13 September, 1918 - *"Stratford, September 11: The district is carrying its full quota of casualties. Recent lists include many familiar names. Corporal Carrol Coulton (Strathmore), who has been engaged for a long time in straffing the Kaiser's men, having left with the 8th Reinforcements, was wounded on August 8, and is now recovering from his injuries in hospital"*.

Carrol's records do not show whether he received surgery for the gunshot wound. He was transferred to the Convalescent Hospital in Hornchurch on 9 September 1918 and spent two months convalescing from his wounds during September and October of 1918. During his convalescence he received a military discipline and was severely reprimanded on 17 September for "being in possession of goods the property of a comrade"; followed again by a further reprimand and forfeiting two days gross pay for being "AWOL from the hospital overnight/neglecting hospital orders/breaking into Hornchurch Hospital" on 28 & 30 September.

On 3 October he was discharged from Hornchurch on leave to report to Codford Hospital on 18 October. Carrol never rejoined his battalion and on 11 November, 1918 the war ended.

Carrol forfeited another 3 days' pay on 14 December 1918 when he was discharged from Codford Hospital on 14 December 1918 and transferred to Sling Camp, a Rehabilitation and Training Camp, in preparation for his return home.

In March 1919, at his own request Carrol reverted to the rank of Private. He embarked on the Tahiti on 27 May 1919, departing from London, arriving back in New Zealand on 7 July 1919.

Carrol was officially discharged from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 3 August 1919 having served a total of 3 years 347 days (including 112 days of training in New Zealand). He was awarded the British War Medal on 22 March 1921 and the Victory Medal on 5 June 1922. A total of 41 men from the Strathmore, Te Wera and Makahu areas served in World War 1. Their names are immortalised on the Strathmore War Memorial on Brewer Road. 8 out of the 41 were killed in action or died of illness before reaching the theatre of war.

After the war Carrol returned to farming at Strathmore. On 19 November 1921 at Stratford, Carrol married Eva Ellis (Dolly) Meredith also from Strathmore, with whom he had seven children - Sheila, Yvonne (Bon), Rex, Morrie, Bruce, James (Jim) & Katherine (Kath). Despite having numerous health problems as a result of suffering the trauma of poison gas during the war, Carrol became closely involved in the local community. He died suddenly in Stratford on 19 March 1936, aged 42. Dolly outlived him by more than 50 years, passing away on 20 March, 1988. They are both buried in the Kopuatama Cemetery, Stratford. ■

