

Private Thomas Squire 70919 (b. 19 November 1885 d. 28 May 1957) War Service World War 1

By October 1917 New Zealand was conscripting and accepting volunteers to keep the flow of men into overseas service going. Thomas was married with three children under seven but his army service file records that he volunteered to serve for “the duration of the present war... and six months thereafter” (Attestation 10 October 1917.)

Note this left Isabella Squire, his wife, with three young children—Pearl aged six, Fred aged five and Arthur (yet to be called Moss) aged four—living at 150 Strickland Street, Sydenham, Christchurch.

He trained at Burnham from 12 November 1917 until early April, then at Trentham and Featherston in New Zealand until 4 June 1918. On the 5 June he sailed on the SS Remuera as part of the 38th Reinforcements. They arrived in Liverpool on 31 July—a long trip of over six weeks. They were rapidly transferred to the large army camp at Sling on the Salisbury Plain near Burford by 1 August 1918.

After two months of further training they were shipped to France landing near Etaples on 13 October. Here he joined the 1 Battalion Canterbury Regiment 13 Company as they rested in their billets at Beauvois from 17-22 October.

In the final days of World War One he was with 1 Battalion near Le Quesnoy participating in fighting that saw significant losses of men. (Between October 23 and November 5 his Battalion lost 27 killed and 124 wounded.)

After the Armistice they marched across Belgium to occupy part of Germany near Cologne. This move into Germany was a route march and there were problems with boots and in some instances men were hungry as the amount of food available did not meet the needs of men who were marching 8-10 hours a day. The march began on 28 November and ended on 20 December 1918 when they reached Cologne having marched across Belgium and about 40km into Germany

Once in the Cologne area they did some military activities to ensure the local population was orderly but also had time for Rhine Cruises and visits to Cologne and Bonn.

As the men who had joined the Canterbury Regiment the earliest were being demobilized the Regiment shrank in size and by the end of March ceased to exist as a fighting unit. Thomas returned to England on 18 March 1919 and waited for a boat to take him home. (At the end of the Great War there was a severe shortage of shipping and this meant soldiers waited months before they could embark for home.)

Thomas left Glasgow on the SS Papanoa on 28 May 1919 and got back to New Zealand on June 22. He served 355 days overseas and 234 in New Zealand. He was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Sources: 70919 Thomas Squire: Official New Zealand War Service Record

The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F. 1914-1919 by Captain David Ferguson published by Whitcombe and Tombs 1921 is available online and provides details about the last 3 weeks of the War and the march to Cologne in Chapters XVII and XVIII from about p270-291