



**New Zealand Society of Genealogists  
NELSON BRANCH  
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## **WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION PROJECT**

### **NELSON NURSES of WORLD WAR ONE**

#### **Biography of Ethel Hannah BARNES NZ Army Nursing Service number 22/101**

**Full Name:** Ethel Hannah BARNES  
**Birth:** 7 June 1884 in NZ  
**Marriage:** 20 Oct 1920 to Mr Cyril Sanderson SPEAR of 77 Nile Street, Nelson  
**Death:** 27 July 1923. Buried Wakapuaka cemetery. C/E B 17 P 13.

Not on any Nelson memorial.

### Chronology

1914 passed nursing exams Nelson Hospital registration no.1555  
1915 Westport Hospital followed by  
1915 Charge Sister Nelson Hospital  
1915 July Hospital Ship *Maheno* No.1 NZ General Hospital, Codford, England.  
1915 Nov back to NZ with heart strain on *Tahiti*  
1916 returned to UK on staff of the hospital ship *Maheno* promoted to Sister  
1917 March returned to duty from NZ to No.2 NZGH as staff nurse  
1917 October tonsillitis admitted to No.2 NZGH then to duty No.2 NZGH  
1918 May influenza admitted No.2 NZGH then to duty No.2 NZGH  
1919 May promoted to Sister and for demobilisation  
1919 October struck off NZEF and placed on reserve of NZANS  
27 July 1923 died

### Origins

Ethel Hannah Barnes born in New Zealand on 7 June 1884 was the daughter of Philip and Eleanor Barnes<sup>1</sup>, of Cornwall, England. It appears Philip and Eleanor Barnes emigrated to New Zealand and lived at Johnsonville<sup>2</sup>, Wellington. Ethel's sisters were Helena Elizabeth born 1881 and Violet Mary born 1889. The 3 girls all attended school in Wellington with Ethel at Johnsonville School, Te Aro School and Mount Cook School in Wellington, and after 1894 her destination was home.

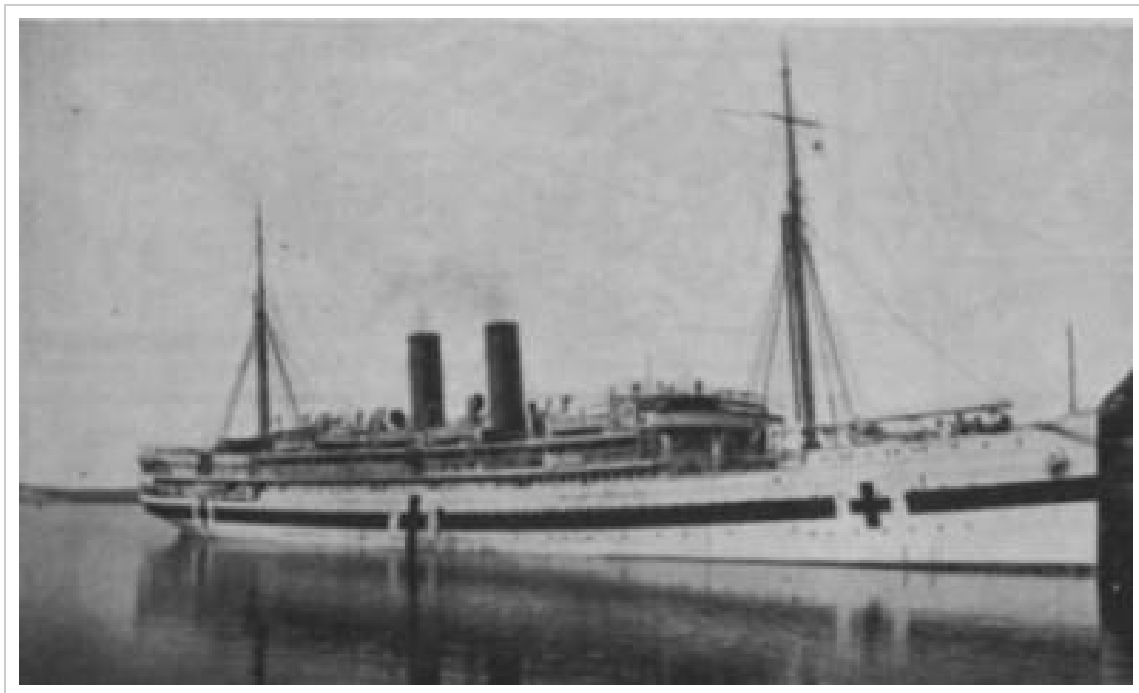
### Qualifications and Training – Nelson Hospital

Ethel trained at Nelson and had a Nelson Hospital certificate, sitting her State Nursing exams in June 1914 with registration in August 1914. The 1915 NZ Gazette records her as a hospital Sister at Westport hospital but at the time of enlisting her war records say she was a charge sister at Nelson Hospital.

### War Service

#### NZ Army Nursing Service

On 7 July 1915 it was reported in the *Dominion* that 69 nurses required for service in the military in England were leaving on Saturday in the Hospital Ship "*Maheno*" completing the quota of 100 which NZ was asked to send. Ethel Barnes was one of these nurses along with Nelson nurse Ethel Hooper, as members of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service Corps. The nurses were to report at No.1 NZ General Hospital, Codford, England.



T.S.S Maheno

Photo courtesy Union Steam Ship Coy

### **Maheno**

The *Maheno* of 5,282-tons built 1905 by William Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton, near Glasgow, was a New Zealand vessel, owned by the Union Steam Ship Company, and built as a luxury passenger ship for trans-Tasman crossings

The *Maheno* had eight wards and two operating theatres, an anaesthetising, a sterilising, and an X-ray room, a laboratory, a laundry and drying-room, steam disinfector, dispensary, telephone exchange, and two electric lifts each of which took two stretchers at a time. On July 11th 1915, H.M.N.Z. hospital ship *Maheno* sailed from Wellington, with the hospital section staffed by a matron and thirteen nursing sisters, five medical officers, a detachment of sixty-one orderlies of the New Zealand Medical Corps, and chaplains. Capacity 340 cot cases.



Departure of the Hospital Ship "Maheno", 1915

Walter Armiger Bowring

### **Invalided to New Zealand**

While Ethel left on this voyage<sup>3</sup>, 5 months later she was invalided back to New Zealand on 20 November 1915 from Egypt on the ship *Tahiti*<sup>4</sup>, suffering from heart strain. Ethel had been at the Taumaru Convalescent Home at Lowry Bay, Wellington for two months, but was so much improved that she has filled the place of the nurse in charge, Sister Campbell, who left on Transport duty, and was anticipating giving up her pension and re-enlisting for Home service<sup>5</sup>.

A year later,<sup>6</sup> Ethel was one of a list of nurses selected for the staff of the hospital ship *Maheno*, third commission, and the contingent of 25 nurses also included fellow Nelson trained nurse Miss Nora Slater. On the way over the ship called at Freemantle, Durban, Capetown and Dubar [West Africa]. In January 1917 it was reported the nurses had experienced a long and happy time on the transport ship. There was an epidemic of measles but no serious cases.

Ethel was promoted to sister sometime in 1916 as recommended by the matron in Chief.

It would appear that Ethel was not a well woman because she was admitted on 25 Oct 1917 to 2<sup>nd</sup> NZ Stationary Hospital Walton-on-Thames with tonsillitis and discharged on 31 Oct 1917, then admitted with the flu in May 1918 and discharged back to duty a week later. She was invalided back to NZ with heart strain, the following year in October 1918 and discharged to the Military Hospital in Trentham and then home to Nelson.

## Honours and Awards



### 1914/15 Star 1914, British War Medal, Victory Medal

According to her war records Ethel was awarded the medals 1914/15 Star, on 17 Feb 1920; British War Medal, 9 Feb 1921; Victory Medal, 4 Jul 1922. All medals were issued prior to her death.

## Marriage at Wellington

Ethel Hannah daughter of the late Philip and Eleanor Barnes, of Cornwall, England married Cyril Sanderson Spear of Nelson the son of the late Frederick Spear of Nelson. Cyril Spear left Wellington in November 1915, to serve with the 13th Battery of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade. He returned in May 1919.

They were married on 20 Oct 1920 at St James' Church, Wellington<sup>7</sup>. Cyril at the time of his marriage to Ethel was on the literary staff of the Nelson Mail, enlisted with the 7<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements and saw service until Armistice Day. Information on Cyril held at Nelson Provincial Museum, community archives, include diaries from 1915-1919. The diaries give detailed daily descriptions of the voyage to Egypt and his experiences there and in France<sup>8</sup>.

## Death

Ethel died at Nelson aged only 39 years on 27 July 1923 of chronic nephritis and syncope [loss of consciousness], with her death attributed to war service.

*On the 31st July 1923, the death occurred of Mrs. Spear (Sister Ethel Barnes); late of the N.Z.A.N. S. Mrs. Spear was trained at Nelson Hospital, and qualified in 1914. She joined the Army Nursing Service in 1915, went to Egypt with one of the early contingents of nurses from New Zealand and served in an Imperial hospital in Cairo during the great rush of wounded and sick from Gallipoli. She was invalided back on account of heart strain, and was a patient at the Lowry Bay Convalescent Home, but as soon as possible resumed work when nurses were badly needed, and then acted as charge nurse at the Convalescent Hospital, where she was a great favourite with the returned men and staff. After her marriage she lived at Nelson, where nurses were warmly welcomed in her home. Her early death is greatly regretted by all who knew her.<sup>9</sup>*

Ethel Spear nee Barnes is buried at Wakapuaka Cemetery, Nelson<sup>10</sup>, with Cyril dying in 1958 also buried at Wakapuaka but in the RSA section of the cemetery<sup>11</sup>.



**SPEAR Ethel nee BARNES, Wakapuaka Cemetery, Nelson C/E Block 13, plot 17.**

Cheryl Carnahan

Ethel's total service was           in NZ           1 yr 29 days.  
                                                  Overseas       2 yrs 352 days.  
Total service                           4yrs 16 days.  
Commenced duty 6 July 1915. [2] 25 July 1916. Date discharged 14 October 1919.

Discharged to Military hospital in Trentham and then 77 Nile Street, Nelson. Died at Nelson aged 39 on 27 July 1923 of chronic nephritis and syncope [loss of consciousness], death due to war service. Died since discharge, next of kin Mr Spear of 77 Nile St Nelson. Scroll posted to Mr C.S.Spear May 1929 and a plaque issued 21 Jan 1930

**Sources:**

- NZSG - Nelson (Ancestors Attic) for Gazettes.
- NZSG - Kiwi Index school records
- NZSG - WW1 CD.
- NZSG - NZ Marriages 1836-1956 CD
- NZSG Nelson - Wakapuaka Cemetery - held at Ancestors Attic library NZSG Nelson
- Nelson City Council cemetery database Wakapuaka Cemetery, Nelson
- 1911 electoral roll- nil
- Cenotaph Database <http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/cenotaph/>
- Nelson City Council Wakapuaka Cemetery, Nelson <http://www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz/services/>
- NZ Army Nursing Service [www.nzans.org](http://www.nzans.org)
- Papers Past - Kai Tiaki <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz> : the Journal of the Nurses of New Zealand

## Endnotes

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1 Parents names from Ethel's marriage report in the newspaper.

2 NZSH Kiwi Index School records.

3 Nominal Roll Vol. 2, Roll 49, Page 21

4 Evening Post, Volume XC, Issue 143, 14 December

5 Kai Tiaki : the journal of the nurses of New Zealand, Volume IX, Issue 3, July 1916, Page 179

6 Nelson Evening Mail , 19 December 1916, Page 3

7 Kai Tiaki : the journal of the nurses of New Zealand, Volume XIV, Issue 1, January 1921, Page 47

8 Info on Cyril held at Nelson Provincial Museum in community archives as diaries from 1915-1919.

Spear left Wellington in November 1915, to serve with the 13th Battery of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade. He returned in May 1919.

The diaries give detailed daily descriptions of the voyage to Egypt and his experiences there and in France.

NZSG Indexed Probates

SPEAR Cyril Saunderson Place Nelson, Occupation Journalist Death Date

Court Nelson, Agency AAOO, Series 17072, Accession W5410

Probate Number 6407, Filed Date 9 May 1958. Type Will

Further enquiries to Archives NZ – Wellington

9 Kai Tiaki : the journal of the nurses of New Zealand, Volume XVI, Issue 4, October 1923, Page 181

10 C/E Block 17, Plot 013. Ethel Hannah Spear age 39. Died 31 July 1923. Undertaker Fleming. Her headstone reads- Sister E.H.Barnes died 31-7-1923 [Grey War Stone, Nursing Service N.Z.E.F. cross set on stone].

In memory of Ethel Hannah dearly beloved wife of Cyril S.Spear who fell asleep on July 31. 1923. [In front, scroll shape.] On base "For we shall give his angles charge over thee".

11 Wakapuaka Cemetery

SPEAR Cyril Saunderson, Date Type Burial RSA, 3052. Age 79. Died 13 April 1958, RSA Forrest Lawn cemetery. Block 3, Plot 025 Undertaker Shone & Co.