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Researched by Dennis Bush-King

WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION PROJECT

Charles James Hamilton DOBSON

Church of England

Born 25 November 1886 Westport, New Zealand¹

Died 06 May 1930, Lisbon, Portugal

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Son of John Howard DOBSON (1852-1924) and Annie Augusta PRINCE (1855-1913)

Married 12 May 1919, Helene (Eleni) Paolos GEORGOULOPOULOS (1890-1940) of Athens

He trained for the priesthood in 1907 at the College of St John the Evangelist, Auckland before becoming a deacon in the Nelson diocese in February 1913 working in the Marlborough Sounds. In 1911 he took a commission in the Senior Army Cadets. This led to him leaving with the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces after the onset of the First World War on 16 October 1914, attached to the Otago Mounted Rifles as Chaplain 4th Class. He was one of 13 chaplains to accompany the main body. Initially he served on a Hospital Ship running between Alexandria and Gallipoli.

He was wounded at Gallipoli on 28 August 1915 while visiting Hill 60 with fellow chaplain William GRANT who was killed, the first chaplain to be killed in action in WW1. By November 1915 Dobson was in the 1st London General Hospital unfit for duty but did work in a hospital ship and Brockenhurst Hospital.



In February 1917 he was present at Buckingham palace when the King and Queen entertained the New Zealand Prime Minister Mr William Massey and his wife and Sir Joseph and Lady Ward.²

¹ Registered as Charles Hamilton DOBSON

² *Nelson Evening Mail*, 6 March 1917, Page 5

By March 1917 Dobson was in France; he was wounded at Passchendaele. He was also appointed Assistant Principal Chaplain to the New Zealand Chaplains Department with the rank of Major (Chaplain, 3rd Class) in December 1917. In 1918 while serving with the 2nd Battalion, Auckland Regiment he was awarded the Military Cross. The citation "for acts of gallantry in the field" stated:

During an attack the battalion was heavily shelled prior to its advance. The regimental medical officer and many of his men became casualties. Mr Dobson immediately took charge of the situation, established a regimental aid post, organised stretcher parties and himself dressed wounded men under intense fire with few facilities. His example of gallantry and unselfish devotion to duty won the admiration of all who came into contact with him.³

He was officially discharged from the army in 1920 with a total service of 5 years 15 days.

He then served as Curate at St Paul's, Middlesbrough before returning to New Zealand with his wife to become vicar at Richmond, Nelson. He returned to Europe in 1922 attached to the Gibraltar diocese and on Good Friday, whilst in charge of St John's church in Smyrna [Izmir], Turkey he distinguished himself again by his rescue work in a blazing fire following ethnic violence between Turks and Christians. He and his family escaped to Malta with 800 other refugees, and later he sent his first report on Smyrna to the Foreign Office from Rome while en route to Marseilles. He briefly served with the Missions to Seamen at Marseilles, France before taking up the position of chaplain to the English community in Lisbon where he was attached to the British Embassy. On 28 November 1925 he conducted the memorial service for the Dowager Queen Alexandra of Saxe-Coburg, widow of King Edward VII.

He died in Lisbon of typhoid fever, complicated by pneumonia. His loss was greatly felt amongst the British community that a fund was set up for his widow and three children.⁴

³ *London Gazette*, December 1918, p 14289 www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31043/supplements/14289/page.pdf

⁴ Haigh (1983), p 73