

ATHOL HUDSON

Athol was born in Nelson 1894 and was the sixth of ten children born to Dr James Hudson and his wife Beatrix Jane, nee Andrews. Beatrix was the daughter of Rev. J.C. Andrew. Dr James Hudson was born in London in 1854 and graduated from London University. He practiced medicine in England then South Africa before migrating to New Zealand and settling in Nelson. He was a registered medical practitioner in Nelson from 1882 until 1908 and then in Tapawera from 1909 until his death in 1912. Dr Hudson had been a prominent Nelson citizen having served as a Nelson city councillor and the District Health Officer for Nelson and Marlborough as well as belonging to various other local committees.

The Hudson family home was built in Tapawera in 1907 and given the name of Hartmoor. This house survives as a well maintained family home now belonging to the Wadsworth family who originally purchased it from Mrs Hudson in 1929.

Dr Hudson had purchased one of the first motor vehicles in the district but had a fatal accident whilst descending the Spooners Range on 8 July 1912. The creek named Doctor's Creek, on the South side of Spooners Range, is named for him. His family donated a beautiful imported stained glass window for the Tadmor Church in his memory.

The following information is quoted from the Nelsonian:

“ In the December Issue of the ‘Nelsonian’ we drew attention to the fact that Athol Hudson had been chosen as New Zealand Rhodes Scholar for 1915. We summarised there the brilliant achievements that made him a well-known figure in the University life of this country. His death, following so soon on his successes, came as a great shock to those who were watching his career.

Athol Hudson was at college as a very young boy for four years (1903-1906). He then went to Waitaki High School and later to Victoria College with a Junior University Scholarship. Word was recently received that he had obtained his bachelor of Science Degree and a Senior Scholarship in Chemistry. As a long distance runner he achieved really remarkable success, and was already one of the best three-mile men that New Zealand has seen. There was no limit to what he might have done in that department of athletics. He was one who took great pains over everything he did, either in work or play, but yet made light of any success that resulted.

A fellow university man has expressed very well what was generally felt when Athol Hudson was awarded the Rhodes Scholarship:-

“This year, with a whole heart, we feel we can congratulate the Committee, which selects New Zealand's Rhodes Scholars. We have not always seen eye to eye with the Committee in the past. We have always felt that it attached to great weight to the possession of degrees. But this year, we think that all our readers will agree that in Athol Hudson, New Zealand will be worthily represented in the Old Country. We value Hudson not for any degree of popularity, which he may possess, nor for his scholastic attainments, for which we don't care two pence: but we esteem in him those qualities of humility and of humour, of courtesy and of strength, of tolerance and of patience, of honesty of purpose and of clearness of vision, which, to our mind, go to the make-up of the true university man. Probably most of our readers will have heard the story of the Oxford don, who, with gentle irony,

spoke of his services to the college. Such will not be forgotten by those who knew him. Always of a retiring nature, his work was as thorough as it was unobtrusive. He was indeed one of those 'who do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame'"

Athol Hudson enlisted on the outbreak of war and joined the Samoan Expedition. On his return he spent a little time completing his Bachelor of Science course and then went into camp again for further service. He headed the list in the examination for commissions in the Expeditionary Force and was drafted to the Ninth Reinforcement as a second Lieutenant. He proceeded with them to Egypt and enjoyed his stay there intensely during the Egyptian spring. He was charmed, too, with France, where, owing to his knowledge of the language, he was made Interpreter to his Battalion, and thus had great opportunities for interesting intercourse with the French. On one occasion that we know of he was left for three hours receiving petitions and complaints from the inhabitants of a village which our troops had entered. This kind of work gave him interesting glimpses into French life and character.

He was also an Intelligence Officer – a perilous position to hold, but one he was delighted with, as giving free scope for his abilities. In reference to his work he wrote, "My conning tower is blown to atoms by a shell – I was not in it."

It appears that on the night of July 15th Athol Hudson and two men went into the 'No Man's Land' and crept close to the German trenches in an attempt to gain information that would be valuable in a raid that was being planned for that part of the line. He noticed a movement nearby and was handing his glasses to one of his men when he was shot, and in all probability killed instantaneously. One of his comrades was also shot, and the other, after attempting to carry in the two bodies, was compelled to abandon them. A subsequent attempt to recover them failed, and it is concluded that the enemy had buried them."

Since the above was in type a letter has been received from Lieut Cyril Rout ('02—'06) describing the circumstances under which Athol Hudson met his death:- "I saw a fair amount of him in and out of the trenches. His loss is felt by us all, as he was carrying out the important work of sniping and intelligence officer. His keenness and energy in making a success of his 'job', as we call it, was recognised and appreciated by his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Austin. We who knew him best at times feared for his safety, so great was his coolness and contempt of danger.

" His death was instantaneous, so he therefore suffered no pain. He was endeavouring to obtain all important information for a raid we were making. To obtain this he made his way with two of his own men through the long grass up to the German wire entanglements. He lay at full length gazing at the German parapet so near at hand. With a whisper and a slight movement he handed his glasses to his corporal alongside him, saying, 'I can see three Germans there.' A few seconds later he was hit, no doubt by a sniper, death being, as I stated, instantaneous. His two men endeavoured to bring his body, but had to abandon until nightfall the attempt, on account of the fire opened on the small party. We mourn the loss of a brave man and only hope that if death should come to us we would be able to leave behind such a record of conscientious devotion to duty and fearlessness as Athol did."

Other Biographical Notes from Cenotaph Data Base

Athol Hudson was the son of Dr James and Beatrix Hudson of Hartmoor, Tapawera, Nelson, New Zealand. Rhodes Scholar, B. Sc. (New Zealand). "In the death of Lieutenant Athol Hudson New Zealand has sustained an irreparable loss. Originally from Nelson, he was educated at Waitaki B.H.S., where he was one of the most popular and, for a time, the leading boy of the school. In 1912 he was Dux, as well as being the most prominent figure in all branches of the school's athletic life. All Waitakians and more especially his contemporaries, will feel his death deeply, but the depth of that feeling cannot reach the depth of their admiration and respect for their old school fellow. Until the outbreak of war he was at Victoria College, Wellington, where his success at study and his prowess at sport increased rather than diminished. While there he gained the New Zealand Long Distance Running Championship, the Championship of the New Zealand Universities, and the University Light-Weight Boxing Championship. He was also a notable swimmer. On the outbreak of war he went with the advance guard to Samoa. On his return he gained New Zealand's highest scholastic distinction – the Rhodes Scholarship. Receiving a commission in his regiment, the Wellington Infantry, he came to France, where, during scouting operations on the night of July 24th between the lines, he went missing, and is reported "believed killed." (Chronicles of the NZEF September 15, 1916, p32). For information about the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, see: The Official history of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade (The Earl of Liverpool's Own) by Lieut.-Col W.S. Austin. This publication records Athol Hudson's date of death as 14 July 1916.

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