

Valentine Huffam

Valentine Julius Blake Huffam was born 14 February 1888, the son of T.B.Huffam and Jane Huffam (nee Jacobsen), of Richmond, in the Tasman district. Valentine inherited the family name of Blake. The family consisted of Valentine, known as Julius, Dorothy Agnes, Runa Frances, Godiva [Iva] and Blake [Blakey] Frederick.¹

The Huffam family had roots in the Motueka region since early pioneering days. In 1869 Timothy Huffam and his four sons, Timothy Blake, Frederick, Richard and Gerard, landed at Bark Bay in the Abel Tasman National Park, and lived off the land initially. Later the Huffam family was boat builders.² Richard moved to Nelson and opened a boat building business at Port Nelson.³ His firm built the Port Mission Hall (The Seaman's mission), opened in 1884, on Haven Road opposite to his premises.⁴ The Huffam Brothers, Gerard and Frederick Huffam, were a well established Motueka cycle business by 1916. Their premises were on the site the Top of the Town dairy now stands on the Main Street, Motueka.⁵ Gerard had earlier farmed as an orchardist in Motueka.⁶

Timothy Blake Huffam, Julius's father, had moved to Nelson. Initially he had a stationers and book store on Trafalgar Street, then he owned a music business in Hardy Street.⁷ He sold this business to Charles Begg and moved to Richmond. His son Julius was in the Nelson Territorial Reserve force.

When war broke out Julius was living in Australia. His diary, which is held by the Nelson Provincial Museum, records his interest in the progress of the war. The entry dated 5 August 1914 declares:

"War declared between England + Germany ...War news very exciting + demonstrations in streets. Dense crowds everywhere + newspaper offices besieged by crowds awaiting news. Shriill screams of newspaper boys is deafening".⁸

Julius returned home and enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 14 May 1915, as a single man, from a Weka Street, address in Nelson, care of W.A.Gray. He was working as a factory hand at S. Kirkpatrick's factory. He entered his religion as Anglican. His army service number was 3/690 and he held the rank of private, in the Medical Corps, No. 2 Stationary Hospital. He embarked on 13 June 1915 bound for Suez, Egypt.⁹

He saw service in Egypt 1915 and 1916, with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in 1916 and in Western Europe 1916-1918. Initially he was a cook at the New Zealand General Hospital. He was promoted to corporal in May 1916 but at his own request was demoted back to private. By November 1916, he served with the No 2 N.Z.E.F. Field Ambulance. This was the last unit he served with.¹⁰

Julius died aged 31 years of broncho-pneumonia following influenza on 22 January 1919 in Cologne, Germany. He is buried at Sudfriedhof cemetery, Cologne.¹¹

His father received his medals, the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal by 1924.

Endnotes

- 1 Huffam, Valentine, Diary. Family note.
- 2 Huffam Family, Biography File 1.
- 3 New Zealand Post Office Directory 1887-1888

- 4 Stade, Seaman's Mission extract.
- 5 Smith, C. research.
- 6 Wises's Canterbury Marlborough Nelson and Westland Directory 1907-08
- 7 The New Zealand Post Office Directory 1887-1888.
- 8 Huffam, Valentine, Diary, 5 August 1914.
- 9 Huffam, Valentine Julius, Cenotaph Database Record
- 10 Huffam, Valentine Julius, Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 11 Huffam, Valentine Julius, Military Personnel Record. History sheet.

Sources

Huffam T. Blake Obituary, Nelson Evening Mail. October 1939, Nelson Provincial Museum Biography Files.

Huffam, Valentine Julius , Cenotaph Database record, Auckland War Memorial Museum, URL :
http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/7286.detail?Ordinal=1&c_surname_search=huffam&c_firstname_search=valentine&c_warconflict_search=%22world+war+i,+1914-1918%22 , accessed 2.6.2014.

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<http://www.archway.archives.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=18050593> accessed 2.6.2014.

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This Biography was compiled by Anna Wilkinson, Nelson Provincial Museum, in 2014.