

Cecil Malthus

Cecil Malthus was born on 24 April 1890 in Timaru, the son of H. P. Malthus of Timaru.¹ Cecil was selected as the Canterbury nominee for the Rhodes scholarship as reported in the Colonist 2 October 1913. He was a German and French linguist, who graduated MA from Canterbury College in 1912.² In 1914 he moved to Nelson and was assistant master at Nelson College³ and lieutenant of the Nelson College cadets.⁴

Cecil enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 15 August 1914⁵ from Nelson and his address was given as Boys' College, Nelson. His army serial number was 6/291 and he was a private, with 12th (Nelson) Company, in the Canterbury Infantry Battalion. He departed on 16 October 1914 with the Main Body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.⁶

He fought in the Balkan 1915, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1916, and Western front, 1916 theatres of war. He was admitted to hospital twice during the Gallipoli campaign, with diarrhea in July and scarlet fever in September of 1915. He was promoted to sergeant on 14 March 1916 and embarked for service in France from Alexandria Egypt in April 1916.⁷ He was wounded in action 25 September 1916 at the First Battle of the Somme by a bomb blast.⁸

He wrote to his mother from a hospital in Rouen:

"I have had my usual marvelous good luck, or I would not be alive at all. I am on the roll of honour at last. I was hit by a bomb exploding under me, but the only serious wound is in the right foot, which is rather badly shattered...The boys made another successful attack and that is the main thing. It is rather annoying to miss my commission, which I would have got this week".⁹

He had part of his right foot removed and was given a final discharged on 5 April 1917, no longer fit to serve. He embarked for home from Southampton in January 1917. He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medals by 1924.¹⁰

After the war he married Hazel Watters in Ashburton on 18 December 1918.¹¹ Initially he taught at Boys High School in Timaru.¹²

Later he was awarded a French scholarship¹³ and studied at the University of Paris.¹⁴ He lived overseas from 1920 to 1933¹⁵ and he died in Christchurch on 25 July 1976.¹⁶

He published two books about his war experiences:
Armentieres and the Somme. (2002). Auckland, Reed.
Anzac: A Retrospect. (1965). [Christchurch], Whitcombe and Tombs.

His papers are held by The Christchurch Libraries.

Endnotes

- 1 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 2 Colonist 19.8.1914 p2.
- 3 McKay and Allen, p20.
- 4 Colonist 19 August 1914 p2.
- 5 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. History sheet

- 6 Malthus, Cecil. Cenotaph Database Record
- 7 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. History sheet and Statement of Services sheet
- 8 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. Letter 22.1.1965.
- 9 Colonist 22.11.1916, p4.
- 10 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. History sheet
- 11 Timaru Herald, 15.2.1919, p6.
- 12 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. History sheet
- 13 Oamaru Mail, 28.7.1920, p4
- 14 Ashburton Guardian, 20.4.1921, p.5.
- 15 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. Letter 22.1.1965.
- 16 Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel Record. Notification of death.

Sources

Malthus, Cecil. Military Personnel record, Archives New Zealand, URL: www.archway.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=10928022 , accessed 21 February 2014..

Malthus, Cecil. Cenotaph Database record, Auckland War Memorial Museum, URL: <http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/33860.detail?Ordinal=15&c-su> , accessed 21 February 2014.

Cecil Malthus. World War 1 papers, URL: <http://christchurchlibraries.com/Heritage/Digitised/WarsAndConflicts/WorldWar1/Malthus> , accessed 21 February 2014.

General Notes, Colonist, 19.8.1914, p2.

Marriage, Timaru Herald, 15.2.1919, p.6.

McKay, J G and Allan, H F, comp. 1956. The Nelson College Old Boys' Register 1856-1956. Nelson, R W Stiles & Co. Ltd.

Personal, Colonist, 22.11.1916, p4.

Personal, Ashburton Guardian, 20.4.1921, p.5.

Travelling scholarship. Oamaru Mail, 28.7.1920, p4

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