

Philip Hamilton Harper

One of six brothers who fought (& died) for New Zealand

Philip was a Barrister & Solicitor in Levin.

He was born in Christchurch in October 1882.

His father George was born In England & his mother Agnes Loughman, in India.

His grandfather Henry Harper was the 1st Anglican Bishop of Canterbury and was one of those responsible for the building of the Christchurch cathedral.

However Philip and all his siblings were all brought up in his mother's Catholic faith.

Philip was one of 10, with seven brothers & two sisters.

He was educated privately & at Christchurch Boys' High School. His father was a solicitor in Christchurch and at least two of the brothers, along with Philip, became solicitors too.

Prior to qualifying he served in the NZ Mounted Rifles in the Boer War from 1899 to 1902. Two other brothers (Edmund & Cuthbert) also served during the Boer War.

Philip qualified as a solicitor in 1905, was articled to his father's firm & was admitted to the Bar in 1906. He came to Levin to set up in practice in 1907, probably because his brother George was already practicing as a solicitor in Otaki, with a small office in Levin. This office was part of the David Smart, bookseller & stationers on the West side of Oxford St.

Philip & George went into partnership (as Harper & Harper) with an office in Otaki & one in Levin. The Levin office was part of a building on the East side of Oxford St, not far from the Bath St corner.

In October 1912 he became engaged to Flora McDonald, daughter of J R McDonald of "Heatherley".

They never married and she died in July 1914.

Philip enlisted for WW1 service, as a private. He was promoted to Lance Corporal before leaving NZ and then to Co Sgt Major in May 1915. In July 1916 he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant.

Philip was part of the first contingent to land at Gallipoli. During his time there, two of his brothers, Gordon & Robin landed in May. They were there as part of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.

The three brothers had an agreement that if they used their dog whistles the others would come to help. Gordon & Robin fought side by side and when Gordon was

severely injured in the attack on Hill 60 in August, Robin carried him back to the beach.

Eventually all three brothers fought again in Europe, in different theatres. Gordon & Robin were at Palestine together in January 1916. This time Gordon was again severely wounded, Robin rescued him but he died of his wounds.

On hearing of the death of Gordon, another brother, Eric enlisted after getting his varicose veins fixed. Unfortunately he too was killed in April 1918.

In the meantime Philip, now a Captain, continued and was at Mons with the 22nd Army Corp on Armistace day.

That's a long time of service to his country, especially taking in his Boer war time.

Philip returned to Levin to continue his practice. At some point he entered into another partnership (Harper & Merton) with an office in Levin & Palmerston Nth. This partnership was dissolved in 1925.

On the 23 November 1921, Philip married Eileen Mary O'Rourke. She was the daughter of Timothy O'Rourke (the long time policeman & later Mayor of Otaki) and Bridget.

They had three children, Beatrix (1924), Derek (1926) & Piripi [Philip] (1931).

During his time in Levin, Philip took a keen interest in sport. He was a steward of the Levin Racing Club, and a member of the golf & tennis clubs. He was also involved with the RSA and was on the committee of the St Andrew's Catholic church.

In March 1929 he was appointed a Magistrate and moved to serve in Gisborne.

In May 1933 he had a fall, over a cliff, whilst fishing and injured his head. He was encouraged to seek medical advice in Christchurch. Unfortunately he died after an operation at the age of 51.

His wife, Eileen lived to the age of 94.

The six brothers that fought for NZ were:

Edmund	Died in 1917 from illness related to the Boer War
Cuthbert Strachey	Died in 1921 of his Boer War wounds
Philip Hamilton	Boer War & WW1
Gerald Gordon (known as Gordon)	Killed in action Aug 1916
Robert Paul (known as Robin)	Also served in WW2
Eric Tristam	Killed in action April 1918

Eric was an All Black who played in the 1905 tour of Great Britain, known as the "The Originals".

He features in the NZ Rugby Museum exhibition (and book), "Balls, Bullets & Boots", an exhibition which showed in Levin.