

Sergeant Clifford Wharfedale Mather[©]

Regimental number: 25/129

3rd Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade, New Zealand Division

born: 13 March 1889 – died: 30 June 1916

Sergeant Clifford Wharfedale Mather was born on 13 March 1889,¹ the son of Joseph John Mather and his wife, Amelia.² His father was born in about 1855 and his mother, the former Amelia Bayly, in about 1859.³ They married on 5 April 1887 in the Wesleyan Church in Waitara, Taranaki⁴ and had seven children:⁵ Harold Wilson (born in 1888),⁶ Clifford, Violet Anne (born in 1891),⁷ Edna Jeanne (born in 1893),⁸ Charles Gordon (born in 1896),⁹ Florence Marian (born in 1902, but died at the age of seven)¹⁰ and Gertrude Mary (born in 1908).¹¹

As a clergyman, Joseph moved his family around quite a bit over the years. In 1900, Joseph and Amelia were living in Willowby, near Canterbury on the South Island.¹² Five years later, they had moved further south to Palmerston.¹³ Five years later, they had moved to the North Island to Pukekohe, near Auckland.¹⁴ At the outbreak of the Great War, they were further south in Marton, but still on the North Island.¹⁵ By the end of the war, they were living in Mount Eden, near Auckland.¹⁶

When he enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, Clifford was a farmer, living in Toko Stratford on the North Island. He enlisted as a rifleman in the 3rd Battalion of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade (“The Dinks”) on 11 October 1915. He was promoted to lance corporal in December 1915. The following February 1916 he left New Zealand and arrived in Egypt on 13 March.¹⁷

The New Zealand Division was formed on 1 March 1916 in Egypt from the former New Zealand and Australian Division, which had fought on Gallipoli. Advanced parties left Alexandria for Marseilles on 5 April.¹⁸ Clifford embarked for France on 7 April 1916.¹⁹ By the last week of April, the whole division had moved to northern France to take over trenches in the Armentieres sector. However, the “. . . demands of reorganisation and a long sea and rail journey meant that opportunities for training had been inadequate at all levels. Accordingly the division was ill-equipped for its immediate tasks in many respects.”²⁰ In the three months since arriving in northern France, the Division incurred 2500 casualties, of whom 375 died.

Clifford was one of those casualties. He had been promoted to sergeant in early June, but just three weeks later, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with multiple gunshot wounds in his back and buttock. He was admitted on 24 June 1916 and died less than a week later. He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: II. E. 121) with Rev C. K. Whalley officiating.²¹

Clifford’s injury was reported in the *Auckland Star* in early July. The entry noted that:



Sergeant C. W. Mather

Source: “Australia and New Zealand, Find A Grave Index, 1800s–Current,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk)

Before leaving for the front Sergeant Mather was engaged on the land in Taranaki and the North, prior to which he was a member of the literary staff of the New Zealand "Herald." He was one of Auckland's finest hockey players, and for several years was a member of the representative eleven.²²

Clifford's death is noted on his parents' gravestone in the Waikaraka cemetery in Auckland. He is also honoured on the New Zealand online cenotaph²³ and in a grove of memorial trees at the Intermediate School in Pukekohe. A grove of trees was planted at the school in 1924 to commemorate old boys of the school who died during the Great War.²⁴



Mather family gravestone, Waikaraka cemetery, Auckland, New Zealand

Source: "Australia and New Zealand, Find A Grave Index, 1800s-Current", *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk)

Clifford's two brothers, Harold and Charles, also enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Harold enlisted under compulsory military service,²⁵ although no military service records were found for him. Charles, a farm hand, enlisted as a private in the Wellington Infantry Battalion in May 1916.²⁶ In June, he was promoted to corporal and probably arrived in England in November 1916. In September 1917, he was wounded and admitted to a Canadian hospital in Etaples, France. He rejoined his unit a few days later but was wounded again in October and again hospitalized. He returned to England in January 1918 and was sent to the New Zealand General Hospital in Brockenhurst. He probably returned to active duty because he took part in a physical and bayonet training course in September 1918. He returned to Australia for discharge in 1919.

Clifford's sister Violet was a nurse.²⁷ She immigrated to the United States in 1928 and lived there until 1938. She left for a while, but returned to California in 1940, intending to stay there permanently. Her death in 1959 is noted on her parents' gravestone.

Clifford's father died soon after the war (8 November 1921) and his mother just before the outbreak of World War II (16 April 1939).

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¹ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840-1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Clifford Wharfedale Mather, Registration Place: Mahurangi, New Zealand, Folio Number: 1121; "Charteris Family Tree," Ancestry Public Member Trees, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Clifford Wharfedale Mather

² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 29 October 2016), entry for Mather, Clifford Wharfedale, Service No: 25/129

³ "New Zealand, Cemetery Records, 1800-2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Clifford Mather

⁴ "New Zealand, Marriage Index, 1840-1934," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Folio Number: 3437; "Charteris Family Tree," Ancestry Public Member Trees, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Clifford Wharfedale Mather

⁵ Family source

⁶ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840-1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Harold Wilson Mather, Registration Place: Mahurangi, New Zealand, Folio Number: 1129

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- ⁷ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Violet Anne Mather, Registration Place: New Plymouth, New Zealand, Folio Number: 231
- ⁸ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Edna Jeanne Mather, Registration Place: Paparua, Auckland, New Zealand, Folio Number: 2379
- ⁹ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Charles Gordon Mather, Registration Place: Hamilton (North), New Zealand, Folio Number: 1282
- ¹⁰ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Florence Marian Mather, Registration Place: Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand, Folio Number: 2074; "New Zealand, Cemetery Records, 1800–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Florence Marian Mather
- ¹¹ "New Zealand, Birth Index, 1840–1950," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Gertrude Mary Mather, Registration Place: Eltham, New Zealand, Folio Number: 4949
- ¹² "New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Electoral Year: 1900
- ¹³ "New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Electoral Year: 1905–1906
- ¹⁴ "New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Electoral Year: 1911
- ¹⁵ "New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Electoral Year: 1914
- ¹⁶ "New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Joseph John Mather, Electoral Year: 1919
- ¹⁷ "The New Zealand Division in France and Flanders May 1916 to November 1918: A Contemporary Diary of Pilgrimages in Their Footsteps April 2002 and July 2005," Revised Edition 2005, John H. Gray, Christchurch, New Zealand (<http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Publications/NewZealandDivisionInFranceAndFlanders/NewZealandDivisionInFranceAndFlanders.pdf>: accessed 30 August 2016)
- ¹⁸ "The New Zealand Division in France and Flanders May 1916 to November 1918: A Contemporary Diary of Pilgrimages in Their Footsteps April 2002 and July 2005," Revised Edition 2005, John H. Gray, Christchurch, New Zealand
- ¹⁹ "Military personnel files," *New Zealand Defence Force, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga* (<http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one>: accessed 26 October 2016), entry for Clifford Wharfedale Mather, Description: - WW1 25/129 - Army; Record no: 0079038; R no: R21373618; Series: 18805. Unless otherwise noted, all information about his military career comes from this source.
- ²⁰ "The New Zealand Division in France and Flanders May 1916 to November 1918: A Contemporary Diary of Pilgrimages in Their Footsteps April 2002 and July 2005," Revised Edition 2005, John H. Gray, Christchurch, New Zealand
- ²¹ "Military personnel files," *New Zealand Defence Force, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga* (<http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one>: accessed 26 October 2016), entry for Clifford Wharfedale
- ²² "Roll of Honour," *Auckland Star*, Volume XLVII, Issue 162, 8 July 1916 (<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19160708.2.23?query=mather>: accessed 31 August 2016)
- ²³ "Clifford Wharfedale Mather," *Online Cenotaph NZ* (<http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C10504>: accessed 30 October 2016)
- ²⁴ "Pukekohe Intermediate School memorial trees," *Stqry* (<https://discover.stqry.com/v/pukekohe-intermediate-school-memorial-trees/s/d0db11436cdc0099e7e08f9a6e6dc74b>: accessed 30 August 2016)
- ²⁵ "New Zealand Army WWI Reserve Rolls, 1916–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Harold Mather

²⁶ "Military personnel files," *New Zealand Defence Force, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga* (<http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one>: accessed 26 October 2016), entry for Charles Gordon Mather, Description: - WW1 25560 - Army; Record no: 0079036; R no: R21373616; Series: 18805

²⁷ "U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895–1956," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 August 2016), entry for Violet Anne Mather, Record Type: Manifests