



Samuel Charles Phillips was born on September 1, 1836 at Reading, Berkshire, England where he was educated. He was apprenticed to a tailor in London, but finding the occupation uncongenial, enlisted in the Osman II Horse Artillery for service with the Turkish Contingent, destined for Scutari, near Constantinople.

When peace was proclaimed in 1856 he returned to London and afterwards went to Canada. In the following year Mr Phillips joined the 100th Regiment of Foot, ordered to India to assist in quelling the Mutiny. Peace being declared he returned with his regiment to England, and later went out to Gibraltar, where he left the army and joined the convict prison service, where he remained until the abolition of the department.

Again transferred to England Mr Phillips was appointed to the Melbourne gaol a 'Pentonville style' prison, pending a suitable vacancy elsewhere. Within a few months he received the appointment of gaoler at Lyttleton, New Zealand, with responsibility for general supervision over the Canterbury gaols, arriving to take up his duties in May 1876. While he held this position the prison buildings now in use at Lyttleton were erected by prison labour.

Mr Phillips remained at Lyttleton until December 1882 when he was transferred to the Dunedin Gaol. Since his arrival in Otago he has been an active member of the Trinity Wesleyan Church, of which he is a steward.

Phillips was the last gaoler of the old Stuart Street gaol and the first of the Dunedin Prison, Castle Street, the brick building next to the Law Courts. He was a man with very firm ideas and was not reluctant to express them in his reports to his superiors. In his 1901 report he complained about the lack of a Gaoler's residence close to the prison. Phillips noted that a wooden cottage residence had been attached to the old gaol, "which as gaoler's quarters was a disgrace to the age in which we live; but evidently was considered good enough. The cottage was pulled down with the old prison building, and the gaoler now resides in rooms, part of the administrative offices of the new prison."

In 1864 Samuel Phillips married Mary Jane, a daughter of Mr R W Camplar of Gibraltar, but previously of Kent, England. There were no children to the marriage and the couple found the accommodation within the prison sufficient for their purposes.

In his private life Phillips was held in very high esteem, being for many years a member of the Patients and Prisoners Aid Society, a member of the executive of the Council of Christian Churches, treasurer of the Temperance Reform Council, and a member of the Dunedin Licensing Committee. Over the years he lived in Dunedin he occupied every position open to a layman in the Methodist Church and was responsible for the formation of both the Woodhaugh and North East Valley Churches.

Samuel Charles Phillips retired to their home in Union Street in March 31, 1903 but died suddenly on 23 November 1909 and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery. His wife died on July 5, 1936 aged 90 years and is buried beside he husband.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz)

from information in the Cyclopaedia of New Zealand p142.