



IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
LOTTIE MAY
DIED 19TH DEC 1901
AGED 14 YEARS
ROBERT GEORGE
CAPTAIN 7TH CONTINGENT
DIED IN SOUTH AFRICA
11TH APRIL 1902
AGED 30 YEARS
FRANCIS TUBMAN
FATHER OF THE ABOVE
DIED 23RD APRIL 1913
AGED 69 YEARS
SARAH
BELOVED WIFE OF ABOVE
DIED 16TH MARCH 1938
AGED 88 YEARS

TUBMAN

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Robert George Tubman, born in 1871, was the son of Francis (Frank) Tubman of Owaka and formerly of Beaumont. Robert was educated at Beaumont School, but received his training as a pupil-teacher at Mornington School in Dunedin. He became a student at the Dunedin Training College, and acted for some time as a relieving teacher around Dunedin schools. He was appointed head master at Moeraki School in 1890. While at Moeraki he took an interest in the local Maori community and when he left in 1895, he was presented by a local Chief with a greenstone weapon. It was while at Moeraki that Robert Tubman joined the North Otago Mounted Rifles and took a keen interest in their activities and enjoyed the military environment.

He left Moeraki, after five years service, because he wanted to further his education and attend lectures at the University of Otago. In order to do this he applied for and obtained the position of fourth assistant at George Street School. He held this position until he joined the Fourth Contingent, New Zealand Mounted Rifles in 1900.

While at Moeraki he married Elizabeth Josephine (Bessie) Culling in 1895. Sadly Bessie died the following year, shortly after she and Robert moved to Dunedin. She was only aged 22 years.

Robert Tubman was appointed lieutenant in the Fourth Contingent. This rank was in recognition of his valuable service while in the military camp located at Forbury, Dunedin. When he left Dunedin he was presented by the Teachers Association of Otago with a horse and a pair of field glasses. The Tailoress's Union also presented him with a second horse.

He served with the Fourth Contingent during the whole time they were in South Africa, and was acting-captain for a period of nearly six months. He regularly wrote articles for the *Otago Witness* newspaper of his activities with the Fourth Contingent.

When the Fourth Contingent returned to New Zealand Robert decided he wanted to stay in South Africa. He found military life agreed with him, and he liked the climate of South Africa. He resigned his position at George Street School, which had been kept open for him, and offered for service with the Seventh Contingent which was due to arrive in South Africa. His service was accepted and leaving the Fourth Contingent he joined the Seventh on its arrival in South Africa. He was appointed a captain. Shortly after this appointment he was sent on a special mission to bring a train from Capetown to Johannesburg, and his success and the attention he gave to details so impressed General Garratt that he appointed him as provost-marshal to his column. His last letter to the *Otago Witness* newspaper recorded that he was in Johannesburg attending the trial of some rebels captured near Klerksdorp.

Before World War One, enteric fever, or typhoid fever, was the scourge of armies, and in the Anglo-Boer War killed more soldiers than enemy action. It is caused by bacteria entering the body via contaminated food or water. At the time of the Boer War, there were no antibiotic remedies for the disease. Sadly Robert Tubman contracted enteric fever and died on 11 April 1902. He is one of four New Zealanders buried in the Heilbron Cemetery, Heilbron, South Africa.

The flags on George Street School were hoisted to half mast when his death was announced in Dunedin.

His death came just five months after the death of his sister, Lottie, who died on 19 December 1901 aged just 14 years.

Robert Tubman is memorialised on the family gravemarker in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery.

Taken from the *Dunedin Family History Group, October 2012 Newsletter*.
Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz)