

# NEW ZEALAND COMMUNICATION TRENCH

*Newsletter of the New Zealand Branch,  
Western Front Association*

1914-1918  
REMEMBERING

*No 52 - February 2018*



*Chateau de Nieppe, France, at the time of the service to commemorate  
the death of 6/1215 Father James Joseph McMenamin, 8 June 2017  
(see page 23)*

*Image: Natalie Fache Boone*

**ww100 theme for 2018: The Darkness  
Before the Dawn. By year's end 1918, hostilities  
were over and the Allies had secured victory.**

**Commemoration of the Liberation of Le Quesnoy**  
4 November 2018



## Notes from the editor

**Thank you** to all the people who have contributed to the newsletter: from New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and Belgium. This newsletter wouldn't have been possible without your contributions and to each and every one of you, a very big thank you.

Thank you also to Geoff McMillan and Paul Simadas for their help with some proof-reading.

It's a small world ... three people with connections to the New Zealand Branch quite coincidentally were on the same tour of the battlefields in Israel in November 2017: Paul Simadas (chairman of the Australian Branch), Gary Murdoch (New Zealand Branch member from Wellington), and Edward Holman (who had contacted me earlier in the year about photos of VC graves and headstones). These men must have had a fantastic trip and Paul and Gary have shared their experiences with us.

I couldn't find appropriate photos on the internet showing the New Zealand silhouette recently unveiled at the Scottish Memorial in Zonnebeke, so a call for help to Richard Pursehouse sent him on a mission contacting his friends on Facebook. He had a tremendous response and I had great difficulty in only choosing three photos to put in the newsletter. If anyone would like more photos of the silhouettes, please let me know and I can email them to you. Grateful thanks to Richard for his efforts and to the three photographers from Belgium who have willingly allowed the use of their photos.

Anna Rogers is researching and writing a book on the New Zealand medical services in the First World War, part of the centenary series that is being edited by Glyn Harper, and is due for publication later this year. Anna kindly responded to a request by Graham Grist, WFA member in the UK (see Graham's article later in the newsletter), and then took time out from her busy writing and book editing commitments to respond to my request for an article for the newsletter about the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton-on-Thames.

"Gunner", a magnificent war horse statue by Matt Gauldie, was unveiled at Hamilton Memorial Park in November 2017. Early in the new year, when I initially contacted Kate McArthur at the TOTI Charitable Trust with a request for photos and an article, Kate replied to my email even though she was still on holiday. When Kate returned to work, although having much work to catch up on, she wrote an article and supplied photos.

\*\*\*\*\* The next *New Zealand Communication Trench* is due for publication in June 2018. I would love some contributions please: what research you have been undertaking; what books you have read and can recommend. It is the last year of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations and we would all enjoy hearing about what is happening in your part of the country and sharing your experiences and thoughts. \*\*\*\*\*

**Branch meetings:** We had no branch meetings last year and recently I have had two enquiries about whether meetings will be starting up again. If anyone has had thoughts about volunteering for the role of meetings co-ordinator (or a group of two or three of you), please let me know.

**VC headstones:** Edward Holman in the UK is working on a project to collect photos of all VC headstones around the world. He contacted me last year and Jim Woodhams, Gary Murdoch and I have managed to take several of those that Edward was seeking. There are (at this time) seven that we haven't been able to do. If you live near any of the places in the following list and have a little spare time, could you please take a photo or two of the following headstones and email them to me:

- K Elliott: Paraparaumu Cemetery Returned Services Lawn Section
- L W Andrew: Levin Cemetery Returned Services Section, Row 13
- E McKenna: Terrace End Cemetery, Palmerston North Presbyterian Block II, Plot 65
- H L Laurent: Hawera Servicemen's Cemetery Memorial Wall
- D G Boyes: Anderson's Bay Cemetery, Anglican Southern Section Block 6, Plot 24
- J D Hinton: Ruru Lawn Cemetery, Bromley Road, Christchurch, Returned Servicemen's Section
- C H Upham: Family grave in St Paul's Anglican Churchyard, Papanui

**Subscriptions for 2018:** That time of the year again ... subs renewal notices were sent out a couple of weeks ago and many thanks to those who have been right on the ball and sent your subs in nice and pronto. We hope that you all wish to renew your subs and just make a little request: could you please pay your subs to me as soon as possible. Thank you! If you don't wish to renew then that is fine – if you let me know (I promise, no pressure), I can cross your name off the membership list and won't bother you again.

*Elizabeth*



*A ceremony was held at the grave of Freda (the Great Dane mascot of the NZRB) at Cannock Chase, on 10 November 2017 to remember all animals that took part in the First World War and all working dogs from around the world. The wreaths were laid on behalf of the Cannock Chase Council, Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Dolores Cross Project and one on behalf of Assistance Dogs. There were 20-30 people at the ceremony and – good to see – several dogs!  
Photo: The Chase Project*

## War Horse statue of national significance unveiled in Hamilton

Kate McArthur, TOTI Charitable Trust

New Zealand horses sent to war overseas, where they endured terrible suffering, were finally given the national recognition they deserve in Hamilton on Armistice Day, 11 November, 2017. That day, in a public ceremony attracting a crowd of 1500, a 300kg bronze commemorative statue was unveiled in the Hamilton Memorial Park to honour the 18,000 horses sent to the South African War and First World War from New Zealand. The statue was commissioned by WEC (Waikato Combined Equestrian Group) and the project managed by TOTI Charitable Trust (Theatre of the Impossible).

Artist Matt Gauldie depicted the “big, awesome, bronze War Horse searching for his fallen rider”.

“Moments earlier, the horse would have been charging through machine gun bullets at Beersheba,” he said. “This would have been the most important and distressing time of his life and what the horse and rider trained for, for months. Sadly, many of these heroic animals would be destroyed just months after this famous cavalry charge, their purpose in the war over.”

Gauldie is a former Defence Force artist and has visited many historic battlegrounds. The Battle of Beersheba was fought by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps on 31 October, 1917. This was the biggest charge of the First World War and the Australian and New Zealand horsemen’s victory over the Ottoman army allowed the Allies to capture Jerusalem. They then went on to the Jordan Valley to take Amman.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Major (Rtd) Simon Marriott, president WMR Regimental Association, and former WMR Squadron Commander, said the “Waikato Mounted Rifles’ history will always be linked with the employment of horses in war, and the great service they rendered to our men during the South African War and the First World War, particularly during the desert campaigns in Sinai, Palestine and Syria.

“The horse gave the mounted trooper the priceless advantage of mobility, and with this came the ability to manoeuvre rapidly on the battlefield. Sadly, the cost was severe. Horses played a vital military role during both the previous two centuries and it is right that we should recall the hardship and losses they suffered on our behalf.”

The public unveiling followed on from the traditional civic Armistice Day Service, and included a special “War Horse Parade” - led by Clydesdale horses pulling a one-and a half ton First World War artillery gun, followed by armoured army vehicles, WMR troopers and War Horse March riders - along Memorial Drive and into Memorial Park.

The assemblage of the padre, the RSA, the bugle player, the bagpiper, the band, the cadets, the Waikato Mounted Rifles, and the people of Hamilton all at the cenotaph “to remember” created a strongly atmospheric Armistice service. After the minute’s silence, the crowd gathered in front of the statue flanked on each side by the stoic and sombre horses, creating a feeling of “brothers in arms” and a very moving scene. Together, Noeline Jeffries, Dr Ngapare Hopa, Richard Stowers and Simon Marriott lifted the New Zealand flag to unveil the statue, and Dr Hopa (Ngati Wairere) followed by RSA padre Don Oliver, gave traditional blessings.

The band played on, under a magnificent old oak tree. The river flowed by, the sun shone, and the council served tea and baking. People acquainted themselves with the “big, awesome, bronze”, were assured the war horse was designed to take “riders” for photographic opportunities, and mixed and mingled with others in the crowd.

Noeline Jeffries, WEC President said that the statue completion was “a dream come true”. She was “overwhelmed and truly grateful to everyone who had supported and assisted with the project. These noble creatures suffered along with our soldiers, hardships that we could never imagine and we owe it to them, as a nation to remember their sacrifice.”

*Postscript:* To complete the War Horse project, an illustrated book featuring the unveiling and the making of the statue, will shortly be available (\$10 a copy). And, in response to the upsurge of interest in riding, a War Horse Memorial Fund has been set up to provide free lessons at the WEC equestrian centre in Pukete for children whose families can’t afford lessons.



*“Gunner” the magnificent, big, awesome, bronze war horse searching for his fallen rider,  
Hamilton Memorial Park  
Image: Paula Stuart Photography*



*Ngati Wairere’s Dr Ngapare Hopa and WEC’s Noeline Jeffries  
Image: John Mercer/Debra Taylor Cameraworks 21*

[www.toti.co.nz](http://www.toti.co.nz)

[www.facebook.com/TOTITrust](https://www.facebook.com/TOTITrust)

[www.mattgauldie.com](http://www.mattgauldie.com)

### **Geoff’s Jottings**

Many historians, especially from the UK, refer to “Kiwi” soldiers in the First World War. A check of New Zealand Papers Past 1914/20 has only one reference. There was a so called “Kiwi” Orchestra that entertained troops in France, late in the war. Names used seemed to be generally: New Zealanders, Maorilanders, Colonials, ANZACs, or “Massey’s Tourists”.

## Commemorating the liberation of Palestine

Gary Murdoch

Early Saturday morning 4 November 2017 saw me arrive at Tel Aviv airport from Hong Kong to take part in a commemorative centenary tour remembering the Allies liberation of Palestine a hundred years earlier. The flight was tiring and unremarkable but at its conclusion, I had the pleasure of meeting up with fellow southern traveller Paul Simadas, while awaiting a shuttle. Paul is the chairman of the Australian Branch of the WFA and where appropriate he and I added an Antipodean perspective to the commentaries later on. He more so than me, I must concede.

My shuttle driver was an interesting person, being a Muslim who had served in the Israeli army and currently has a son doing so. He was grateful for the things his country provided in the health and education areas particularly, but felt his contribution was undervalued, and that his status has diminished over the years. He's convinced the current government is controlled by local Mafia and all that matters is power and money. He lamented that everyone could not just be friends, as we all do I'm sure. As I say, he was an interesting character offering a new, unexpected dimension of life in Israel.

I wasn't scheduled to meet up with Battle Honours Tours until Sunday, so Saturday was spent trying to stay awake at Tel Aviv beach which almost rivals Waikiki for its high rises and bikinis. A tremendous amount of new-build is taking place all over Israel but none more so than in Tel Aviv. It's all of high quality so one would expect the new immigrants are well-heeled. I'm told a lot are emigrating from Russia. On Sunday morning I hired a bike and cycled up to Jaffa where the New Zealand Mounted Rifles were prominent in its liberation in late 1917.

Later that day, the rest of the group flew in from Britain and a quiet evening followed in preparation for our departure to Beersheba the following morning.

The trip down took about an hour. While stopped at a coach stop for morning tea I was struck by the lack of civic pride in the physical environment. No rubbish bins were evident so litter was strewn everywhere. Outside of the major urban areas, this was ubiquitous. It seems as if it has been ever so, with several New Zealand soldiers moved in their memoirs to condemn Old Jerusalem for its filth. I hasten to add it is not so there now.

We had been scheduled to stop at the ANZAC memorial near Gaza, but the security situation prevented us getting close. The military police barring our path, including two young ladies, proved a hit with our keen photographers. Thwarted in our ANZAC memorial mission, we retired to Tel Gamma for a panorama of the battlefields, followed by a visit to Buqqar Ridge before finishing at the Allenby Gardens.

The following day was the highlight of the trip for a Kiwi - standing on Tel el Saba Ridge, which the Auckland and Wellington regiments of the NZMR Brigade and British artillery captured prior to the Australian Light Horse charge into Beersheba. While this was going on the Canterbury's were securing Wadi Khalil around the back to protect the flank. Some Ottoman trenches survive. It is also the location of Tel Sheva, a very ancient archaeological site where in Genesis, Abraham swears an oath that a well the Philistines had seized, was his. Beersheba means "well of the oath". Nothing much has changed over 3,500 years with water the main objective of the Third Battle of Gaza.

For those unfamiliar with this campaign, the Otago Mounted Rifles were not part of the brigade, having gone to the Western Front with the rest of the New Zealand Division. While absorbing the view of the Negev panorama we were treated to the sight of 100 or so camels being driven up the wadi by a couple of urchins on donkeys, much as it must have happened in Biblical times.

Being a UK tour, the focus was naturally British and there is a hint of annoyance in what was believed to have been Australian high-jacking of the official commemorations the week before. A clue might be gleaned from a Battle Honours Facebook posting of a photo of Zeitoun Ridge, the revealing caption declaring: "the real battlefields of Palestine"!

It wasn't on the itinerary to visit the area around the Kiwi-captured Ayun Kara or the infamous town Surafend which left a stain on ANZAC history with the massacre of civilians by ANZAC troops after the war had finished. This was retaliation for the murder of NZM Rifleman Leslie Lowrie who had chased a Bedouin after he'd stolen Lowrie's kit. I think I'd have found these two places deeply affective.

Leaving Beersheba behind we made our way along the EEF advance lines into the Judean hills and west to Jerusalem, stopping at Mughar Ridge where the Yeomanry emulated the Australians at Beersheba by successfully charging their horses at Turk's line. A stop was also made at Junction Station which although abandoned, is still standing. It was here with the assistance of a couple of armoured cars that the British cut the vital Beersheba/Jerusalem rail link. One is never far from oppressive security in Israel and the continual circling of F15s at the time had us thinking we were the objects of their scrutiny.

Our chief guide Gareth, a former tank officer, whose only slightly kidding mantra was "a day without a tank is a wasted day", had us dialled in for a tour of the tank museum at Latrun. Despite the only rain of the tour, it proved a magnificent visit for those into military hardware. No wonder the Israeli army has always been so formidable.

And so with a few other stops to get a picture of the encirclement of Jerusalem we made our way to this much-disputed city.

Our interpreter was an Israeli catholic and after being dropped off near the Jaffa Gate he took us on a tour of the Old City including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre one of the holiest sites in Christendom. A most unexpected surprise was to discover he lived in the old city in one of a few apartments owned by the Catholic church and he gave us a tour of his home and introduced his mother. The dwelling is a stone construction characterised by low domed ceilings with a door that we all needed to stoop to enter. A truly remarkable experience.

The day in Jerusalem was devoted mostly to monuments, the war cemetery with its New Zealand inscriptions, and free time. As with all tours, much of the fun is meeting new people, so the social side was not ignored. Let's just say that "Beer"sheba was not the only "beer" encountered.

The final day saw us our making way back to Tel Aviv for departure, but not before calling into the CWGC cemetery at Ramleh which contains significant graves from the British mandate era just after the Second World War, when the Zionist movement was flexing early "freedom fighter" muscle. Perhaps today it would be called terrorism?

By necessity, the trip concluded at 1917 boundaries. Maybe sometime when security permits a trip will be organised taking in the fighting of 1918 north of the Auja river and the extensive and difficult fighting of the NZMRs in the Jordan Valley and around Amman.

Concluding my northern sojourn with a week in Britain was equally rewarding. Each day had a war-related mission. The first day was spent at Bletchley Park and the code-breaking activities of the Second World War, followed by the Armistice commemoration and Churchill's Bunker in Whitehall the next day. Monday had a flying visit to Belfast to see HMS *Caroline* the last remaining ship from the Battle of Jutland, squeezing in the fabulous Titanic museum while there. Wednesday was Duxford day where the air component of the Imperial War Museum is located. My trip finished at the Royal Army Museum in Chelsea.

Wonder what I'll do for 1918? The Last Hundred Days tours have much to recommend, but then again Salonika sounds exotic.

## **Two memorials of ANZAC significance, Israel**

Paul Simadas RFD Lieutenant Colonel, Chairman, Australian Branch

*Two memorials in Israel that are inside Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries located in the former Palestine area of operations are of Anzac significance: the Memorial Chapel within the Jerusalem War Cemetery, and the Royal Flying Corps Memorial within the Beersheba War Cemetery.*

Recently I travelled to Israel to tour the 1917 battle sites of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). Most of the tour group was from the United Kingdom. However, I was privileged to travel with a fellow Anzac, and a member of the New Zealand branch, Gary Murdoch. His report appears above, and I am grateful for his company on our pilgrimage.

## Jerusalem

Among the several war cemeteries and memorials we visited on the November 2017 pilgrimage, two stand out as being important to the Anzac experience in the Palestine campaign, each having direct relevance to New Zealand or Australia. Their existence is less well known, and in my case I had no prior knowledge of them!

The first is the Memorial Chapel, part of the Jerusalem Memorial to the Missing, and sited within the Jerusalem War Cemetery, near Mt Scopus in central Jerusalem. The names of some 3,300 British Empire servicemen who served in operations in Egypt and Palestine in 1914-18 and have no known grave are listed on the memorial. The Memorial Chapel honours those who served in the EEF, whilst its interior is a tribute to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who served in the campaign. The Jerusalem War Cemetery was begun after the occupation of Jerusalem in late 1917, with 270 burials. It was later enlarged to take graves from the battlefields and similar cemeteries in the neighbourhood. Two thousand five hundred and fifteen men are now buried here, of which 100 remain unidentified.

The Memorial Chapel is dedicated as follows:

This MEMORIAL CHAPEL was erected by the OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS and MEN of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force to the honoured memory of their Comrades who fell in the Palestine Campaign 1914-1918. The interior has been decorated by New Zealand in honour of the members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who took part in the operations in Sinai and Palestine 1916-1918.

The website of the *New Zealand War Graves Project* states that 34 New Zealanders are buried there and that a further 87 are listed on the memorial and have no known grave. The memorial and chapel was opened on 7 May 1927 by the war-time Commander of the EEF, Lord Allenby, and the then serving New Zealand High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Sir James Parr. The beautiful mosaics on the interior walls of the chapel were designed by the English artist, Robert Anning Bell. The Chapel faces west and is illuminated each evening by the setting sun. It is a wonderful and peaceful oasis in which to contemplate the service of New Zealanders far from home.



*Paul Simadas, at the Jerusalem War Cemetery. The Memorial Chapel is in the distance, beyond the Cross of Sacrifice.*

## Beersheba

Much further to the south and near Gaza is a memorial to British and Australian flyers in the Royal Flying Corps and Australian Flying Corps. Off to the side of the Beersheba War Cemetery is a modest monument to British and Australian airmen of the Great War who served in the Palestine theatre of operations. The memorial commemorates eight flyers who died on operations and have no known grave. They are Captains F H V Bevan, C A Brooks and R N Thomas; and Lieutenants N L Steele, J S Brasell, G L Paget, A H Searle and J W Howells. They are officially listed on the panels to the Missing in the Jerusalem War Cemetery. Four of the eight served with the Australian Flying Corps, and two of these were Australians: Steele and Brasell.

No 1 Squadron AFC served alongside other British squadrons as part of the RFC Palestine Brigade, which by October 1917 was organised into the 5th (Corps) and 40th (Army) Wings. No 1 AFC served in the latter formation.



(Above) The dedication panels at the Memorial Chapel. They are set above the entrance doors, and etched in blue.

(Left) Interior view of the Memorial Chapel

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, the Beersheba War Cemetery contains 1,241 burials, of which 67 are unidentified graves. The original cemetery was begun immediately on the fall of the town to British Empire forces on 31 October 1917, and remained in use until July 1918. By this time, 139 burials had been made. It was greatly increased after the Armistice when burials were brought in from a number of scattered sites and small burial grounds.

The small flyers' monument is dedicated as follows:

THIS MONUMENT generously erected to one of them by their enemies was discovered and restored by their friends January 1918.

This cryptic statement requires some explanation.

It would seem that the initial monument had been built by the enemy, whether German or Ottoman, in 1917 to honour at least one of the listed flyers. The monument was discussed in the blog of the *Great War Forum* in 2010 and it is suggested there that the memorial had been moved from its original location at Tel el Sharia (or Sheria), which is to the north-west of Beersheba and the location of the Battle of Hareira and Sheria on 6 and 7 November 1917, to its current location. Apparently other names were added at this time to a new monument to commemorate these eight flyers with no known grave.

The *Great War Forum* blog contains two press extracts related to the loss of two of the men, one Australian and the other from Wales.

From *The Argus*, Melbourne, Sunday 5 May 1917:

Missing - Flight Lieutenant (sic) Norman Leslie Steele is officially reported missing since April 20th. He was vice-captain of Melbourne Grammar School, captain of football and cricket, and captain of Ruslen House. He is the brother of the late Captain Fred Steele, of the Royal Fusiliers, who was killed in action; Lieutenant Rupert Steele who died of wounds; and Captain Cyril Steele who is returning to Australia.

From *Flight* magazine, 3 August 1917:

Captain R N Thomas RFC was killed in action on July 22nd while serving with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. For eleven months he was in France, and was recently awarded the Croix de Guerre. He left England only a few weeks ago. Captain Thomas was the eldest surviving son of Brigadier General Sir Owen and Lady Thomas, Cemaes, Anglesey, and was one of three brothers who served under their father in the Welsh Army Corps 1914-15, being transferred to the RFC in 1915. He was in the South African War as a trumpeter in the Prince of Wales Light Horse, a regiment that was raised and commanded by his father. His youngest brother, Lieutenant Trevor Thomas, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, was killed in action in France in January 1916, and his only surviving brother is a flight commander in the RFC.

I was able to photograph both memorials during our tour. Though we were so far from home, we felt in familiar surrounds and close to those men who went out from New Zealand and Australia to fight in the Great War. These two memorials are testament to their service and sacrifice.



*The RFC monument to eight British and Australian flyers located at the edge of the Beersheba War Cemetery.*

*All images: Paul Simadas*

## Geoff's Jottings

### **Peculiar Exemption Appeal: Hypnotist before Military Service Board**

At the sitting of the Military Service Board today exemption as claimed by George Wilberforce Wilson on the ground of rendering public service as a medical hypnotist. The appellant stated that he had been working in conjunction with the medical profession for eighteen months, and asked for an opportunity to continue working for the benefit of the soldiers.

The board decided to recommend Wilson for ambulance work, with a suggestion that his service as a hypnotist might be utilised.

Source: *New Zealand Times*, 20 October 1917

### **Hypnotic Demonstration**

Mr George Wilberforce Wilson will give his final hypnotic demonstration in Auckland at the Town Hall this evening. As a result of a recommendation by the Military Service Board, Mr Wilson is to be included in the Army Medical Service Corps at Trentham. The entertainment is said to be both instructive and humorous.

Source: *New Zealand Herald*, 27 November 1917

# The Daily Telegraph

LONDON, THURSDAY DECEMBER 13, 1917

## ALLIES' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

### GEN. ALLENBY'S MESSAGE.

### MARTIAL LAW PROCLAIMED.

### HOLY PLACES GUARDIANSHIP.

In the House of Commons yesterday, the Government announced that they had received from General Sir Edmond Allenby an account of his entry, with the representatives of France, Italy, and the United States, into Jerusalem. In reply to a question put to him by Mr. R. McKenna, Mr. Lloyd George read the following telegram, which the Prime Minister stated had been received yesterday, from General Allenby.

JERUSALEM, DEC. 11 (2.0P.M.).

I entered this city officially at noon to-day, with a few of my staff; the commanders of the French and Italian detachments; and the Military Attachés of France, Italy, and the United States of America. The procession was all on foot. At the Jaffa Gate I was received by guards representing England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, India, France, and Italy. (Cheers.)

#### **The population received us well.**

Guards have been placed over the Holy Places.

#### **My Military Governor is in touch with the acting Custos of the Latins and the Greek representative. The Governor has detailed an officer to supervise Christian Holy Places.**

The Mosque of Omar and the area around it has been placed under Moslem control, and a military cordon composed of Indian Mohammedan officers and soldiers has been established round the mosque. Orders have been issued that no non-Moslem is to pass this cordon without permission from the Military Governor and the Moslem in charge of the mosque.

#### **The following proclamation was read in my presence to the population in Arabic, Hebrew, English, French, Italian, Greek, and Russian from the steps of the Citadel, and has been posted on the walls:**

Proclamation of Martial Law in Jerusalem. To the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Blessed and the people dwelling in its vicinity.

#### **The defeat inflicted upon the Turks by the troops under my command has resulted in the occupation of your city by my forces. I therefore here and now proclaim it to be under Martial Law, under which form of administration it will remain so long as military considerations make it necessary.**

However, lest any of you should be alarmed by reason of your experience at the hands of the enemy, who has retired, I hereby inform you that it is my desire that every person should pursue his lawful business without fear of interruption. Furthermore, since your city is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer, of whatever form of the three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred. (Cheers.)

#### **Guardians have been established at Bethlehem and at Rachel's Tomb. The tomb of Hebron has been placed under exclusive Moslem control.**

The hereditary custodians of the Wakf at the gates of the Holy Sepulchre have been requested to take up their accustomed duties in remembrance of the magnanimous act of the Caliph Omar, who protected the church. (Cheers.)

*The Daily Telegraph*, 13 December 1917  
Reprinted in *The Daily Telegraph* 100 years later

Contributed by Tim Keenan

## **Bells for St George's Memorial Church, Ypres: A follow-up**

Elizabeth Morey

In the *New Zealand Communication Trench* October 2017, I wrote of the eight new bells that had been delivered to St George's Memorial Church in Ypres and that the bells had been dedicated and were to be installed in the church in time for a final dedication service in October 2017.

With thanks to the WFA Essex Branch e-newsletter in November 2017, I can now provide the following follow-up, taken from a letter from Alan Regin, Trustee of Bells4StGeorgeYpres addressed to the Ypres Bells Supporters.

"I am very pleased to say that the dedication weekend in Ypres was a great success. Over 170 people travelled from many parts of the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe to be present at the blessing service on Sunday 22 October. The service was led by the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, The Right Reverend Dr Robert Innes, and we were most grateful to Bishop Robert for this. The church was very full, standing room only, with donors and bell ringers being joined by church members and VIP's from Ypres and beyond. The handbells were rung during the service.

Immediately following the service in the church, the clergy and eight ringers went up to the ringing room where the room was dedicated and named "The Bertram Prewett Ringing Room" and straight after that the new bells rang out *Ypres Surprise Major* to the delight of the ringers and the assembled crowd outside. Following the dedication ring, over 100 bell ringers tried the new bells! As they will, I hope, attest, they sound great, especially in the wonderfully appointed ringing room.

Many donors and interested people were also able to visit the ringing room and, with the bells "down", were able to chime "their" bell and have a demonstration of a bell being raised. Many others watched on the TV screen in the porch, which is part of the information/education aspect of the project. The screen alternates between the belfry, with a great view of the bells, and the ringing room."

## **Hospital research: No 2 New Zealand General Hospital, Walton-on-Thames**

Graham Grist

My name is Graham Grist and I live in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, England, and I have been a member of the Western Front Association since its formation in 1980 (membership number 216). I attend the monthly meetings of the Surrey Branch.

As you are probably aware, we had a hospital in Walton-on-Thames during the 1914-18 war which was opened by the Royal New Zealand Army Medical Corps in August 1915. The full title of the hospital was the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital, often simply referred to as Mount Felix Hospital or Walton-on-Thames Hospital.

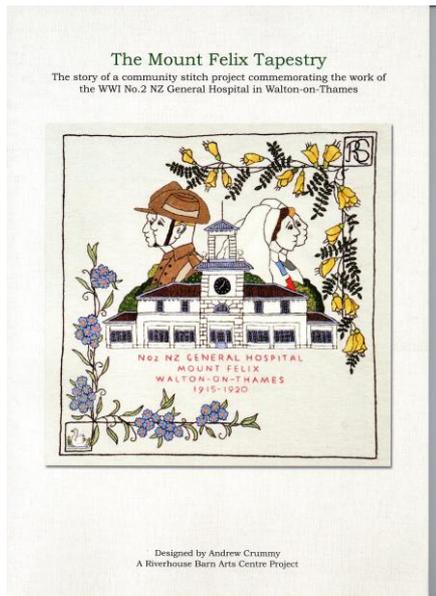
The Mount Felix name comes from the name of the large house that was taken over for the hospital. Most of the wards were only temporary and, unfortunately, the house was destroyed by fire in 1968, which is before I lived here so I have no memories of it. All that remains today is a building that was used as the administrative block and is still used as an office today.

There has been research into the hospital and I am researching those who worked at the hospital and those who were patients. Nineteen New Zealand patients and staff are buried in St Mary's churchyard. Twenty-one New Zealanders are commemorated on the Roll of Honour in St Mary's Church, two of whom were treated at the hospital but are not buried in the churchyard. Every year in Walton-on-Thames we commemorate ANZAC Day on the Sunday nearest to 25 April, with representatives from the New Zealand High Commission in attendance.

If anyone has an ancestor or knows of someone who worked at the hospital or was a patient there, I would very much like to hear from them and also from anyone with an interest in Mount Felix Hospital or the New Zealand medical services in general. You can contact me by email: [grahamila@googlemail.com](mailto:grahamila@googlemail.com). I look forward to hearing from some of you.

# The Mount Felix Tapestry

Elizabeth Morey



In October 2017, Graham Grist contacted me regarding his research into the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton-on-Thames. With thanks to a suggestion by Glyn Harper, I put Graham in touch with Anna Rogers who is researching and writing a book on the history of the New Zealand Medical Corps, part of the centenary series that is being edited by Glyn.

Graham mentioned that a group of women, as a community project, had embroidered 44 panels telling the story of the New Zealand hospital, and that the panels would be travelling to New Zealand for exhibition in 2018. New Zealand wounded soldiers were welcomed into the heart of Walton-on-Thames and the design by Andrew Crummy from the Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre depicts some of the most powerful true life stories surrounding the hospital in each of the panels.

A small army of stitchers from the Walton-on-Thames area, and even a few from New Zealand, worked in teams, and sometimes on their own, to create the Mount Felix Tapestry. The result is a tribute from the community of Walton today to the soldiers and the people of Walton 100 years ago.

There is an excellent website with a panels' gallery that has information about all of the 44 panels and the people who worked on the embroideries. Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre have also published a beautiful book that my sister and I have purchased that also contains all the information about the panels and the embroiderers.

For further information on the tapestry and to view the panels look at the following two websites:

[www.mountfelixtapestry.co.uk](http://www.mountfelixtapestry.co.uk) and [www.riverhousebarn.co.uk](http://www.riverhousebarn.co.uk).

The panels will be touring in New Zealand from August 2018 to July 2019 and the following is the itinerary. All these dates are correct at this time, but may be subject to change.

**Auckland:** Papakura Museum, 18 August to 30 September 2018.

**Christchurch:** Canterbury Museum, 6 October to 3 November 2018 (to coincide with the reopening of the Nurses' Memorial Chapel in October 2018).

**Hamilton:** Waikato Museum, 10 November to 3 December 2018

**Wellington:** Expressions Gallery, Upper Hutt, 22 December 2018 to 7 March 2019

**Dunedin:** Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, 15 March to 29 April 2019

**Hawkes Bay:** Wairoa Museum, 6 May to 29 June 2019.

## A home away from home: No. 2 New Zealand General Hospital, Walton-on-Thames

Anna Rogers

The news appeared in papers throughout the country on 5 June 1915: "The New Zealand Government has secured Mount Felix, a large residence at Walton, as a hospital for New Zealand wounded." The idea was born late in 1914 when the New Zealand War Contingent Association, a London-based voluntary welfare organisation, considered contributing to a convalescent hospital for wounded Kiwis invalided to Britain from Egypt, Malta and elsewhere. The association decided on the stately old riverside home of Mount Felix at Walton-on-Thames in Surrey, about 27 kilometres from London. It was ideal: the rooms were spacious, it had attractive and extensive grounds and there was a station nearby, so trainloads of patients could easily be collected and dispatched. Funded by the War Contingent Association and the New Zealand and British governments, Walton was opened by New Zealand's high commissioner in London, Thomas Mackenzie, on Saturday 1 August 1915 as a 110-bed civilian-run hospital. (It now needed to be more than purely convalescent.) The New Zealand flavour was strong: the wards were named Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Taranaki and so on; there was a Hinemoa wing; the main entrance featured a "picture of a Maori carving, and under it the word 'Haeremai' in large letters". New Zealand sick and wounded were still sent to British hospitals, but now they also had a home of their own, staffed by Kiwis.

Major Bernard Myers headed the hospital and the matron was Annie Tombe from Dunedin, who brought with her four New Zealand nurses already working in England. The staff increased as Walton grew: more surgeons, a physician, a radiologist, an oculist, a pathologist, an aurist, a dental surgeon and anaesthetists. One of the first patients was a Canterbury man who had been wounded at Gallipoli and hospitalised in Manchester. He declared Walton-on-Thames “a grand little spot ... no hospital I have been in can compare with our own”. He was also “more than satisfied to be under the care of our ‘own girls’ once more”. The locals could not do enough for the New Zealanders. There were free film sessions, outings, gifts of games, fruit and books, and concerts. A London firm sent down a gramophone and records. Once they were up and about, all the men, as was usual, wore special blue suits, faced with red, white shirts and red ties, which won them the nickname “blue boys”.

The hospital soon needed more beds. By the time Myers wrote his first report on 12 August, 103 patients had been admitted and by the end of 1915, Walton was receiving convoys of seriously wounded men directly from the hospital ships. A 200-bed extension was opened on 3 January 1916 but as soon as 17 February Myers was asking for more.

With the prospect of many more serious cases once the New Zealand Division reached France in April 1916, the authorities decided that a military-run medical base for New Zealanders in Britain was essential and that Walton should become an official New Zealand Expeditionary Force hospital. The War Contingent Association was concerned about the establishment losing its unique flavour, but these concerns were resolved, as were initial problems regarding pay, and by the beginning of August 1916, Walton-on-Thames was officially No. 2 New Zealand General Hospital. (No. 1 was Brockenhurst, near Southampton, which had opened shortly before.)

The Battle of the Somme in July created an enormous number of casualties and convoys poured in daily. To increase Walton’s capacity, marquees were erected, along with 70-bed hutted wards. Severely short-staffed until more nurses arrived from New Zealand, Sister Violet Barker “had a never-to-be forgotten time ... the dressing and feeding of over 100 patients was a great business.” There were many bad cases among the wounded: “compound fractures, abdominal wounds, and big flesh wounds.”



*General winter view of Mount Felix, the No. 2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton-on-Thames in the First World War. Probably rear aspect. Shows snow on the lawn. Photograph taken c1918 by Thomas Frederick Scales.*

*Image: Royal New Zealand Returned and Services’ Association New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-014150-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.*

As patient numbers mounted, in November 1916 the War Office took over the historic hotel of Oatlands Park, only 2.5 kilometres away, so that by the end of the year Walton had a 1,040-bed capacity. The *Evening Post* correspondent, who visited in January 1917, considered Oatlands “exceptionally well adapted for the purposes of a hospital”. At that point there were 854 patients in Mount Felix and Oatlands, and a total of 3,400 men had passed through No. 2 NZGH since it opened. With marquees added at Oatlands, by April 1917 Walton could accommodate some 1,500 patients, many of them in hutments, as they were known. By April 1918, new cases were arriving constantly. As Sister Edna Pengelly reported, “Our men are having a beastly time. We have over 600 here and are still putting in extra beds.” Two days later the patient total was 700.

Oatlands became the centre for men who had lost arms and legs, the “limbies”, because Queen Mary’s Convalescent Auxiliary Hospital at Roehampton, which specialised in fitting prosthetic limbs, was nearby. The men could take a variety of “classes of instruction in shorthand, engineering, carpentry, and woodwork of all kinds”, and bookkeeping, with an eye to future employment. Also based at Oatlands, in the stables, was the Mechanical Transport section, whose “expert drivers and artificers [were] capable of undertaking anything in the motor-repair line” and worked on the ambulances used at other New Zealand hospitals.

By the end of 1917, Mount Felix had a new operating theatre, an X-ray room and a laboratory. Major H D Pickerill, the former Professor of Dental Surgery at Otago University, had set up a special department to treat the all too common facial and jaw injuries; in 1918 he would join Queen Mary’s Hospital at Sidcup in Kent, a purpose-built facility for reconstructive surgery.

Compared with the stiffer, more formal atmosphere in British hospitals, Walton was blessedly free of what Harry Kitson called “silly petty rules. You are here to get fit & do as you like, within reason of course.” William Wilson described pillow fights at bedtime: “As long as nobody is hurt and nothing is broken we are allowed to have our fun.” The food at the New Zealand hospitals was generally better too. When Ed O’Neill was sent to Sidcup he found the rations “very much inferior to what we have been accustomed at Walton”. Both medical staff and patients loved being with fellow New Zealanders; often they even knew one another.

Between 1 May 1916 and 1919, Walton-on-Thames treated some 27,000 patients; only 150 died. The Mount Felix part of the hospital closed at the end of June 1919 but about 80 beds remained open at the end of August, and Oatlands amputees were still waiting to have artificial arms and legs fitted at Roehampton. Twenty-one New Zealand patients and staff from 2 NZGH are remembered at the Walton-on-Thames cemetery adjoining St Mary’s churchyard; 19 are buried there. They are remembered in an annual ANZAC service.

As Sister May Chalmer wrote in 1916, Walton “is truly a lovely place; if the boys are not happy they should be. They love this place and always leave it with regret...”



*War amputees holding rabbits raised on the rabbit farm at the New Zealand military hospital at Walton-on-Thames or at nearby Oatlands Park Hospital, Surrey.*

*Shows the men and rabbits in front of wooden cages.*

*Photograph taken c1918 by Thomas Frederick Scales.*

*Image: Royal New Zealand Returned and Services’ Association New Zealand official negatves, World War 1914-1918.*

*Ref 1/2-013929-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.*

## 16/77 Rotohiko Utauta, 1<sup>st</sup> Maori Contingent

Elizabeth Morey



Early in the new year I received an email from Allan Parry, the Publicity Officer for the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Branch of the Western Front Association in the United Kingdom. Allan had recently come across an autograph book of Senior Nurse, Miss Mary W Corfield. She was Senior Nurse at the YMCA/Red Cross Hospital in Swansea, South Wales, from 3 December 1914 to 3 December 1918.

During this time she nursed many wounded soldiers. The autograph book in Allan's possession covers 1914 to 1916 and it contains the signatures of 63 nurses and 47 soldiers.

One of the soldiers is 16/77 Private Rotohiko Utauta of the 1<sup>st</sup> Maori Contingent who was wounded at Gallipoli. Rotohiko was born at Whakatane. At the age of 23, he enlisted in the NZEF on 3 October 1914 and departed from New Zealand in February 1915 aboard HMNZT No 20 *Warrimoo*. On 30 June 1915, Rotohiko embarked for Gallipoli and was wounded in August 1915 with a gunshot wound to his hand. His Army records on Archives NZ Archway, state the date that he was wounded as 6 August 1915 (the Battle of Sari Bair, the first day of the August Offensive). However, when he signed Nurse Corfield's autograph book, Rotohiko has noted the date that he was wounded as 8 August 1915 (the Battle of Chunuk Bair).

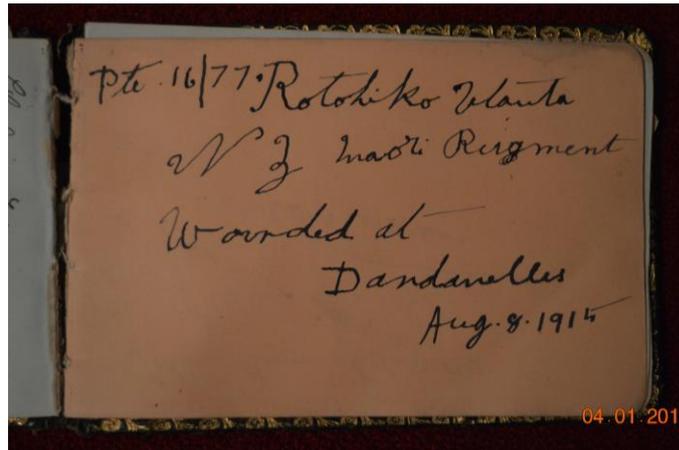
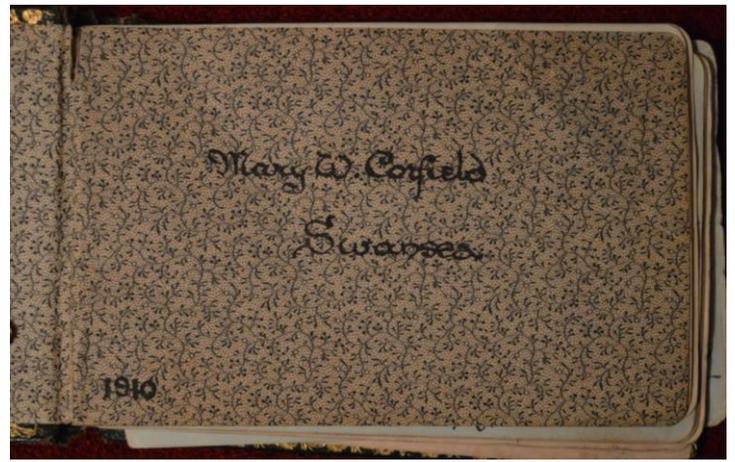
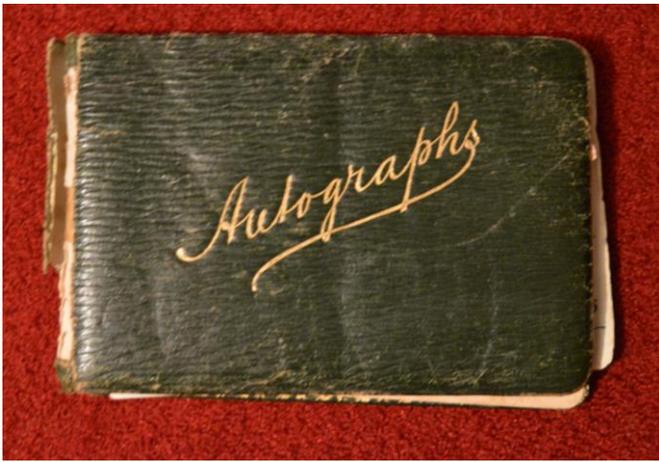
After time in hospital in Malta, Rotohiko was admitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Western General Hospital, Cardiff, South Wales, on 30 August 1915. Although his Army records do not indicate that he was sent to the YMCA/Red Cross Hospital in Swansea, it is assumed that once he was on the way to recovery, he would have been transferred to the Red Cross hospital, where he was looked after by a small number of trained nurses and VADs, his dressings changed and his general comfort attended to. The YMCA were involved in the hospital at Swansea to arrange visits, write letters etc.

In March 1916, Rotohiko was transferred to the New Zealand Command Depot at Hornchurch and a month later he was struck off the strength of the NZEF and left England on SS *Athenic* on 15 April 1916. He died at Motiti Island on 19 July 1931.

If any member would like to take up the challenge of finding more information on Rotohiko and possibly his whanau, it would be good to be able to provide them with the copy of Rotohiko's entry in the autograph book. Please note that his name is spelt slightly different on Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph – his first name is spelt Rotokiko.



*A ward at the YMCA/Red Cross Hospital, Swansea, Wales.  
Image: Courtesy of Phil Treseder, Swansea Museum and Swansea YMCA.  
With thanks to Allan Parry for providing the image.*



*Sister Mary Corfield's autograph book and Rotohiko's entry in it*  
Images: Allan Parry



*Māori soldiers assemble at  
Outpost No 1 before their attack  
during the Sari Bair offensive, 6  
August 1915*  
Photographer: James Read

*Image Alexander Turnbull  
Library, Wellington, New  
Zealand. Ref: 1/4-058101-F*

## Scottish losses at Passchendaele commemorated at Zonnebeke

Elizabeth Morey

In August 2007, to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele, a memorial was unveiled at Frezenberg Hill near Zonnebeke, Belgium. Hewn from solid Scottish granite, the impressive Celtic cross was raised in memory Scots and those of Scots descent who lost their lives in the Battle of Passchendaele. Ten years on, in August 2017, crowds again gathered to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Scottish advance on Passchendaele Ridge.

For the centennial commemorations, the memorial site has been enhanced with the erection of ten silhouettes depicting soldiers advancing on the Western Front. Constructed from corten steel which forms a rust-like appearance, the 150 percent life-size figures provide an unmistakable, stark reflection of a time of battle. One of the silhouettes depicts a piper, evoking the role of the Scottish bagpipes in the war as a means to rally troops as well as to lament the fallen. A mile marker was placed near the memorial noting the distance to each of the nations from the monument. Representatives from Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa as well as from the local community, attended to pay their respects.

The New Zealand Ambassador to Belgium, Mr Greg Andrews, and Alderman Sabine Vanderhaeghen from the town of Zonnebeke unveiled the New Zealand soldier silhouette. The New Zealand silhouette is standing with his Australian counterpart.



*The mile marker with the Scottish Memorial in the background*

*Image: Glasgow University's Great War Project  
[www.glasgowunigreatwar.wordpress.com](http://www.glasgowunigreatwar.wordpress.com)*



*Mr Greg Andrews and Alderman Sabine Vanderhaeghen unveiling the New Zealand silhouette*

*Image: Johan De Jonghe, Belgium*



*The New Zealand and Australian silhouettes  
Image: Pat Debaere, Belgium*



*The Australian and New Zealand silhouettes  
Image: Ian Roofhooft, Belgium*

## **Messines and Sam Frickleton VC**

Richard Pursehouse

The history books on the Battle of Messines, the *Official History of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade (NZRB)* and War Diaries of the NZRB during the Great War include accounts of the actions that led to the award of the Victoria Cross to Lance Corporal Samuel Frickleton of the NZRB on 7 June 1917, the day the New Zealand, Australian, Irish and British troops successfully breached the German defences along the nine mile long ridge in Belgium.

However, although Sam Frickleton's story is easily available for all to read - the capture of several machine guns, his being wounded and his capturing of German prisoners – some of the details differ from those he gave to relatives for decades after the end of the Great War.

While at the centennial commemorations of the capture of Messines Ridge in June 2017, as guests of the New Zealand High Commission, the New Zealand Embassy in Paris, and the Mayor of Mesen (Messines) Sandy Evrard, four

members of The Chase Project military research group were introduced to Mark Frickleton (grandson of Sam), his wife Jennifer, and Sam Frickleton (great grandson) at the Messines Museum by the town's Cultural Affairs Officer, Steven Reynaert. Tyche, the Greek god of good fortune was smiling on us that day.

The Frickleton trio willingly opened up their large personal collection of newspaper cuttings and photographs they had brought with them from New Zealand and invited The Chase Project (Lee Dent, Richard Pursehouse, David Dunham and Shaun Caddick - all from Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, England) to study the contents.

While this fascinating file was explored, the citation in the *London Gazette* was noticed, which states:

For most conspicuous bravery and determination when with attacking troops, which came under heavy fire and were checked. Although slightly wounded, Lance Corporal Frickleton dashed forward at the head of his section, rushed through a barrage and personally destroyed with bombs an enemy machine gun and crew, which were causing heavy casualties. He then attacked the second gun, killing the whole of the crew of twelve. By the destruction of these two guns he undoubtedly saved his own and other units from very severe casualties and his magnificent courage and gallantry ensured the capture of the objective. During the consolidation of the position he suffered a second severe wound. He set, throughout, a great example of heroism.

*London Gazette*, No. 30215, 2 August 1917

The Frickletons let out a family secret: Sam, taken aback at the attention resulting from his bravery, explained to his son and relatives - including Mark his grandson - that he had been awarded this highest medal "For Valour" for racing into a burning building to rescue two nurses, a story he claimed to be true for years. Also scotched was the "myth" that Sam had been slightly gassed prior to the battle - Mark explained that his grandfather had contracted tuberculosis.

Mark commented that they had been unable to find anywhere that sold poppy wreaths, so Richard and Lee offered their "backup" wreath which was accepted – on condition they incorporated a Dolores Cross Project harakeke cross. The family accepted the deal.

Jennifer Frickleton asked if we were going to the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial for the 8.00 pm Last Post ceremony that evening in Ypres (the "theme" being the contribution of New Zealand on the eve of the centenary of the attack at Messines), and we all agreed to meet up, with the caveat that should the three Frickletons choose to dine with us prior to the ceremony they would be welcome. This they did – as Jennifer mentioned it was Mark's birthday that day. We ate at the *In Het Klein Stadhuis* restaurant in Ypres (nestled in a snug corner adjacent to the Cloth Hall), The Chase Project footing the bill (how could we not?), and afterwards we experienced the Last Post at the Menin Gate together.

Lee and Richard mentioned to the Frickletons afterwards that over the past ten years the numbers had increased from a handful of people (more during the summer) to dozens to hundreds since 2014. They declined our suggestion to join us for the 3.10 am dawn vigil next morning at the base of the Messines Ridge, assuring us politely but firmly (after they had stopped laughing) they had no great desire to "experience" the moment *exactly* 100 years later when the 19 miles exploded long the ridge.

Again we met up with the now "suited and booted" Frickletons for the 8.00 am service on 7 June 2017. They explained they had placed their wreath on the Sam Frickleton memorial outside St Nicholas' Church at Messines, correctly anticipating that there would be a plethora of wreaths placed at the Stone of Remembrance at the cemetery. The memorial adjacent to the church was a poignant place to lay the wreath, within yards of the two German machine gun positions Sam Frickleton had led the attacks against for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross – the only New Zealander to receive the medal for the fighting at Messines.

We asked if we could take photographs of Mark and Sam standing either side of the panel inscribed with the name of Private Allan Green of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, who is commemorated in England on the Weeping Cross war memorial near Cannock (refer *New Zealand Communication Trench*, October 2015). We also placed a wreath on the grave of Thomas Jackson from Cannock who served with the 14<sup>th</sup> ("Jacka's Mob") Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces and who was killed at Messines (his family had lived less than 500 yards from Richard).



*The memorial to Samuel Frickleton at St Nicholas' Church, Messines, June 2017.  
Image: The Chase Project*

The ceremony over, everyone rendezvoused at the Mesen Peace Village Centre nearby, thankful for some relief from the very strong winds. The Frickletons were rather taken aback by the attention they received from civilians and New Zealand military personnel, although they pleasantly and politely acquiesced to the plethora of requests for photographs.

We spoke to Mark, Jennifer and Sam Frickleton and explained that preliminary discussions had taken place with the NZDF about an inter-forces "joint ops" recreation in 2019 of part of the Messines terrain model excavated on Cannock Chase - assuming the engineers believe they can do at least as well as their predecessors - and will be incorporated into the "conclusion" to events commemorating the time New Zealand troops were based on Cannock Chase. The idea has been discussed with Steven Reynaert from Messines, whom we originally met back in 2007, when we first mentioned there was a "terrain model" of Messines on Cannock Chase, as Mesen too has plans for 2019.

Email addresses were swapped and we agreed to send copies of our research on Sam Frickleton VC that we had found in England, as well as anything we had published upon our return.



*Sam, wearing Samuel's medals (left, great grandson of Samuel) and Mark Frickleton (grandson of Samuel) standing in front of the Messines Ridge (New Zealand) Memorial to the Missing in the Messines Ridge British Cemetery, June 2017. Sam and Mark are standing either side of the panel inscribed with the name of Private Allan Green of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade (originally from Staffordshire).  
Image: The Chase Project*

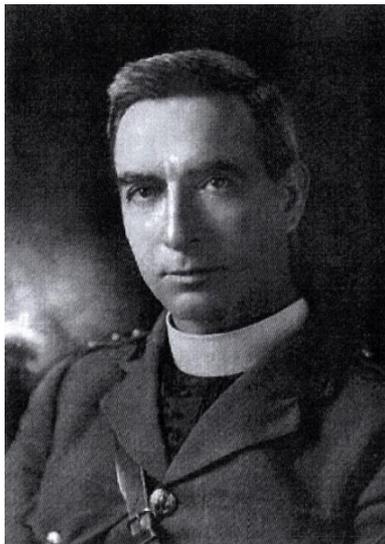
## Centenary Commemorations for Father James Joseph McMenamin, June 2017

Richard Pursehouse

Richard Pursehouse and Lee Dent of The Chase Project, along with their two friends Shaun Caddick and Dave Dunham, were invited to the centenary commemorations for the Battle of Messines, held in Belgium in June 2017. Their experiences at the ceremony were covered in the *New Zealand Communication Trench* October 2017, although once Richard started to jot down his thoughts on the events he realised there were in fact several stories, each of which needed to be written about separately in order for them to be covered fully.

This article covers a ceremony that, shortly before we left for Belgium, Dolores Ho of the Dolores Cross Project, WFA NZ Chairperson Elizabeth Morey and WFA NZ member Geoff McMillan suggested we could attend. We decided if we had time, we would “pop our heads into the event”.

The ceremony was planned for the evening of 8 June 2017, and the focus was on a single man, a man who had dismissed concerns for his safety after Messines had been captured by New Zealand soldiers. His name was Father James Joseph McMenamin, and this is his story.



*6/1215 Father James Joseph McMenamin,  
Chaplain to the Forces Class III  
Killed while attending the wounded on 8 June 1917  
Image: Sacred Heart Parish Petone Archives*

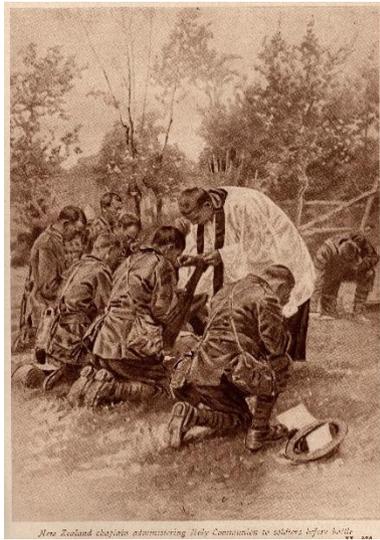
### **War is declared: his first tour of duty**

Father McMenamin was a Catholic chaplain in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Since 1912, he had been the parish priest at Petone's Sacred Heart Church, Lower Hutt, in the Wellington Diocese. When war broke out, Father McMenamin immediately volunteered as a Chaplain to the Forces and left New Zealand with the Canterbury Infantry Battalion, aged 43 years, with the Main Body in October 1914. Father McMenamin took with him a chalice, a gift from Sacred Heart Church, that accompanied him throughout his travels and which was eventually returned to the church and used during services ever since.

Father McMenamin was one of the first ashore during the landings of the New Zealanders at Gallipoli. A fellow chaplain wrote: “No place was too hot for him. He carried water, he helped the wounded to the beach, he was up night after night doing good.” The conditions on the landing beaches and ANZAC Area are well documented and Father McMenamin's time in the trenches took a heavy toll on his health. He spent several weeks recuperating in Egypt before returning to Gallipoli. Eventually he was invalided back to New Zealand arriving in March 1916, having lost a third of his weight.

### **Returning to war: his second tour of duty**

He built up his strength and returned to Europe, and in May 1916 Father McMenamin was “taken on strength” with the 9<sup>th</sup> Company, Wellington Infantry Regiment, and spent time as a chaplain at No 1 New Zealand General Hospital at Brockenhurst near Southampton from July 1916, followed four months later by a period at No 2 New Zealand General Hospital at Walton-on-Thames, south of London. However, he believed his duty lay in the trenches and in January 1917 he was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Canterbury Infantry Regiment in France. Soon after, on 1 February, he was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand Brigade.



*Hand written inscription with the photo reads: "New Zealand Chaplain celebrating Holy Communion in a field, the firing line." A Chaplain wearing his robes, possibly Father McMenemy, is kneeling down to offer Holy Communion to a group of about 13 soldiers who are kneeling on the grass under a tree. Unknown photographer, 1917.*

*Image (sketch): Illustrated War News*

*Image (photo): Auckland War Memorial Museum - Tamaki Paenga Hira. PH-ALB-418 H69.*

By all accounts, Father McMenemy was a popular man, and was fondly remembered for comforting the men during their tours in the trenches and was often seen in the rear areas when the men were training, as he was based in Nieppe in France (about ten kilometres to the south west of Messines). He was nicknamed "Father Mac" by the men. One soldier from Petone wrote a letter home shortly before Messines:

*Father McMenemy is known as Father Mac. He is right out on his own. When he is not settling draught problems for us he is accompanying embryo Sims Reeves\* on the piano, and is always looking after the boys, who swear by him. The way the boys borrow an occasional 5s from him is pretty strong. Catholic, Jew or Protestant, it is all the same. There's no creed or colour drawn by Father Mac. Good luck to him.*

\* The foremost English tenor vocalist of the mid-Victorian era.

Although Messines was captured in a brilliantly executed attack, part of an advance by General Plumer's 2<sup>nd</sup> Army along a nine mile front, the Germans ousted from the village attempted to recapture it, and constantly shelled the consolidated defences.

During one of the many heavy enemy barrages, Father McMenemy felt compelled to go out and bring in wounded New Zealand soldiers, disregarding the advice of those around him to stay with them and wait for the German bombardment to end. As he was laying to rest one of the men brought in, a shell exploded nearby which tragically killed Father McMenemy.

Colonel Hugh Stewart, Commanding Officer of the Canterbury Infantry Regiment wrote:

*Whilst engaged in these last solemn rites of the battlefield, a shell killed the Rev JJ McMenemy, a man of the highest character, unsurpassable courage and kindly disposition who showed to perfection that shrewd judgment tempered by charity of men and things, characteristic of the best type of Roman Catholic priest.*



*Hand written inscription with the photo reads: "The resting place of Chaplain Maj. Mr. Menamin [sic], a very popular priest both with New Zealand soldiers in France and in New Zealand. He was killed on Messines Ridge while performing last rites at [sic] burial of soldiers 9/6/17."*

*Photographer unknown.*

*Image: Auckland War Memorial Museum - Tamaki Paenga Hira. PH-ALB-418 H97*

Initially, Father McMenamain was buried at Messines, although a couple of days later his body was moved to the priests' vault in Nieppe Communal Cemetery. There appears to be some confusion as to the date of his death. His Army service record has both 8 and 9 June recorded, although in two places the date of 8 June has been clearly amended to 9 June. His CWGC headstone states 9 June. The commemoration ceremony was held on 8 June, perhaps the explanation being that his family were originally told the date of 8 June, and in any case at 9.00am on 9 June the Australians took over the whole front, relieving the New Zealand Division which was withdrawn into Corps' reserve.

The French priest Father Vandaele at Nieppe organised the arrangements for his burial. He wrote in the Parish Register:

*9 June 1917, Father McMenamain, New Zealand chaplain, had been called to the burial of a Catholic soldier near Messines. While he was reciting the final commendation at the gravesite, a shell blew up near him and killed him. This very zealous chaplain, who was held in high esteem by his soldiers, was, on the wishes of this Parish Priest, brought to Nieppe where he was given solemn funeral rites. The mayor gave permission for this priest to be buried in the parish priests' vault.*

Father McMenamain was the only New Zealand Roman Catholic chaplain to be killed in either world war.



*The priests' vault at Nieppe Communal Cemetery, June 2017*

*Image: Natalie Fache Boone*

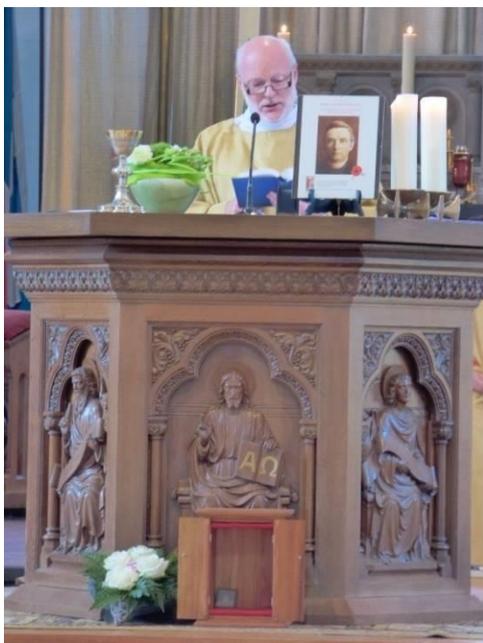
### Commemoration services at Nieppe and Messines, June 2017

On 8 June 2017, there was an afternoon graveside service at Nieppe Communal Cemetery and wreaths were laid at the foot of his CWGC headstone in front of the priests' vault.

At 7.30pm that evening, there was a Remembrance Mass for Father McMenamin in St Nicholas' Church, Messines. The chalice, originally carried to the Great War from New Zealand by Father McMenamin, was escorted in by Reverend Paul Stanaway, an NZDF chaplain.

Those attending included Gregory Andrews the New Zealand Ambassador to the EU, Messines Mayor Sandy Evrard, Steven Reynaert the Cultural Affairs Officer at Messines, the Maori Cultural Group, several members of the NZDF, local people and Richard, Lee, Shaun and Dave.

For the chalice's 2017 journey from Petone to France and Belgium, a box to protect the chalice had been constructed out of native timber by students at St Bernard's College, Lower Hutt. The students conducted a haka outside the new Sacred Heart Church at Petone (built in 1997) before the chalice left, and the parish priest, Father Marlon Maylon, blessed the box and the people taking charge of it - the New Zealand Defence Force.



*Evening Remembrance Mass at St Nicholas' Church, Messines, with Dirk Verschoore, the Deacon of Messines, conducting the joint Anglo-Flemish ceremony. The chalice on the left of the flower bowl, the box on floor.*



*Reverend Paul Stanaway, NZDF chaplain, with the chalice at St Nicholas' Church, Messines*

There were also commemorations in New Zealand on the same day, with two Requiem Masses, one at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington and the second at Sacred Heart Church in Petone.

On their way back to the ferry the following day, Lee, Richard, Dave and Shaun made a slight detour via Nieppe in order to place a Dolores Cross and wreaths on behalf of the New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association and The Chase Project at the grave of Father McMenamin.



*Lee and Richard at Father McMEnamin's grave, Nieppe Communal Cemetery.  
 Lee suggested an additional message for the card on the NZ WFA wreath:  
 The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them  
 (Czeslaw Milosz: The Issa Valley).  
 Last three images: The Chase Project*

## **Two First World War sites in the UK saved for the nation**

Elizabeth Morey

In his article in the February 2017 issue of *New Zealand Communication Trench* p18, Tim Keenan wrote of his visit to the sound mirrors near Dover – the acoustic mirrors that detected German aircraft over the seas, before being buried for 40 years. These unusual objects have been scheduled (protected) by Historic England.

The two mirrors, carved from the cliff-face at Fan Bay, are among the earliest surviving examples of Britain's first early-warning systems developed to deal with enemy aircraft, the new weapon in the theatre of war. One dates from about 1916 and its companion was constructed during the next decade. During the First World War the acoustic dish - which reflected the sound of distant aircraft engines on to a focal point to be detected by a listener, and later a microphone - replaced visual spotters and could identify the sound of aircraft up to 25 miles away.



A network of the mirrors was constructed along the Sussex and Kent coastline. It was only with the advent of radar technology that the mirrors became obsolete. Historic England said that the Fan Bay pair had survived "extremely well" largely because they had been covered over in the 1970s. The National Trust bought the land in 2012 and excavated the mirrors a few years later.

*One of the 15 foot diameter sound mirrors at Fan Bay near Dover  
 Photo: Tim Keenan*

Fan Bay is one of 20 locations the National Trust has highlighted as its “most intriguing” sites listed last year. Another of the intriguing sites incorporates another survivor of the First World War: Blackie the war horse. The gravestone of the horse, which was erected about 1942 in Liverpool, is being Grade II listed to represent the “strong cultural and historic significance” of the role animals played during the war. Blackie served at the Somme, Arras and Ypres where he suffered shrapnel wounds.

Blackie was one of the small number of horses that returned to Britain after the conflict, during which more than eight million horses were killed by enemy action, disease or starvation. Blackie was then bought by the mother of his master, the war poet Leonard Comer Wall, and returned home to Liverpool. Leonard was killed near Ypres on 9 June 1917 and is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium. Leonard had left instructions in his will that his medals should be buried with his horse. Blackie lived until 1942 and when he died at the age of 35 in an RSPCA facility in Hunts Cross in Liverpool, he still bore the scars of the shrapnel that killed his master. The National Trust said “the fact that Blackie is buried with his master’s medals reflects the strong bonds shared between thousands of soldiers and their horses on the Western Front”.

## **Farmer who is sitting on a bomb**

Neil Tweedie

[This 2004 article by Neil Tweedie was found quite by chance on the *Telegraph on Line* website by Richard Pursehouse. The somewhat light-hearted article has been slightly abridged.]

Estate agents are used to talking up the good points of a property while drawing a veil over its less attractive aspects. But it would take a particularly resourceful one to gloss over the downside of La Basse Cour Farm in Belgium.

The first bit is easy: "Attractive farm consisting of seven buildings set in 150 acres in the heart of historic Flanders on the Messines Ridge near Ypres. Ideal getaway for the busy metropolitan family. One hour 30 minutes from Channel Tunnel."

The problem lies with one of the original features: the bomb. Not any old bomb, but the world's biggest unexploded bomb - 50,000lbs to be exact. Still there, 80 feet under the farm, waiting for its big day. "Potential for redevelopment" might cover it.

The bomb - or more accurately mine - was the product of one of the greatest and most secret engineering exercises of the First World War. It lay half-forgotten for 80 years until British researchers were able to establish its exact whereabouts using maps of the period. In January 1916, thousands of British miners began tunnelling out of the Ypres Salient towards the German lines on the Messines Ridge. The plan was to plant 25 enormous mines under the enemy trenches and then blow them shortly before a major offensive planned for the summer of that year. The operation was postponed until the summer of 1917, but when it took place the results were spectacular.

More than 1,000,000lbs of high explosive were packed into underground chambers along a seven-mile front. On 7 June 1917, 19 of the mines detonated in the space of 30 seconds in the biggest series of controlled explosions yet seen. Buildings within a 30-mile radius rocked on their foundations, and the bang was heard in Downing Street. In Switzerland, seismographs registered a small earthquake. As many as 6,000 German troops perished in the inferno and the Messines Ridge was quickly taken by General Sir Herbert Plumer's Second Army. The Battle of Messines was regarded as the most successful local operation of the war.

But it left a legacy: six mines were not used. Four on the extreme southern flank were not required because the ridge fell so quickly, and another, a 20,000lb mine codenamed Peckham, was abandoned before the attack due to a tunnel collapse. The sixth, and one of the biggest, was planted under a ruined farm called La Petite Douve. It was lost when the Germans mounted a counter-mining attack, and never used.

After the war, La Petite Douve Farm was rebuilt by its owners and later renamed La Basse Cour Farm. The mine is beneath a barn, next to the farmhouse. The owner [in 2004, and presumably still the current owner] is proud that he still farms the same land as his father and grandfather, and, luckily for the estate agents, he isn't selling.

Indeed, the little matter of 22 tons of high explosive lying 80 feet below his property seems to trouble him hardly at all. "It doesn't stop me sleeping at night," he said. "It's been there all that time, why should it decide to blow up now?" The farmer, who lives at the farm with his wife and daughter, seems to have a relaxed attitude to the subject of ordnance. Like many farmers in areas of Belgium and northern France scarred by the Western Front, he is used to digging up old artillery shells and other potentially lethal devices during his work.

But history suggests he should not be all that relaxed. In 1955 one of the four unused mines at the southern end of the ridge detonated after 38 years in the ground. The explosion was believed to have been triggered by a lightning strike.



*La Petite Douve Farm later renamed La Basse Cour Farm  
Both images: The Chase Project*

### **Geoff's Jottings**

#### **Joking with a Sentry: Wellington Man Shot**

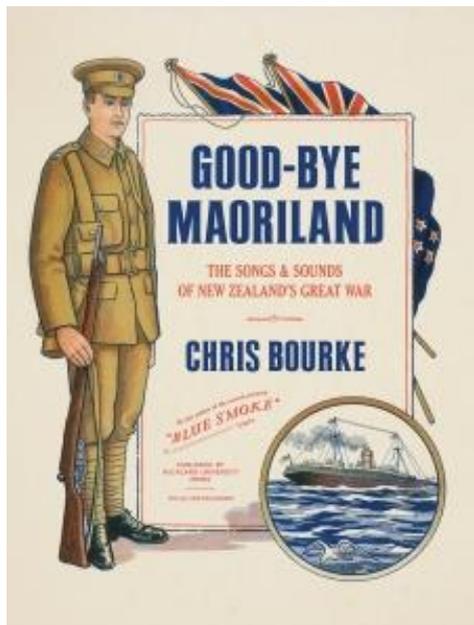
About 3 o'clock yesterday morning a man named Brewer was shot in the shoulder by a sentry at Fort Dorset. The authorities are reticent, but it is stated that Brewer said he was joking to see if the sentry's rifle was loaded or if he would use it. Brewer was conveyed to Wellington Hospital.

Source: *Poverty Bay Herald*, 2 August 1915

By the end of the First World War, Fort Dorset was the main battery defending Wellington, and the only one to mount modern heavy guns.

## Book Marks

*Good-bye Maoriland: The Songs & Sounds of New Zealand's Great War* by Chris Bourke, Auckland University Press, 2017. The following is mostly taken from [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz).



Be it “Tipperary” or “Pokarekare”, the morning reveille or the bugle's last post, concert parties at the front or patriotic songs at home, music was central to New Zealand's experience of the First World War. In *Good-Bye Maoriland*, the author introduces us to the songs and sounds of the war, in order to take us deep inside the human experience of war. When Chris Bourke started work on a book about New Zealand's First World War music, he immediately hit a speedbump: there are virtually no contemporary recordings of the 200-odd original songs that were composed by Kiwis to celebrate, mourn or (very rarely) protest the Great War.

A century ago recordings were scarce and expensive, so if a New Zealander wanted their own copy of the latest hit song, that usually meant buying the sheet music, sitting down at a piano and playing it – and they did so in droves. So Bourke did much the same, though with a minor technological update: after checking out each musical manuscript from the Turnbull Collections at Wellington's National Library, he took a snap on his cellphone, printed it out later in his home office in suburban Newtown, then carried the duplicate to the next room and bashed out the tune.

Such efforts were just a small part of Bourke's five-year journey towards writing *Good-Bye Maoriland* - a compendious, meticulously researched survey of the musical life of First World War New Zealand.

In a handsome, image-packed volume, Bourke charts the rise of patriotic songs both imported and home-grown. He looks at military brass bands and the concert parties who toured for the troops. He unearths the subversive, salacious songs that the men in uniform sang to shrug off the miseries of trench war, and considers the legacy of the era's Māori composers and performers. It's a book about music, but always with an eye to how that music reflected and affected the society in which it was embedded.



*With the NZRB near the line, Ypres 1917*  
*The New Zealand Rifle Brigade brass band playing outside surrounded by tents and camouflaged trench entrances. Unknown photographer.*  
*Image: Auckland War Memorial Museum - Tamaki Paenga Hira. PH-ALB-418 H256*

## Interesting facts and figures about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<b>850</b>	gardeners work in all corners of the world for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
<b>23,000</b>	locations in more than 150 countries.
<b>1.7m</b>	headstones from two world wars are maintained, as well as hundreds of memorials that list the names of 700,000 people whose bodies have never been recovered.
<b>£65m</b>	per year is spent on maintaining graves. The Commission employs engravers, stonemasons and blacksmiths, but most of the staff is gardeners.
<b>994</b>	football pitches: the size of the ground area controlled by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
<b>66</b>	characters were permitted to sum up a loved one's life and death (excluding New Zealand headstones).
<b>14</b>	years: the age of the youngest First World War casualty.
<b>67</b>	years: the age of the eldest First World War casualty.
<b>12,000</b>	burials in the Commission's largest cemetery, Tyne Cot Cemetery.
<b>4</b>	burials in the Commission's smallest cemetery: Ocracoke Island (British) Cemetery, North Carolina, USA (Second World War sailors).



**Emailed newsletters:** With the more frequent use of photos in the newsletter, if you would like to have your newsletter emailed to you so that you can see the photos in colour, please let me know. I am happy to either a) email the newsletter to you; or b) email *and* post it to you. Your choice – just let me know (elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz). If you want to stay with the status quo (remaining on the posting list only), then you don't need to do anything.

**To join the New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association,** please contact Elizabeth Morey (address details below). The current subscription for membership is \$15.00 per year per household (January to December). All new members are very welcome – you certainly don't have to be an “expert”.

**The views expressed in articles in this newsletter** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect or represent those of the editor or members of the New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association.

**All contributions to the next newsletter would be very welcome:** The next newsletter is due for publication in June 2018. The deadline for articles, snippets of information, poetry, book reviews etc is first week in May 2018. Please send to Elizabeth Morey, 89/1381 Dominion Road, Mt Roskill, Auckland 1041, or email to [elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz](mailto:elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz).