NEW ZEALAND COMMUNICATION TRENCH

Newsletter of the New Zealand Branch,
Western Front Association

1914-1918
REMEMBERING

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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
New Zealand Memorial, Avenue des Néo Zélandais, Le Quesnoy

Notes from the editor

Congratulations to Helen Pollock: It was not until after the February 2018 *New Zealand Communication Trench* had been distributed that I heard that Helen has been appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for her services to art, particularly sculpture, in the 2018 New Year Honours. Helen has been a member of the New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association for many years and articles about her sculptures focussing on the First World War have been printed in the *New Zealand Communication Trench* over the last ten years. Helen has a deep interest in the First World War and her sculptures pay a moving tribute to the events and to the men and women of the war, including her father. On behalf of all the members of our branch, congratulations Helen on your most well-deserved award.

Mt Felix Tapestry: In the February 2018 *New Zealand Communication Trench*, I wrote about the Mt Felix Tapestry that is going to tour New Zealand in 2018/19. The dates listed in the newsletter for some of the locations have changed slightly, in particular Auckland (now 2-23 August 2018). If you are interested in seeing these great embroidered panels, keep an eye on the tapestry website: www.mountfelixtapestry.co.uk.

Thank you … Several authors from New Zealand and England have contributed to the June issue of our newsletter and I wish to thank each and every one of you for all your work and for sharing your knowledge, experiences, stories and photos with us.

The newsletter's future: Due to family and other commitments I have become over-committed and with regret this is to let you all know that October 2018 will be the last issue of the *New Zealand Communication Trench* for the foreseeable future. I have not made this decision lightly but I need to take stock and cut back for now. Without the newsletter, it means that the New Zealand Branch of the WFA will go into recess after October … but I don't mean forever!

Elizabeth

The beginning of the Great War's end

David Broome

First published in the *Dominion Post* on 21 March 2018. *David Broome is a Wellington-based member of the Western Front Association and was formerly Chief of Staff to the Rt Hon Winston Peters.*

The centennial of the German spring offensive on 21 March marks the beginning of the Great War's end. But 1918 couldn't have started worse for the Allies, with Russia quitting the war in December 1917, negating America's earlier entry into the war.

It would get much worse. Freed from fighting on two fronts, Germany's Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff could focus on the west. They knew Germany had to win the war before America's vast manpower tipped the balance, or the Royal Navy's blockade collapsed Germany from within.

At 4.40am on 21 March 1918, *Operation Michael* was unleashed with over three-million shells, one-third containing poison gas, falling between Arras and St Quentin. While each side would suffer similar casualties on the first day, most of the British would become prisoners whereas Germany would lose over 38,000 killed or injured. One of the bloodiest days of the War. While some Germans would penetrate the front to 60-kilometres, it was no general advance but a bulge in the Allied line.

The Germans had also run into the British Empire's shock troops; her dominion soldiers. On 26 March, the New Zealand Division went into action near the old Somme battlefield and with an Australian Division and British tanks, stabilised a key part of the line.

Two days later the Germans launched *Operation Mars* to clear the way for a German breakout towards the Channel Ports. It was a debacle. With poor artillery support and clear skies German stormtroopers were mowed down. *Michael* would continue until 5 April, with the New Zealand Division, Canadians and Australians, all helping to deny the Germans the strategic prize of Amiens. Cracks in German discipline also started to show. As the Germans entered Albert they came across a cornucopia of food and alcohol. In contrast to their meagre rations this had a cancerous effect upon morale.

On 9 April, Ludendorff and Hindenburg turned to Flanders with *Operation Georgette*, intending to take Ypres and force a British retreat to the Channel Ports. The hapless Portuguese were smashed before the British 55th Division's staunch defence saw Ludendorff diarise, "…we were held up. The result is not satisfactory". Over the coming days the Germans would retake names etched on our memory; Passchendaele and Messines but not Ypres. The vital railway junction at Hazebrouck also proved a bridge too far thanks to British and Australian units. It was a close-run thing and on 11 April, Field Marshal Haig issued his famous 'backs to the wall' order for troops to fight where they stood.

The German advance started to falter while New Zealand support troops fought with others from across the British Army. Over 200 men of the 2nd New Zealand Entrenching Battalion would be surrounded and captured on 15 April. Yet vitally for the Allied cause, France's General Ferdinand Foch had become supreme Allied commander a week before *Georgette's* launch. French troops came to the aid of the British and *Georgette* started to lose momentum. The Germans had created another bulge but no breakthrough. On 21 April over the Somme Valley then came disaster for German morale. The Red Baron, Germany's aerial talisman, was shot down and killed.

By 29 April Ludendorff realised *Georgette* had failed and it was now time to try the French.

Operation Blucher was launched on 27 May and achieved remarkable success. France's General Duchene had recklessly packed his front lines allowing German artillery to wreck terrible damage. With the line ruptured German assault divisions poured through and by 3 June, some had reached the Marne only 80-kilometres from Paris. It is here that Ludendorff fatally chased tactical success. Instead of drawing French troops away from the north before another push there, his eyes were set on Paris. That's when American divisions decisively intervened. After suggesting to US Marines that they should also retreat, one French officer received this immortal reply: "Retreat, Hell! We just got here". *Blucher* was called off on 6 June and was yet another bulge. Three days later came *Operation Gneisenau.* After early success it petered out due to a French and American counterattack supported by tanks and aircraft.

Then at 12.10am on 15 July came *Operation Friedensturm;* Germany's last offensive of the War. Ironically called the peace offensive, it would fail due to German attackers being ground down by Allied defence in depth. On 18 July the Germans were then thrown by a massive French counterattack in the Marne. The tide had turned.

The Spring Offensive had cost Germany some 800,000 dead or injured. Just 235-days after trying to win the war these failures and Allied victories to come would force Germany into Armistice, bringing the First World War to an end at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

Stitching lives back together: men's rehabilitation embroidery in the First World War

Emily Brayshaw

[In the October 2014 and February 2018 issues of the *New Zealand Communication Trench* there is a couple of articles about embroideries relating to the First World War: the altar frontal at St Paul's Cathedral, London, and the tapestry recently made by the people of Walton-on-Thames in Surrey to commemorate the New Zealand hospital in that town. The following article by Emily Brayshaw gives more information about the value of embroidery undertaken by soldiers recuperating from wounds. This information has been extracted, with Emily's permission, from an article on The Conversation website. Emily is a Lecturer in Fashion and Design History, Theory and Thinking at the University of Technology, Sydney. See www.theconversation.com.au.]

Many of the hospitals tending the wounded during and after the First World War provided bright, clean, quiet environments where the men could perform meditative, transformative work that was essential to their rehabilitation from their physical and mental wounds.

One such activity was embroidery, also known as "fancy work". Embroidery was widely used as a form of therapy for British, Australian and New Zealand soldiers wounded in the war - challenging the gendered construct of it as "women's work" that was ubiquitous throughout the 19th century.

Hospitals in England, France, Australia and New Zealand all offered embroidery therapy and important examples of the soldiers' work can be found in places such as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, the Australian War Memorial Museum and St Paul's Cathedral in London, where the beautiful embroidered altar frontal was created by wounded soldiers from the UK, Australia, Canada and South Africa.

Themes of the soldiers' embroidery ranged from military heraldry to scenes from the French countryside to pieces for their sweethearts. Individual embroidery was an excellent past-time for the wounded soldiers; it is a small, flat, quiet, intimate activity that can be conducted seated, either in a group or alone.

The soldiers' work also created economic opportunities. In Sydney, their embroidery and other ornaments were sold at the Red Cross Hospital Handicrafts Shop where visitors were encouraged to "purchase the work of returned soldiers

to help them help themselves". The Red Cross also supplied printed templates for embroidery, many of which bore patriotic messages.

Interestingly, two recent studies have helped articulate the rationale for rehabilitation embroidery. One has demonstrated that undertaking everyday craft activities is associated with emotional flourishing, revealing the importance of handcrafts to their makers. Another study has shown that embroidery and sewing can allow individuals to work through mental trauma associated with war.

Embroidery offered soldiers physical therapy as well as helping them with psychological trauma. Learning to embroider helped them redevelop fine motor skills in their wrists, arms and fingers that may have been damaged through injury, while learning to embroider with the opposite hand was vital to learning how to perform basic functions if their limbs were too damaged to use or missing.

Highlighting the practice of rehabilitation embroidery gives us new ways to remember the men who served in the First World War. The stories they stitched into their embroidery allow us to remember them as we grow old.

Wounded soldiers displaying their embroidery, possibly at the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, Hampshire, UK. Netley Military Cemetery contains 714 graves First World War graves, including 12 graves of New Zealanders. Image: Royal Victoria Hospital and Military Cemetery at Netley website www.netley-military-cemetery.co.uk

Returned servicemen embroidering in hospital, possibly in Christchurch Public Hospital, c1918
Photographer: Leslie Hinge
Image: Alexander Turnbull Library, ref PAColl-5932-27

A Great War Pilgrimage

Alan Hughes

Alan Hughes recently spent a month in Europe tracing the journey of his grandfather Jim McKenzie, through France, Belgium and Germany. Jim was a private in the 15th (North Auckland) Company, 1st Auckland Infantry Brigade. He arrived in mainland Europe in October 1917 and departed from Germany in March 1919.

"Where is One Blanket Hill?" The first question of many in my search for the places that my grandfather noted down in his diaries kept during the war. Jim arrived in Boulogne and spent his first night in Europe under canvas at this place notorious for its exposure to the elements.

Neither the tourist office nor the office of patrimony recognised the name, so I scouted around the city for a few possible locations. No doubt someone who knows for sure may confirm or correct me, but my bet is on the open green space at the top of Rue de la Tour d'Odre. It overlooks the city and when I was there a gale force wind was whipping through with sleety rain.

"One Blanket Hill" possible site overlooking Boulogne
All images: Alan Hughes

This article will not cover everywhere I went, the people I met, the times I got lost even with the best maps, the 3,000 kilometres driven. Here are a few highlights though:

- Locating where Jim went into the front line for the first time at Polderhoek Château, east of Ypres, in January 1918. I'm indebted to Elizabeth Morey who, with Herb Farrant, went to the site and sent me some photos. Along with maps provided by Freddy de Klerck, the founder of the museum at Zonnebeke, this gave me the coordinates for a thorough exploration of the area.

- At the German cemetery, Langemark, finding the grave of Gustav Bartsch, a Swiss-German soldier, whose postcard Jim had souvenired and brought back to New Zealand. The card was hand-painted and written by Gustav's son in February 1917, and Gustav died in July 1918. Jim may have found it in an abandoned German dugout, as it has a hole in the top where it appears to have been attached by a nail.

- On 26 March 2018, being at Mailly-Maillet, Somme, 100 years to the day when Jim was among those repulsing the German advance. The landmark I found closest to where Jim wrote in his diary "went over in stunt and occupied trenches" is the rough scrubby area next to the chalk pits on the Auchonvillers road. All around it now is ploughed land.

- Finding places where the soldiers were billeted as they marched, at war's end, the 150 miles from Beauvois-en-Cambrésis in France to Herbesthal on the Belgian-German border, from where they caught a train to Köln. For example at Lobbes in Belgium they stayed in a convent which is still standing.

- Getting to know the areas where the soldiers spent most of their stay in Germany. Richrath, where they spent Christmas 1918, and Immigrath, where they spent over a month, are suburbs of Langenfeld, situated between Köln and Düsseldorf.

The return of the postcard, Langemark German Military Cemetery

Chalk pits area, near Mailly-Maillet

Alan Hughes at chalk pits area, near Mailly-Maillet

The convent at Lobbes

Richrath

A learning from my experience in exploring, in particular, the back areas of the Somme battlefield, was that the local memory of the New Zealand soldiers being there is virtually non-existent, as compared with places like Ypres and Le Quesnoy.

Something that impressed me as I drove the route marched by the soldiers across France and Belgium is their stamina, after all the hardships they had already faced during the war. Even after their 150-mile trek, having detrained at the station at Ehrenfeld in the western part of Köln from the train trip from Herbesthal, they still had 22 miles of marching before they reached their quarters. They marched west through the northern part of Köln, across the Mulheimer Bridge (their first glimpse of the twin spires of Köln Cathedral from a distance) to Mulheim on the eastern bank of the Rhine. They then turned north to march to Richrath.

My trip, whilst arduous at times, served to honour the memory of my grandfather through glimpses of the Europe this North Auckland farmer saw 100 years ago.

ANZAC Day on Cannock Chase

Richard Pursehouse

The New Zealand Rifle Brigade moved its Reserve Depot to Brocton Camp at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, England, at the end of September 1917 and the following April the New Zealanders held their first ANZAC Ceremony on Cannock Chase. The event was very different to what takes place today. There were no standard bearers with their flags, speeches read, hymns sung, or Last Posts played. Instead the day in 1918 consisted of sporting events such as pillow fights, running races, tug-o-war, and boxing.

However, with 73 New Zealanders buried in the Cannock Chase War Cemetery, most of whom were victims of the pandemic influenza outbreak during the winter of 1918 (42 New Zealanders in November alone), the following year's commemoration was more poignant and a brief ceremony took place on 25 April 1919 at the cemetery. In early June 1919, the last of the New Zealanders had left Brocton Camp and were on their way home.

Any worries or concern their countrymen would not be remembered were groundless. A small notice in local newspapers announced that a short ceremony would take place and locals were invited to attend and bring floral tributes. Thus the ceremony began to grow through the 1920s, almost spontaneously at first until it was deemed necessary to have a structured event.

This year, the centenary of the very first ceremony, around 400 plus attended with about 80 standard bearers from the Royal British Legion led in by Greg Hedges and mascot Colour Sergeant Watchman V. The Riders for the RBL and the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, the High Sheriff and representatives from Beaconside Barracks, Stafford also attended this year.

It is believed the ceremony is the largest outside of London, and present were a representative from the New Zealand High Commission Mr David Evans, the head of the New Zealand Defence Force for Europe Brigadier Chris Parsons, and the Australian representative Flight Lieutenant Adam Gunthorpe, Royal Australian Air Force and his wife Christie. Adam was also at the ceremony to meet Wayne Hartshorne, who has been tending to the grave of Warrant Officer John Burrows RAAF for the last 25 years. Adam and Wayne were able to go to the cemetery to visit Burrows' grave, where they laid a wreath on behalf of the Royal Australian Air Force. Warrant Officer Burrows married a Cannock girl six months before he was killed in 1943.

Stafford's MP Jeremy Lefroy was in fine voice at the event as usual, and local dignitaries attended, including Mayors Marco Longhi from Walsall and Aiden Thomas from Stafford. The Lea Hall Brass Band provided the musical accompaniment and the ceremony was conducted by the Staffordshire RBL County Chaplain the Reverend John Davis.

A special mention should be made to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) staff, including Stuart Urquart, who have immaculately maintained the cemetery for over 100 years, and will continue to do so, come rain or shine. Cannock-born Scott Smith who works in the publicity department at the CWGC head office finally met Richard and Lee and expressed his appreciation for photographs and news articles they have managed to get into magazines both here and in New Zealand concerning CWGC cemeteries.

ANZAC Day ceremony at the Cannock Chase War Cemetery, commemorated on Sunday, 29 April 2018

The base of the Cross of Sacrifice at Cannock was packed with poppy wreaths including from the people of New Zealand, New Zealand Defence Force, the people of Australia, The Dolores Cross Project, the New Zealand Branch of the Western Front Association, Wolverhampton Branch of the WFA, Amanda Milling, MP for Cannock, and Lee and Richard's wreath from The Chase Project.

Brigadier Chris Parsons, New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner David Evans, and Adam Gunthorpe RAAF

The grave of Freda, the Harlequin Great Dane mascot of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade

The New Zealand Branch WFA wreath is top right, leaning against the headstone. The card reads:

"In acknowledgement of the animals who served and still serve in all conflicts".

After the ceremony, Lee and Richard accompanied the New Zealand delegation to the grave of Freda, the Harlequin Great Dane mascot of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade during its time on Cannock Chase. She is buried in the hut lines where New Zealand soldiers lived while training. Wreaths and Dolores Crosses were placed at the memorial to Freda and a family who had come to see the grave were invited to place crosses too. Brigadier Parsons gave the family a commemorative New Zealand centenary coin.

After a well-deserved coffee and teacake at Spring Slade Café, the four then visited the Great War Hut at Marquis Drive Visitors' Centre which is a "living museum" with volunteers explaining life in the First World War camps on Cannock Chase. The New Zealanders were very impressed with the Council information boards, diorama of the camps as well as photographs on the walls of their countrymen training on Cannock Chase. Discussions about how to commemorate the centenary next year of the New Zealanders' departure from Cannock Chase also took place.

In this, the centenary year of the very first ceremony local people once again met over Cannock Chase to honour, reflect and show their appreciation to those who came to our aid in darker times. We have, we do, and we will continue to, remember them.

Kia Ora

Cannock Chase children placing Dolores Crosses on Freda's grave.
All images: Richard Pursehouse

Geoff's Jottings

A hefty-looking appellant, who spoke with a strong Scotch accent, made a statement to the military Service Board at Palmerston North, that he had "five brothers besides himself." Captain Walker observed that that was an Irish way of putting it. The appellant warmly denied that he was Irish. "You must be," stated Captain Walker, "your parents were born in Ireland." "They were not," said the appellant, "they were born in Ulster." It transpired that appellant has five brothers at the front, and Captain Walker said the fine example shown would enable the Board to quote this case as an example to others. Mr DGA Cooper (chairman of the board): "Your family is to be very much congratulated on the number of sons who have gone to the front."
Source: *Bruce Herald* (Milton), 3 September 1917

ANZAC Day at Walton-on-Thames

Elizabeth Morey

The Walton-on-Thames Cemetery in Surrey, England, located next to the churchyard of St Mary's Church, contains two screen wall memorials. The screen wall memorials face the footpath (one on each side of the footpath) near the north entrance to the cemetery, close to the hedge and the main road. In front of each of the screen walls is a large garden plot with a very low stone border. There are small numbered blocks along the front of the low border, indicating 12 individual graves. The bodies are not evenly distributed in the graves: there are between one and six bodies in eight of the graves and no-one is buried in four of the graves.

There are 21 names of New Zealanders on the two screen walls, 19 of whom are buried there (18 men and one woman, a VAD at the No 2 New Zealand General Hospital). Two men are commemorated on one of the screen walls but they are not buried there – the whereabouts of their burials is not known. An English soldier is also buried in one of the garden plots. Although he does not appear to have any New Zealand connection, he must have died at the hospital (see *New Zealand Communication Trench*, February 2018, pp12-15).

A Roll of Honour inside St Mary's Church records the names of the 21 New Zealanders who died at the hospital.

An ANZAC Day service is held every year in St Mary's Church and wreaths placed at the screen wall memorials.

Lieutenant Commander Zia Jones, New Zealand Defence Force, at one of the screen wall memorials, Walton-on-Thames Cemetery, 22 April 2018

The two screen wall memorials on either side of the path.

One of the screen wall memorials – small New Zealand flags have been added to the memorial, next to each of the names.
All images: Graham Grist

Geoff's Jottings

It is generally assumed that gas was first used by the Germans in the First World War. This is not accurate. The first recorded gas attack was by the French in August 1914, using tear gas grenades containing xylyl bromide on the Germans. This was more an irritant than a gas that would kill. It was used by the French to stop the seemingly unstoppable German army advancing through Belgium and north-eastern France. In one sense, it was an act of desperation as opposed to a premeditated act that all went against the "rules" of war. However, while the French were the first to use a gas against an enemy, the Germans had been giving a great deal of thought to the use of poison gas as a way of inflicting a major defeat on an enemy.

The lost fob from the Great War

Geoff McMillan

My uncle, Samuel Albert (Tui) McMillan, could not have contemplated the research necessary 100 years later to trace a fob, which he had been presented with by a grateful southland community on his return from the Great War. He had attested in the name of an older brother, as he was determined to go overseas in 1915, although well underage. His mother opposed his going, but finally relented and by December 1915 he was in Egypt and then off to the Western Front, as the Gallipoli campaign was over. His war involved being wounded four times and in 1918 receiving the Military Medal for gallantry.

His patriotic fervor was somewhat dampened by his experiences overseas. His mother had to receive the Military Medal on his behalf and it was many years before he joined the RSA.

24/1439 Corporal S A McMillan MM
(Enlisted and served as W H McMillan)

We now move on to the 1950's, when a couple were fishing in the Mataura River near Gore in Southland. They noticed a shiny gold object on the river bank and it turned out to be the fob (medallion) awarded to Corporal S (Tui) McMillan from a western Southland community. They endeavoured to track down the owner, but the Southland RSAs could find no trace of an 'S' McMillan who had signed up from the Riverton district during the Great War.

They kept the fob and wore it proudly to ANZAC Day commemorations. It eventually became the possession of their daughter, who commenced another round of military research. By then, many more army records were available and eventually Medals Reunited cracked the code and found that S McMillan had attested as older brother, W H McMillan. They noted that the final entry on his army file had been a statutory declaration that he was actually S A McMillan, possibly to get his army pension. And of course, his 1914/15 Star, Great War Medal, Victory Medal and Military Medal were engraved with the name of W H McMillan.

The fob is now in the possession of Tui's granddaughter in Wellington. She has been good enough to let me handle it and take photographs.

"A token of honour to Corporal S McMillan from the residents of the Gummies and Wild Bush District on his return from the Great War 30 May 1919" (back)

Gummies Bush earned its name from an early settler who had lost his teeth.

The fob belonging to
Samuel Albert (Tui) McMillan (front)

LOCAL & GENERAL.

A welcome home social and presentation will be tendered Sergt. S. McMillan, M.M., and Privs. S. Barron, and J. Wilson, all of whom have recently returned, in the Gummies-Wild Bush Hall on Friday night next.

Image: Papers Past - Western Star, *27 May 1919*

Readers by now will be asking many questions. Why was he nicknamed "Tui" for instance? Prior to the war he had been a sawmiller and he was apparently a great mimic of the native bird.

Overseas he was known as "Tui", which would have masked his real name. Interestingly enough, he lived most of his postwar life in Tui Street, Lower Hutt, and named his oldest daughter, Tui.

Those familiar with the Southland province would know that the Mataura River is in eastern Southland and before moving north in 1922, he resided in western Southland. How did the fob end up on the banks of the Mataura River? I guess we will never know. Many theories are possible. It was not unknown for soldiers to toss medals and other military awards away. Famously, Siegfried Sassoon was said to have tossed his Military Cross into the River Thames. Tui made the odd trip south over the years and often made a point of visiting a nephew who lived near Gore. Maybe they went fishing together and the fob was lost then. Of a more sinister nature, none of his medals were inherited by his descendants. One can only speculate!

He was certainly down south in the mid 60's when I met him for the first and only time. I was cheeky enough to ask him to show me his wounds … so much muscle missing you would wonder how he could still walk, or use his arms.

Of course, I knew the family history in respect of Uncle Tui and when I finally accessed his army file from Trentham in 1998, I found the stories to be true. Others researching from an opposite point did not have this luxury. I commend Medals Reunited for their research.

It is great to have the fob back in the family to pass down to future generations.

Website for Medals Reunited: www.medalsreunitednz.co.nz

Geoff McMillan with his uncle's fob

The McMillan family in October 1915:
Back Row. Samuel (Tui), Hugh, William (Tui attested in his name)
Front Row. Tom, Sarah, Frederick, Robert, May and Charles
Tui was about to go overseas and Hugh had just returned wounded from Gallipoli.
Charles, sitting on the right, has been inserted from another photo. He died at Brocton Camp of influenza on 7 November 1918 and is buried in Cannock Chase War Cemetery.
All images: Geoff McMillan

New Zealand War Animal Memorial and Purple Poppy Day

NEW ZEALAND
WAR ANIMAL MEMORIAL
"Commemorating the contribution animals have made in war and peace"

Australian War Animal Memorials

The following, slightly edited, is taken from the National Army Museum website and the photos were supplied by Charlotte Marsden, Marketing and Social Co-ordinator at the museum.

With thanks to the efforts of Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation (AWAMO) and artist Susan Bahary, on 24 February 2018, the National Army Museum unveiled the New Zealand War Animal Memorial to commemorate the contribution of animals who have served with the New Zealand military and their efforts during war and peace.

Throughout history, both during times of war and times of peace, man has always been accompanied by animals. Exercising their abilities, these valiant animals have worked as carriers, protectors, messengers, mascots and companions. They have served with loyalty and distinction, creating an unrivalled, unwavering and unbreakable bond with their human counterparts.

In two wars, the Second Anglo-Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902) and the First World War (1914-1918), New Zealand sent nearly 20,000 horses overseas, and sadly only five would return home – one from South Africa and four from the Middle East and the Western Front. As quiet creatures, they gave loyal service to the men that saw them mainly as "cobbers". In carrying out their duties, the horse forged a history that has often been forgotten.

For many New Zealand military units, especially during the First and Second World Wars, the acceptance of animal mascots was a common practice. Often kept for ceremonial purposes, as emblems of the particular unit or simply as a companion, the animals instilled a sense of peace and normality for the men, and women, suffering the hardships and uncertainties of war.

Currently the use of animals within the New Zealand Defence Force is on a steady rise, predominately due to the military's training and implementation of explosive detection dogs and military working dogs. These dogs are used in both homeland defence and in international operations against terrorist forces.

The National Army Museum hopes to use 24 February as an annual **Purple Poppy Day**, in order for the animals to have a commemorative day. It is hoped that with the unveiling of the New Zealand War Animal Memorial, these animals and their sacrifices will be commemorated and remembered by future generations.

The new memorial and attendees at the National Army Museum on unveiling day.

The plaque on the front of the memorial reads:
New Zealand War Animal Memorial.

All images: National Army Museum

Clive Collett's pioneering parachute jump

Adam Claasen

[Reprinted from Auckland Council's *Te Kahu Focus on Heritage* e-newsletter Summer 2017 and reprinted with the permission of Noel Reardon, Heritage Manager, Auckland Council, and Adam Claasen, Senior Lecturer in History at Massey University. The article is based on an extract from Adam's book, *Fearless: The extraordinary untold story of New Zealand's Great War airmen.*]

Did you know that New Zealand's most skilled Great War airman was the first person to attempt a parachute jump from a Royal Flying Corps aircraft?

Signed portrait of Captain Clive Collett MC
Image: Air Force Museum of New Zealand.

At 30 years of age, Clive Collett was one of the older New Zealanders to enter the air war when he arrived on the Western Front in March 1916. The Blenheim-born airman had worked his passage to Britain as an engineer on SS *Limerick* as part of the 1914 Main Body convoy. Unlike his Gallipoli-bound compatriots, however, he did not disembark at Suez but carried onto one of the many private flying schools in England.

Following a year's worth of civilian and military aviation training, Collett served briefly on the Western Front as an airman in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), before being withdrawn from action and sent to England to undergo surgery for a long-standing injury. Upon recovery in June 1916, he was posted to the RFC's Experimental Station at Orfordness, Suffolk. Collett was in his element in the Orfordness experimental work. His pre-war training as an electrical engineer in Wellington at William Cable & Co., his flying expertise and his devil-may-care attitude placed him in high demand. Collett's most famous exploit, however, was a series of experimental parachute jumps from RFC aircraft.

Parachutes offered the possibility of saving an airman's life over the front; without one, aircrew had no way of escaping a doomed machine in flight. The lack of parachutes seemed inexplicable to many, especially since it was common knowledge that observational balloonists deployed them to avoid being engulfed in flames when their hydrogen-filled perches were under attack. And when, in 1918, German airmen were seen exiting doomed machines by parachute, this added to the ire of Allied airmen.

The technology for jumping from balloons was well understood by the time the Great War arrived. However, the parachutes issued to British airship and balloonist aircrew were attached directly to the observation baskets and not carried on the backs of the crew members. When the occupant "bailed out", a line attaching the balloonist to the parachute would pull the chute out of its container - in other words, a static line jump. The result was generally successful and many balloonists' lives were saved. But these parachutes were not designed for jumping out of fast-moving aeroplanes, and their weight and bulk were difficult to accommodate in military machines. Another solution would be needed.

Englishman Everard Calthrop carried out conceptual and experimental work with parachutes for deployment in aircraft. Principally a railway engineer, Calthrop had taken up parachute development in the pre-war era when his good friend Charles Rolls, of the Rolls-Royce motor company, had been killed after losing control of his aircraft. This and a non-fatal aviation accident involving his son convinced Calthrop of the need for a reliable parachute that was

suited to aircraft. His invention, marketed as the "Guardian Angel", was lighter than those used by balloonists and technically more advanced. The silk chute was packed between twin metal discs in a canvas bag affixed to the aircraft's under-fuselage. The airman's harness was attached to this by a cord. When the airman jumped free from the aircraft and the potentially entangling tail section, the parachute was pulled free and the airman floated to earth.

Clive Collett wearing his parachute harness before the test jump.
Image: Air Force Museum of New Zealand.

It was this device that Clive Collett was going to test. In the days preceding his "live" jump, he watched a series of airborne dummy loads being cast overboard to approximate his own upcoming effort. On 13 January 1917, the big day arrived, and the New Zealander took the rear seat in a staid and stable BE2c biplane. The pilot, Captain Robin Rowell, eased the aircraft down the runway before climbing to 600 ft. Looking down, the laconic Collett spied the station ambulance and fire tender conspicuously in attendance - vultures gathered in anticipation of a meal. "Much good they'll be if my 'chute doesn't open, but anyway it pleases the authorities," Collett yelled to Rowell. On the ground, a camera was tilted and running. It captured Collett awkwardly exiting the cockpit and easing himself out onto the port wing. Exposed to the elements, with the roar of the wind and the V8 engine assaulting his ears, Collett paused, then launched himself headfirst into thin air. He felt the jerk of the line as it snapped tight and the parachute was pulled from the base of the fuselage. Within seconds he had made landfall. The "Guardian Angel" had worked as advertised, and Collett became the first man to make a parachute descent from a RFC machine. He made a second, equally successful and drama-free jump on 21 January.

Collett photographed back on the ground after his pioneering descent from an aircraft.
Image: Air Force Museum of New Zealand

In spite of Collett's achievements, the British authorities never really took to the idea of parachutes. Further experimentations and vocal remonstrations from Calthrop were unsuccessful in persuading military aviation boards and committees to adopt the lifesaving parachute that Collett had so ably tested. Calthrop's parachute was too heavy and cumbersome for use in the battlefield of the sky; however, it did offer the possibility of further development, had the authorities been fully persuaded of its necessity. Empire airmen could only watch and ponder in mid-1918 as German pilots escaped certain death to gently float groundwards. Where, they wondered, were their silk angels?

One of the few people in England to actually get a parachute was Collett's sweetheart Peggy. He gave her two "Guardian Angels" following his test jumps; the luxurious creamy-white silk was intended for her wedding dress. When Peggy unfurled them they were sprinkled with sand from the beaches of Orfordness. She was already close to seven months pregnant with their child.

The "Guardian Angels" were never transformed into Peggy's silk wedding dress - Collett died on 23 December 1917, when the German Albatros DV fighter he was flying crashed into the Firth of Forth in Scotland. Over time, Peggy, "a very accomplished dressmaker", made the "Guardian Angels" into pretty garments for their daughter Marion and other family members.

Book Marks

Make Her Praises Heard Afar: New Zealand women overseas in World War One by Jane Tolerton, Booklovers Books, 2017. Reviewed by Glyn Harper, Professor of War Studies at Massey University. Reprinted from www.stuff.co.nz with Glyn's kind permission.

An indomitable woman is one who is strong and brave and impossible to subdue or defeat, as their strength comes from within.

These are the qualities that many New Zealand women demonstrated during the First World War.

This book focuses on the role of New Zealand women in the First World War. Rather than concentrate on the New Zealand home front, where most women stayed and worked in many ways to assist the war effort, it examines those who travelled overseas, often at their own expense, in order to do their bit.

The author, Jane Tolerton, is a Wellington-based independent historian and has written six books. Her most well-known publication to date is the acclaimed and award-winning biography of Ettie Rout; the pioneering safe-sex campaigner active during the First World War.

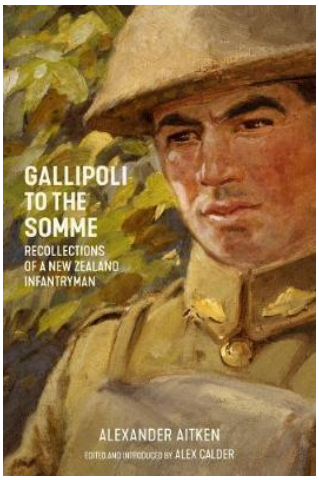
In *Make Her Praises Heard Afar* Tolerton is critical of histories of New Zealand's participation in the First World War, claiming that while they are well-researched and readable "they are almost all by men and about men". Her task in this book is to put women back in the picture. It is to make New Zealand's history of overseas service in this war as much about women as it is about the soldiers who went to fight. And Tolerton has succeeded admirably in this task.

A great strength of this book is the sheer range of the women who feature in it. There are the medical personnel: the doctors and nurses as one would expect. But there are so many others. These include hospital directors, ambulance drivers, munition workers, scientists, musicians and even a dancer at the Folies-Bergere. This range and the variety of

tasks our women performed during the war reveal many previously untold stories. It also reflects the depth of Tolerton's research.

The book is heavily illustrated and well-written yet its structure is unusual. Rather than follow the experience and work of the individuals described in it, the book has ten chapters. Each deals with a specific time period of the war. So a person might appear in Chapter 1 (April to December 1914) and then not to be featured again until Chapter 5 (January to April 1916) or Chapter 7 (January to December 1917). This makes it difficult to follow individual women and, at times, disrupts the flow of the narrative. As a result, this is a book readers will dip into rather than read from cover-to-cover. Despite this, *Make Her Praises* is a considerable achievement. The research is impressive and the stories compelling. The book succeeds in putting women at the centre of New Zealand's First World War experience and fills a void in this history. For those interested in New Zealand's efforts in the war or the forces that have shaped a nation, this book will be essential reading.

Gallipoli to the Somme: Recollections of a New Zealand Infantryman *by* Alexander Aitken**,** Auckland University Press, 2018. Reviewed by Glyn Harper.



New Zealand, as with the other combatant nations of the First World War, has spent considerable time and effort commemorating significant events that occurred 100 year ago. However, one of the most critical and important battles of the war passed with barely a mention in New Zealand in 2016. This was surprising as the Battle of the Somme - fought from July to November 1916 - was a watershed experience for New Zealand. Its first offensive operation on the Western Front resulted in the heaviest casualty list of any battle in New Zealand's military history. It is therefore fitting that Auckland University Press has republished Alexander Aitken's classic account of the battle *Gallipoli to the Somme* edited and introduced by Alex Calder.

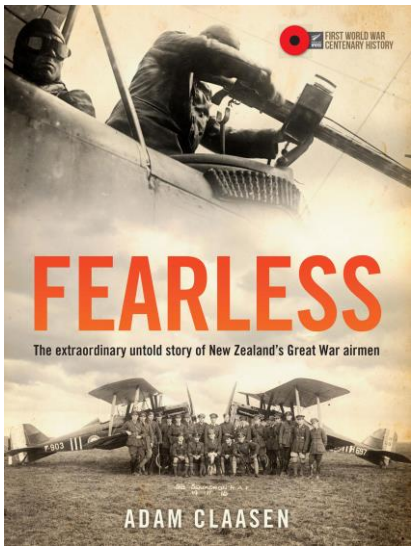
Alexander Aitken was studying languages and mathematics at Otago University in 1914. In April 1915, probably in response to news of the Gallipoli landing, Aitken joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He sailed from New Zealand with the 6th Reinforcements and served with the 1st Otago Battalion during the last months of the Gallipoli campaign and then with this battalion in France. There on the Somme, during the Battle of Morval at the end of September, Aitken was badly wounded, just one of nearly 8,000 New Zealand casualties in September/October 1916. Aitken's wounds were severe and he was invalided out of the NZEF in early 1917. *Gallipoli to the Somme* was first written from memory between April-September 1917. Aitken revised it in 1930 and the manuscript was finally published in 1963.

The book was widely acclaimed on its release, being recognised as a new classic in the literature of the First World War. No less a luminary than the historian A.J.P. Taylor singled it out as one of the best books of 1963 writing that it "eclipsed all others as a book both true and moving". On the strength of this, Aitken was elected to the Royal Society of Literature.

Gallipoli to the Somme has not lost its power to influence and inspire others. In 2016, the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra performed and recorded "Gallipoli to the Somme" based on Aitken's book. The recently published *The Anzac Violin*, by Robyn Belton and Jennifer Beck, was also inspired by Aitken's book and is currently on the bestseller list for children's books.

Gallipoli to the Somme thoroughly deserves its reputation as a war classic. Readers will not find a better description of the New Zealand experience on the Somme. Nor will they find a better examination of what Aitken called '"the gossamer thinness of the partition between life and death" which was the lot of the New Zealand soldier of the First World War.

Fearless: The extraordinary untold story of New Zealand's Great War airmen by Adam Claasen, Massey University Press, 2017. The following is taken from the Massey University Press website.



The fascinating and little-known story of New Zealand's daring military aviation pioneers

During the Great War, 1914–1918, New Zealanders were keen participants in the new field of military aviation. Close to 850 men, and a small number of women, from the Empire's southernmost dominion sought positions in the British and Australian air services.

Drawing on extensive archival material, historian Dr Adam Claasen explores New Zealand's reluctance to embrace military aviation, the challenges facing the establishment of local flying schools and the journey undertaken by the New Zealanders from their antipodean farms and towns to the battlefields of the Great War. In spite of their modest numbers, the New Zealanders' wartime experiences were incredibly varied.

Across the conflict, New Zealand aviators could be found flying above the sands of the Middle East and Mesopotamia, the grey waters of the North Sea , the jungles of East Africa, the sprawling metropolis of London and the rolling hills of northern France and Belgium. Flying the open cockpit wood-and-wire biplanes of the Great War, New Zealanders undertook reconnaissance sorties, carried out bombing raids, photographed enemy entrenchments, defended England from German airships, strafed artillery emplacements and engaged enemy fighters. By the time the war ended many had been killed, others highly decorated, some elevated to "ace" status and a handful occupied positions of considerable command. This book tells their unique and extraordinary untold story.

Foden steam wagons on the Western Front in the First World War

Tim Keenan

In May 1918, five Australian Army Corps under the total command of Lieutenant General John Monash as GOC, made history as the Australian Imperial Force went onto action to achieve some of its greatest victories south of the Somme River, in the rolling fields of Picardy, France, forcing back the German Kaiser's armies into a retreat. John Monash, General Sir John Monash (1865-1935) was a much respected and distinguished army commander, loved by his men, holder of many war decorations. To remember these important times, I looked though my First World War photographic archives and discovered an historic vehicle picture. This tells a story not much known today. It is well known that the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte said "an army marches on its stomach", meaning soldiers do not fight well without a good daily feed. (This quote is also attributed to Fredrick the Great, King of Prussia). Though, they also need to have clean uniforms on a regular basis to keep their morale going.

All over the Western Front and north Italian battlefield areas, as well as other fronts in the Middle East at this time as the conflict progressed and conditions steadily got worse, the British Government introduced a method whereby when the soldiers left the front line trenches, with its horrendous conditions, of mud, human waste and other detritus of war, their uniforms and other clothing including bedding, were thoroughly cleaned to eradicate the lice and other devilish mites which plagued all Allied soldiers. The mites spread diseases, thereby cutting the effectiveness of the fighting forces. This was going to be a huge operation, with the many hundreds of thousands of military personnel on the Front, which of course included the Australian and New Zealand armies. War has always been a lousy business!

In 1904, the Thresh Company, who had offices at 66 Victoria Street, Westminster, Central London, applied for a British Patent for an improved Disinfector, a device which used hot steam from a boiler into sealed chambers to fumigate infected clothing and bedding. The company, under the name of Summersides Limited, had their Phoenix Works at Keighley, West Yorkshire, where the Thresh Disinfectors were manufactured. The Disinfectors (also known as Thresh Delousing Chambers) were well known to the War Office as well as Crown Agents, and were known to have been sold in some numbers for use in the British Empire colonies. They were also supplied to Rural District Councils and hospitals for example. During the 1900's, in the main they were mounted on a specially designed type of horse drawn two-wheel cart, and a single horse was used for ease of movement, though they could be installed as a

static unit (a four-wheel cart was also offered). It was insulated with wooden slats on the outside to keep in the heat for efficiency of use, and was of an oval design. Clothing and other items to be treated was put into a purpose designed basket which closely fitted the interior of the Disinfector. They had their own furnace at the bottom of the oval boiler.

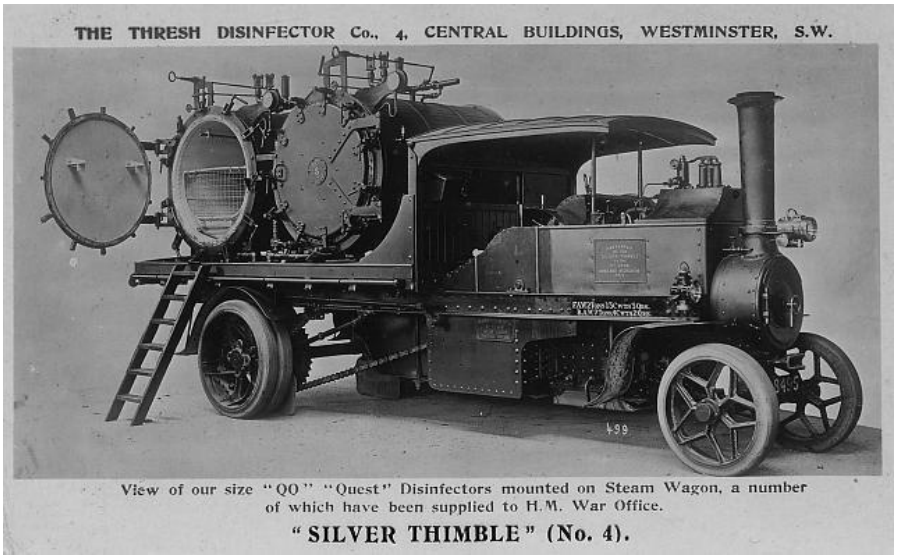
One such example is in store at the well-known Beamish Industrial Museum in the north east of the UK and another resides in an army museum at Quetta, India.

British Tommies with a single horse drawn unit at Camp Anglais at L'Etuve.

(Tim has tried to locate this place on French maps and has Googled it – but cannot pinpoint it. He wonders if perhaps it was a farm or small hamlet.)

The British Army Service Corps (ASC) ran most of the transport on the Western Front and had many sections; one of great importance was the transport of clothing for the Royal Army Clothing Department. They had a huge amount of differing vehicles, both steam and petrol and they numbered over 38 makers, which included British, French, Italian and American manufactures, which, I would suggest, would have been quite a serious headache when ordering spares.

However, vehicles which could carry the greatest loads at this time where steam wagons. Again, almost every British maker was used - the famous firm of Edwin Foden, Sons and Company Limited, Elworth Works at Sandbach, Cheshire in the north west of the UK where without doubt the most prolific, with the Sentinel Steam Waggon Company of Shrewsbury coming in a close second.



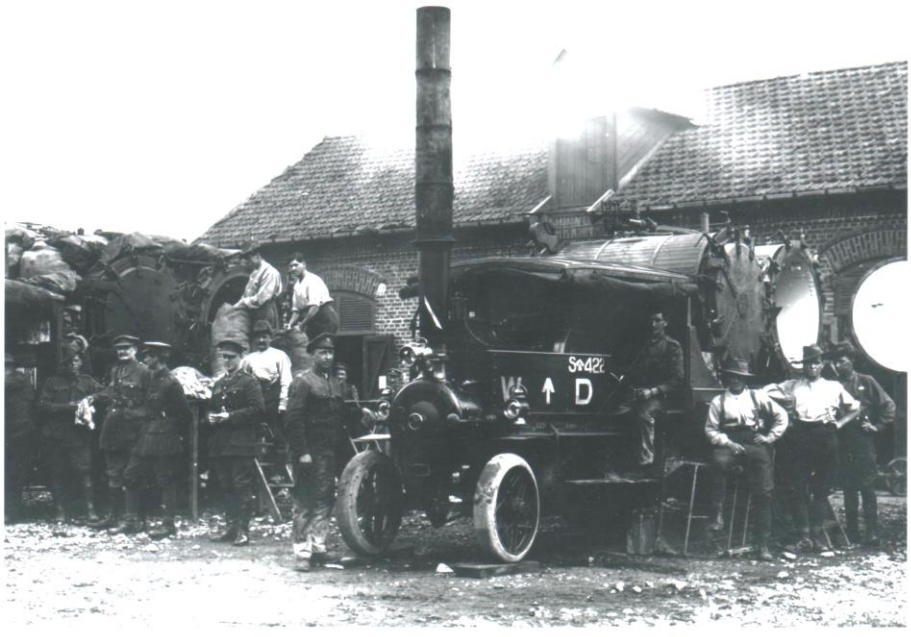
A First World War period postcard by the Thresh Disinfector Co London showing the setup of the sterilising ovens

Edwin Foden commenced trading in 1856, as a small agricultural machinery concern and proceeded to build stationary steam engines, tractions engines and many other types of machinery. By 1899/1901 they out-shopped their prototype steam road wagon which achieved some success in the famous War Office Trials of 1901. The Foden five-ton steam wagon of the Great War period was fitted with two road speeds (though three-speed versions were also used) and early in the war shod on steel wheels - later they were supplied with solid pressed on rubber tyres for an easier ride and less road shocks to the vehicle.

They were much favoured by the ASC for the fitting of these Thresh Disinfectors (a type of Autoclave as we would know them today), two were fitted to the Foden's rear tray and steam at around 200 lb per sq in was supplied to them via a steam take off from the boiler. The heat from the steam not only eradicated the vermin, in particular lice, from the material but also dried it. These Thresh units were also in use by the American Yankee Division of the American Army on the Western Front, when they arrived in some numbers in France in 1917/18. Some of the American troops later in the war complained that this device was really too efficient as it melted the buttons on their tunics!

It is known that one hundred of these Foden steam wagons where fitted with Thresh Disinfectors and all had two chambers mounted at the rear of the trays. By 1918, at least 90 were at work on the Western Front with five in Italy and three in England, according to various reports. It is known that first Australian Imperial Force soldiers moved into the Somme valley in July 1916 and soon the small town of Vignacourt was overrun with them. It also was home to the 61st Casualty Clearing Station where many soldiers were treated for their wounds. There were also large Australian camps very close by, at Pernois and Flesselles.

These rest areas were on the south Somme where there was also a huge training and stores area (not in the battlefields) used by all the Allies, where soldiers were trained, rested and supplied with new uniforms etc, as well as personal items. Although it is not known where the photo of the Australians and the Foden steam wagons fitted with the Thresh Disinfectors was taken, it is likely to be in this area of these small villages. Today, this district of Picardy still has very strong connections to the Australians. This part of France is north east of the City of Amiens. It is also interesting to note, the famous Australian First World War historian, Charles Bean, had his Australian War Records section at Vignacourt which was connected to the 1st ANZAC Corps Salvage Section. He collected very many war items, which today form part of the Australian War Memorial's massive collection at Canberra.



Australians and Tommies at work with their Foden steam wagons,
believed to be taken in the Vignacourt area of Picardy, France.
Note the extensions funnel to draw away the smoke from the wagon's boiler.
Image: Author's collection

The Great Dorset Steam Fair is held at the end of August each year, some three hour's drive west of London in the rolling hills of the West Country and is a fantastic event. The fair also has a large replica layout of First World War trenches and cavalry remount depot. Set out on farm land, the rally grounds cover over 600 acres (242ha). At such an event, with much going on, one is hard-pressed to see everything, even in a couple of good long days.

Starting in 2014, the management decided to request owners of First World War vehicles to attend and to commemorate vehicles used in that war. Owners rose to the challenge over the last few years and in 2018 will continue to bring some very rare and interesting vehicles to this rally site.

One in particular, Foden steam wagon no 7768 is certainly the only one existing from the Great War era in original order was displayed at last year's event, though of course there are many Foden steam wagons in the UK in preservation today. Foden 7768 was shipped to France in 1917 and today carries a road register number plate M 8562.

Driving side of First World War Foden 7768 at the 2017 Great Dorset Steam Fair
Image: Tim Keenan

Foden7768 at the 2017 Great Dorset Steam Fair – note the correct livery.
Image: Tim Keenan

This engine was supplied new in 1917 to the Roads Department of the ASC to haul stone for effecting repairs to the roads behind the front lines. This was a huge and continuous effort by the lads operating these wagons, as the roads were in constant need of repairing and upgrading, with some working very close to the front lines. Sometime in 1919, the British held a number of War Department (WD) disposal sales in France (as they did in the UK) and this wagon was purchased by a Chicory producer in Cambrai in the heart of the battlefields area, who used it until 1948 when it was sold off to a local scrapyard. It is not known what it was used for by the grower, but it is likely it was used for soil sterilisation using steam from its boiler. By 1976 it was purchased by an English steam collector and returned to its homeland after 59 years working/resting in a foreign land. Over a number of years it was restored at the well-known Kew Bridge Steam Water Pumping Station, now a museum in west London.

Foden 7768 sports many original features from the First World War times. It has the original screw type rear tipping body to WD specifications, ie high sides with the legend painted in white lettering "Load not to exceed 5 tons" - which I am sure was exceeded many a time when a big battlefield push was on! The tipping body was operated by a belt drive off the pulley on the flywheel on the left hand side of the crankshaft, with the screw gear mounted on the rear of the cab. Perhaps more interestingly, it still has the twin spring loaded buffers still attached to the smokebox which butt up to the wagon's chassis to take the shocks. These buffers were fitted to many such wagons for use in railway yards and docks operated by the Inland Waterways and Docks section of the Royal Engineers, to move trucks around – this wagon it is the only one known today with these features. The cab also has a very nice period black painted klaxon, fitted to the small wooden tool box at the rear of the cab, a fitting hard to find nowadays. A set of period paraffin side oil lamps complete the picture, though many were supplied with a large oil lamp mounted on a bracket at the base of the funnel. This Foden is painted in WD light khaki, as it would have been during the war, making it a very distinctive vehicle, with white lettering on the motion side aprons with the number S917, complete with the WD vertical arrow. It is not known if it carried this number when operating on the Western Front.

Front smokebox with special spring buffers on the Foden 7768
at the 2017 Great Dorset Steam Fair
Image: Tim Keenan

There were many wagons painted with similar lettering and numbers, which of course was effectively the WD registration numbers, for example S254, S55 and S422, with the vertical arrow as standard. An average daily journey with a load of four tons was considered to be 25 miles (40kms), firing on coal. Also, on the left hand side of the chassis at the front, lettering indicates the allowed road speeds of the wagon, on steel shod wheels at 5 mph and on solid rubber tyres 8 mph.

The ASC Mechanical Section ran extensive training courses for drivers and their mates in the operation and maintenance of their charges. They were taken very seriously, anyone found not following the correct procedures was dealt with most severely, after all they were the King of England's property! There were huge workshops in the rear areas of the battlefields to repair and service many kinds of road transport vehicles.

This article is respectfully dedicated to all lads of the Australian Imperial Force and New Zealand Expeditionary Force, who served King and Country during the First World War – Heroes All!

Postscript: In New Zealand and Australia, wagons or lorries are referred to as "trucks", steam powered or otherwise. When the Edwin Foden, Sons and Company Limited stopped making steam wagons and started making oil (diesel) engine wagons in about 1929, they still referred to their trucks as wagons.

There is today only one Foden steam wagon in steamable order in New Zealand and it resides in Rolleston with a well-known steam road engine enthusiast. It arrived in New Zealand as new in its working days (possibly 1920's) and was later purchased at auction about 30 odd years ago by a well-known Australian collector. He shipped it to his extensive vintage museum situated south of Brisbane. A few years ago it was returned to New Zealand and is now quite a rare machine in the "Land of the Long White Cloud".

* *

A mascot remembered on the New Zealand War Animal Memorial

Soldiers playing with Snowy the cat, the New Zealand Tunnellers' mascot, in Dainville, France, 16 July 1918
Photographer: Henry Armytage Sanders
Image: National Library of New Zealand, Ref: 1/2-013371-G

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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 October 2018. The deadline for articles, snippets of information, poetry, book reviews etc is first week in September 2018. Please send to Elizabeth Morey, 89/1381 Dominion Road, Mt Roskill, Auckland 1041, or email to elizabeth6@xtra.co.nz.