

THE GREAT WAR TIMES

ISSUE TWO:
JUNE 2015

FROM THE WHANGANUI
WWI CENTENARY PROGRAMME



100 YEARS OF MEMORIES

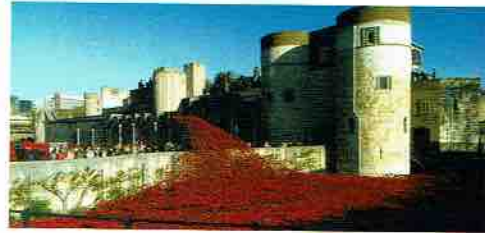
Welcome to the second issue of *The Great War Times*. Since starting our WW1 Centenary Programme last year, we have been privileged to meet so many people who have stories and connections to the Great War. Indeed, a surprising number of these men and women had fathers or uncles who fought in the war. Perhaps this reflects the fact that so many soldiers needed time to settle down after the war; certainly many of them had children born in the 1930s and even the 1940s who are alive today and have clear memories to share with others.

We have taken our Great War Roadshow to Ruapehu and Rangitikei and plan more excursions around our region to enable local people to come and share their memorabilia. Our base in Wanganui at the Alexander Heritage and Research Library is also attracting visitors who come in to share their family stories on weekday afternoons. A diary might not only have the soldier's recording of day to day activities at the Front (or in hospital) but also information about support services such as the New Zealand Red Cross and War Contingent Association with Wanganui people on their committees.



In 2014 Aramoho school children visited the National Army Museum at Waiouru and then created war-time installations in their classrooms such as this trench enjoyed by the boys.

Our local newspapers have published numerous stories of the war and its effect on families while recent concerts and theatrical entertainments have reflected what was so popular during the war years. World War 1 and society is the theme of a series of history seminars being held at the Alexander Heritage and Research Library in conjunction with Massey University; you can download the programme from the Library website www.wanganuilibrary.com.



Poppies have featured everywhere in the lead up to the centenary commemoration of the Anzac landings on Gallipoli. From the one million ceramic poppies at the Tower of London (*photo above left: Dan Eliasson*) to the knitted poppies made in New Zealand, reflecting the war-time promotion of Lady Liverpool who encouraged New Zealand women to knit for the boys at the Front. The knitted poppy wreath shown above was made by residents of Broadview Retirement Village in Wanganui and placed on the memorial steps on Anzac Day morning.

Indeed, women's views of the war are not always published with men's diaries and letters being more prominent – but often because the women in the family kept them. *Annie's War* is the published diary of Annie Montgomerie, a Wanganui woman who was determined to keep her family together during the war. So, in 1916 they all packed up and sailed to London where the two sons joined the Royal Flying Corps. Annie's grand-daughter, Susanna Norris, transcribed and edited the diaries which have been published by Otago University Press. Of course, few mothers were in the position whereby they could leave the family farm for an unknown period of time and witness wartime society in Britain. Annie also had little patience with some of the English people she encountered during their stay; perhaps this reflected a historic view of a woman whose family background was Scottish!

Wanganui Repertory Theatre has received a number of plays reflecting aspects of the Great War, some of which will be staged as Fringe events during this year's Literary Festival in September 2015.

If your story has not yet featured in *The Great War Times*, please wait – we will have another issue out very soon.
Wendy Pettigrew, Chair, Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust.

AN HISTORIC SUNDAY MORNING

Cameron Campion, a 30-year old farmer from Okirae near Fordell, was in Australia when war was declared. He enlisted with the 3rd Australian Brigade and landed on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Cam's letter home describing his experience was published in the magazine of his old school, St Pat's College in Wellington¹. Excerpts here give a flavour of his truly ANZAC experience as a New Zealander fighting alongside Australians.

"The dawn found us stealing in to the accompaniment of the distant thudding of cannon. .. For breakfast we snatched a biscuit and a bit of cheese, scalded ourselves with hasty gulp of tea and rushed up on deck... Now it was broad daylight, though the sun still behind the big hill threw the beach into deep shadow, against which the flame from our big guns showed up in vivid splashes, while an occasional enemy shell threw up a geyser like a spout of water among our foremost boats... [When] we were within half a mile of the shore, we tumbled into boats tugged by piquet boats from the man-o-war. I could see we were in for it. The rifle fire was one continuous rattling roar... At last our boat beached and we rushed off ... A few of our dead were scattered about the beach, and a good many wounded... We toiled up a steep hillside where our fellows had swept over earlier ... [they had to fall back from an earlier position on a second ridge when they met strong enemy opposition] and found ourselves in a hot corner... with enemy fire from the front as well as cross-fire... but being a Britisher... the worse he is getting it, the cooler and calmer he becomes... with a total absence of flurry. Despite all, we did hold on and did very well, and have been congratulated by our King.

For my part in all this: no sooner did my company mount from the beach to the first ridge than we came under long range fire and began to lose men. "Stretcher here" was the frequent cry... After advancing downhill into a deep gully... we climbed again to the next ridge whereon our chaps were taking the brunt of the battle. With half a dozen others I was the first of our company to go in... we were strung out a long way... gasping for wind and with the sweat pouring off us, we plugged away to the top, had a slight pause to get our rifles ready (up to this point we hadn't fired a shot) then strolled – strolled is the word – into the hottest bit of fire you could imagine. The air was simply singing with flying lead.

A long line of our fellows in a dreadfully exposed position were firing at a lot of green shrubs... I couldn't see a single thing to fire at but was assured men were behind the bushes

so I fired too in case. We were then ordered to cease fire and dig ourselves in. Then the shrapnel opened on us... up to then I was pleased as punch with my hole, it sheltered me splendidly. Now I conceived the greatest possible contempt for it. It was no use at all for shrapnel... it kept coming with monotonous regularity and at every explosion men died, men groaned and I began to do the greatest think ever. How long before I got it? ... Our battery men were lying dead around their guns. The machine gun was silent, it's crew dead. .. Our aeroplane swung high in the blue searching for the battery that was giving us such a bad time, and now with a thunderous roar our ships joined in, and the air quivered over us as our big shells rushed over our heads inland... Would our gunners never find that damned battery? ... Then whack! I thought I'd lost my arm at least. I had my elbow up a bit too high while working with the bayonet to make my hole bigger ... it bled a great deal."

Cam waited for a lull in the shrapnel then made his way to a dressing station. His arm made good progress and he was soon back in the firing line. However, he would be wounded again in August and then sent to hospital in England; we will follow his story there in our next issue.



Captain David Simson's photograph of the landing place on Gallipoli was made into a postcard in July 1915. Rae Scott kept this one with his photographs.



Anzac Cove commemoration site where services are held each year.

Sir William Birdwood was responsible for coming up with the term ANZAC. "When I took over the command of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in Egypt a year ago, I was asked to suggest a telegraphic code address for my Army Corps, and then adopted "ANZAC"². Later on he asked to have the beach where they landed recorded as Anzac Cove.

¹ Margaret Campion provided this information about Cam.

² "Noted in foreword to *The Anzac Book* published in 1916.

RAE SCOTT ON CHUNUK BAIR

21-year old farmer Rae Scott from Kukuta near Wanganui sailed away from Wellington on 14 February 1915. He had enlisted with the Wellington Mounted Rifles and reached the Dardanelles in early July, in time to participate in the offensive on Chunuk Bair. His aunt, Margaret Fraser from Pukehou near Bulls, gave him diaries each year he was away so he could record his war experiences. We pick up his diary the day after the Wellington Mounted Rifles took possession of Big Table Top ridge in their assault on Chunuk Bair.

7 August 1915, Saturday: Improving our position on table top ridge. Cutting scrub with bayonet. Watching the Light Horse charging on Walker's Ridge¹. Their men blown up as soon as they got into the Turkish trenches. 135 out of 400 answered the roll. Severe bombardment by battleships.

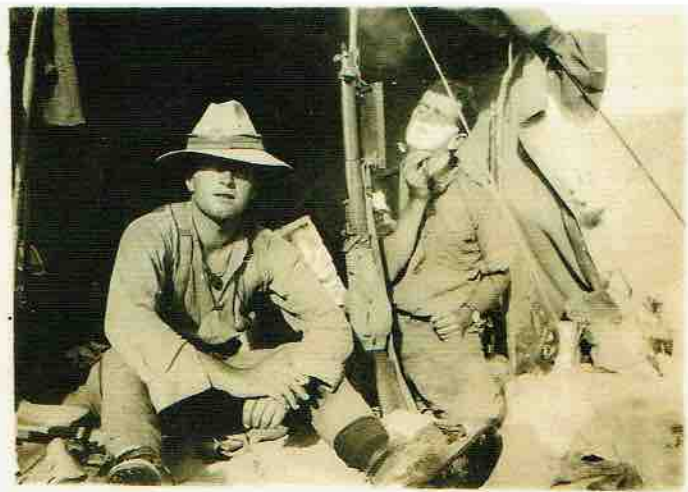
8 August 1915, Sunday: Ready to move any moment in case we are wanted. Moved out at 2:30 and rested underneath the firing line until dark then went and dug ourselves in. Sent back for water. Ground littered with dead and wounded. An awful sight. Turks frightened to attack. Some men demented.

9 August 1915, Monday: Turks attacked but were repulsed. Bombs came into our trenches in scores. Losing men all the time. Shrapnel coming in our trenches from our own guns. 6 men blown out with a shell from a warship (N Zealanders). Communications cut and reinforcements unable to come up until dark. Relieved from trenches at 12pm and came back to rest after 15 hours in a perfect hell. 43 casualties out of 95 in 2 WMR².

10 August 1915, Tuesday: Came back to rest at No. 1 Outpost and get some sleep and good tucker, the first for 3 days. Went out after dark to bury Major Elmslie³. [See opposite] Tommies⁴ ran from Chunuk Bair.

11 August 1915, Wednesday: Washing clothes and bathing in morning. Received orders to go out and garrison destroyer ridge at 2pm. Working most of night improving trenches, etc.

12 August 1915, Thursday: Sergt Fletcher⁵ shot in arm. In trenches all day. Burying dead Turks under cover of dark. The worst job I have had since I joined.



Rae Scott in camp, probably during his Middle East war service.

13 August 1915, Friday: In trenches all day. Costick⁶ post at night. Kitcheners⁷ doing far from good work; too young and badly led.

14 August 1915, Saturday: In rest, swimming and washing clothes etc.

Rae survived his time on Gallipoli, returning to Egypt and then serving in the Middle East until the end of the war.

Major Jim Elmslie was CO of 2 Squadron of the Wellington Mounted Rifles who died at Chunuk Bair.

On 3 August 1915, Elmslie wrote a jolly letter to his wife, no doubt to reassure her, which was published in the *Wanganui Chronicle* on 15 November 1915 after his death:

“Could you not use your influence with the Kaiser in the interests of peace? Tell him if he hands Belgium back to the Belgians, Alsace and Lorraine to the French, his navy to New Zealand, and pays the cost of the war to all parties concerned, we will give him Stewart Isd on which to end his days in peace. Tell him we are sick of going without table napkins and white collars, motor rides and picture shows. Just fancy! Sometimes we don't even have brandy to put in our sauce for the daily plum pudding!... There is really nothing fresh to relate here ... just the same only shelling, shooting and bombing as has gone on since we landed.... [The Turks] are a jolly decent enemy and never resort to unfair methods... they seem to have a perfect genius for this fighting in trenches while we have it all to learn.”

The *Wanganui Chronicle* also published a letter the same day from Rev Grant, Chaplain to the Wellington Mounted Rifles to Mrs Elmslie noting that the Major's men were “broken-hearted” over the loss of their CO.

¹ The Light Horse were Australian mounted troops.

² Wellington Mounted Rifles; “2” refers to Squadron 2.

³ Major James (Jim) McGregor Elmslie was commander of 2 Squadron, WMR. He was born in Waverley in 1876 and was married in Sydney in April 1914 to Miss Martha Jean Hamilton.

⁴ British soldiers were often called “Tommies”.

⁵ Sergt Purslow Fletcher of the Wellington Mounted Rifles was shot in the right arm and taken down to the ship *Valdivia* where he died on 13 August and

was buried at sea. He came from Whangaehu; his father Edward Fletcher was a farmer and his mother, Catherine, was the daughter of Henry C Field, the surveyor. (See www.nzmr.org/wellington_record for the list of all Wellington Mounted Rifle casualties.)

⁶ This may have been a temporary post.

⁷ British soldiers who enlisted in response to Lord Kitchener's famous “Your Country Needs You” recruitment posters.

OUR FIRST MAORI CONTINGENT

Once the New Zealand government had decided to send a contingent of 500 Māori troops to join the expeditionary force¹, local iwi were quick to respond. Whanganui soon enlisted its quota of 26 men who were farewelled at a merry party in town on 16 October 1914 organised by Waata Hipango. The group included the three Mete Kingi brothers: 27-year old Teira Hoani, 22-year old Paki Hoani and 18-year old Henare. At the time, Paki and Henare had been working for Gregor McGregor on the Morikau land up the river. On 19 October the Mete Kingi men marched with their companions to the railway station in Whanganui with the Garrison Band at their head before boarding the train for Auckland. The group went into camp at Avondale for training before embarking on the troopship *Warrimoo* at Wellington on 14 February 1915 bound for Egypt. Initially the contingent was sent to Malta for garrison and training duties, but by the beginning of July they were transferred to Gallipoli where casualties had depleted the number of soldiers to the extent that reinforcements were needed urgently. All three Mete Kingi brothers served at Gallipoli, but Teira Hoani paid the ultimate price as he was killed in action on 8 August during the ill-fated attack on Chunuk Bair. Both Henare and Paki fell sick and spent time in hospital on Mudros or in England.

In April 1916, the Māori contingent then moved to the Western Front with the rest of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Henare was killed in action on 14 September 1916 while serving with the New Zealand Signal Corps on the Somme. Early in 1917, Paki was seconded to return to New Zealand for a short time, by now promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He visited Whanganui on leave in May 1917 where he was welcomed home to Putiki in great style. A brass plaque commemorating his brothers had been installed in the old Putiki church a few weeks before in March 1917; it was later moved to the new St Paul's Memorial Church when it was built in 1937.

It was most unusual for a New Zealand soldier to be able to return home during his war service. Most of the men had to make do with trips to England, or to Paris where Waitotara man, Herewini Whakarua enjoyed a week's respite from the Front in September 1917. However, Paki Hoani Mete Kingi had a job to do in New Zealand helping to prepare another group of reinforcements for the Pioneer Māori Battalion as it was now known. He sailed back on the *Willochra* bound for Liverpool with the reinforcements

and by February 1918 was back at the Front. Apart from contracting influenza in December 1918 and spending two months in hospital, first in France and then in England, the rest of Paki's war was relatively uneventful.

Putiki was again the centre of attention for Paki and the other men from Whanganui and the West Coast when they returned home in April 1919. The ship *Westmoreland* brought them back to Auckland; they then took the train home to Whanganui where they received a heroes' welcome on 7 April. The new Aotea Dining Hall was built specially at Putiki marae to accommodate the numbers attending the hui, which lasted for nine days. Dr Maui Pomare was amongst the dignitaries formally welcoming the Māori Pioneer Battalion men home.

The Māori War Memorial at Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens recalls the service of Whanganui men in the Great War. The names of 17 men who were killed in action or died of wounds are transcribed onto the tablets at the base of the memorial; many of these names are also on other memorials in our district.

Whanganui's first Māori contingent²

The men were Privates when they enlisted unless otherwise noted. Names in bold are among those listed on the Māori War Memorial at Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens.

Hone Aperahama

Matene Rangiamohia Duff

Jack Hiroti

Rangihiwini Hiroti (Bugler)

Turu Hiroti (2nd Lieut)

Tamehana Kanapu

Te Aurahi Kora (Rarotongan)

Te Aohau Kumeroa

Ngore William Mangaroa

Henare Mete Kingi

Paki Hoani Mete Kingi (Company QMS)

Teira Hoani Mete Kingi (Lance Corporal)

Hiroti Nehemia

Ngawakataurua Tetahua Pehimana (Sergeant)

Tame Potonga

Thomas Savage

Kimi Tamou

Whetu Tauri (Sergeant)

Wiremu Hoani Tauri

Wiremu Te Korowhiti (from New Plymouth)

Kotuku Tieketahi

Herewini Whakarua (Corporal)(Statue on top of memorial)

Ture Wharemate (From Opunake)

Niheta Wiremu

Haerehuka Kanapu (in charge of the group but did not serve)

Frank Huria (transferred to reserves)

¹ *Wanganui Chronicle* 29 September 1914 reports that the British government had agreed 250 men were to go to Samoa and 250 men to Egypt. This was later amended following pressure from Māori and all 500 men in the first contingent sailed to Egypt.

² Names from the list in *Wanganui Chronicle* 20 Oct 1914 plus the nominal rolls in books by Pugsley and Cowan. All efforts have been made to spell the names correctly; our apologies if we have not succeeded – corrections are welcome.

BACK TO SCHOOL



Teira Hoani Mete Kingi, the first of the brothers to be killed in the war. Photo supplied by Dardi Mete Kingi Mato.

Below, his name as it appears on the memorial at Chunuk Bair Cemetery on Gallipoli. Pettigrew photo 2010.



For further reading and names of all the Māori soldiers who served in the war, check out these two books which will be in most libraries:

Christopher Pugsley, *Te Hokowhitu a Tu: The Māori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War*, Reed 1995.

James Cowan, *The Māoris in the Great War: A history of the New Zealand Native Contingent and Pioneer Battalion*, Whitcombe & Tombs for the Māori Regimental Committee, 1926 (with later reprints).

Another book worth reading is this diary:

Rikihana Carkeek, *Home Little Māori Home: A memoir of the Māori Contingent 1914-1916*, Totika Publications 2003.

Nearly 700 Wanganui Collegiate School old boys and masters served in the Great War. Their names are recorded on the Big School honours board and in the chapel memorials to the 150 or so who died in the war. Less well known are the stories of the masters who came to teach at Collegiate after their war service and how that may have affected their decision to take up teaching and the way their career developed during their time at the school. Of the young men who came to Collegiate to teach in the 1920s, three are of interest because of their length of service to the school as well as their different war experiences.

Our thanks to Helen Maclean and Janet Bishop, and Jenny Browne and Catherine Hare for the information about their fathers Nelson Maclean and Roby Marks, and to Jeremy Austin for information about his grandfather. Other facts have been obtained from the men's service records at Archives New Zealand.



One of these men, **Nelson Maclean**, was an old boy who enlisted in May 1917 aged 20 and chose to be a gunner with the New Zealand Field Artillery so he could be involved with the horses that pulled the gun carriages. He also did not fancy having to carry a heavy pack which was often the case for the infantry. In 1918, after further training at the New Zealand artillery base at Ewshott in Surrey,

Nelson had one tour of duty in France, including a spell in hospital that November recovering from the 'flu. After a brief visit home after the war, he returned to England to study history at Jesus College in Cambridge and also spent some time at university in Dijon, France.

Nelson took up his post at Collegiate in 1923 and stayed there, as house tutor, housemaster and master until he retired in 1961. His daughter Helen recalls that he did not appreciate the attitude of some of the New Zealand officers he served under during the war; mere gunners were not deemed able to make even simple decisions without getting orders from their seniors. Nelson considered this was an insult to a young man who had been a school prefect and held other responsible positions requiring decision-making. He wrote about his wartime experience in the memoirs he published in 1982 entitled *A lifetime at school*. Nelson's relatively short time under fire at the Front, compared to some of his common room associates, may have made it easier for him to adjust to civilian life in the comfort of his old school. He was by no means the only returned soldier who sought familiar surroundings after experiencing the horrors of war.



In 1915, 24-year old **Warren Austin**, the son of a London cord maker, was ordained as a Church of England minister and took up his first temporary commission as Chaplain with the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. He was sent to France at the beginning of October that year to join the British Expeditionary Force.

He had two commissioned tours of duty, the first from

1915 to October 1916 and the second for two years from mid-1917 to mid-1919. His service was mainly in France on the Western Front.

His Colonel, a Mr Foster, wrote this about Austin in the New Year of 1919, noting that he "only put what he honestly thought of him":

"This chaplain, attached to the 20th Division cannot be too highly spoken of in every respect. His devotion to duty at all times has been beyond praise. He was always away visiting the various artillery units where casualties were most likely to occur, and where his presence would be most required. Has tact, and a kindly manner; and is self-sacrificing; a kind word to all, a friend of the soldier."

This testimonial almost certainly led to Warren being mentioned in Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig's last despatch of the War on 16 March 1919. Winston Churchill, as Secretary of State for War, signed this commendation for Austin with the usual citation that he had given "gallant and distinguished services in the Field".

Warren Austin had married Australia-born Vera Downing in 1917 in London and after the war they decided to come out to New Zealand, travelling via Canada late in 1919 so Warren could take up a post as assistant to the Dean of Nelson cathedral. In 1921 the Austins moved to Wanganui where he became chaplain at Collegiate. His own education in England at Trent College, a Church of England boarding school near Nottingham, no doubt set the seeds for Warren to decide to become chaplain at a similar school in New Zealand. He also introduced Toc H to Wanganui and the school. Developed after the war as a Christian social services association, Toc H had its origins in the Great War. A soldiers' rest and recreation centre was established in Poperinghe in Belgium, a transfer station for the Western Front. It was named Talbot House in memory of Gilbert Talbot, a son of the Bishop of Winchester, who was killed at Hooze in July 1915. The Army code for the letter T was Toc, hence "Toc H" being short for Talbot House. Warren Austin had been impressed by the ethos behind Toc H, which is why he became involved in the movement in New Zealand and set up a Wanganui branch in 1928. Warren Austin also served as a chaplain to the Wellington West Coast Regiment and was involved with cadets at Collegiate School.



Also enlisting in 1915 was 22-year old Auckland Grammar old boy **Rowland (Roly) Marks**. Sergeant Marks joined the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and arrived in Egypt that December. Early in 1916 he was sent to France where he was wounded in the leg in September during the battle of the Somme and subsequently spent time in hospital in England.

He was awarded the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal) with the citation that it was for his "conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He has performed consistent good works throughout and has at all times set a splendid example throughout." Roly was back in France by March 1917 and even managed to get leave to visit Paris that August. He joined an officers' cadet unit in Cambridge a month later and was then promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. 1918 was not a good year for Roly – he got the flu, then tonsillitis and was back in hospital again by November 1918. He would have been more than happy to sail home in February 1919.

Roly's daughter Catherine Hare recalls that her father was reticent about his war experiences. He found it difficult to settle down, resorting to alcohol and a wild lifestyle while finishing his degrees at Auckland University and then moving on to several teaching jobs. Roly suffered from nightmares for many years and "never took part in parades or ceremonies as he wanted nothing to do with the glorification of war which to him was unmitigated bloodshed and misery." He considered that the world-wide sacrifice of so many lives had all been in vain – it had not been "the war to end all wars". His daughters say Roly's saviour was his 1929 marriage to Dorothy Fox, another school teacher, the year after he was appointed language teacher at Wanganui Collegiate School. He stopped drinking and became a family man while leading cadets and other activities at his new school where he remained on the staff until 1957.

It was the post-war slump and the effect it had on ordinary people that led Roly to want to do something about building a "better world" and thus he espoused the philosophy of Social Credit, hoping to put power into the hands of people. Many Wanganui people supported Roly during the 1940s and 1950s as he stood unsuccessfully for Parliament; however conservative New Zealand was not ready for such a change at the time. Roly was a man of high principles, including advocating healthy living to an extent that may have seemed eccentric at the time, but would not be so today. He died in Wanganui in 1977.

BERTIE WRITES HOME

Among Wanganui farmer Derick Matthews' prized possessions are his father's Great War photographs and three letters written home in 1917. They illustrate life at the Front for those in the British artillery regiments.

On 25 January 1917, Frederick Herbert St George Matthews ("Bertie" to his family) was gazetted as being promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery from an Officer Cadet Unit. He was just 20 years old when he was in France and wrote these letters home to his "dear Mater", Mrs Lydia Matthews, about conditions at the Front. Bertie's father, a retired Naval chaplain, had died in 1911 hence there are no references to him in the letters. Bertie was the only son in the family; he had six sisters. His spelling and grammar are replicated here as they appear in the pencil-written letters.



July 23 (1917)

I am down at the wagon line¹ for three days rest as things are d-d hot up at the guns. I found out yesterday that my old Bty are quite close to us though they are not equipped. I hope to go over and see them today, A/2 & B/a H.A.C.² also the H.A.C. heavy Bty is in action quite close here. ... We have been loosing a lot of horses lately and it is awful to see the poor blighters suffering as they are so helpless and then having to shoot some of them. The Russian question is very serious, the devils have let us down, I never did think much of them³.

7 Aug 1917

It has been impossible to write for the last 10 days or so. I have sent several F.P.C.'s⁴ to reassure you. I am just out for a couple of days in the wagon line. I hope to come out shortly for some time. Lydford seems to be a very pretty place⁵. To add to the misery it poured with rain for 3 days and night and the mud became something unthinkable. The last two days have been better though still undecided. I have seen several of the old Bty knocking about here and I hope to see more of them when we come out. Perhaps when we are out they may let us off on leave irrespective of the number per Bty. ... I am afraid my mac. is pretty well done in; a piece of shell right across the back & of course it is no longer waterproof though nothing will stand it for 3 days continual. ... [in the last parcel] the saffron cake was excellent. Things out here are painful and nerve wracking in the extreme, but in every thing there is humour or comedy of some sort when one looks at it afterwards, for instance trying to turn yourself into a worm and get under a 2ft bank, eh! .. (He thanks his sisters for their letters...)

14 Aug 1917 (at same address, but never specified)

... We are out at rest now for a few days, very welcome. I am about 5th on the leave list & should get off in about 4 weeks⁶, if they hustle things up, being out at rest in 3 weeks perhaps. I don't mind where I go, Gosport or Lydford. Don't get the wind up when I say I had a miraculous escape three days ago. I was in a dug out with one of our Officers & his servant⁷ & it was blown in on us by a big shell, the Officer an awfully nice fellow was killed & the servant injured by timber, I was unhurt but unconscious for a short time & a bit shaken. It's an exciting life taken slowly. There are 3 of us left out of seven. The [weather] is awful, rain & thunderstorms every day, the mud when we left was appalling, I have been into slush up to my knees. If any more socks are being made for me, make as long as possible, stockings in fact, as they shrink so. The blue ones from Phil only just cover my ankles now. ... love to all the family, Your loving son, Bertie.

Bertie survived the war and by Summer 1919 he was in Cologne with 2/1st Warwickshire Royal Horse Artillery as part of the army of occupation on the Rhine. But the return to civilian life in England was not what he expected. England was "in chaos" his son recalled him saying later in life. An advert in *The Times* newspaper caught Bertie's eye – the British firm Leach's were seeking sugar planters for their extensive estates in the Argentine. Like many young men after the war, Bertie decided to take up a new challenge and on 6 May 1920 set sail for Buenos Aires on the *Highland Rover*⁸. He made a good life for himself in the Argentine where he became known as Freddy rather than the Bertie of his youth in England.

¹ Wagon Lines are the gun carriages, which having been taken out to the Battery [Bty] position are then taken back away from the front line. The gun carriages were often horse-drawn.

² HAC is the Honourable Artillery Company.

³ Bertie is referring to the Bolshevik uprising in Russia.

⁴ FPCs were Field Service Postcards, with boxes to tick on one side (eg "I am well") but no other information to impart.

⁵ Mrs Matthews was probably staying in Lydford, Devon during the summer; Gosport in Hampshire was the family home.

⁶ English soldiers could take leave in Britain, crossing the Channel in "leave" boats escorted to avoid the German u-boats.

⁷ British army officers usually had a "servant" – a lower ranked soldier who assisted the officer with his every need. Later they were referred to as Batmen.

⁸ Passenger list from Ancestrylibrary.com.

THE BACK PAGE



Len Caldwell in court

Whanganui River farmer Percival Leonard Caldwell went to war with the Main Body and served on Gallipoli until he was wounded and invalided home on the *Willochra* in September 1915. In January 1917 he got into trouble in town outside Chavannes Hotel when he called local joiner Thomas Roscoe “a b..... shirker”. The police were called in and Len Caldwell was charged with using insulting language. (*NZ Truth* ran the story entitled *A Sanguinary Shirker* on 10 February 1917 which explains the word omitted from the report in the *Wanganui Chronicle* on 1 February 1917!) Despite strong defence by his solicitor Louis Cohen, Len was fined 5 shillings by the magistrate. Having already done his bit for the war effort, Len decided to enlist again and left New Zealand on 2 April 1917 bound for Plymouth. He served on the Western Front, was accidentally wounded in August 1917 and spent time in Walton on Thames and then Hornchurch, the main New Zealand hospitals in England, before returning to the Front. His luck ran out when he was killed in action on 1 October 1918, just six weeks before the war ended. 25-year old Len was awarded the Military Medal which was sent home to his family. His name is one of those on the honours board in the Ūpokongaro Memorial Hall. Glennis Syrett provided Len's photo.



Rangitikei Remembers

is the title of the DVD with stories of local people involved in the war who came from the towns and farming areas throughout the district. It was launched at the Majestic Theatre in Taihape on 30 November 2014 with showings being organised at different sites. It can be viewed at home on a computer and

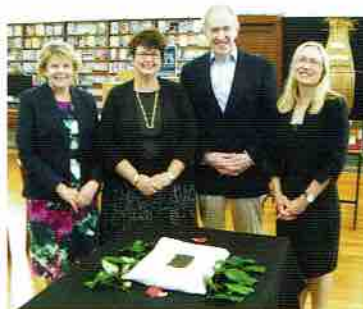
copies can be purchased for \$20 from the local museums who make up the Rangitikei Heritage group who master-minded the project. The Bulls Museum also has their exhibition on the mounted rifles which features the horses and their role in the war.

Billy Connell's War

The Whanganui Regional Museum's exhibition uses the photograph albums of a local man, Billy Connell, to illustrate the role of Whanganui people in the Great War. If you have not already seen it, do go along.

Soldier's diary comes home

During the war an unnamed soldier serving on Gallipoli with the Wellington West Coast Regiment wrote a diary. This small pocket book with miniscule handwriting was kept after the war by the grandfather of Jon Langley from Tewkesbury, England. It was probably rescued from the dead soldier's pockets when Jon's grandfather was on burial duty at Cape Helles while serving with the 7th Manchester Regiment. With no owner's name in the diary, it has taken many years of research and contact with our Alexander Library, which houses the archives of the regiment, to ascertain that it may have belonged to Charles Henry Dorsett, an Englishman who was working in Palmerston North when war broke out. Dorsett sailed with the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and served at Gallipoli where he was shot and wounded in the chest on 8 May 1915. Sadly he died the next day at No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station on Gallipoli.



The diary was welcomed home to Wanganui on 7 April 2015 by (l to r) Tricia Langley (diary owner's wife), Sally Jane Smith (Chair, Library Business Board), Jon Langley (diary owner) and Gillian Tasker (Heritage Services Leader, Library).

Herewini back on top



The marble statue of Herewini Whakarua was lifted gently by Emmett's crane back to the top of the Māori Memorial at Pākaitore/Moutoa Gardens on 2 June 2015. The statue had been restored by Goldfield Stone and displayed at the Sarjeant on the Quay in March. Further work is still needed to complete the restoration of the whole memorial.

For information on all national activities commemorating the centennial of World War One, visit the official website www.ww100.govt.nz.

