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FROM THE WHANGANUI
WWI CENTENARY PROGRAMME



WHANGANUI RETURNED SOLDIERS CLUB WAR AT HOME

Adjusting back into civilian life after experiencing the trauma of warfare was difficult for returning soldiers so local patriotic societies were set up to assist them with this. While these societies initially worked to raise and disburse funds essential to the well-being of the soldiers, they went on to provide other comforts and assist in gaining employment. One challenging issue that the patriotic societies faced was the best way to handle the undeniable mental stress suffered by many of the returned soldiers. It soon became evident that the soldiers themselves needed an organisation of their own to help manage these issues.

By the end of 1915 there were enough returned men in Whanganui to justify the formation of a club and a meeting was called by the Whanganui Patriotic Society on 21 January 1916 inviting returned soldiers to discuss the matter. Thirty responded and a decision was made to establish a club along the lines of the one set up in Wellington a week before. The sub-committee formed, then acted quickly and within a few days it had negotiated a 12 month lease on a building in Taupō Quay, known as Balmoral House. By the middle of February it was ready for occupation. The grand opening was held on Saturday 19 February and the keys were handed over to Lieutenant Aldridge, at the time the spokesman for the returned men.

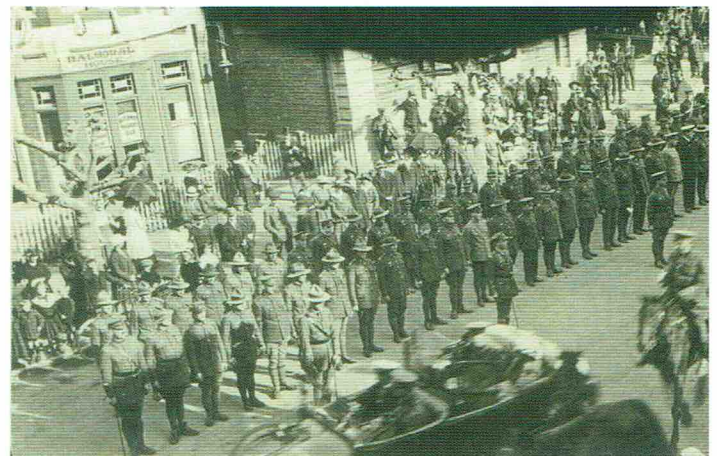
A few days later they held a meeting to elect a provisional committee to draw up rules and regulations for the new club. This took longer than expected and by early March the soldiers went public with their discontent at the length of time it was taking. The Whanganui soldiers were not alone in experiencing difficulties in being able to run their own club. At the end of June it was reported that in Wellington there had been a similar situation with friction between the committee of the Patriotic Society and the soldiers, concerning trusteeship of the club.

At the end of April delegates of Returned Soldiers Clubs around the country met in Wellington and resolved to form the Returned Soldiers Association which would assist with the formation of local branches. On 10 May a notice appeared in the Whanganui Herald that a general meeting of soldiers would be held that evening to appoint a permanent

management committee and officials. This was the first sign in over two months that the soldiers' organisation was officially starting to materialise. This discussion between the delegates of the Patriotic Society and soldiers, however, failed to reach an agreement on how the club should be run and another meeting was convened by Lieutenant Aldridge on 31 May.

This meeting was chaired by Mayor Charles Mackay and a report appeared a few days later in the local papers. It outlined that the Patriotic Society had the soldiers' interests and well-being at heart and were determined to do all they could to assist them. The rules drawn up by the Patriotic Society were discussed and agreed to, with some minor amendments. The soldiers had gained the representation they were after on their house committee which allowed them to run their own affairs and focus on attending to the needs of returned soldiers.

With grateful thanks to Peter Johnston for supplying information for this article.



The first Whanganui Returned Soldiers Club

Behind the parade of servicemen and Militia lined up for the arrival of the Governor General, Lord Liverpool, in 1917, you can see the first premises of the WRSC in Balmoral House on Taupō Quay.

Whanganui Regional Museum Collection Ref: 1966.142.2.24A

OUR FIRST ANZAC DAY

25 APRIL 1916

The Australians were the first to consider commemorating the landing at Anzac Cove with a special day. The New South Wales Government invited the heads of the churches to hold a memorial service on 25 April with all business suspended for an hour at midday and all traffic including trams, trains and boats to stop for a minute “as a tribute to the fallen dead”. People called for Anzac Day to be a day of mourning, with donations to be made towards building an Anzac Memorial, and as a day for recruiting more men.

New Zealand followed Australia’s lead. Unlike Australia where the Returned Soldiers’ Association was given charge of the arrangements, in New Zealand the civil authorities, the local councils and churches planned the commemorations. The New Zealand Government declared a half-holiday, businesses were encouraged to close for the day and sports events planned for the day, such as the Feilding Jockey Club’s race meeting, were postponed.

In Whanganui Mayor Mackay announced a public holiday from 1.00pm with a procession of returned soldiers, Territorials, cadets, veterans, bands and National Reserves marching from the Drill Hall (site of the present War Memorial Centre) to the service of remembrance at Cooks Gardens at 2.30pm. A fundraising afternoon tea following the service raised more than £100 to replace equipment lost in a fire at the New Zealand Stationary Hospital on Salonika.

Meanwhile, in northern France the Whanganui men of the Wellington Infantry Battalion settled into their billets in Wittes in preparation for their first experience of war on the Western Front at Armentieres.



Postcard, Anzacs in France

Even as the first Anzac Day was being commemorated in New Zealand, kiwi servicemen, including those from Whanganui, mostly in the Wellington Infantry Brigade, were training and preparing to enter trench warfare on the Western Front in France.

Whanganui Regional Museum Collection Ref: 1802.3795

WOMEN AT WAR

ANNIE’S WAR

Women’s views of the war were seldom published as the diaries recording their thoughts were often kept within the family.

Annie Montgomerie, a Whanganui woman who lived on a farm called *Taukoro* in the Parapara, kept diaries in which she recorded family events during the war. She and her husband Roger, and their children, Winifred (Wid), Oswald (Os), Seton and Alexandra (Al), all travelled to Britain so that the sons could enlist as pilots in the Royal Flying Corps. Susanna Norris, a granddaughter of Annie, transcribed these diaries to write a book called *Annie’s War*.

The family boarded the RMS *Remuera* on 22 June 1916 and returned to Auckland on 25 December 1919. The two sons involved in the war returned home on 28 January 1920. Annie’s diary contains interesting details of her family, her thoughts on the war, wartime London life and Kiwi views on the English. A small selection of Annie’s diary entries are below, as examples of her writing

Sunday 6 August 1916

“It was so strange to be really gazing on English hills and English everything. It was rather disappointing to find everything brown instead of the beautiful green we had always been promised, but it was England and safety ... Colonel Standish told his wife that our trip had been the most dangerous since the beginning of the war: four submarines had been caught in the last few days, one yesterday just on our track ...”

Friday 23 March 1917

“... Thank goodness some Americans were drowned in the last American boat sank, surely old ‘Won’t Fight Wilson’ will have to play the man now. Mrs Watts is very worried about her boy in France. It’s pitiful to see the anxiety these poor mothers go through ...”

Tuesday 24 April 1917

“Went to Kew Gardens with Wid and Al. It was just a little too early, but the daffodils in one place were beautiful, and blue flowers [bluebells] were worth seeing ... English people are in three strata: lowest, sordid, then middle class smug, and third and highest swollen headed and charmingly inefficient ...”

Thursday 25 December 1919 Landed at Auckland

“Up early and busy until breakfast ... Al was the first to discover Auntie Jen and I ran down the gangway and got to her. She had been waiting on wharf since 5 o/c this morning, all by herself. It was heavenly to see her after all these years ... An unforgettable Christmas.”

With grateful thanks to Susanna Norris, author of *Annie’s War*, for permission to use text from her book.

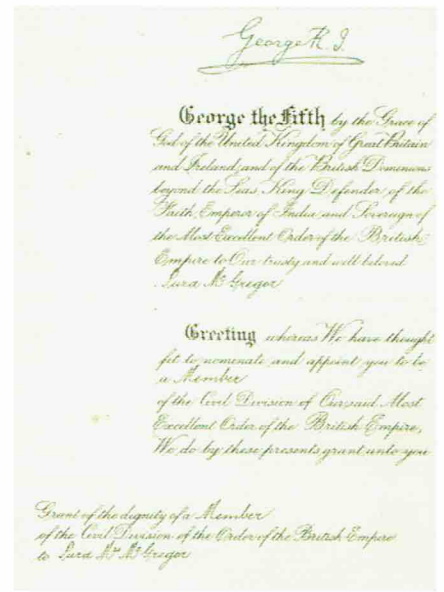


Annie Montgomerie with two of her servicemen sons
Roger Oswald is at Annie's left while
Huw Seton is at her right.

Susannah Norris Collection



New Zealand Army Nurse's uniform
World War I uniform owned and worn
by Sister Vida MacLean while on active
service, consisting of a long cotton dress,
a long apron, a cotton cap and a short
red felt cape. WRM Collection Ref: 1995.44.33



Pura Te Manihera McGregor's OBE
Royal Warrant conferring Order of the British
Empire upon Pura McGregor
WRM Collection Ref: 1956.120

SISTER VIDA MACLEAN'S WAR

Trained in Whanganui, Vida MacLean served with the Army Nursing Service in Samoa, Egypt and England during World War I.

At the outbreak of war, hundreds of nurses from all over New Zealand volunteered for the New Zealand Army Nursing Service, keen to go to war and 'do their bit for New Zealand' and 'Home' which is how Britain was still viewed by settler descendants in New Zealand at the time.

From August 1914 to March 1915 she was attached to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and served in Samoa. She then served in Cairo, and later, in the No 1 New Zealand General Hospital at Brockenhurst in England where she rose to be Matron.

Vida was mentioned in dispatches twice, in 1916 and 1918. Nurses proved their worth at the front and in the large hospitals that cared for the thousands of men wounded and ill.

When the war was over, 17 New Zealand Army nurses had died. Vida returned to New Zealand and held many different senior nursing and teaching posts. She spent 1938-1955 in Calcutta, developing and running a Mothercraft clinic. She retired to Whanganui, and died in 1964.

PURA TE MANIHERA MCGREGOR'S WAR

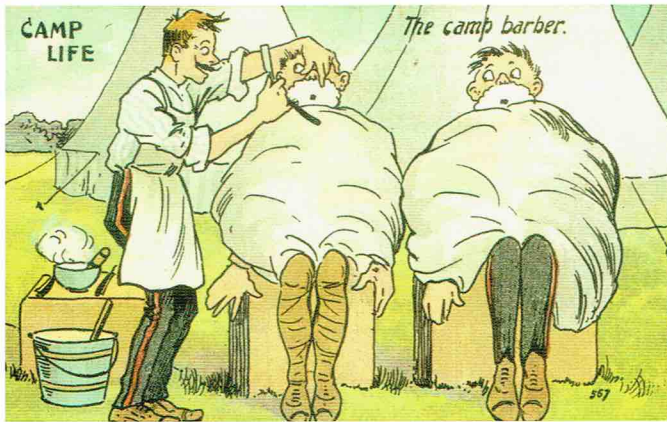
Ngāti Tūpoho/Ngāti Ruaka/Te Arawa

During World War I Pura Te Manihera worked hard to raise money for patriotic causes. A Queen Carnival was held as a fundraising campaign for local soldiers where votes were made through monetary contributions. Pura won Queen of the Carnival. She received an OBE for her efforts during the war. Awarded by King George V and signed by his son Edward Prince of Wales, the warrant confers membership of the Civil Division of the Order of the British Empire on Pura McGregor (her married name).

Pura Te Manihera was always a forceful character. As a girl of about 13 years old in 1868, she accompanied Kēpa Te Rangihiwini and his kūpapa, the Māori soldiers who supported the Government. This particular campaign was to pursue the famed warrior and prophet Te Kooti who had successfully evaded the British Imperial and local militia troops. Pura was assigned the honour of leading the haka of victory after battle, having climbed a tree and flown the Union Jack to rally the men. She was recommended for the New Zealand War Medal, but being a female, the recommendation was turned down.

Pura was always active in her community, joining in on tree planting expeditions and other landscaping projects. She helped raise funds for the development of Virginia Lake and was instrumental in enlisting the help of local and upriver Māori in the work of the Wanganui Beautifying Society of which she was a member.

After her death in 1920, at the initiative of Whanganui Māori, a memorial waka overlooking Virginia Lake (Rotokawau) was installed as a memorial to Pura in 1921. The waka was a significant landmark for nearly 70 years until it eventually fell and broke and was finally removed in 1988.



Comic postcard, World War I

Whanganui Regional Museum Collection Ref: 1802.3775

NEW ZEALAND WORLD WAR I SLANG

Bill Masseys	Military boots
Bint	Young woman (from Arabic, daughter)
Bombay bloomers	Servicemen's baggy shorts
Camel dung	Egyptian cigarettes
Conchie	Conscientious objector
Cootie	Louse
Gallipoli gallop	Dysentery
Inch and pinch	Gallipoli Peninsula
Kerbside jockey	Safe job
Kiwi	New Zealand serviceman
Komaty	Dead or wounded soldier
North Sea rabbits	Herrings
Shot full of holes	Drunk
Turkey off	Absent without leave

WWI CENTENARY SCULPTURE PROJECT FOR MAINSTREET, WHANGANUI

In 2015 pupils from Keith Street School, Okoia School, St Mary's School and Carlton School in Whanganui worked with the Sarjeant Gallery Education Team, Sietske Jansma and Andrea Gardner, on a project focusing on the animals that were involved in World War I.

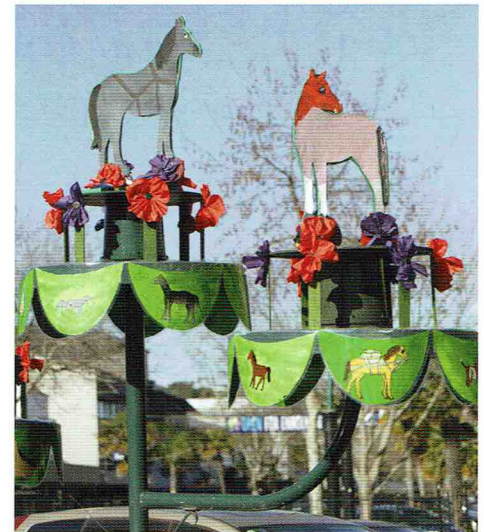
Individual artworks made from recycled banners and other mixed media were assembled into four group sculptures on plinths along Victoria Avenue. These "memorials" paid tribute to the animals that were vital in supporting soldiers and the war effort during the war and featured horses, dogs and pigeons.

Horses carried officers into the field or hauled heavy loads of supplies. Dogs worked as sentries, scouts, ratters, casualty finders, messengers and mascots.

Pigeons, called the "winged wireless", carried messages and with their speed and strength had a 95% success rate. This project honoured the memory of these animals.

Mainstreet Wanganui helped to facilitate this project.

For over 20 years the Sarjeant Gallery has held a contract with the Ministry of Education to provide Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) through practical art activities for primary to secondary students in the Whanganui region. The education team at the Sarjeant Gallery was proud to have these sculptures on view and congratulated the students for their wonderful artwork.



Anzac Animals
Horses in Victoria Avenue.
Sarjeant Gallery Photograph

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