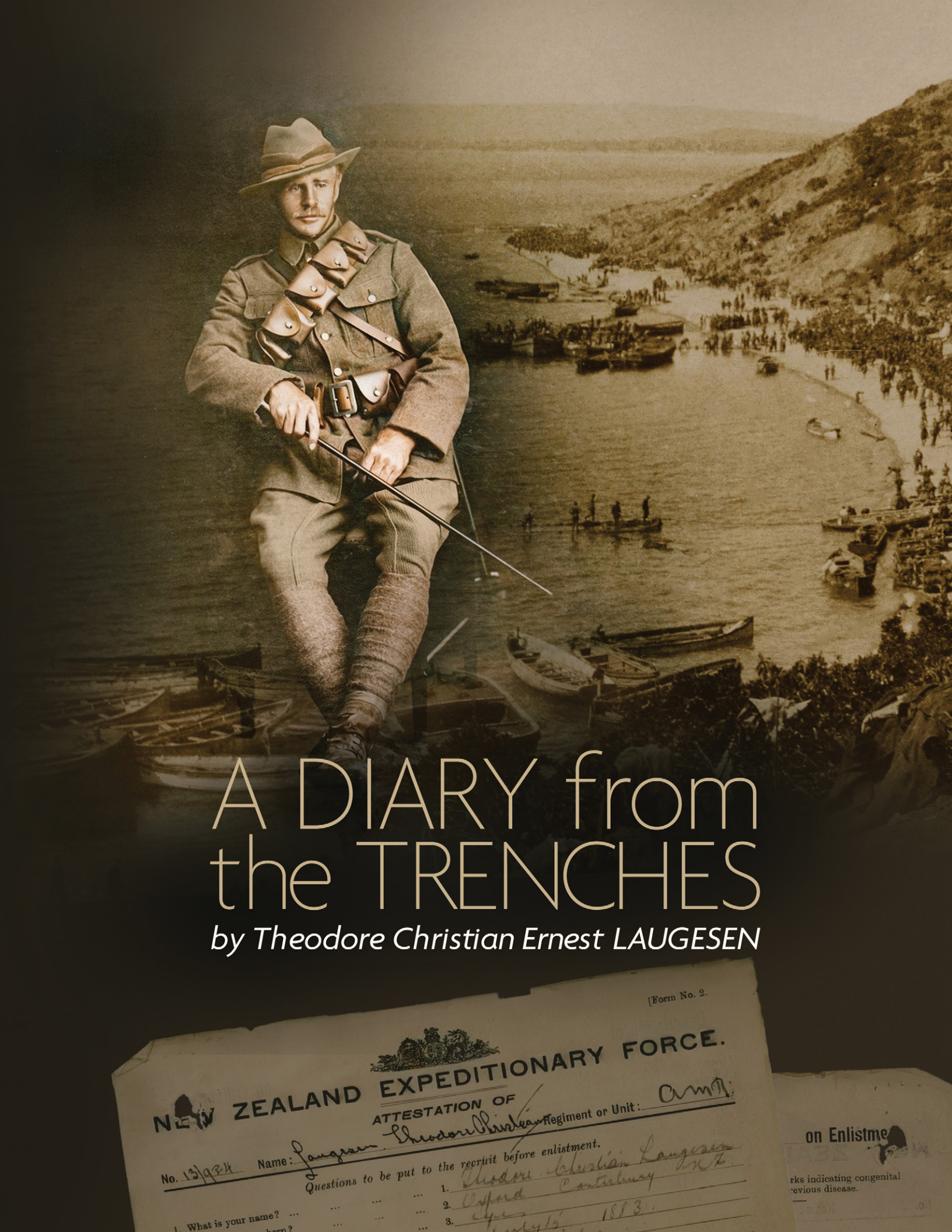


A DIARY from the TRENCHES

by Theodore Christian Ernest LAUGESEN

[Form No. 2.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

ATTESTATION OF

No. 13934 Name: Laugesen Theodore Christian Regiment or Unit: Army

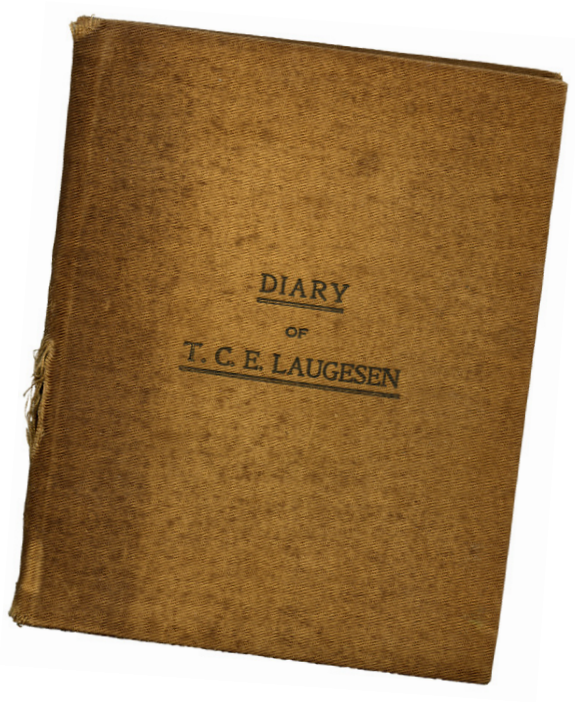
Questions to be put to the recruit before enlistment.

1. What is your name? ... ... 1. Theodore Christian Laugesen
2. ... ... 2. Oxford Canterbury N.Z.
3. ... ... 3. Farmer 1883.

on Enlistme

rks indicating congenital
evious disease.

Introduction



Theodore was born in Oxford N.Z. in 1883 to Christian Louis and Sophie Cecilie Laugesen. His mother died a year later, he is one of 10 siblings all up. His father eventually re-married some 12 years later but for the most part his of his up-bringing he was raised by his father and 5 older brothers and 2 older sisters, Dagmar taking on the role of running the household. He was educated at the Normal and Kaikoura Town Schools. Afterwards he was joined his father in the sawmilling business. He took a great interest in rifle shooting, and became a first-class marksman and horseman. He volunteered for service in the Boer War, but was not accepted on account of his age being then only 17.

His father Christian served in the Danish Army during the war against Germany in the 1864 ~ the second Schleswig War, and was awarded the Danish war medal for bravery. At the time of the outbreak of WW1 Theo had moved up north and was working for his brother-n-Law William Glassey Doyle and his wife Juliana on their 'Tennesee Station Farm' just out of Rotorua.

At the end of 1914 Theo eagerly offered his services, and left with the 4th Waikato Mounted Rifles on the 17th April 1915, as part of "A" Squadron, The Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment consisting of 3 Officers & 104 Other Ranks, and it's where his diary begins.





Theodore
aged 14.



Theo and Dagmar





Theo out camping Puhi Puhi.



Sophie & Emilie's
headstone,
Oxford,
Canterbury,
N.Z.



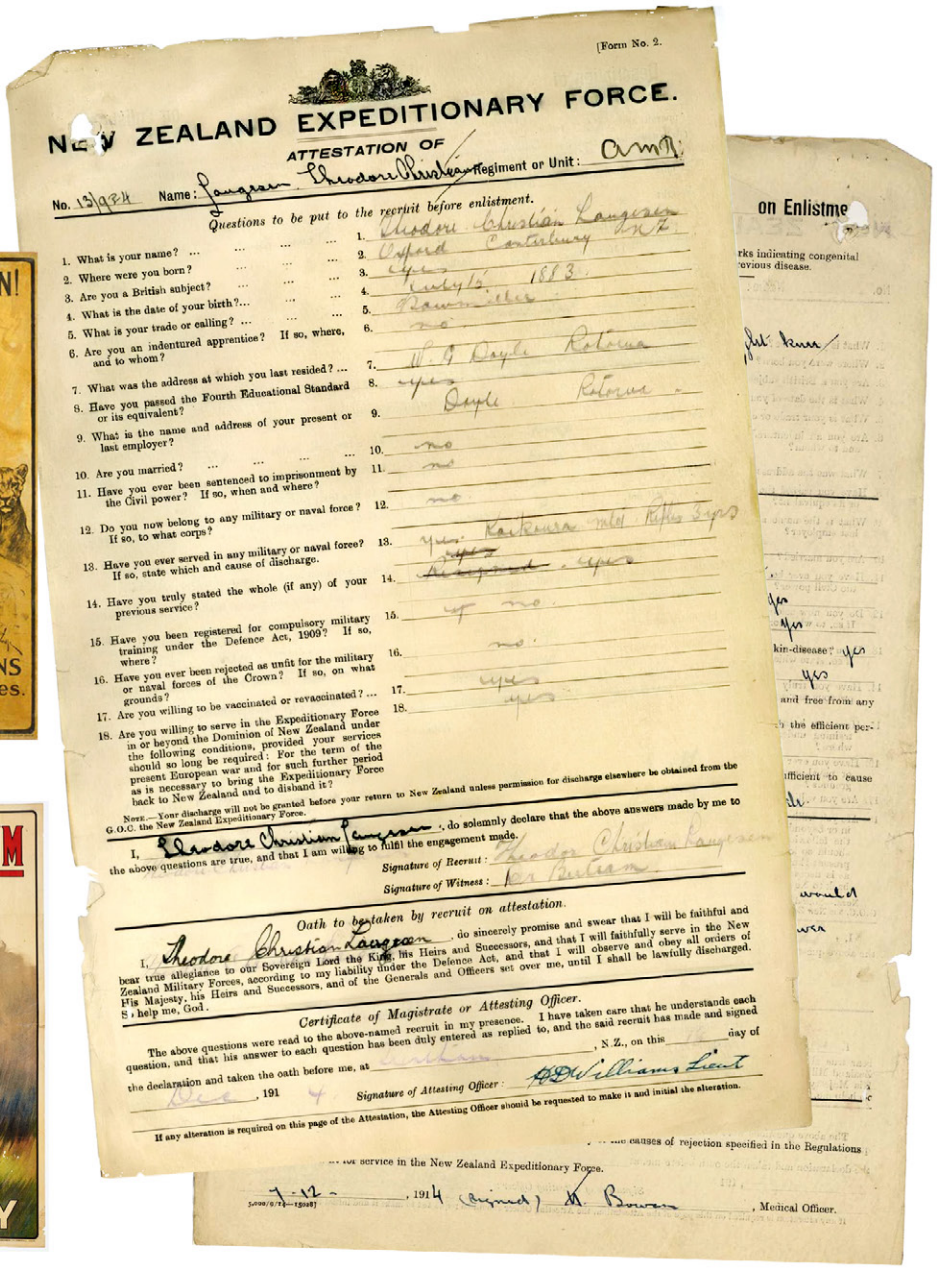
right to left: Christian, Albert, Willie, Theodore (behind),
Frank, Frederick. Back row: unknown workers. 1906.



Christian and seven of his children from marriages to Emilie and Sophie.
Back (left to right) Christian, Louis, Theodore, William, Albert,
Front Juliana, Frank, Dagmar. After returning to Christchurch around 1891.






[Form No. 2.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

ATTESTATION OF

No. 13/424 Name: Langsen Theodore Christian Regiment or Unit: Cmd.

Questions to be put to the recruit before enlistment.

1. What is your name? — 1. Theodore Christian Langsen
2. Where were you born? — 2. Oxford Canterbury N.Z.
3. Are you a British subject? — 3. Yes
4. What is the date of your birth? — 4. July 15 1883
5. What is your trade or calling? — 5. Farmer Settler
6. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? — 6. No
7. What was the address at which you last resided? — 7. W. G. Doyle Rotorua
8. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? — 8. Yes
9. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? — 9. Doyle Rotorua
10. Are you married? — 10. No
11. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? — 11. No
12. Do you now belong to any military or naval force? If so, to what corps? — 12. No
13. Have you ever served in any military or naval force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. — 13. Yes Kaikoura Mtd Rifles 3 yrs Resigned 4 yrs
14. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? — 14. Yes
15. Have you been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where? — 15. Yes No.
16. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the military or naval forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? — 16. No
17. Are you willing to be vaccinated or revaccinated? — 17. Yes
18. Are you willing to serve in the Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand under the following conditions, provided your services should so long be required: For the term of the present European war and for such further period as is necessary to bring the Expeditionary Force back to New Zealand and to disband it? — 18. Yes

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before your return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, Theodore Christian Langsen, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Signature of Recruit: Theodore Christian Langsen

Signature of Witness: H. Barnes

Oath to be taken by recruit on attestation.

I, Theodore Christian Langsen, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, his Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Military Forces, according to my liability under the Defence Act, and that I will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. S. help me, God.

Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer.

The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Christchurch, N.Z., on this 4 day of Dec, 191

Signature of Attesting Officer: H.D. Williams Lieut

If any alteration is required on this page of the Attestation, the Attesting Officer should be requested to make it and initial the alteration.

... causes of rejection specified in the Regulations ... service in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

7-12-, 1914 (Signed) H. Barnes, Medical Officer.

5/000/6/12—15008

on Enlistme

rks indicating congenital vious disease.

kin-disease? yes

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the efficient per-

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left: The Kaikoura Mounted Rifles joining the Nelson & Marlborough Mounted Rifles marching along West End Kaikoura.

The Mounted Rifles troops and their horses marched to North Canterbury heading to Lyttleton, Canterbury. The group started their journey at Nelson & continuing south, as more troopers joined the march from towns along the way. At Kaikoura The Kaikoura Brass Band leads the march. The troopers & horses boarded the train at Parnassus to Lyttleton, and on to the troop ship to Wellington.

Account of the Trip Over 1915

I take up this diary in the Red Sea, nothing very exciting has happened so far.

May 23rd

We have lost a good many horses and now the ship loses about two every day. We have not had any good food so far and there has been a lot of growling. It is scandalous the way we have been fed. We are two days sail off Port Suez.


Horses on a Troopship - bound for EGYPT 1917

We called in at Albany and had a route march, and at Aden to drop the mails. We have passed a few ships here and there and saw a few rocky islets. It is not quite so hot to-day as a little breeze is blowing.

We disembarked at Suez and went by train to Cairo. It was very hot whilst passing through the desert but it was better when we got amongst the green fields of the Nile Valley. We camped on the desert a few miles from Cairo outside Zeitoun, and had a humdrum time leading horses, and at last nine men out of each squadron were sent to the front. We saw them off with cheers. A few days after we all got ready to go, and this is where I will take up this diary in earnest as there may be something exciting.

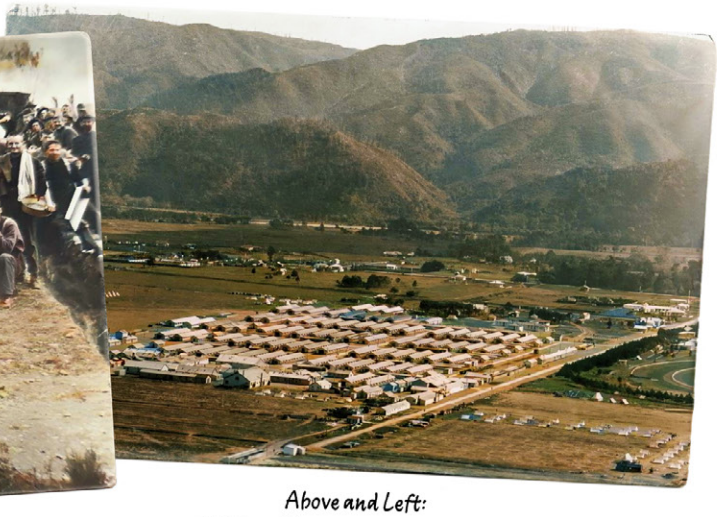
August 16th

We started this morning with our packs up and two hundred rounds of ammunition. At two o'clock in the morning all the remainder of the 4th Contingent. We tramped to the train, not a cheer to send us off, as all the fifth lot were in bed, but we did not mind we were all happy as we could be getting away from that everlasting grooming. We travelled all the morning till ten o'clock through the same old Egyptian scenery, nothing but rice and cotton fields for miles. At ten o'clock we pulled up at the wharf at Alexandria, and were marched on to H.M. Troopship "Melville" and up went the anchor, and away we went bound for the Dardanelles at last.

August 17th

Was out early, not a sail in sight we sleep in hammocks in this ship, a big improvement on the bunks, food very good. Got bad news to-day by wireless. The Troopship which we believed our mates were in who went a day or two ago was sunk by a submarine, and twelve hundred poor chaps have gone to the bottom. Only 400 saved out of 1600. It gives a shock and a strong lookout is placed around the ship. I got my overcoat and slept on deck. I was taking no chances.





Above and Left:
Military Training Camp Trentham
Below: Horses Loaded on Ship for Egypt.

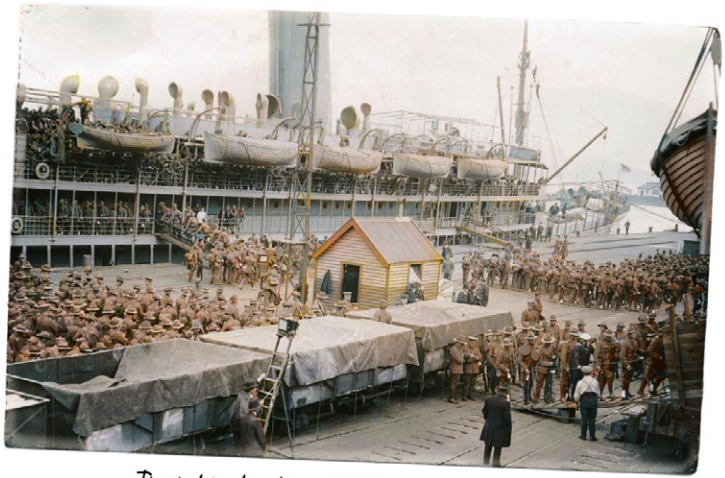


HMNZT 21 Troopship SS Willochra
Leaving Wellington for the 38 day Voyage to Suez.





Theo in Etaples 1916



Troopships Loading at Wellington for the to Suez.



August 18th

No sign of submarines, but had to dodge a few floating mines, and one came quite close and about a dozen rifles were fired at it, but they did not manage to explode it. They brought up a mine sweeper to pick them up. We all got our rifles ready.

August 19th

Here we are about ten o'clock. We sighted the island of Lemnos and it was a sight. We sailed in through rows of mines. Miles of them and all sorts of battleships in rows, French and English Hospital ships, Tugs, Paddle Steamers and Tramps. Well I have never seen so many ships together before, and I have seen London and Tilbury Docks. It was a great sight as we sailed between them all and anchored close in shore. This island belongs to Greece, and is all farms, and on all the spurs are old flour mills, with their windmills to work them and from the ship we can see small towns back in the hills and valleys, and cows getting driven to get milked and reminds us all of Home, Sweet Home, which many of us may never see again. We don't know what the morning will bring as we are waiting for further orders.

August 20th



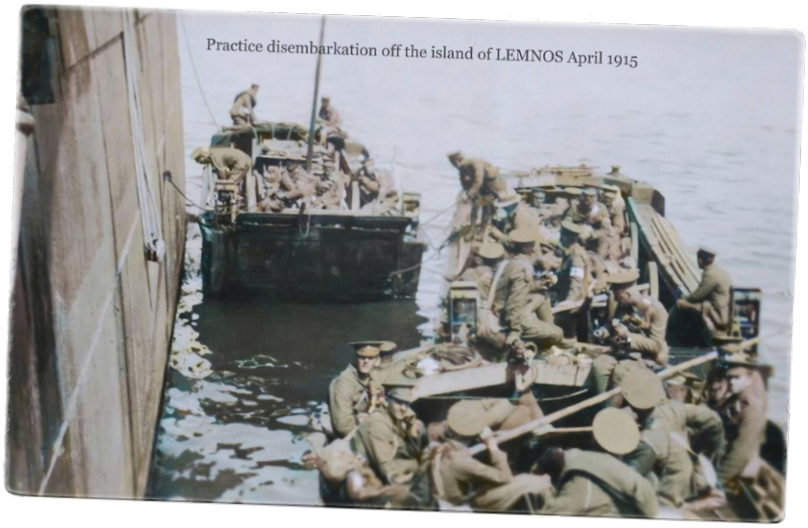
We are still in Lemnos, a splendid day. We all got over the side and had a grand swim. We anchored close in shore and you can sit on one side of the boat and see nothing but old fashioned windmills and cows and sheep, and stacks of hay; and walk round the other side of the ship and there you see the grim realities of war, rows and rows of ships packed with troops and battleships galore. We don't know yet when we will sail, it is only an hour's sail from here to the Dardanelles, and to-night we saw a steamer packed with Australians, sailing out and we cheered ourselves hoarse. Most of the Auckland Brigade at the front are wiped out, only 22 men left and we have not enough men here to make them up, but though we are only few we will give a good account of ourselves. We are being fed like fighting cocks and are getting very fat. Every now and then my thoughts go back to dear old New Zealand, and I think of the loved ones at 'Tennessee' tonight.

1915

August 21st

Still here in Lemnos. Hear all sorts of rumours. Heard the 'Arabic' was sunk. Bad news from all sides but we must just bristle up, and grit our teeth and keep on keeping on. Had a row around the shipping and spoke to some of the wounded New Zealanders in a hospital ship. They did look broken up, all bandages. Spoke to a Wellington Infantry man from Dannevirke and he told me that Kitchener's new army was no good. As soon as the officers are shot they retreat. Wellington Infantry Brigade of 400 strong entrenched supported on the left and right by Welsh troops of Tommies, and the Tommies retreated and the Turks got on every side of the New Zealanders, and the warships had to open fire on our boys as well as the Turks, and only 80 came out of it alive, out of 400 men just because the Welsh would not stick it out. Had a little rain today and it looks as if we will soon have winter. The climate here is just like New Zealand and we are all picking up fast. We need to too, as we all got very thin in Egypt.

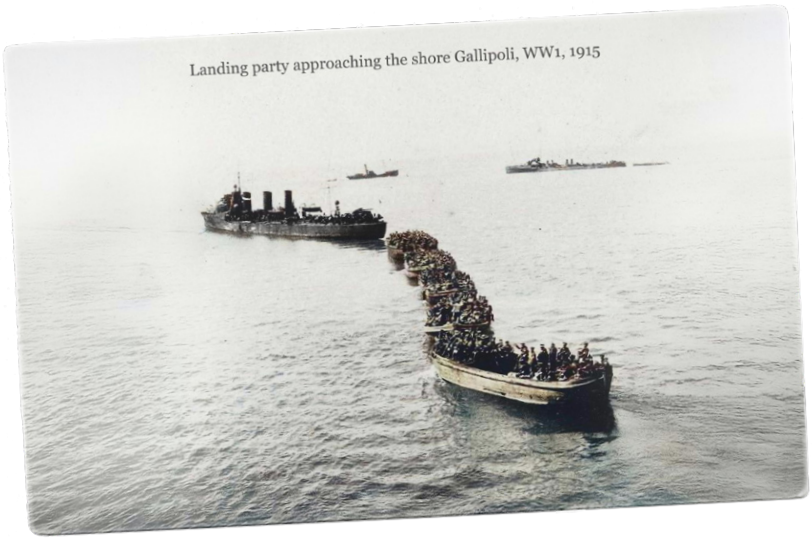
August 22nd


Practice disembarkation off the island of LEMNOS April 1915

We got word at two o'clock to sail for the Dardanelles in H.M.S. Partridge. We all got on the move and set sail at five o'clock, and after four hours sail we got to Gaba Tepe and could hear the rifles crack. We were taken off in litters and had to change our bandoliers for infantry gear with trench tools. We only had a bit of bully beef and biscuits, and weighed down with our swags and ammunition we were marched into a leading trench, and away up steep hills, still in a deep trench. The Turks were on a higher ridge above us, and the bullets kept whizzing over. They could not see us as it was about eleven o'clock at night. After what seemed miles of troops passing men lying in little caves, dug out of the side of the trench we at last got to an outpost. There we had to lie down in the bottom of a trench as all the dug-outs were filled up and all the men were walking over us all night, and the shells screeching overhead. The officers disappeared altogether and there we were left to ourselves.

August 23rd

In the morning. We are not much better off still had to stand up in the trench. We were all going to make dug-outs for ourselves when we were told that we were going to make a move tonight out to the advance trenches, so we are in for a slap up as they say here. I did not know how I would take it at first but I find I do not take a bit of notice at all. I suppose I have inherited a bit of Father's blood in me. When the big guns boom it makes the ground fairly tremble where you sit. It is very rough country here, very steep, something like Monk's Hill at Kaikoura. The land is just like at 'Tennessee', of pumice and it smells like mummys or a graveyard. The hills at a distance are just like out at Flaxmill, only not quite so high. It is twelve o'clock now and they say we move off at one, so I will fill this in later on. Things are moving now, we have been called out of our trenches, and sent to the trenches further out. We are now lying in a gully waiting our turn for the trenches. The aeroplanes are soaring overhead and every now and again explosive bullets burst just over my head, and a shower of shrapnel flew around and one piece went into the ground


Landing party approaching the shore Gallipoli, WW1, 1915

only two feet away from my foot. Between it all the sharp crack of the rifles. In the gully we are lying, small scrub. It is not a very nice sensation when a shell comes whizzing and you look up and wonder where it is about to land. It is a cruel war and we haven't near enough men. The Turks outnumber us two to one, and it is only the men's bravery which carries them on. The Sergeant is calling the men so I may have to go.

August 24th

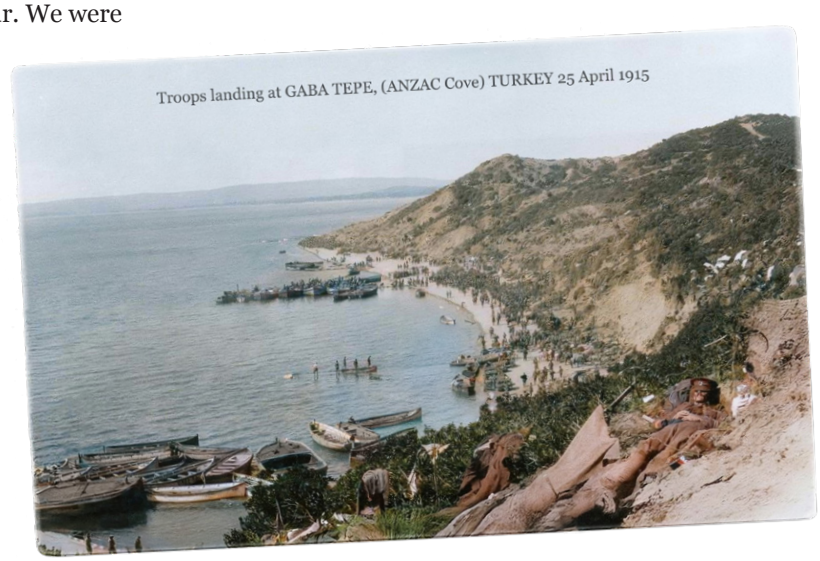
Did not go into the trenches last night, a quieter day. Was nearly sniped as I went back for my swag.

August 25th

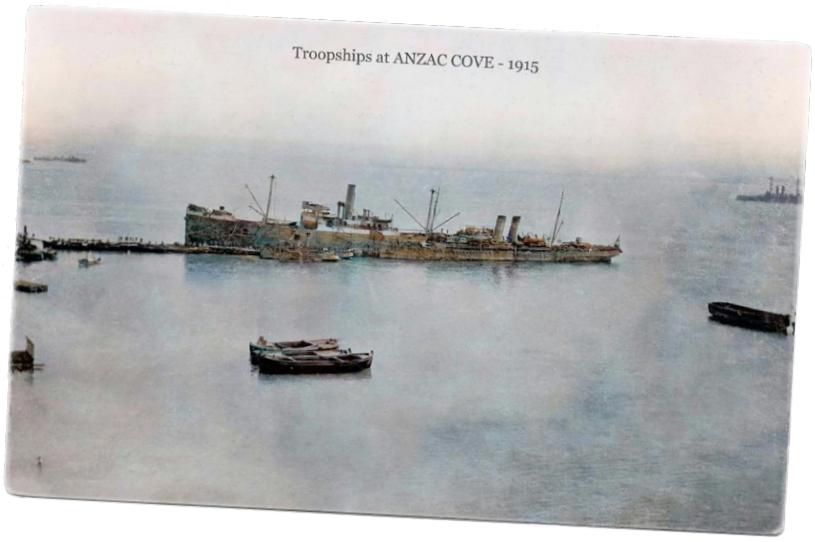
Went into the trenches last night at half past seven, got into our harness and got loaded with two hundred rounds of ammunition and our overcoats for throwing over bombs, that drop into the trenches and besides they gave us a lot of long logs to carry to place over our trench. Well away we marched and I wondered if I was to come back after twenty four hours. After tramping in single file up hills and across the flat the bullets whizzing past our heads just like a bee buzzing past your head - not a man ducked. Then we entered the sap and it was very low and not finished. The Turks could see any post sticking up in the air and they sent a perfect raid of bullets.

I can't say I was not afraid. I had all my work cut out getting around the bends of the trench. It was a jamb all the way, for we were passing over our men who were flattened against the sides of the trench, and in small holes at the side. By the time I got up to the trench where the others were I was dead beat.

The 4th Waikato's had the post of honour. We were on the extreme right and the trench we held was taken by us two nights previous from the Turks. We did not get all the trench and where I was placed in the morning there was just one row of sandbags across the trench, separating me from the post that the Turks still held. There were four corpses, four Turks and one poor Otago chap there. They were all swollen and black and the stench was awful. Where I was posted I just had my rifle across the bags separating me from the Turkish trench and every now and then blazing away.


Troops landing at GABA TEPE, (ANZAC Cove) TURKEY 25 April 1915

A bomb thrower was standing just behind me and every now and then he



would throw a bomb over my head to the Turks who were about a chain along the trench. It was a good job the trench took a bend just ahead or they would have had me with a machine gun. Only three yards along the trench a gruesome object showed ahead, a Turk had been trying to get out of the trench and shrapnel had caught him just before he had drawn his legs out, and he had been there for over a week. One foot had been blown off and his stomach was hanging out, and where his eyes had been were only two black holes, and his head was twisted around as if he was staring at me, and as soon as the flies got about they were going in and out of his eye sockets.

And next to him loomed another body up in the scrub. Then turning around and looking back into our trench just two yards back on the edge of the trench another, and I heaped a bit of earth over the front of him just to get him out of my sight.

Then a bit further back on the top of the trench was a New Zealander. When you stood in the trench by the side of him if you put out your hand you could have grasped his which was turned up as if imploring and was black. We could not bury him. If you put your head up at once a machine gun would scatter the earth over you, and the bullets would also rip into the dead ones, and the trench would become hell, so we kept our heads well down. It was as near hell as ever I want to get

We were twenty-four hours there before relieved, and the bread was brought up to us. As soon as it was put down the flies made it black, after sitting on the dead they went on the bread. I could not eat and so for twenty four hours I only had a little rum and water, so you can imagine what it was like.

In the morning the enemy got on to us with shrapnel, it should be called 'death knell', as it makes a man just a wreck of nerves. When you hear the bang you listen for the whistle of it and duck and flatten yourself at the side of the trenches and make yourself as small as possible, then when she gets overhead she bursts and she fairly lifts you up and deafens you for a while and you quiver all over.

The order came along that we had to dig ourselves in and it was as hot as hell all day and the place was black with flies, and the corpses got blacker and blacker and the stench worse.

Well at last we were relieved about ten at night. The Turks made one counter attack but we drove them alright. I was glad to get back to our quarters that night and I just stretched out and went to sleep and slept till morning.

August 26th

Had a rest today from the trenches, but was put on fatigue, building a bomb proof shelter for a general. Had a bathe in the sea and a good swim, went early as the Turks shell the beach with shrapnel. Went for water and was nearly sniped. General Godley gave us a speech tonight and we are in for a bayonet charge tomorrow so this may be my last entry in this diary and I hope that if anyone posts this that Julie will get it. My thoughts go out to my dear ones across the sea in dear New Zealand and Tennessee. Goodnight as it is too dark to write.

August 27th

We are all getting prepared for a charge and it may come off in daylight, if so, there will be a lot of us go under. I hope our efforts will have done a little good to finish this war.

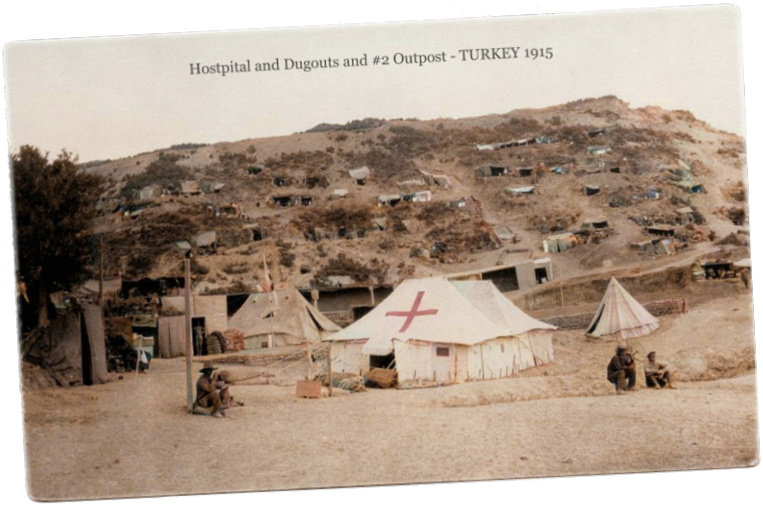
August 28th

I am fairly lucky to be able to take up this diary, as I am the only Waikato man to come out of this charge unwounded. There were three hundred went into the charge and only 29 came out unwounded. There were 35 of our Waikato Regiment went into the charge and I am the only one to come through. We charged in broad daylight and we started about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was a bit trying sitting down in the trench dodging shrapnel. A hot lump of shell fell into my lap, the Connaught Rangers were on the same trench as us and acted as our support. When the word came to charge the Connaught Rangers helped us out of our trenches. I threw my rifle out of the trench and was hoisted out by two Irish Connaught Rangers and we had orders to charge over two lines of trenches and hold the third on the brow of the hill. It was quite in the open, just small scrub on the slope. Well I crouched low and sprinted for the first Turkish trench.



There were two machine guns and shrapnel turned on us besides rifle fire. We had about 50 yards to run and the poor chaps were falling all around me. About three feet from the Turkish trench I knelt down and fired at the loopholes in the trench that the Turks were firing from. Then I had a bomb slung at my waist, and undoing it I lifted it and threw it into the Turkish trench and it killed three and wounded one. I then sprang over the trench and one wounded Turk put up his arms for mercy. I shouted to him to stop there and rushed on till I got into a Turkish sap and followed it along crawling over a lot of our wounded mates who were groaning horribly. At last we got to the second trench and held it although there were only 22 of the three squadrons left to carry on. There were also fourteen behind me and eight in front and the Connaught Rangers failed to follow us and ran into another support of New Zealanders whose officer drove them out with his revolver and a lot of them were killed. If they had only followed us up we would have got the third trench, but we had to wait for supports and the Turks throwing bombs on top of us all the time.

One of my mates called Genning Simpkins was hit on the head and was crying out for water so I crawled and gave him a drink. I tried to take his equipment off but had to cut it with my sheath knife. I then got his water bottle for him and then had to leave him. At last reinforcements came up and we got the wounded out to another trench but they had to lie all night and the next day before we could get them out. I was nearly killed a dozen times that night but we held the trench in-spite of the Turkish counter attack. I was relieved the next night. I nearly lost my voice by a shell bursting only a yard away and covering me with dirt. It was a horrible sight, pieces of men lying about. I think the New Zealand Mounteds some of the



bravest troops, they never waver in a charge. I saw one poor chap I knew charging with one hand blown off. This war is hell on earth. I hope they don't put me in another charge for a while.

August 29th

In the rest camp, but it is not very safe here. One of my mates had his hand shot through by a shrapnel bullet. I have just had my hand dressed and bandaged for septic poisoning. If you get a small bit of skin knocked off it will go bad and if you don't get it dressed your hand will swell up, the flies poison it as there are so many corpses lying about. My word, I would give anything to be in peaceful New Zealand again. It is beautiful weather now but the nights are getting very cold.

Our aeroplane is sailing overhead. We always like to see them as the Turks do not dare to fire, as they would give away their gun positions. The aeroplanes would send a wireless message to the warships and the guns would soon be smashed. There was a German machine over us this morning and she dropped a couple of bombs but they did not do any damage. Our aeroplane chased her away.

August 30th

We were sent into the trenches today and acted as inlying pickets. There are only 13 men of the Waikato troop fit for duty, only two of them are main body men that are left. We were placed in a stinking trench, dead mates all around us. I got a periscope and went along to where I charged from, and had a look at that fateful fifty yards where all our poor mates were wiped out. The shrapnel had hit the loose scrub and a fire had swept over all my poor dead mates, and there they were all lying blackened corpses. I turned away sick at heart, and went back along the trench where I could not see them. Several of the chaps have gone mad and have had to be taken away and others are going grey. Mine is alright yet.

Went down and had a swim tonight. You get gradually weaker and weaker as if you were drunk. It is very cramped up in the trenches for so long. Had a good sleep tonight.

August 31st

Same old game, went into the trenches as a lying in picket. Went along and had a look where I had charged across, it is all black now. We are all getting very thin. There was an enquiry today on the chaps who are missing, and I had to give evidence as I was the only one to come through. We have half our men held in reserve and when the Connaughts did not support us, they all charged to our rescue and we lost most of them. The gallant 4th Waikato Squadron of 108 men, now comprises 9 men and three of them are main body men, so that leaves 6 men available. We have lost our Commander, Lieut. Moore sadly, also Lieut. Kittle, killed. All our sergeants gone, and three men and one sergeant gone mad. The people at home do not know what we go through. It was far better when the men fought in the open. Now you get packed into a trench, two deep, and wherever a bomb falls in there are four or five men blown to pieces. Then you have the shells bursting overhead and the machine guns and rifles sweeping over the trenches and you have to keep sticking your head up to see if the Turks are charging.



September 1st

Same as the other day, all night in the trenches. The flies are terrible. You have to keep sweeping your hand across your face continually, and the Turkish trenches are full of lice, and you are covered in no time.

September 2nd

I do hope they will soon give us a rest. Night after night we have to stand holding our rifles, no wonder some go mad. Another of our chaps killed while he was asleep. You are not safe anywhere. War again in the trenches. The Turks do not fight in the daytime, but at 7 o'clock at night both sides start throwing bombs and it makes night hideous.

We keep sending up sky rockets to light the ground ahead, and if you see a Turk creeping up through the loose scrub you shoot him. You can't walk anywhere without falling over a dead Turk. After coming out of the trenches this morning I was so tired I did not have any breakfast and lay down, then my name was called and I had to join a fatigue party to go and clear up the trenches and we had nothing to eat till dinnertime.

Carrying heavy ammunitions all the morning out of the trenches and was nearly blown to pieces with a seventy-five. The shell buried itself about a foot away and burst, knocking me flat and half burying me in earth. My head is still ringing with it. There is some talk about us having a rest, I hope it is true. I am just skin and bone. Oh' how I would like to be at 'Tennessee' just for a rest and free from flies and shells, and the stench of dead men.

Shifted camp last night. Yesterday morning I had my hand dressed by Percy Cave. I did not know him at the time but he heard my name on the sick report and came up and saw me. So I wrote to Julie and told her. About nine o'clock we moved off, and tramped up a steep hill and when we were about to drop we were told to lie down.

September 3rd

We can see the sea from here, and all the battleships. I don't know whether we are here for a rest or more fighting. Only ten of the Waikatos, they have split the regiment in half. The Indian Mounted Battery is just to the left of us.

September 4th

Shifted last night to a new place - Ridges. We had an awful tramp and a big load to carry. We just lay down as we were and slept.



September 5th

We are still here between steep hills. The shrapnel every now and again comes over and another is shot. You hear a whistle and then a deafening report over your head, then a loud groan and you know another of your mates are gone or wounded. We have no tents, just a bit of a hollow out of the side of the hill, and there is your home. They are getting ready for another charge, so as to wipe out the few of us who are left. I will be lucky to get out alive after another charge. The flies nearly drive us mad. They persist in crawling in your eyes and nose. I have not had a wash for a week now. We are just given one small milk can of water between four men, and it has to last for 24 hours, so it is too precious to use for washing. I would give anything for a bathe in the Fereniki now.

September 7th

Same as ever, a little better now. Got a few stores sent up to us. Have spread us among a lot of Tommies to put a little backbone into Kitchener's Army, as they find a Tommie fights well if he has a New Zealander or an Australian near him to back him up.

September 8th

Have been very bad with concussion and had to go into the trenches, and suffered all night with pains in my stomach and back.



September 9th

We go into the trenches at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and stay there till the following afternoon at 2. Only have a few hard biscuits and the bully beef we can't eat.

September 10th

My stomach and back is better, but my eyes have got very bad and I can't see very much. I don't think I could see a Turk ten yards off. We are not so bad from the Turks now as their trench is across a gully from us about 2 miles off. Not like where we could throw bombs at each other. We are living in holes in the earth like rabbits. It is getting very cold. It will be dreadful when it is real winter here. Yesterday morning a German Taube came over and she must have discovered the guns as the Turks sent some shells right on top of the battery, and you should see the Indians come out and make for their dug-outs. All the New Zealanders laughed aloud, but I think us New Zealanders would laugh at the devil himself.

September 11th

The Turks are not giving us much trouble at present. We are well tunnelled into the hills. We are about 400 where we are stationed and a deep gully between so they cannot throw bombs onto us.

September 12th

Same as usual, eyes very bad and I don't know when they are going to get right.

September 13th

Excused trenches because of my eyesight. Hope it does not turn to blindness.

September 14th

Had another night in the trenches and both eyes are closed up. Do not know what to do, may have to change into the A.S.C. as I am not of much use on watch.



August 15th

They are going to send us away for a rest somewhere and it will be alright. We are nearly all ill and as weak as cats. A lot of Australians have come here to relieve us. It is a cooler day.

September 16th

We go today or tonight. We were all paid £2 in English money. It is time they sent us away. I cannot eat a thing and my inside feels as if it were tied into a knot. It has started to rain and we will soon be in a mess as we have no covering overhead, no oil sheet. I hope Georgie does not climb up high places. I dreamt she fell off a ladder and broke her legs. I saw her fall and rushed up and Willie was just carrying her along, and he said we must take her to the Dr. at once. I hope it is not one of Father's true dreams. I woke my mate next door I cried out so loud. I must be ill when I start crying out in my sleep as I have never done it before.

This evening we packed up and the remnants of the brigade (mounted) were marched away and it was a devil of a time, tramp, tramp of weary feet, had to march about five miles, and I had only had a little cornflour for days. To cap all besides my swag and rifle they gave me a heavy pick to carry, and I just staggered along. Poor little Percy Cave came with us, and he staggered along loaded down like a pack mule. He had all the brigade medicine chest besides his personal gear. But he was a jolly as usual. He said

to me he had on General Godley's coat, and Lord Stinkpot's hat, so he was alright. We got near the landing stage at last. Lay down for a couple of hours and after getting stiff and cold were put on board a transport. We were taken out on pontoons, and they kept shouting 'Pack up, pack up', and I thought of the hunt at Cambridge. Aboard the transport and a hard bed on the deck. Then landed in the small hours of the morning; another weary march five miles and then rest at last.

September 18th

We have been here two days now, and am getting fed up with bottled stout if you please and eggs. I have been around to two villages and they are very quaint. The men wore wide trousers and shoes made of raw hide. I must try and get a pair to send home to Willie, they would be handy on the run.

The nurses here are having a good time. I saw some flying around with naval officers. I bought some wine and cognac and it did me a lot of good. I go and have a swim in the sea every morning and it is putting me right very quickly. We are going to be reorganised before we go back to fight.

September 19th



Came down in torrents today and swamped all hands. Cleared up in the afternoon, we had a parade and were inspected by the famous new French General, and he rode through between us and saluted and spoke French. There are 1000 reinforcements coming over in a day or two. We are to move to a new encampment soon.

September 20th

Moved to a better encampment. Just in front of it the Greek peasant women are busy tying sheaves of millet and stacking them to dry. I went down and watched, some of the younger ones are fair and good looking. One little girl about three years old came up to me, she had fair hair like Georgie. I took off my hat and pointed to my hair. The old man who was dressed like a brigand slapped me on the back as much as to say I was of the same kind as he.

September 21st

I and three others walked about two miles to a village. I don't think any troops had ever been there and the priest showed us over the church and it was very beautiful inside. My eyes are giving me a lot of trouble. If they don't get right soon I will have to join the Army Service. I Hope not as I don't like to leave my trusty rifle. General Godley is coming round to see if we are fit, but I suppose it means back to the firing line and more slaughter.

No more daylight charges I hope as I don't suppose I have a charmed life. I can't imagine how I got through, I only put it down to my speed as I ran very fast towards the Turkish trench and the machine



that was mowing us down could only swing round a certain distance. Not like the English which can swing round in a full circle and shoot every way, so I must have got out of the line of fire and the Turks can't shoot straight when you get close to them with the bayonet.

Godley told us he was very proud of us and New Zealand was also. Although we had suffered such a lot we still would see a lot of fighting before the war was over, and he wanted to see the mounted brigade in front when we entered Constantinople. Yes, and how many of us will be left if we go into so many charges. He forgets what a small country New Zealand is and that every township now has its women mourning for loved ones. Let English regiments do a bit of charging and give the New Zealanders a rest to get the brigade up to its former strength. It is no use wiping off the reinforcements as soon as they are landed. I suppose he wants more glory. I wish he would head us in a charge and not remain in a safe dugout all the time. It has been a fine day. We have started drill in the morning, on the hands, down and so on.

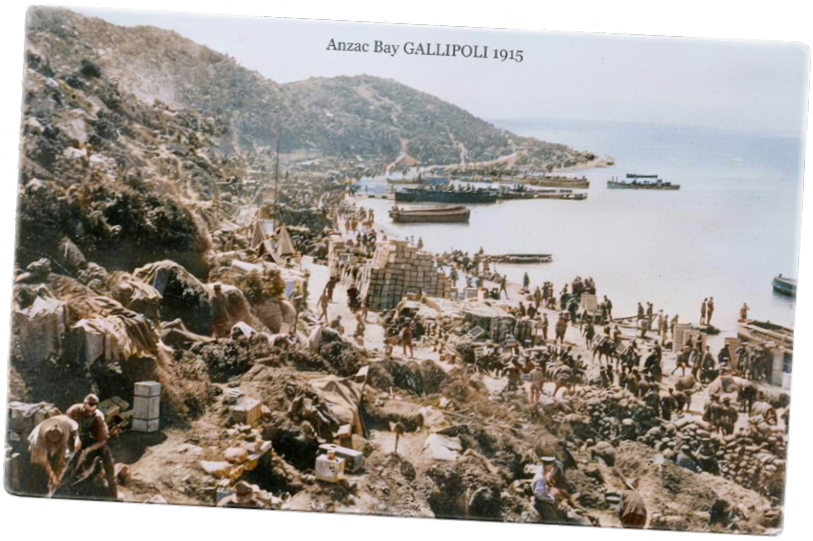
September 22nd and 23rd

Nothing of any importance. Drill before breakfast, running around like a lot of kids and high stepping. We are waiting for the reinforcement and then will get into it again.

Percy Cave wanted to know how they all were at home. It is getting very cold now and I think we are going to have a very severe winter. We have rifle drill all the morning, after dinner we have a rest.

September 24th

A sad thing happened to-day. We went out for a route march and had a bit of hill climbing. One poor chap dropped dead in his tracks of heart failure. We buried him just as the moon rose on the brow of a hill at the back of our camp. It was very impressive as we fired three salvoes over his head and the last post was sounded. He had an easy death and a decent burial, which a lot of our mates have not had. They still lie bleaching in the sun.



September 25th

Went out to a hot spring and had a splendid hot bath like Rotorua. Could not soak in it as the water was running into a small cistern. It was in a high room domed like a church, and as it was Sunday we all, about 14 men, stood round the stream and sang. It sounded grand there. We killed a whip-snake coming back.

The Greeks are all being called up to fight. The war is spreading over the world and will be a long one.



September 26th

They called for volunteers to join the Signallers Corps, and I joined as it is a good thing to learn the Morse Code. You have it a bit easier, don't have to do so much pick and shovel work and sleep in filthy Turkish trenches. I think I have done a sensible thing for myself, I may miss getting stripes, as the few that are left will all get stripes when the reinforcements come, but I do not want them. As soon as the war is over I will be only too pleased to get back to a civilian's life. I don't fancy the game for a trade. If I had joined younger I may have taken it up. It looks like rain tonight.



September 27th and 28th

Nothing much doing these days. I am very ill, the Dr. thinks it is influenza, but I think it is something wrong inside as I am very bad in my back, and there is a place just below my heart the size of my hand. I suppose they will send me away tomorrow. Percy Cave took my temperature last night and it was 101, and I do not feel any better today.

September 29th

They sent me over in an ambulance to the hospital. The place was overcrowded so I had to go back to camp.

September 30th

I am very bad this morning. I would like to be home now. I know how Julie would look after me, and instead of the cold hard ground to lie on I would have a nice bed.

October 1st

Just as bad today. This influenza seems to effect my heart and I perspire all night. I am worse than I have ever been. I cannot eat the fat bacon they give me so I have to starve or buy stuff from the Monastery. I will soon be too weak to walk that far. Oh well, I must keep my pecker up or I will go under and it will be a bit hard after getting through so many scrapes. This has been the hottest day I have felt on the Island and I will be glad when the sun goes down. Got mail today, one from Julie and one from Willie.

October 4th

Here I am in hospital. I got worse in camp and they managed to get me a bed. I don't feel well, so these notes will have to be short. I wrote to Julie, I hope she gets the letter.

November 10th

I have been very ill, unconscious for a week they tell me. They had to strap me down I was so violent. I have been all this time in bed and have had no letters. I got two letters the day I came here and I have read them till I know them by heart. I have tried all ways to get my mail, and have given up all hope of getting a letter from home while I am here in hospital.

November 11th

First day out of bed, seated in the sun. Had to be carried out as I can't walk. Have rheumatism in one leg and it is quite useless. Enjoyed the view.

November 12th

Out again, but it is cold and my leg gave me fits. I had it massaged and it was agony. I hope it will soon get well. If it does not I will not get to Egypt this week when the hospital boat comes in. I will be better there and it is warm-very cold here. No letters yet.

November 17th

About the same, bad leg and cannot walk. Have my leg wrapped in cotton wool. Will have to be shifted out of this as I will not get better in this climate. Had some mail from home and it cheered me up a lot. Getting colder here, will soon have snow by the feel of it. Am tired of bed and have to be carried when I am up. Will have to get a pair of crutches if it keeps on.

December 23rd

On board the Hospital ship Delta bound for Egypt. I am now able to walk. Hope to get a trip to New Zealand, I will be spending Xmas Day on board, and will be having dinner on board ship. Hope it will be a good one. I am glad to see the last of Lemnos and Gallipoli. The Mounteds are going to get their horses after all, so war may be a bit more interesting after all. I hope they are having a merry Xmas at home.

1916



January 28th

I was at Alexandria for three weeks and not allowed in the street at all. I have got very fat. We were at last sent here, Cairo. We may get a trip home yet.

February 1st

I have been shifted to a hospital here in the Heliopolis Sporting Club grounds. We are in long sheds open at the top. We can walk over to the Flying Club sheds and as five or six aeroplanes go up every morning we have a good chance of watching them. We are so used to them that we hardly look up when we hear one overhead. The Australians are leaving us this morning and I don't know where we will be sent. I am very well now and getting tired of loafing around.

February 2nd

Still here. The weather is getting much warmer. As I write four aeroplanes are sailing around overhead like great hawks, making a row like a chaff cutter. Up they soar in wide circles till they look like dragon flies, and then disappear into the blue distance. It is wonderful to see them come down like a bird with their wings dipped over sideways, till they get low down and then they right themselves and take two or three circles round and run along on two wheels with a slide of steel at the tail to act as a brake. It is quiet here now, nothing doing. One hotel here has got a gambling hall and it is bad for young Australians, they spend all their spare time gambling their few wages away. We will be pleased when we are sent home for a rest, or back to our units. Very slow here.

February 4th

A quiet day, spent mostly reading. Had a walk in Heliopolis. Fine day.

February 7th.

Got another move. It is very funny the motors which took us did not know the way, and we drove about 30 miles till we found it. Then we found it was an old camel stable turned into a rest camp. After getting all our nice uniforms on and then having to get into our grey clothes again. We were given a big bowl and plate and mugs. It was a great day all told.

February 21st

Got another shift. We are now at New Zealand Hospital - and have had to undress again. Have a hospital suit on now. We are in a tent now surrounded by high walls of spiked bars. I will soon be an experienced jailbird. Still don't know if we are to be sent to New Zealand or where. Would rather be sent to the front than kill time here.



February 25th

Still here, next to the Gyps camp. We sit on the wall all day and watch them drill. They get knocked about a lot, the Corporals hit them with the butt end of the rifle. Have a bad headache today. When will this weary time be over, and we can get shifted somewhere. We are called the lost 23, as we should have been moved out of this sooner.

March 17th

Moved again. Am now at Details camp, Zeitoun. Not very good food here, very different from hospital. No trip home for me. No matter I would sooner see the whole thing through.

March 19th

Left here for Gaza camp, and the very next day was put on guard over seven prisoners and at night it rained and as we were camped under mat sheds we got very wet.

March 20th

Was put on fatigue packing leather waistcoats. I do not know when I will be sent to my unit.



March 25th

Had a few route marches, and am now at a place on the canal called Ismailia. I cannot get back to the mountains. Have been drafted into the Auckland Infantry, 2nd Brigade. It did not go down very well, but we will soon be sent to France now, so must not growl but knuckle down. It is nothing but sand, sand, as far as you can see. I will be pleased to get out of it.

April 5th

Go from here tomorrow. Had a lot of marches over the sand and was knocked up. We are off to France and it won't be so hot there.



April 10th

Set off by train for Alexandria. Had a rough journey in an open truck. Travelled all night and embarked at Alexandria the next morning on H.M. Ascania.

April 11th

Sunday. We all have to wear lifebelts in case we get a tin fish. I will be glad when we are in France on dry land. Have a lot of alarms and have to rush to posts at once. We are feeling the cold after the desert heat.

April 12th

Sailing along on a very calm sea. Passed the island of Crete the other day, and today land can be seen in the distance. Have been served with two gas helmets and given lessons in how to wear them. They have picked me for a Grenadier, and it is about the most dangerous work of all. We have to charge in front of the infantry, and only have revolvers besides our hand grenades and often have to charge under our own artillery, so they mean to get me this time. I will have to be bullet proof as a Grenadier's life is not worth a toss up as soon as he gets to the front. Well, I will do my duty and God will do the rest.

April 13th

Saw Malta yesterday but were not allowed to land. Still wear our lifebelts. Will land at Marseilles tomorrow, I am in No.5 boat and will be the first to be lowered. A bit rough to-day and I am feeling a bit seasick. Got another stab in the arm today. I have been filled to overflowing with inoculation but it did not prevent me from having typhoid, and I think this stabbing is all rot and I hate it more than poison.

April 17th

Landed at Marseilles. Had a rough passage. Arm very stiff with inoculation. Go off tomorrow.

April 18th

Got on to the train and as I am writing this we are travelling through the South of France. Everything looks pretty as it is green and just bursting into bloom, and flowers in the fields. You see women working at everything in place of men, they all seem pleased to see us New Zealanders.



April 21st

After three days in the train 8 men cramped in a compartment the size of a piano case, we had not much sleep, lying all on top of each other. We were taken on a march of 10 miles. The last mile was hell for me, all over my feet were large blisters, walking on a hard road after the sand our feet were soft. I had to chew the corner of my overcoat collar to keep me from groaning all the time. A lot of the poor chaps had to fall out and were put under arrest for it. It did seem hard for them. I just managed to keep up and that was all.

We are now billeted in a French village in a pigsty, but it is quite clean and warm. The people here are all descendants from the old Normans and they look like Danish people. They are very kind to us. We are about 20 miles from the firing line. Have been put in Grenadiers and were marched for 6 miles in pouring rain. Got very wet.

April 24th

Can hear the guns booming from here. We are still billeted in the French village called Ruebeck. I wonder when we will be sent to the firing line. Am not too eager as it will be hot enough when we get there. The people here are very kind. Have picked up a few French words. Have constant drill, two gas helmets today. Weather fine again. Everything very pretty and peaceful here, no one would think that a cruel war was raging a few miles away.

April 27th

Still here. Will get a move soon nearer the firing line. Everything out in leaf, very pretty.

April 30th

Left on an eight mile march, with full packs up, the people of the village of Ruebeck all turned out to see us off and were very sorry to see us go. It was a hard tramp, and we were all stiff and sore when we got to our camping place.

May 1st

Off again at 7 o'clock. Had 15 miles to tramp. A lot of chaps were dropping out. I stuck it out well and was told off to go out and bring a straggler along. I carried his rifle a couple of miles for him. The last few miles the men were fainting all along the road, but our Platoon No.13, the devil's number stuck to it like glue. We had a piper and he played his pipes and it seemed to lighten our packs. Arrived at last and was put on guard the same night. We are five miles from the fire trenches and the guns are booming continually.

May 2nd

We are in comfortable quarters in a big shed. The Germans have been here, but were driven out about three weeks ago. The women of this village were not treated badly by the Germans, but locked in cellars. We were given steel helmets, and they are just like pudding basins, we look funny in them.

May 14th

Yesterday we started for the trenches, 12 miles to tramp, and raining all the way. We tramped through the darkness which was lighted up now and again by star shells from the trenches. The 'Dinkums' came into our billets when we left.

We 2nd Brigade are going to be the first New Zealanders to go into the trenches. We have the post of honour given us. We arrived in the town of Armentieres about 12 o'clock at night. It is like three Wellingtons thrown into one. The last mile was a killer, over rough cobble stones. One poor chap dropped in his tracks. I do not know if he was dead or fainting. We are billeted in a big building which looks as if it had been a big Dressmakers as there are a few blouses here. A church on the right and another on the left and they make a splendid mark for the Germans. The walls of our billet are full of holes. One pillar is spattered with some poor chap's blood. The people moved about the streets as if nothing was happening. I think they are a brave lot of women, everywhere is the smell of quicklime like a graveyard. We go into the trenches tonight. Still very cold and damp.

May 15th

Went into the trenches for eight days. We left at dark marched about a mile, entered the sap. We were nearest to the German trenches and I being a grenadier was placed with 8 others in a shell crater to watch the Germans and I had a bomb in my hand ready to throw at any moment. The rain came down in torrents, and we were soaked. The Germans did not attack and we were withdrawn. I am writing this on the 21st. Still in the trenches and the German machine guns are ripping bullets over my head. They picked me out for a party to go cutting wire in front of the trenches, a dangerous job.



May 23rd

Out of the trenches after eight days and nights. It was very trying and we could not sleep at nights. It is not as bad as Gallipoli as the trenches are very good. The big shells are very bad as they blow everything up where they strike. We lost four men and a few wounded, so I think we are lucky. Are not safe where we are having our rest in Armentieres, as there were nine Tommies killed here a few days ago by shell. Every window in the town is broken and walls are shattered. Still a lot of shops open.



Postcards sent home from Theo

Just got a letter from home it was very welcome. We find to be out of the trenches is not much rest. We have to go out and dig saps in the open, in the firing line under machine gun fire. Out last night and it was pouring with rain. Lucky I took my oilsheet. Were told off in batches of eight men and a lull in the firing we had to get over the parapet. Each of us was told off to dig a section of trench. Were in a grass paddock and every time the flash went we had to drop flat. The bullets would whiz over our heads. It was a nerve racking time till we had a shallow trench dug so we could get a little cover, and it was raining in torrents and dark as pitch between the flare flashes and when we dropped down it was in a sea of mud and water; altogether we had a rotten time up till one o'clock. Then a weary tramp through the trenches out to the town.

The other night we were shelled in the street. One of our chaps was hit in the leg, I felt the wind of the pieces of shell pass my head. We crouched against the building amid showers of bricks and mortar. Big shells between three walls of bricks and they burst inside the houses.



Such a wreck of ruins you never did see. But amidst it all the brave women still carry on their business. We go out again tonight.

May 28th

Was carrying sheets of iron from ten o'clock till one in the morning. We got back today about three o'clock tired out, and were allowed a rest. They called for men to join the tunnelling company to be attached to the Australians. I put in my name as I would like to have a go at it. Sent a few cards home to my dear ones in dear New Zealand. Will be glad when I get back.

Getting very thin at this job, not enough sleep. Two men and a Maori Officer were wounded near where we were working last night, got by a sniper I think. Not much leave today. We go back to the trenches on Monday. Sunday today and splendid weather. This would be a nice town if it were not shot about so much. If I get into the tunnelling Company I will be able to gain some new experiences, as they tunnel right under the German trenches and then blow them up. I like to get where the most excitement is going on. I want to see every side of warfare.

June 1st

Have been out on various fatigues in the trenches. Out the other day putting down duck-walks and a German captive balloon saw us and directed the artillery on to us. I was nearly killed, a shell burst just on top of the trench where I was working knocked a few sandbags on top of me, and the opposite side to me was just riddled with bullets and shell splinters.

I have a very bad cold, something wrong with my chest. Had it painted with iodine. Not going into the trenches tonight. Will enjoy a good sleep tonight.

June 2nd

Still very bad with cold on chest and in head. Was lucky not to be out with the boys last night. They got hell. They had just got a little way down the street when they were shelled, killed and wounded 21 men. This morning with others I was sent down to hoop lines and passed over the place where the poor chaps had been hit, and the pavements had pools of blood still on it for a good distance along, and the road was strewn with tiles that had been brought down.



A lot will get caught here if they persist in taking us down in batches when they could take us in two's about a chain apart. Then when a shell bursts it would not catch so many. We go into the trenches today. I feel pretty bad and sore in the chest, but it is the old story you must go till you drop. Far better if you get a wound, then you are sent straight away to the hospital. If you get ill and run down with hard work in the trenches you get no consideration until you collapse.

Am back in the trenches again, in the support trenches and have a comfortable dugout to sleep in. They threw over 500 shells here yesterday and never got a man. I am in for twelve days this time, and like it better than in the town. Shells are whizzing overhead as I write this and four aeroplanes are sailing overhead among the clouds. Puffs of shrapnel bursting around them from the German aircraft guns. One of our observation balloons broke away yesterday and the two observers had to come down in parachutes. I saw them come down. As soon as they were half way our own guns opened fire on the balloon as it was drifting over to the Germans, but we failed to drop her and she drifted away into the distance.

Our trenches are around an old farm. In the orchard there is an old cherry tree full of fruit, just over my head but not ripe. Yesterday a German shell burst under it at the end of my bivvy and cut a branch or two off. The farm is in ruins, only a few bricks standing. It seems a shame. The fields are waist high in grass, and poppies everywhere.

June 4th

Had a good day, Germans a bit quiet. Sent six of us grenadiers as a covering party to some wire setters. They put up wire entanglements in of our trenches. The German trench was 170 yards away, and thank goodness it was dark. We had to walk out to the German trench with fixed bayonets and rifles loaded, then lie down and watch for Germans. It was a ticklish job as flares were going up every minute or two. They go up like great sky rockets and make it as light as day. We were lucky and did not lose a man. I had a narrow escape, just got back, was looking over the gap in the bags to see if the other three grenadiers were coming when a bullet ripped past my ear through the same hole my head was in. I have a horrible cold so I was left closer to the wiring party than the others as the wind was blowing to the German lines and I kept coughing and they may have heard me. It was a bitter cold night, and we were all glad to get back to our rabbit holes.

June 5th

Not quite so cold today. Have a bad head, all my bones are aching. Went on sick and got a pill too and I fancy it has done me good. Having a good rest today. About ten yards from our post there has been a big factory, the Germans shot it to bits the other day. It was built of brick about four storeys high. Now it is one heap of bricks mixed up with pulley wheels, iron belting and tanks.

June 7th

We got another shift. Told to make shell-proof dugouts as the Germans were going to shell us with heavy guns. Worked right through the night without sleep. When we had nearly finished two shells came into a brick farm near us and we all had to get billeted in an old brewery, but no beer.

June 8th

As I write I am on guard over a steel bridge over a canal. A church at the end of the bridge and the Germans have shelled it till only part of the tower is standing and it looks as if it would topple down at any time. Have to stand close to the church. The church is a great big one, in fact, a cathedral. On the other side we sleep between watches in the only house that has stood against the shells Have a bad cold still. All the houses look so lonely torn about by shells. It makes me wish I was with my dear ones in peaceful New Zealand. There are no people here, got too hot for them. This bridge over the River Lys (Leie), is on the border of Belgium and France, so when I am on guard I am in France and when I go to bed I am in Belgium.

I am sitting in the old hotel where we are billeted and we have a big fire going in the stove which is in the middle of the room. One of my mates has found some coffee beans and a coffee mill and he is grinding away to make coffee.

There are pictures on the walls, even a palm in a pot still growing, and everything just as if the people had just left. Everything upside down and a hole in the wall where a shell has gone through. We have stuffed it with bags.



June 11th

Have to go into the trenches to dig new ones every day. The trenches we go through are all in standing crops of oats and as our heads are level with the roots they tower away above us. We move along like going along a valley. You would have a good idea of the trenches if you had a ditch seven feet deep and six feet wide at the top, along the bottom of the trenches are four by two's with battens nailed on like a ladder only close together. They are about two feet wide and on these netting is nailed to keep you from slipping when it is wet. Along the sides are uprights to which is nailed netting or iron. Iron is placed at the back to keep the earth from slipping. The trench runs like this so you see one has a long way to walk as they are so shaped that they can't shoot straight down them. I will be an expert trencher soon.

June 14th

We were out as a wiring party the other night. Had to put wire entanglements in a moat round the ruins of an old castle, and as the moat was about a chain wide, and black and stagnant water filled it. Had to take sections of the wire, tie sandbags full of bricks, tie the ends and throw them as far out in the water as we could. The Germans must have heard the loud splashes as they turned the machine guns on us. We had to duck behind the old brick walls and it was a rotten job.

The bank was lined with shrubs and nettles. At last we were done about one in the morning. Lucky not to have anyone hit, tramped back to town in pouring rain. We were served out with hot tea and rum for the first time and it warmed us up and did my cold good. Hope to get a trip of eight days to England soon.



June 17th

The other night was out in No Man's Land filling up an old cellar in a ruined farmhouse, as snipers were using it against us. I always seem picked for those dangerous jobs and I don't like them much. We were lucky, none were hit. Had to stand too all last night, as a raid was made against the Germans and as we were in reserve we had to be ready. It has cleared us today. My name has been taken for a trip to England so it wont be long now and I will be able to have a few days rest.

June 18th

Same old game, carrying heavy frames into trenches. Nearly broke my shoulders, also carrying bombs. Got a rest last night for the first time. Thought I was going to have a sleep but the battery at the back opened fire and it was deafening all night. Got word a German attack expected, had to put on our gear and stand too all night. Gas alarm went. Was out on a foraging party getting timber in back yards. What an awful wreck in the houses. Tables still with food on them, the people must have left in a hurry. In one place the whole wall of a house had been blown down, pictures still on the walls, Mother and Father hanging there in gilt frames looking down on the ruins. We tried to get a remembrance but found nothing. One house had the church organ in it and it was great to hear us singing in the ruins "Oh that will be glory for me". Most of the houses will fall down when the frost gets them. The Germans put a notice on their parapet saying "Fire light New Zealand, there will be peace in five days". The Germans opposite us are Saxons, the Tommies say they are not as bad as the other Germans.

June 21st

In the trenches again, and whiz, bang, shells sailing overhead and bursting everywhere. This is the longest day here in France and had no summer yet to speak of. Yesterday before we came into the trenches I climbed up a very tall chimney, there was a telephone at the top. It was a hard climb, just small

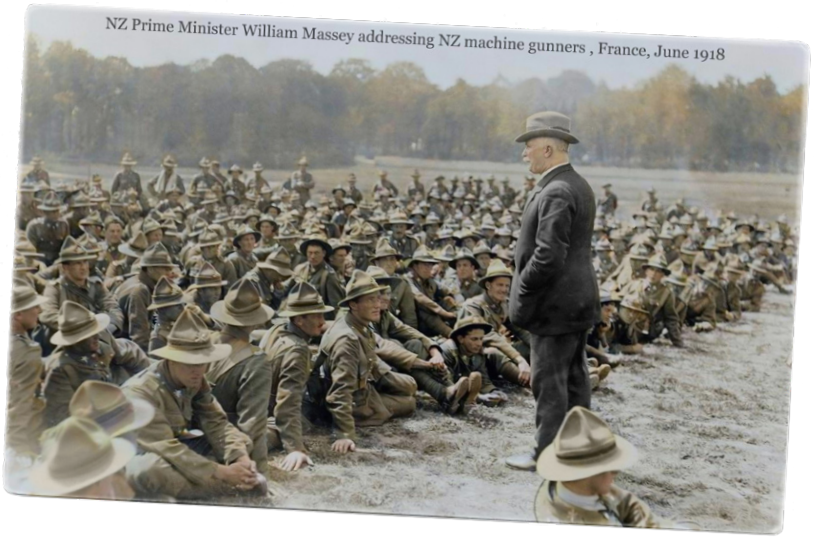
iron rings driven into the bricks to climb up by. Had a good look out over the German trenches. I wish I could have stayed longer as I was not allowed up but I chanced it. A few shells whizzed past while I was there, and it felt a bit queer when you thought how you would feel if one struck the top of the chimney.

June 23rd

Here we are in a snug dugout and a violent thunderstorm raging, and between the roar of the thunder the cannons keep speaking. I think we are fairly safe. I was in the front line of trenches last night and the Germans started a bombardment and our guns started too. The ground just trembled. The infantry on both sides just have to sit crouched up against the walls of the trench while the artillery of both sides are banging away, blowing either into the next world like a lot of lambs to the slaughter. It is a class of warfare I don't like, give me the old style out in the open and man to man. This is murder. Got two letters from home and they were welcome.

June 26th

Here we are, four in a dugout, just gone through a bad bombardment. It was horrible while it lasted. A big shell called a 'Minenwerfer' fell close to us and blew a hole ten feet deep and fifteen across. It is one o'clock now and they have stopped firing shells only machine guns are going. They always seem to start on a Sunday night. The noise was deafening and the ground trembled continually like an earthquake; the flashes of bursting shells like vivid lightening. It was a terrible strain. It makes one wish they were back in peaceful New Zealand.


NZ Prime Minister William Massey addressing NZ machine gunners , France, June 1918

June 27th

Sitting in my bivvy, have just finished an hour's hard work. Go to the firing line at ten o'clock at night, on guard all night till four the following morning, and sleep from five till one. Of course meals in between. Afternoon, have to do fatigue five hours also. You see it is not an easy time in the trenches. The other night I was looking over the parapet, before I knew what I was about I was asleep and awoke with a start after a minute's sleep, standing up and head exposed to the fire of the machine guns. Australians had a row the other night, and a night or two ago got some prisoners from the German trenches. Our aeroplanes burnt three German balloons yesterday.

June 28th

Dreadful bombardment last night, both sides going at once. They threw over three thousand shells. The Germans must have as much if not more. The other there was a duel between a big German gun and our gun and my dugout was a direct line. The German shells landed all around us. There are two dugouts

here close together and three Scotch chaps and myself live in them through the day, and the shell blew up our trench leading out of the dugouts five yards away. We stuck it out for a long while and counted 45 German shells which two landed near our Dugouts. There are only two rows and three rows of sand on my bivvy and if a shell bobbed it would have come right through. The other chaps asked me if we had better shift so we waited until a big shell dropped and while the dirt was still falling we dived out and ran for our lives. The shell had at blown a lot of dirt and iron into the trench leading out and while we were crawling over this the German machine gun and snipers got on to us, but we kept on as we were expecting a big shell any moment. Had a straight run down a shallow trench till we got to a bend, just managed to get round the corner when a big shell bobbed in the trench and sent shrapnel flying all along it. After it had stopped we went back and there was a mess. A big tree alongside our dugout had been cut right off near the ground and the trench was blown in in many places. We call this Suicide Corner as more troops were killed here than any part of the trenches. Three mates of mine who had been in Gallipoli with me were blown to pieces by a shell today and it has cut me up a lot, as they were fine chaps. It is rotten weather rain every night.


German soldiers - schwerer Minenwerfer Mortars 1918

June 30th

Two of our men were sent into the front line. The Germans sent over two Minenwerfers and they landed right on the bivvy our two men were in, and blew a hole about twenty feet across and twelve feet deep. It was hell, there was nothing left of the two chaps. I had a look in the daylight and I could only see small pieces of flesh the size of halfcrowns, even their rifles were gone. Here for another eight days.

July 6th

Was in several heavy bombardments and got a chill and influenza, sent to a rest camp for a few days to get well again. Very weak, get stout served out to me twice a day. I am not doing so bad, cant eat very much as my stomach is out of gear. It is a blessing to get away from those terrible guns and be able to get a good rest. Have a bad head and feel as if my eyes are going to drop out. Am being sent to hospital today, but do not know where. Afraid I am in for a bad time with my chest. I knew I would not be long in the trenches before I broke up as I was not nearly right from the typhoid, and it was not right they should send me back so soon without a rest. If I peg out this time it will be their fault, will write home when I get to the hospital as I have no writing paper.

July 7th

Here I am at a hospital, called No.15 clearing station, and am being sent to the base tomorrow. This place is called Hazelbrook and the base I am being sent to is Boulogne. May be sent to England yet, depends how full the hospitals are there, cannot walk yet and have a continual cough.

July 8th

I am leaving for the base hospital today, hope I get a bit of sea air it may do me good. I have a bad pain in my chest, but altogether it is a grand rest after the trenches. I was just played out before I left.

July 10th

Here I am after a long weary journey in the train and a long one in a car. Am in an Australian hospital right on the English channel by the sea at a place called Boulogne. Not feeling very fit today.

July 14th

Still here, they say they are going to send me to England for a rest. Hope they don't change their minds at the last minute. I feel so tired and weary of it all, in fact I am worn down to a shadow.

July 17th

Going from here to a convalescent camp near Boulogne. No trip to England yet awhile. Still very shaky. A fine day.

July 18th

Still in C. Camp. Told to have a rest for a few days. It is very pretty here. This is a big camp about 3000 men of every regiment in the British army. Here you see South Africans, English, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, Scotch in their kilts, Welsh and all sorts. I am tent orderly and they say I am here for three months.

July 19th

Still here in camp, getting well again, will soon be able to get back to my unit.



July 21st

Still here an having an easy time and getting well. Not been in Boulogne yet. Have not felt strong enough but will try and have a walk down tomorrow.

July 22nd

Still here, camp going on as usual. Have to shift to another tent today to get ready for a lot more wounded.

July 23rd

Fine day, can see the sea from here, and see all the boats sailing in. Wish we could get to Blighty as the Tommies call England. Am lying on a slope of grass as I write this, to the right the sea and straight in front in a wood, and on the left a big farm and market gardens. Over the top of the wood I can see a big church in Boulogne like the dome of St Pauls An airship is flying over it, and the scene is very peaceful after the firing line.

July 25th

Fine day, still here. Having an easy time and slowly getting well.

July 27th

Heard that my Company were back from the trenches for a few weeks so I don't need to be in a great hurry to go back again for a while.



July 31st

Still here and doing well, feeling a lot better. A big crowd of wounded men brought into camp tonight.

August 4th

Same as usual, no letters from anyone. Am fed up with the infantry would like to get back to the Mounteds. I would give anything to join up with them again and have a glorious charge on horseback at those Germans. I don't expect it is my luck to get back again. I would like a letter from home.

August 11th

Went down to Boulogne yesterday. It is a big place. It was Sunday and all the people were on the beach. They have mixed bathing here and we did see some sights. Great big fat women and young thin ones and nice plump ones, and they had to walk right through the crowd of people to their dressing sheds and after being in the water their bathing dresses stuck close to them. But the French women here do not seem to mind. Some of them had on white bathing dresses and you could see right through them. As one of those sort came out the French men and women laughed at them. I am afraid it would have shocked our New Zealand people. Saw the Doctor today and he said are you fit. I said "No". He then marked me down as fit. I was sent over to Details camp the same day. The chill has left me very weak and my heart is bad. I do not think I will be able to carry the pack.

August 12th

Here in Details Camp. Am being sent over to Etaples as fit today. If they try to run me round the bull ring I won't be able to do it, and then perhaps they will examine my heart.

Landed here at a big camp called Etaples. It spreads for miles and is pitched on sand dunes, and as I look out of the tent it seems as if I was in Egypt again. They sent a big draft to the front today, I will be examined again here. I'll soon know what they are going to do with me. I am sure I am not fit for the pack.

August 13th

The Doctor gave me an overhauling today and gave me medicine twice a day. Having two teeth drawn tomorrow, very stale place here, all sand and fir trees. Part of the thirteenth reinforcement came here today. No letters yet. Have heard the 16th Aucklanders have been cut up a lot since I left. Heard they had conscription in New Zealand.

August 16th

Am going before the Board tomorrow. A lot of chaps about 80, all of Austrian and German parentage have been brought down from the lines. Some of them have fought through Gallipoli and are being sent away as undesirables and the chaps are all sorry for them as they are treated like prisoners.



August 17th

Am going in front of the medical board today so I hope to know what they are going to do with me. Fine weather today. We are near some Scotch Regiments, Seaforth Camerons and Black Watch, and they think a lot of the New Zealanders. Have been trained for eighteen months and have not seen a shot fired yet.

August 20th

The other day went before the Board. They have marked me T.B. and that means Temporary Base and I go before the Board again next Thursday. Feel a little better now though a long way from being well. So tired of camp.

August 22nd

Still here in base camp as T.B. Am fed up with this place, getting on my nerves. Got two letters from home and they were welcome.

August 26th

Yesterday was marked by Board P.B Permanent Base. They have put me on a job which I cannot do. Sick parade today. Am not feeling very well.

August 27th

Still here, now that I am P.B. if they sent me out of here to England. Very stale nothing much to do.

August 31st

Still here, have a very bad cold. Heard good news of Romania. Fine day.

September 1st

Still here. They tried to make a waiter of me for the officers but I refused and they put on another chap. They want boot men for the officers but I don't fancy the job, but I suppose if they put me on I will have to do it. Oh for dear old New Zealand again. You can't think how sick I am of it all. Same old round every day. Anything is better than this life as it is only an existence.

September 3rd

Fine day. Wrote two letters to Julie and Willie. Got mail yesterday and they were very welcome. Don't know yet what they are going to do with me, still very short of breath, sometimes I can scarcely breathe. Another draft went away today.

September 4th

Still here, a wet day I am being sent up to the line in a day or two I will be glad to get busy again. Some lucky chaps are leaving to-day to get some sea air for their health.



September 5th

5th. Still here and feeling very ill, can hardly walk about I am afraid I am going to be ill again. I feel real bad in the back and heart tonight.

Diary ends.



Epilogue

from Theo's Great-Grandnephew

Theo's last entry in his diary was September 5th 1916.

At 7pm that evening he took his own life. He initially survived, but his head injury was extensive and he died in the ambulance on the way to hospital.

3 days later a court of inquiry recorded witness statements and it became known that an hour before his death he approached the NZ Chaplain to discuss harassment he was receiving from his tent mates and those in the tent next door, the nature of the harassment was very upsetting to him. The chaplain in his testimony stated that "Theo was normal in appearance and was quite rational in his conversation". He advised him not to worry about it and he would look into it.

Theo had been transferred to the Auckland Infantry as most of the Waikato 'Mounteds' had been killed or injured, so he wasn't with a group of long held comrades. It's hard to imagine that with all that he had been through, the feeling of isolation he must have then felt when those fellow soldiers, turned on him. Whether the harassment was insensitive taunting or of a malicious intent we don't know, but for Theo it was too much.

This diary serves as a graphic anti-war document, as it should, a record of a horrific disregard for life for questionable outcomes, but it also demonstrates the remarkable courage and strength of those men of whom so much was asked. They paid the ultimate price whether they survived the combat or not, and we can only hope that one day, accounts of the madness of resolving conflict this way, will long be confined to the distant pages of history.

Lest we forget.



Theo and comrades~ Etaples France 1916.



Theo ~ early life in Kaikoura.



'4th Waikatos' Mounted Rifles Cap Badge.
Featuring a Kaka parrot in a wreath of kowhai leaves
The motto translates to "Liberty and Homeland".



Theo ~ Etaples France 1916.


DIEU ET MON DROIT
The GREAT WAR
1914-1918
THEATRES OF WAR IN WHICH ACTUALLY SERVED
W. European 1914-16.
Army of Occupation Gallipoli, France 1916.
AWARDED
British War Medal
Victory Medal
CERTIFICATE OF THE SERVICES IN THE
New Zealand Expeditionary Forces
OF 13924. Private Theodore Christian Laugesen
Liverpool
GOVERNOR GENERAL
RECORD OF
WAR SERVICE
In New Zealand ... Years 121 Days
Overseas ... 1 Years 143 Days
Total Service Years 629 Days
Date commenced duty 15. 12. 1914
Date finally discharged 5. 09. 1916.
J. Allen.
Minister of Defence
NZMR


1914
1918

Two letters home from Theo



August 27, Gallipoli.

Dear Julie *(Juliana is Theo's sister)*

Just a few lines we are here in the thick of it. I have kept a bit of a diary, and if I go under you will get this I hope. This war is simply Hell upon earth, and I hope we are laying down our lives for some good. My word! water is precious here and when I have been few hours in the trenches and my bottle empty and still seven or eight hours to go I always think of those splendid streams at "Tennessee".

Kiss Georgie and Willie from me and tell them I am often thinking or them when the bullets are flying around my head. My word, the New Zealanders are a brave lot or chaps, grit through and through and there are not one of them showing the white feather, they all say we are second to none.

The Auckland Brigade have had all the charges up to now and have lost heavily there is only a remnant of us left, but Godley came last night and asked us to led the way again and in broad daylight this time and he gathered us around in a circle and spoke to us, and it made us feel proud to belong to the Auckland Brigade and we are all going to do or die today.

Now dear Julie if you get this and I am gone you must not take it too hard for I am going with a stout heart and am happy to die for dear old New Zealand. But we must not look on the black side of it. l may be one of the lucky ones if it is my fate. But the only thing that worries me is that there are bound to be a lot of my mates go under.

Now I will close, hoping you will have ever happiness and prosperity, and if I go I will meet you over the border where there will always be peace, your loving brother Theodore.

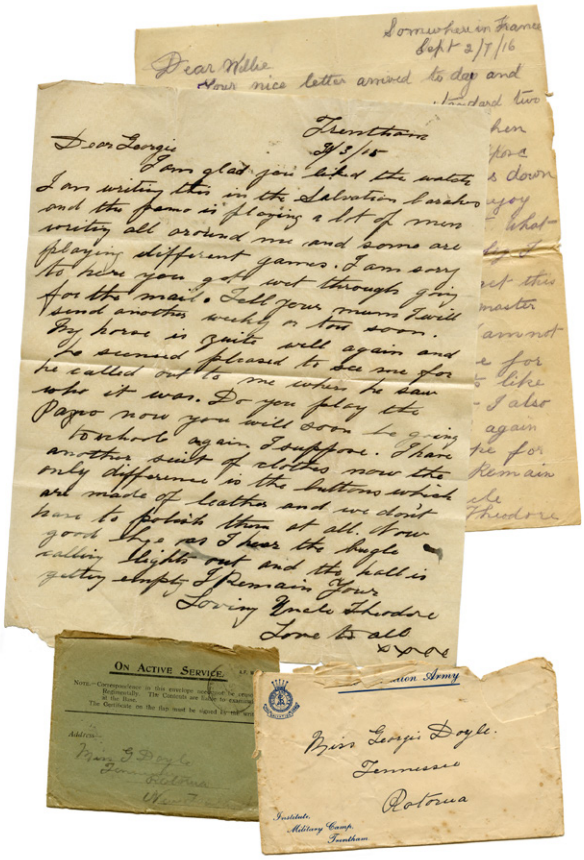
Give my love to all the boys and wish them all good luck.

Dear Willie *(William is Theo's older brother)*

Just a few lines, I haven't much time as we are getting ready to go to the trenches. I suppose "Tennessee" is looking well now. I hope to see it again, and the sooner the better for this war is very bad. I hope to hear you tell me a few yarns when I come back to good old New Zealand. It seems like paradise when we look back to it. I wore a bit of Kidney fern that Julie sent home in my hat and you should see the bush chaps look at it with longing eyes. There is no fear that they don't love their country.

Good Luck. Your loving brother Theodore.

I have got through alright, but I was the only one of our thirty-five "Waikatos" who were in the charge to get through unwounded.



COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

Service Number: 13/924

Pvt. Theodore Christian **LAUGESEN**

2ND BTN., AUCKLAND REGIMENT, N.Z.E.F.
WHO DIED ON 05 SEPTEMBER 1916 AGE 33
SON OF CHRISTIAN LOUIS & CECILE SOPHIA LAUGESEN,
OF ROTORUA, NEW ZEALAND.

REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

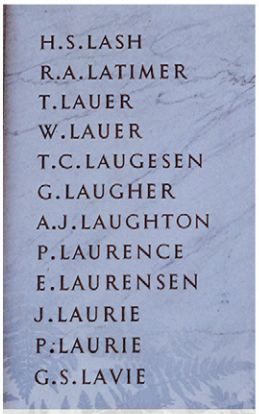
ETAPLES MILITARY CEMETERY | X. C. 2







Etaples Grave
1916 FRANCE



Auckland War
Memorial Museum,
Hall of Memories
NEW ZEALAND



Rotorua
Cemetery
NEW ZEALAND



Kaikoura
War Memorial,
First World War
NEW ZEALAND

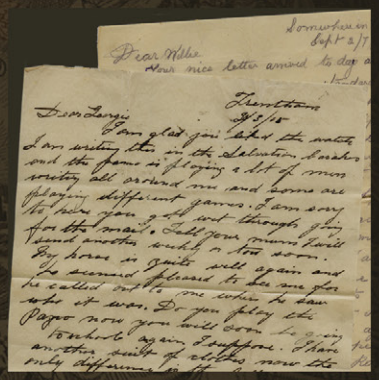




An account of life as a Kiwi
WW1 Soldier in the trenches
of Gallipoli and France in 1916.







BOOK COMPILED & DESIGNED BY DAVE TIPPER 2026