

**FOR KING AND
OTHER COUNTRIES**

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The New Zealanders who fought in other services in the First World War

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with Christine Clement and Rebecca Johns



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To all the New Zealanders who served in the First World War

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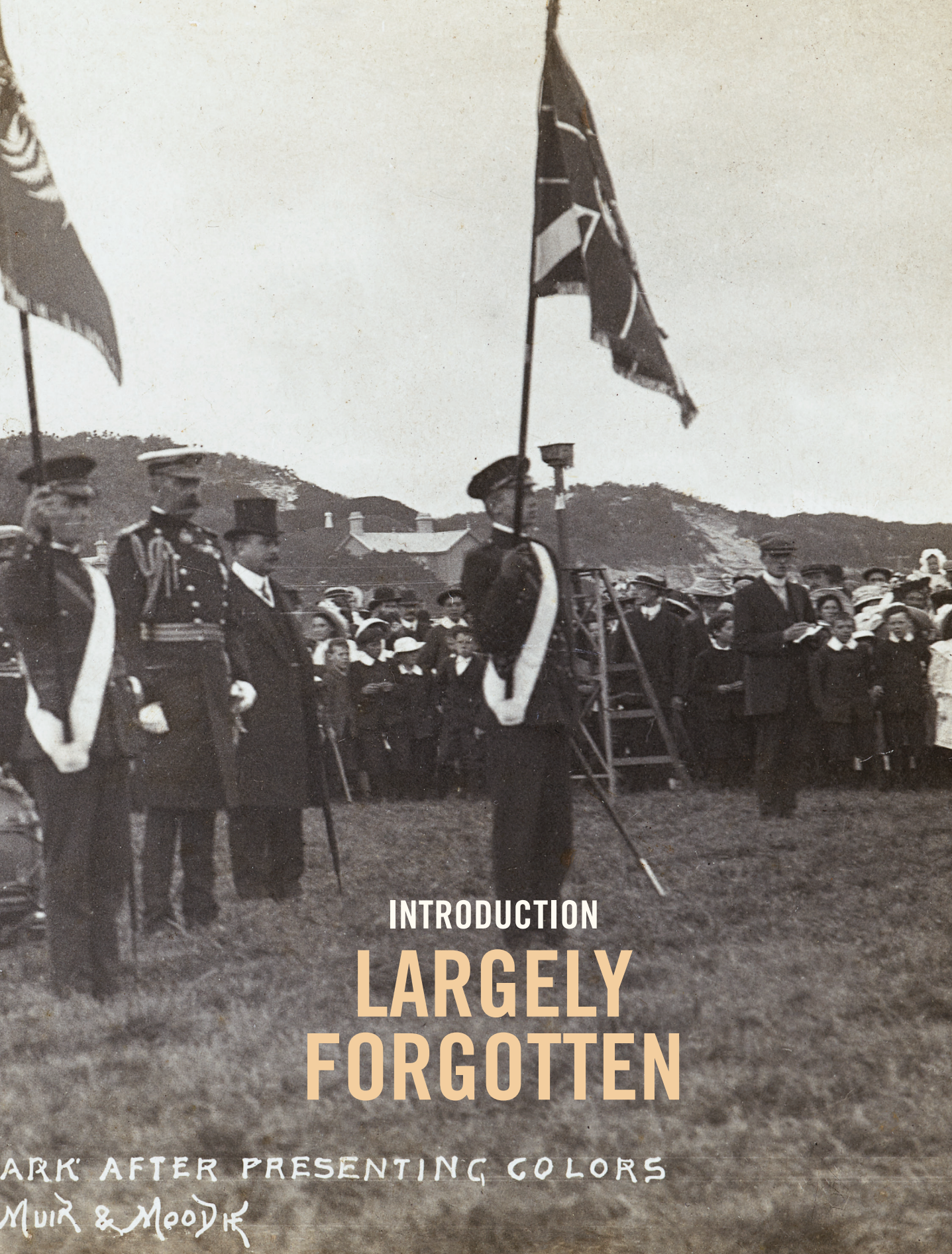
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INTRODUCTION
**LARGELY
FORGOTTEN**

ARK AFTER PRESENTING COLORS
Muir & Moody

In New Zealand during the years of the First World War, many young men were desperate to serve, but age or ill health stood in the way. In 1915 Gustav Victor Berg (Bergh) of Southbridge, a small settlement of 369 people in the 1916 census and some 28 miles (45 kilometres) south-west of Christchurch in Canterbury, was 18 years old and working as an apprentice printer for the local paper, the *Ellesmere Guardian*.¹ Late that year he boarded a ship for Sydney and made his way to Adelaide via Melbourne to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), the army the Australian government had raised to support Britain's fight against Germany and its allies.

Gustav Berg had tried to enlist in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) several times, in various parts of the country including in the North Island, but each time he had been rejected because he was too young.² He wrote to his former employer on 14 January 1916:

There was no hope of being accepted in New Zealand, and I could not stay there and see my mates go away as though I was suffering from 'cold feet', so I had to come over here. I do not know anyone here except the acquaintances I have made since coming into camp. We have a fairly good time and the only things that trouble me are the heat and the flies, both of which are very trying.³

On his AIF papers Berg gave his true age as 18 and a half.⁴

During his four years with the AIF, Berg wrote home regularly to his parents, who passed his letters on to the *Ellesmere Guardian*. The paper printed them as letters from 'a Southbridge boy' and always mentioned that Berg was 'formerly of the "Guardian" staff'. A letter that appeared in the paper on 18 March 1916 was written after Berg had spent nearly a week guarding the wireless station at Abberton, South Australia. There were about 40,000 Germans in South Australia, he said, and they had 'been causing some trouble up country'. The wireless station was seen as an obvious target.

Berg had just completed his final training and was soon to depart for the front. He assured his family, 'I have had a good time so far and am enjoying the life.'⁵ The next news to appear in the *Ellesmere Guardian* was an extract from a letter written on 25 May, by which time Berg was in Egypt and, apart from the heat and flies, was 'enjoying the best of health and . . . the military

life was suiting him first rate'.⁶ Berg's other letters, printed in 1916, would not be so cheerful.

In Australia Berg was initially posted into the 48th Infantry Battalion, but three weeks after arriving in France he was transferred to the 12th Brigade Machine Gun Company.⁷ He enjoyed being with the machine gunners and found learning all the parts that made the work 'very interesting'. But the letter to his parents informing them of his transfer, written from a dugout in the trenches, was much darker than those he had written before. He was still 'having a good time', but:

The only thing that troubles me is the poisonous gasses the Huns use, and we have to be very alert. I have had some experiences with it. They send it along with the wind and it is of a yellowish colour and comes in a thick cloud. A couple of mouthfuls is enough. The shells are buzzing over our heads all day and you can hear them a good way off. They generally try to shell us on account of doing so much damage with our machine guns. We can fire 500 rounds of ammunition in a minute. The rats are very plentiful in our trenches, there being some very big ones. I have not had any letters from New Zealand for over five months. They must be going astray.⁸

Gustav Berg was one of a considerable number of New Zealanders who fought in the war on the same side as New Zealand but under another flag. For the first time, this book tells their story.

New Zealand's military contribution to the First World War is generally accepted as being a massive effort for such a small country. For the first time in its history, New Zealand despatched a large expeditionary force to serve abroad that was centred primarily on a complete infantry division and a mounted rifle brigade. By the time the Armistice came into effect on 11 November 1918, 124,211 men had enlisted for military service: 91,941 volunteers and a further 32,270 men conscripted under the Military Service Act. New Zealand's population was just over one million people, and some 42 per cent of the country's male population of military age had served with the NZEF during the war.⁹

The figure most often quoted about New Zealand's war effort is that, from October 1914 through to October 1918, just over 100,000 New Zealanders embarked for military service overseas.¹⁰ This figure included individuals who were Imperial Reservists and those who served in the Royal Flying Corps and some other services. It excludes, however, the thousands of New Zealanders who served with the AIF and with British army units. Also missing are the men who served in the Indian army, the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the French Foreign Legion, and the considerable number of women who served with other nations' medical organisations.

Those who served with other nations are, of course, far outnumbered by those who served in the NZEF, but their contribution to New Zealand's war effort should be recognised. This book aims to outline where and when these New Zealanders served and to tell some of their stories.

It does not cover the experiences of those New Zealanders who joined the Royal Flying Corps — the Royal Air Force from April 1918 — or those who served with British naval units.



A studio portrait, taken in March 1916, of 18-year-old Gustav Berg (Bergh) in the Australian Imperial Force uniform which Berg sent to his sweetheart in New Zealand. CORRIE HUGHES COLLECTION

Their service in the First World War is the subject of other volumes of the Centenary History series. Further, defining who is included as a New Zealander is no easy task given that New Zealanders also regarded themselves very much as being 'British' in 1914. The men and women who are the focus of this book were born in New Zealand and spent their formative years here. Also included are those who were born elsewhere but spent a considerable part of their early lives in New Zealand. The experience of British reservists living in New Zealand will be briefly touched on especially as the New Zealand government paid for some of their salaries and allowances after the war.¹¹ Excluded from the book are those who served in the war prior to moving here, and those whose connections to New Zealand could be best described as tenuous.

Another aim of this book is to come as close as possible to reaching a figure for the numbers involved. It is clear that to date the estimated numbers have been far too low. Early estimates put the figure for New Zealanders serving with British units as less than 1000. A 2016 publication stated that 'more than 3000 men and women would [fight] in imperial units during the war'.¹² This was a threefold increase on the existing estimates, but the research for this book has revealed that it was also far too low. After all, close to 850 New Zealanders alone served in the RFC or RAF during the war, and more than 4000 New Zealand-born soldiers served in the AIF.¹³ It is likely that the total figure could be more than 12,000 people.

This figure derives from the extensive and ground-breaking work of genealogist Christine Clement, who has spent years compiling a database of all New Zealanders known to have served during the First World War. Her work has been confirmed and enhanced by a wide-ranging trawl through *Papers Past*, given that many newspapers reported regularly through the war on where New Zealanders were serving. Added to this has been a general search for information at the British National Archives in Kew, the British Library, the Australian War Memorial, and the state libraries of New South Wales and Victoria. The service records of soldiers in the NZEF and AIF, now freely available online, were also heavily utilised. From these and many other sources, new information has emerged to challenge our existing knowledge. Many people provided fresh material that greatly assisted the research process. As part of this book's publication, a database of names has been compiled and will be placed on appropriate websites for easy access.

Another figure largely taken as read, and not interrogated until this publication, is that more than 1400 New Zealanders died while serving with the military forces of other nations. (The names of those known at the time of writing are recorded in the Roll of Honour at the end of this book.) This is a staggering figure and, to date, a significant omission from New Zealand's war history.

Why would so many New Zealanders serve with other nations' military forces? The most obvious answer is that their decision reflected the circumstances of the time. In 1914, thousands of New Zealanders were travelling or living abroad. These men and women enlisted quickly where it was most convenient, and they were very comfortable serving with

their adopted militaries. For others, though, it was a deliberate choice to serve with British military units rather than join the NZEF. A small number of New Zealanders deliberately opted to transfer from the NZEF to either the British or Indian armies. Their reasons for doing so, and the process and numbers involved, are examined later in this book.

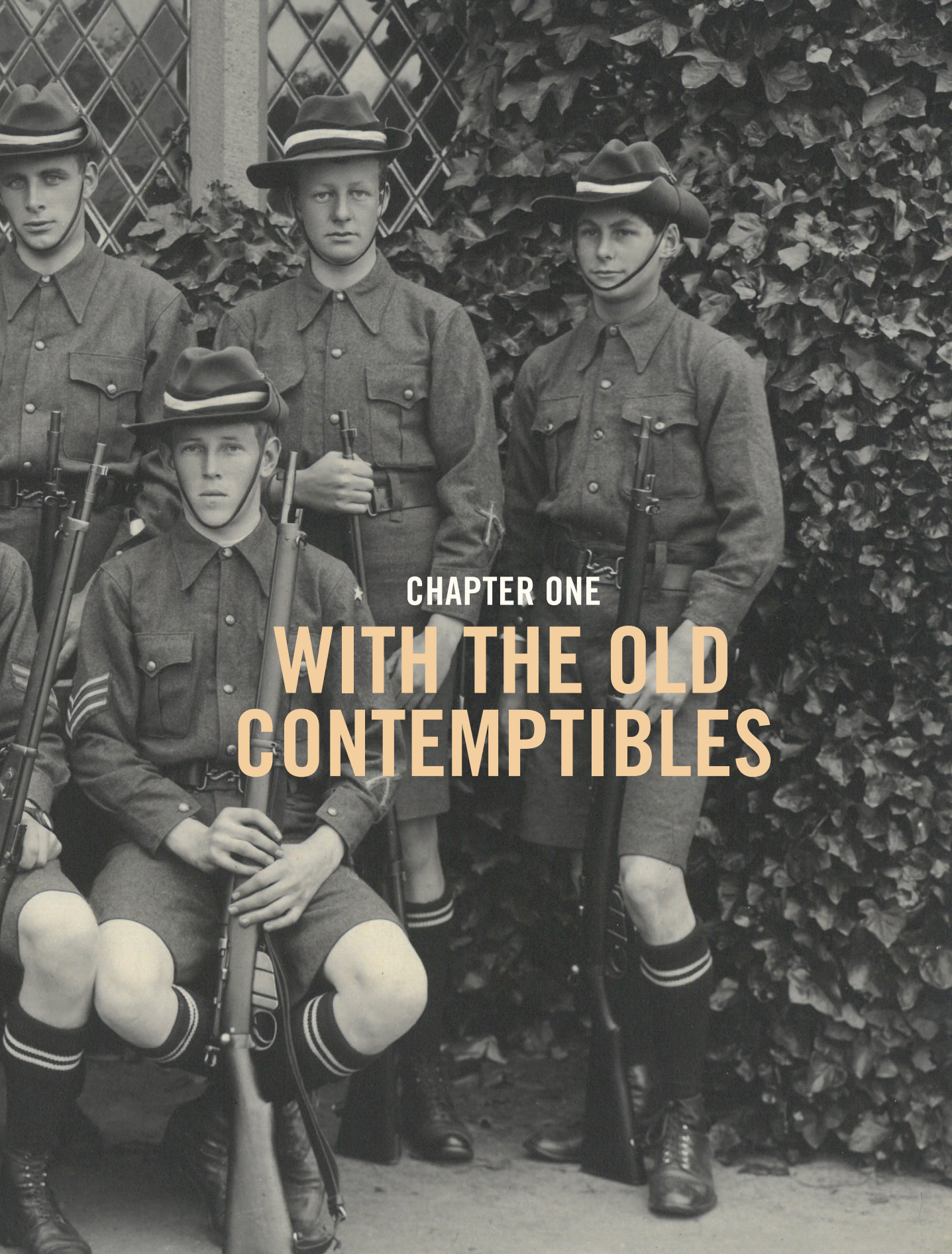
Then there is the fact that in August 1914 many New Zealanders were already serving in the British army, a handful were in the Indian army, and a very small number had enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. British ex-servicemen who had migrated to New Zealand but were still on the reserve list, which could be for a period as long as nine years, were under an obligation to return to service. In 1914, reservists were called up and many migrants had to travel back to the United Kingdom to rejoin their former military units.

Of course, the reverse of this trend happened, too: many people born in the United Kingdom or Australia served in the NZEF. Moreover, Canadians, Australians, Indians and others who were travelling in New Zealand in August 1914 did not hesitate to join the NZEF if the mood took them. This clearly demonstrates how interconnected the British Empire and its dominions were in the early twentieth century. Men and women from the various dominions could freely serve in one another's forces and did so without compunction. They could also serve in units of the British or Indian armies. In addition, it reveals what a truly global struggle the First World War was. As this book shows, New Zealanders served in a staggering array of places, in parts of the world that would have been unknown to them and to their compatriots when war was declared in 1914. New Zealand's current fixation on Gallipoli, and to a lesser degree on the Western Front, means that the global nature of the war is often overlooked, and our collective understanding of it needs to be much broader.

The first chapter examines the experience of those New Zealanders who joined the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914 and found themselves part of the 'Old Contemptibles'. Their experience was different to anything that followed in the war. For the BEF in France the five months of fighting in 1914 were costly and traumatic. Those New Zealanders who joined or transferred to the BEF after 1914 are the subject of a different chapter, as are those who served with the AIF. Since there were so many New Zealanders in the AIF, with such a diverse range of experiences, they are given two chapters. Other chapters look at those New Zealanders who served in the Indian army, the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and with the French military, including its Foreign Legion. A chapter has been allocated to those New Zealanders who either defy categorisation or who have interesting and often unusual stories. This includes a very small number known to have fought for Imperial Germany.

Finding details on the individuals in this book required extensive research in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. While the details of several hundred New Zealanders appear in this book, they are representative of many thousands of others who could not be included.





CHAPTER ONE

WITH THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES

The British army's routine orders for 24 September 1914 contained an extraordinary piece of information, which has since passed into military folklore. Those who heard the orders read aloud, or who read them later, were informed that the German Kaiser was not very impressed with them. In what was purported to be an intercepted communication with one of his generals issued on 19 August, the kaiser is alleged to have said:

It is my Royal and Imperial command that you concentrate your energies, for the immediate present, upon one single purpose, and that is that you address all your skill and all the valour of my soldiers to exterminate, first, the treacherous English [and] walk over General French's contemptible little Army.

The routine orders, issued after Mons and Le Cateau, made the laconic statement that '[t]he answer of the British army on the subject of extermination has already been given'.¹

Some historians have disputed whether Wilhelm II actually issued any such order, but its effect was immediate.² Displaying the dark humour that was such a feature of the wartime BEF, the regular soldiers of its first formations began referring to themselves as the 'Old Contemptibles'. The phrase soon became a badge of honour and an enduring legacy. According to one of the BEF's officers, there was no 'prouder thing' than being able to say you were one of the Old Contemptibles.³

In 1914, the British Regular Army, compared with its European allies and rivals, was tiny. It consisted of just 10,800 officers and 236,632 other ranks. Of this latter figure, the distinguished British military historian Richard Holmes noted it was 'easily exceeded by the 265,379 officers commissioned during the war'.⁴ Such a small force enabled the establishment of only one cavalry and six infantry divisions in August 1914. (A seventh infantry division of regular soldiers would be sent in October.) By comparison, the Germans committed 1077 infantry battalions, the French 1108 and the Belgians 120 at the start of the campaign in August, whereas the BEF could field just 52.⁵ This small force of regular soldiers that made up the BEF for most of 1914 comprised the Old Contemptibles. And yet, as British historian Lyn MacDonald has pointed out, 'the Kaiser was referring to the size of the British Expeditionary Force, and not its quality'.⁶

Indeed, the BEF of 1914 was not only ‘the best equipped Britain had ever sent to war’, but its high standard of training also made it ‘man for man . . . the finest Army in Europe’.⁷

Fine it certainly was, but quality could not prevent heavy casualties. The Old Contemptibles’ time was tragically short — just four months. With severe fighting in several critical battles of 1914, including at Mons, on the Marne and at the First Battle of Ypres, casualties amongst the BEF at the end of the year reached almost 90,000. The original BEF had numbered just on 120,000.⁸ Little wonder that one officer who wrote of his experiences in 1914 described the November battle of First Ypres as ‘the Last Stand of the Old Army’.⁹ The original BEF had been all but destroyed. The casualties had been so high among the aristocratic officer class that Debrete’s *Peerage* could not be published in the spring of 1915 because the editors had insufficient time to revise it.¹⁰ MacDonald concluded her study of 1914 with these words:

Hard battles lay ahead, but they would be fought by other men. The Old Army was finished. The battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne, the Aisne and Ypres had already passed into history — and most of the men who had fought them were dead and gone.¹¹

Those who were ‘dead and gone’ and those who were too badly injured to fight again were primarily from the British Regular Army. This loss of trained, experienced manpower so early in the war ‘was to haunt the British army for the entire conflict’.¹²

The poet Robert Service, often described as the ‘Canadian Kipling’, wrote of their passing:

Oh, weren’t they the fine boys! You never saw the beat of them,
Singing all together with their throats bronze-bare;
Fighting-fit and mirth-mad, music in the feet of them,
Swinging on to glory and the wrath out there.
Laughing by and chaffing by, frolic in the smiles of them,
On the road, the white road, all the afternoon;
Strangers in a strange land, miles and miles and miles of them,
Battle-bound and heart-high:
The gallant old ‘Contemptibles’! There isn’t much remains of them,
So full of fun and fitness, and a-singing in their pride;
For some are cold as clabber and the corby picks the brains of them,
And some are back in Blighty, and a-wishing they had died.¹³

More than 300 New Zealanders fought as part of or alongside the Old Contemptibles in 1914. This included about 15 women, who also offered their services to the BEF in 1914. Their stories form the rest of this chapter.

New Zealanders became part of the Old Contemptibles in several ways. First, there were a small number serving in British regular units in August 1914. These men had chosen to make a career serving with British imperial units either in the United Kingdom or in parts of the British Empire, often because it was a family tradition. They included men like Frederick Andrews in The King's Liverpool Regiment, Robert Gee (Wiltshire Regiment), Frederick Houston (York and Lancaster Regiment) and Robert Masefield (Shropshire Light Infantry). In the mid-1880s the British government initiated a scheme that offered commissions in the British army to officers of the colonial defence forces if they could pass the demanding examination required. The first New Zealander to do this was Albert William Andrew from Christchurch who, in 1886, passed the examination and accepted a commission in the Devonshire Regiment. While serving with his regiment in India, Albert Andrew transferred to the Indian army and served with it as a senior officer during the First World War.¹⁴ His story will feature in a later chapter.

Walter Russell, the only surviving son of Hawke's Bay landowner and politician Sir William Russell, was serving in the Northamptonshire Regiment in 1914. He was not the only New Zealander in the regiment. The three sons of Captain Christopher Garsia of Canterbury were serving in the British military and all were on active duty from August 1914. Lieutenant Oliver Durham Melville Garsia served in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, while his brother Captain Willoughby Garsia was in the Hampshire Regiment. The youngest brother, Lieutenant Rupert Garsia, had opted for the Royal Navy instead. Rupert served for a time on HMS *New Zealand*, but in 1914 joined the Royal Australian Navy ship *Sydney*. When escorting dominion troops to Egypt in September 1914, the vessel had encountered and destroyed the German light cruiser SMS *Emden*.¹⁵ Lieutenant Oliver Garsia would be one of New Zealand's earliest casualties of the war. His story will feature later in this chapter.

Charles Watts, who had secured a commission by examination from Nelson College in 1906, was also in the Northamptonshire Regiment. Nelson College had quite a tradition in providing officers for the British army; this dated back to 1883, when William Glasgow became the first old boy to gain a commission by examination. Glasgow officially retired from the army in August 1914, but offered his services as one of the many 'dugouts' — officers of the regular force who were retired in 1914 but were called back to serve during the war years. Glasgow had become a brigadier general by the end of the war. From April 1916 he commanded 50th Brigade, which was part of 17th Division. William's brother Alfred Glasgow arrived in France in October with the Indian Contingent. He, too, would be promoted to the rank of brigadier before the war's end, commanding 58th Brigade in 19th Division. This was the only instance of two brothers serving as brigadiers in the British army for New Zealand.

South African War veteran Oliver Steele, an accountant from Auckland, obtained a commission in a British regiment, the Royal Berkshire, and spent eight years with it stationed in India. When war broke out, Steele had been in Britain attending a military course. He returned to his regiment and was soon on active service with it in France. Two months later, on 25 October, he was killed in action near Zonnebeke in Belgium. He was aged 32.¹⁶ Following his death, in what would become a familiar pattern, Steele's family wrote to the War Office



'Old Contemptibles' but also New Zealanders. Clockwise from top left: William Glasgow, Alfred Glasgow, Charles Watts and Walter Russell. The Glasgow brothers both commanded British Expeditionary Force brigades during the war — a unique record. NELSON COLLEGE (WILLIAM AND ALFRED GLASGOW, CHARLES WATTS); AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM ONLINE CENOTAPH, KINDLY DONATED BY FAMILY (WALTER RUSSELL)

seeking further information about how he had died. The response, which would be repeated to other families thousands of times before the war was over, was that 'no further information has yet reached the War Office'.¹⁷

Harold Williams from Napier had also obtained a commission in the British army after serving in the South African War. He was with the Dorsetshire Regiment when war was declared. On 23 August, in the first clash of arms between the BEF and the Imperial German Army, Captain Harold Williams 'would earn the dubious distinction' of being one of the first New Zealanders wounded on the Western Front.¹⁸

From Palmerston North, Bertie Albert Follas was the youngest son of John and Elizabeth Follas. While he was still a teenager Bertie had travelled to England, where he enlisted in the Welsh Regiment. His battalion was stationed in India when war broke out, and it was immediately sent to the Western Front. The 1st Welsh arrived in time to take part in the retreat from Mons. In the fighting that followed, Bertie Follas was twice wounded. He recovered in time to take part in the Second Battle of Ypres the following year. Follas described the fighting in this battle as 'murderous' . . . 'the ground between the opposing forces was covered with dead and badly wounded Germans after this big attack, and there was no way of removing them as it was sudden death for anyone to go out in front'.¹⁹ In the conclusion to a letter to his parents, Follas observed a profound truth: that 'the war was all luck'. So much artillery was being used that it was not always possible to find shelter. Therefore, 'if a man lived to see the war right through, it was luck and nothing more'.²⁰ Twenty-four-year-old Bertie Follas' luck ran out during the Battle of Loos in autumn 1915. He was reported missing on 2 October and was never seen again. He was subsequently reported as 'now concluded dead'.²¹

Several New Zealand officers were on duty in the United Kingdom in 1914, most of them attending military education courses. The most senior of these was South African War veteran Brigadier-General Richard Hutton Davies. A former civil engineer and surveyor, Davies had spent the last five years in the United Kingdom, where he held a number of senior appointments, including four years in command of the 6th Infantry Brigade, stationed at Aldershot. Davies' initial posting to the United Kingdom had been for a year only, but he had so impressed the imperial authorities that they offered him this plum role.²²

An experienced commander, Davies was regarded by the New Zealand defence minister, James Allen, as the logical replacement for Alexander Godley as commandant of the New Zealand military forces.²³ When war was declared, it would have been too disruptive to recall all of the dominion officers serving with the British military, so Davies began preparing his brigade for active service and sailed with it to France as part of the British 2nd Division. The 6th landed in France on 12 August 1914; the first regular infantry brigade of the BEF to do so. Davies would be the first New Zealander to command a brigade, and later a division, on active service.²⁴

Davies' military service in this war was chequered. He was not well in 1914; nor, at 53 years of age, was he young. His UK service record indicates that he 'had a serious illness before the war',²⁵ confirmed in a letter he wrote to Allen: 'I was very ill indeed . . . shortly before the war

started, & had not properly recovered when we went over.’²⁶ The strains of active service, especially the withdrawal from Mons, left him and his soldiers ‘absolutely exhausted’. Davies had not been happy soldiering and wrote of his fatigued men: ‘I hope never in my life to see such a sight again.’ As he explained to Allen, ‘This is now a most peculiar war in many ways . . . In fact, now it is a war for sappers, garrison and heavy gunners. The poor Infantry have a poisonous time in the wet and cold trenches.’²⁷

Back in Britain, Davies transferred to the imperial forces at their request in order to command a division. The United Kingdom was desperate for experienced, competent officers, and in February 1915, Davies was promoted to major general and given command of 20th (Light) Division, one of the new formations raised as part of Kitchener’s Army. He was given three months’ rest prior to assuming his new command.²⁸ It followed the previous pattern of his brigade appointment, in that in January 1916, while commanding the division on the Western Front, Davies was again mentioned in despatches. Just two months later, however, strain and sickness struck again.

His corps commander, Lord Cavan, wrote a secret and confidential memorandum that was read to Davies prior to being sent to the BEF’s new commander, General Sir Douglas Haig. The memorandum opened with this assessment of Davies’ poor health: ‘He is a man of strong character, but would, I am convinced, break down with the strain of commanding a Division in the Summer campaign.’ Cavan therefore considered his ‘duty in the interests of the 20th Division to recommend that he be relieved of his command, but that his valuable knowledge and experience be utilised to the full at home’.

In his defence, Davies noted his ‘very serious illness’ before the war, the strain of the Mons battle and the fact that he had recently suffered ‘two bad bouts of influenza’.²⁹ Haig had Davies removed from his command and sent back to the United Kingdom to recover. Haig, writing to the War Office, considered Davies to be ‘physically unfit to withstand the strain of commanding a Division in the field’, but, like Cavan, recognised his other strengths and recommended he be employed ‘to the fullest advantage’ at home.³⁰

Davies later complained to Allen:

I did not agree with the way certain parts of the line were held with regard to ground & did not hesitate to explain my views . . . I considered very many men could have been saved & more damage done to the enemy by certain slight alterations of position, & am still convinced of it.

He described divisional command in the trenches as ‘a poisonous job & one is simply a glorified ganger . . . I would rather keep a shop.’³¹ Although Davies was mentioned in despatches for his part in the Battle of Mons, Haig had not been impressed with his performance, later telling Godley that Davies ‘had no nerve even from the start’.³² Godley, who knew that Allen saw Davies as his logical replacement, used his position to undermine Davies. He wrote to Allen in December 1916:



Richard Hutton Davies was the first New Zealander to command a brigade and then a division on active service. His military service in the First World War was marred by ill health. Worn out by the war, and depressed, Davies took his own life in May 1918.

AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM ONLINE CENOTAPH,
KINDLY DONATED BY FAMILY