

THE GREAT WAR TIMES

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FROM THE WHANGANUI
WWI CENTENARY PROGRAMME



LINER SINKING FUELS WHANGANUI RIOT

The sinking of the British passenger ship RMS *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915 triggered a riot in Whanganui on the night of Saturday 15 May.

Despite warnings from the German government of submarines operating in the Atlantic the *Lusitania* sailed from New York for Liverpool on 3 May. As the ship neared the southern coast of Ireland it was torpedoed by a U-boat and sank in just 18 minutes with the loss of 1,200 lives. Among those who died were American millionaire Alfred Vanderbilt and New Zealanders Joseph and Mary Macky.

A wave of anti-German violence swept through the British Empire with protests and riots in Britain, Canada and Australia. In New Zealand the news of the sinking coincided with the first lists of casualties from the April Gallipoli landings.

In Whanganui threats of violence were made to citizens with German heritage or with family or business names that sounded German. Pork butcher Conrad Heinold was the main target of a crowd that gathered in Victoria Avenue on the evening of 15 May. German-born Heinold had set up business in Whanganui in 1886, becoming a naturalised British subject in 1894, but was accused of anti-British sympathies.

As the hotels closed and the town lights were put out at 10.00 pm the sound of breaking glass could be heard as stones shattered Heinold's shop windows. Despite pleas for calm from Whanganui Mayor Charles Mackay, the shop was destroyed and its contents looted before someone in the crowd cried "What about Hallensteins?"

The clothing store (now occupied by Andersons) on the corner of Victoria Avenue and Ridgway Street became the next target of the crowd along with the windows of the Bristol Piano Company (known as the Dresden Piano Company prior to the war) in Ridgway Street.

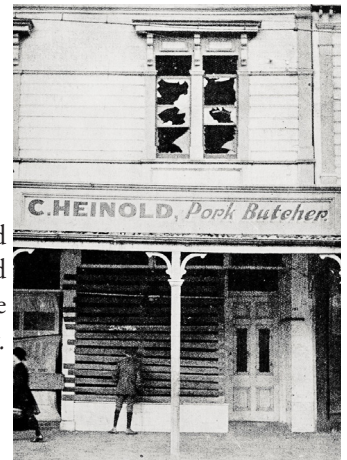
The following day Mayor Mackay called a Patriotic Meeting at the Opera House where attendees resolved to support the war effort through enlistment and fundraising rather than violence. Hallenstein's managing director issued a statement declaring the firm's loyalty to Britain and its support for the war effort.

Although there was no further physical violence, prejudice against alleged enemy aliens lingered. Several letters appeared in the newspapers from people who were "accused" of being German. Amongst these was Herman Neverman, of Danish

descent, who resigned from his position at McGruer's after the store was threatened with destruction for employing a German.

Heinold Pork Butchers had windows shattered by a crowd protesting the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

Photographer A E Watkinson
Sir George Grey Special Collections
Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19150527-48-3



WAR MUSIC FROM WHANGANUI

Gallipoli inspired an outpouring of musical composition, not least by Whanganui composer Godfrey Copley. *Anzac Memories, Poppies of Flanders*, for piano, cornet and voice, was produced with an appropriate cover illustration of a long field of white crosses, a border of red poppies with green foliage and a "Digger" with a lemon squeezer hat and rifle. It was printed and published by the long-established Whanganui firm of A D Willis.



The *Call of the Fernleaf*, for voice and piano, was also composed by Copley with lyrics by A S Hughes.

Music made in Whanganui
Sheet music of a World War I song composed by Godfrey Copley and printed by A D Willis

Whanganui Regional Museum
Collection Ref: 1995.18.6

The front cover is illustrated with a wounded soldier walking on a cloud with a lake and mountains below, a waka being paddled on the lake and a large fern leaf above. This is probably meant to be Lake Taupō.

One of the characteristics of sheet music published in World War I is that at the start of the war it was generally patriotic and stirring. As the war dragged on, there was an increasing

CONSCRIPTION IN WHANGANUI

When Britain announced on 2 August 1914 that it was at war with Germany the New Zealand government immediately announced its support for “Home”. In the first week of war, 14,000 New Zealanders enlisted.

People soon realised that this war would not be “over by Christmas” as predicted, and that fighting could not be sustained by voluntary enlistment. In 1915 more men were needed for the Western Front, yet the number of men joining up declined significantly.

Casualties on the Western front were very heavy. In estimated 2,350 more men per month were required if New Zealand was to meet its obligations. This was an extremely onerous commitment when the total number of men of military age in New Zealand was only 248,000.

In August 1915 a bill was passed making it compulsory for all men between 17 and 60 years to register before 9 November 1915. A fine of £100 or six months imprisonment could be imposed for non-compliance. Using this information, the Census and Statistics office compiled a register and gave each district in New Zealand a list of eligible men in their district. Wanganui, District 6, was required to produce 40 men per month if needed.

The Mayor of Wanganui, Charles Mackay, decided to instigate a door-to-door recruitment drive to try and get the Borough to raise more volunteers and thus avoid conscription in the area. The drive was to be organised by the Patriotic Committee. The Committee called a public meeting for the purpose of selecting volunteers to perform this unpleasant task. Only 18 people came to the meeting, three of them women who were not considered suitable for the job. The scheme was patently not a success.

In May 1916 the Military Service Bill was introduced to Parliament and passed on 1 August that year. Conscription was to commence in November. Call-up was to be by ballot and potential conscripts were divided into four groups.

The first to be called would be single men with no dependants. The second was single men with dependants and married men with no children. The third ballot would comprise married

men with one or two children. The final group was married men with two or more children.

Balloted men were gazetted and had one month to appeal. Appeals were mostly on the grounds of having dependants. Farmers appealed on the grounds of needing to maintain their farms. A few claimed pacifist or religious objections. Police gazettes from late 1916 onwards show a large number of defaulters (did not report for medical examination) and deserters (did not turn up at camp). Warrants were issued for the arrest of these men. This indicates a level of resistance to conscription in the community.

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Māori were not entered on the register until June 1917. By the end of the war 30,000 men had enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and 60 or 70 objectors had been offered exemption on pacifist or religious grounds. 273 men were in prison for refusing to serve.

As a consequence of various forms of conscientious objecting, 2,6000 people lost their civil rights, which included not being able to vote for 10 years and not being able to hold a government job.

The total number of New Zealanders fighting in World War I was about 99,000. Of these, 72% were volunteers and 28% were conscripts.

Acknowledgement is made to NZ History on-line and Wanganui Newspapers

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British recruitment poster for enlistment of servicemen from the Dominions

LIEUTENANT PETTIGREW OF THE RAF

This is the war story of the grandfather of Whanganui historian and community leader Wendy Pettigrew, who passed away in 2015.

For the 26-year old kiwi, Lieutenant Gordon Pettigrew (1892-1973) of the Royal Air Force, the war did not end on Armistice Day. On 12 November 1918 he was sent to Murmansk in Northern Russia to join other RAF men who had volunteered to take part in the Allied Intervention against the Bolsheviks, a campaign which had started the year before with the aim of keeping ports and supply lines out of the Red Army's hands. The RAF went to train White Russian pilots, a difficult task in the northern winter when snow and ice made erecting hangars very difficult, let alone getting planes to start.

In May 1919 Gordon sailed south to Archangel on HMS Pegasus, a float-plane carrier and troopship. From airfields near Archangel, the RAF men undertook reconnaissance flights, especially along the Dvina River, and had bombing raids on Bolshevik-held villages and camps.



From Gordon Pettigrew's wartime photograph album

Young pilots at Murmansk in northern Russia

Wendy Pettigrew Collection

August 1919 saw the evacuation of Archangel, with hundreds of White Russian refugees being taken south to Baltic ports and safety, some of them on the Willochra, a ship which had taken ANZAC soldiers to the Front throughout the war. The Allied campaign in Russia was over and Gordon Pettigrew returned to Britain, spending some time at a wireless training depot, before setting sail for home in December 1919, as a first-class saloon passenger on the Bremen, all paid for by the RAF. Gordon Pettigrew recorded his wartime adventures on film, illicitly of course, and compiled a photograph album.

He returned to Wellington at the end of January 1920, to be met by his Whanganui sweet-heart, Elsie Reid. The two were engaged within days and married in St Pauls Presbyterian Church, Whanganui, in October 1920.

Gordon's Russian photograph album has a history of its own. After he died in 1973 and his house was cleared, a suitcase with the album and a book of autographs and postcards inside found its way to a Railways left-goods auction where it was purchased by an Italian man. His boss contacted the Ministry of Defence where some detective work was done and the owner identified. Gordon's son, Jim Pettigrew (Wendy's father) in Whanganui, was contacted and the photograph album made its way back to the family in 1976.

KENNETH HENRY MILLWARD OF THE ROYAL NAVY AIR SERVICE

Born in Wanganui in 1896, Kenneth travelled to the United Kingdom at the end of 1915 where he enlisted in the Royal Navy Air Service and commenced flight training at the Royal Navy Air Station Redcar on 17 July 1916.

On 2 October he reported his first solo flight. Next day he pancaked and broke the under-carriage and propeller. Typically, the heights of these flights were 1000 to 2000 feet. Some flights involved bomb dropping and the flight duration was usually in the range of 10 to 45 minutes.

By February 1917 Kenneth was stationed at RN Air Station Dover. After 45 hours of flight time on 22 February he was declared "ready for deployment".

He joined No. 8 Squadron at Furnes, Belgium and began flying Sopworth Triplanes, which were his most frequent aircraft for his remaining time in the air. On 25 March he joined No.1 Squadron attached to the RFC (Royal Flying Corps) stationed at Chipilly in the area of Somme, Northern France. On 8 April at a height of 14,000 feet he must have spotted a German aircraft because he reported being "in pursuit of HA - did not get within 6000 ft of him". For the next two weeks he reported line patrols or offensive patrols in the Arras area.

On 5 and 6 May Kenneth reported attacking German aircraft, including firing about 200 rounds at one aircraft which "went down out of control". A week later six German aircraft were attacked and driven off with one downed, out of control. On 3 June he reported delivering a new Triplane N6309 from Dunkerque to Bailleul, not far from the France-Belgium

border. This aircraft was to be the one he flew almost daily, accumulating 45 hours through to 19 June when the logbook entries cease.

Kenneth was shot down and killed 15 kilometres southeast of Comines near the rail line on 7 July 1917.

There is a photo showing his crashed aircraft beside the rail lines surrounded by German officers and troops. Oberleutnant Kurt Wolff was recognised for a "kill" in a triplane near Ypres on that date at 11 am.

Kurt Wolff was a close friend of Richthoffen (the Red Baron) and was the Commander of his second wing, Jasta II.



Kenneth Henry Millward in his Royal Navy Air Service Uniform

Peter Millward Collection

Many thanks to Peter Millward of Nelson who supplied the story and the image of his great uncle.

WANGANUI REPERTORY THEATRE WORLD WAR I PLAYS

In September 2016 three plays were presented to a full house in Wakefield Chamber in Ridgway Street, Whanganui. These were temporary premises while structural maintenance was being carried out at the Repertory Theatre.

The Repertory had called on local playwrights, novices or established, to submit plays reflecting the effects that WWI had on families and citizens left at home, as well as those who went into battle on the other side of the world. The selected plays were staged in conjunction with the Whanganui Literary Festival.

The Lost Generation by Cass Alexander examined the effects of internal suffering experienced by servicemen who felt they had no choices during WWI, and the resounding effects of that today. *Ettie Rout* by Alan Cruise-Johnston looked at the efforts of the infamous Mrs Rout who viewed the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases amongst returning servicemen as a medical, rather than a moral, issue. *The Dug-out* by Scott Taylor-Moore was based on the poems of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen writing from the Western Front in 1916.

The standard of entries was very high, and to acknowledge their efforts, all playwrights received certificates at a formal ceremony attended by their families, Whanganui District Council councillors and Repertory members.

Thanks to April Pearson, Convenor, Wanganui Repertory Theatre Playreading Group

BASTILLE DAY PARADE

The Queen Alexandra's Mounted Rifles marched in the French military parade on Bastille Day. "When we parade the QAMR guidon in Paris on July 14th we're honouring our special connection with the people of Whanganui", said the unit's Regimental Sergeant Major. A guidon is a swallow-tailed flag that symbolises the spirit of a mounted unit or regiment.

Source: River City Press 7 August 2016

BULLS MUSEUM – NEW ZEALAND

MOUNTED RIFLES AND ANZAC WORLD WAR I EXHIBITIONS

The Mounted Riflemen of Australia and New Zealand rarely rode their horses directly into the enemy lines in a frontal charge. The most successful technique was for the horsemen to move quickly to surround the intended battlefield, then dismount and attack on foot like infantrymen. You can learn more about the NZMR at Bulls Museum, open from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm every day.

Near Bulls is a cairn to Bess the war horse, never wounded and one of only four horses that returned to New Zealand after the war. She was repatriated to England in 1919 and underwent 12 months quarantine. Bess apparently took part in a victory parade in Britain. She arrived back in New Zealand in July 1920, along with her three surviving companions.

Visit the Bulls Museum at 81 High Street, Bulls. Entry is free, but donations are always appreciated.



New Zealand Mounted Rifles Reinforcements Badge of the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force

These badges were worn during training and home service and were replaced by the badge worn by the regiment that the reinforcements were assigned to.

Whanganui Regional Museum Collection Ref: 1802.2017

In the next issue of the *Great War Times* we begin the story of the Queen Alexandra's Mounted Rifles.

For information on all national activities commemorating the centennial of World War I, visit the official website www.wwi100.govt.nz.