





---

**THANK YOU**

---

*Thank you to the family of Solomon Isaacs for  
sharing your memories, photographs and  
documents to assist us in telling some of  
New Zealand's 1916 story.*

INTRO PAGE PHOTO: Solomon Isaacs portrait.

**1916**  
**COURAGE & COMMITMENT**  
NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



# THE FIRST WORLD WAR

100 YEARS – LEST WE FORGET



## CONTENTS

**1**

*Introduction*

**4**

*Serving his country – Solomon Isaacs*

**8**

*Pioneer Battalion*

**13**

*The Arras tunnels*

**16**

*The First Anzac Day*

**20**

*The Battle of Jutland*

**24**

*Conscription introduced*

**28**

*The Middle East*

**32**

*The Somme*

**36**

*Away from the front*

**40**

*The home front*

**43**

*Acknowledgements*



These commemorative stamps have been issued in conjunction with WW100  
– a programme established by the New Zealand government to mark the  
First World War centenary through a range of activities from 2014 to 2018.

**IMAGE LEFT:** YMCA facilities near the front line in 1916, serving tea, coffee, biscuits and cake.  
Painted by William Frederick Bell of the NZEF.





## INTRODUCTION

*As Anzac Day 2015 dawned, 40,000 early risers crammed into Wellington's Pukeahu National War Memorial Park and the surrounding streets. From children in pyjamas to the elderly in wheelchairs, they took time to remember those who had served their country – and to honour their courage and commitment.*

*Those last two words loom large in this third special stamp book commemorating the centennial of the First World War. Exactly a hundred years on, we revisit 1916 in both words and pictures.*

*When the year began, the war had left few New Zealanders unscathed. The shocking losses at Gallipoli had a ripple effect not just on servicemen but on their wives, mothers, fathers, children, friends and neighbours. They could see the conflict escalating, could see no end in sight, and could see too many names on the casualty lists. As they remembered Gallipoli on the first Anzac Day, they hoped worse wasn't to come.*

*Though New Zealand's Mounted Rifles continued to serve in the Middle East, in April 1916 the focus of the war – and most New Zealand troops – shifted to the Western Front. The first New Zealand unit to arrive in France was the New Zealand Tunnelling Company, who dug an underground network of tunnels leading to the German front line. Further above ground, the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion did similarly exhausting engineering and construction work, particularly building communications trenches, often under fire. One man attached to both companies was Cook Islander Solomon Isaacs, a remarkable man who risked everything by volunteering. We tell his story as one of the Pacific Islanders who served in the war – and of New Zealand's contribution to the war at sea.*

**LEFT:** People gather to see poppies projected onto the Carillon the night before Anzac Day 2015 at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, Wellington.



## NEW ZEALAND'S 1916 STORY

As New Zealand tunnellers and Pioneers earned reputations for strength and endurance, their comrades earned a reputation for bravery on the battlefield. There's no getting away from the horrors and hardships of trench life, especially at the Somme: the bloodiest campaign of the war for New Zealand. In a welcome distraction, men rotating out of the trenches found companionship in soldiers' cafés that sprang up in French villages. And men on leave made sure to see the sights of the mother country, getting a particularly warm welcome in London.

Back home the flood of volunteers had, unsurprisingly, slowed. Enter conscription. Few opposed this measure, with New Zealanders determined to do their bit. The country's postal system could barely keep up with all the letters, postcards and comfort parcels, many coming from patriotic societies that saw women fundraise tirelessly for New Zealand soldiers. The courage and commitment of these men were sorely tested as New Zealand began its extraordinary contribution at the Western Front.



The post office at Trentham Military Training Camp, pictured here in 1914. As soon as soldiers entered military service they began writing home, a practice that would continue as they went overseas.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### SERVING HIS COUNTRY SOLOMON ISAACS

Solomon Isaacs, born in 1895 and raised in the village of Tautu on Aitutaki in the Cook Islands, signed up with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) as a 19-year-old labourer living in Auckland. He would serve overseas for eight days short of three years as a member of the 3rd Māori Reinforcements, the Pioneer Battalion, the New Zealand Tunnelling Company and the Rarotongan Company in Palestine, before returning to Auckland, and eventually Tautu between 1920 and 1922.







## SERVING HIS COUNTRY SOLOMON ISAACS

*Risking death, injury and illness, Cook Islander Solomon Isaacs showed remarkable bravery and loyalty during three years fighting for his adopted country and the British Empire.*

Solomon grew up in the village of Tautu on Aitutaki in the Cook Islands and migrated to Auckland before the war, working as a labourer in Northcote. He was one of just four Pacific Islanders who lived in New Zealand before volunteering. Had his years in this country strengthened his ties to New Zealand and the empire? Did he want to explore the world? Whatever his reasons, Solomon left New Zealand in February with the 3rd Māori Reinforcements, made up of Māori and Pacific Islanders.

Solomon had been in Egypt with the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion just two weeks when orders came in April to leave for the Western Front. Here, during difficult, dangerous labouring work – particularly building vital communications trenches – Solomon witnessed fellow Pioneers felled by artillery and sniper fire. During raids conducted by the Pioneers, Solomon was armed with hand grenades as a company bomber.

On top of the day-to-day hardships and danger, Solomon struggled with the stodgy rations and the terrible cold. Accustomed to a tropical climate and fresh food, most Pacific Islanders fell ill – and Solomon was no exception.

**PG3:** One of two Roll of Honour boards now found in the Pioneer Lounge of the Cook Islands RSA. Solomon Isaacs' name is third from the top, under the 1st Contingent.



Solomon Isaacs' name and service number 16/1033 carved into the wall underneath the town of Arras, 24 February 1917.

On 7 September he got sick with trench fever, a severe (though rarely fatal) illness spread by body lice that causes headaches, skin rashes, inflamed eyes and leg pain. It took him a month to recover, mostly in England, so he missed the Somme offensive before rejoining the Pioneers.

On 8 December Solomon and two other Cook Islanders who had recently recovered from illness were temporarily attached to the New Zealand Tunnelling Company, where conditions would be a little more bearable. For nearly three months, Solomon helped dig an underground cavern system beneath the town of Arras, pausing to carve his name and service number onto a tunnel wall.

Despite his weak health, on 26 March 1917 Solomon returned to the Pioneers, serving for another 11 months. With respiratory illness still plaguing the Cook Islanders, in January 1918 they all left the Pioneer Battalion to join the Rarotongan Company in Palestine. Here Solomon unloaded and carried heavy ammunition to the front line, keeping stashes concealed from the enemy.



## NEW ZEALAND'S 1916 STORY

On 31 July Solomon became dangerously ill with pneumonia, but pulled through. After two months in hospital, he returned to the Rarotongan Company on 3 October. After Armistice, he sailed for New Zealand, and resided in Grey Lynn, Auckland, for several years before returning to Tautu.

In August 1922 Solomon married gorgeous young 17-year-old Teremoana Tikiteina, who was taken with the former soldier's charm. They welcomed son Pāpā Solomona a year later.

When his son was less than two months old, Solomon went fishing alone in a remote lagoon for seafood that would fortify his wife's breast milk. Here he stood on a stonefish. Though stonefish poisoning isn't usually fatal, paddling and poling his canoe back exhausted him. Come evening, he was found struggling out of his canoe at the Tautu wharf, dying shortly afterwards on 3 September 1923, aged just 27.

Solomon is buried alongside his parents between family homes in Tautu. A concrete headstone bears his name, the words 'Great War Veteran', the New Zealand Expeditionary Force cross and a silver fern.



Three-quarter portrait of Solomon Isaacs in uniform shortly before departing for Egypt with the 3rd Māori Reinforcements, February 1916.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### PIONEER BATTALION

*In February 1916 the 3rd Māori Reinforcements, including Solomon Isaacs, left New Zealand for Suez, Egypt.*

*By April they would be in Western Europe as members of the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion, a unit that grew from the remnants of the Native Contingent that served at Gallipoli the year before. By 1917 the Pioneers had become popularly known as the Māori Pioneer Battalion, a name that would stick until their return to New Zealand in 1919.*







## PIONEER BATTALION

*Annexed to New Zealand in 1901, Niue and the Cook Islands offered soldiers when the war began. They weren't needed at first. But after the heavy losses at Gallipoli, a recruiting drive saw men from Niue, the Cook Islands, Tonga and Ellice Island leave New Zealand with the NZEF in 1916. Volunteering was remarkable enough for Māori, given the tensions between many iwi and the Crown, but it was an extraordinary commitment for the Pacific Islanders. Though four – including Solomon Isaacs – already lived in New Zealand, the others literally went the extra distance by leaving their home islands to train at Auckland's Narrow Neck camp.*

Likely taken in Wellington, the photograph on this stamp shows several soldiers waiting to board a boat bound for Egypt. 170 Pacific Islanders and 112 Māori troops left New Zealand on 5 February 1916, as the 3rd Maori Reinforcements. Six weeks later, when the men disembarked in Suez, 15 Niueans infected with measles were left to recover in hospital.

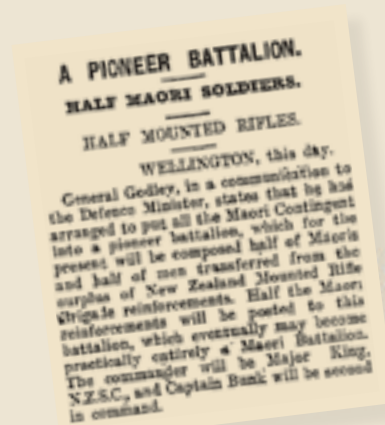


A full kit parade of the Māori and Niue Island soldiers completing their course of training at the Narrow Neck camp, Auckland.

**PG7:** An Observer cartoon's view of Māori participation in the First World War shows a Māori soldier charging two Turkish soldiers with a bayonet. The ghost of a Māori warrior wielding a patu rears behind him.

The remaining men marched into the New Zealand Base camp at Ismailia. Here the 3rd Māori Reinforcements joined forces with troops already serving in Egypt to form the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion, a military labour force. Organised into four companies, each with two Pākehā platoons and two Māori platoons, the battalion reunited Māori soldiers from the former Native Contingent, which had been dissolved after 313 of its 447 men were either killed or injured at Gallipoli.

On 5 April orders came to depart for the Western Front – and to send the most delicate Niueans home. After the Pioneers arrived in France, few Pacific Islanders escaped rampant diseases such as trench fever, bronchitis and pneumonia. By late May, four in every five Niueans had been hospitalised, so all the remaining Niueans were sent to hospital in England then sent home.



**LEFT:** The reorganisation of the Native Contingent after Gallipoli was announced in early 1916, with the Pioneer Battalion formed in Egypt in March.

**RIGHT:** An example of the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion badge, worn by members of the Battalion during the First World War.



Used to fresh food and a sunny climate, the Cook Islanders also struggled to adapt to the chill, the army diet, and speaking English. But for those who weren't ill, there was work to do.

Though the Pioneers sometimes fought with the infantry in raids and emergencies, their focus was construction and engineering work that spanned digging drains and laying railway lines to erecting wire entanglements and burying communication cables.

But their primary task was digging trenches, often under fire and often at night. They were among the first New Zealand units at the Somme in September, with 12 Pioneers killed and 40 wounded on the first day. The two communications and access trenches they built were considered masterpieces of First World War engineering. Before long, the Pioneers were well known for their strength and stoicism.



**LEFT:** 'Te Hokowhitu a Tu', the badge of the New Zealand Native Contingent, who saw action at Gallipoli in 1915. **RIGHT:** Māori soldiers in training in a makeshift trench with bayonets attached, prior to deployment in 1916.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



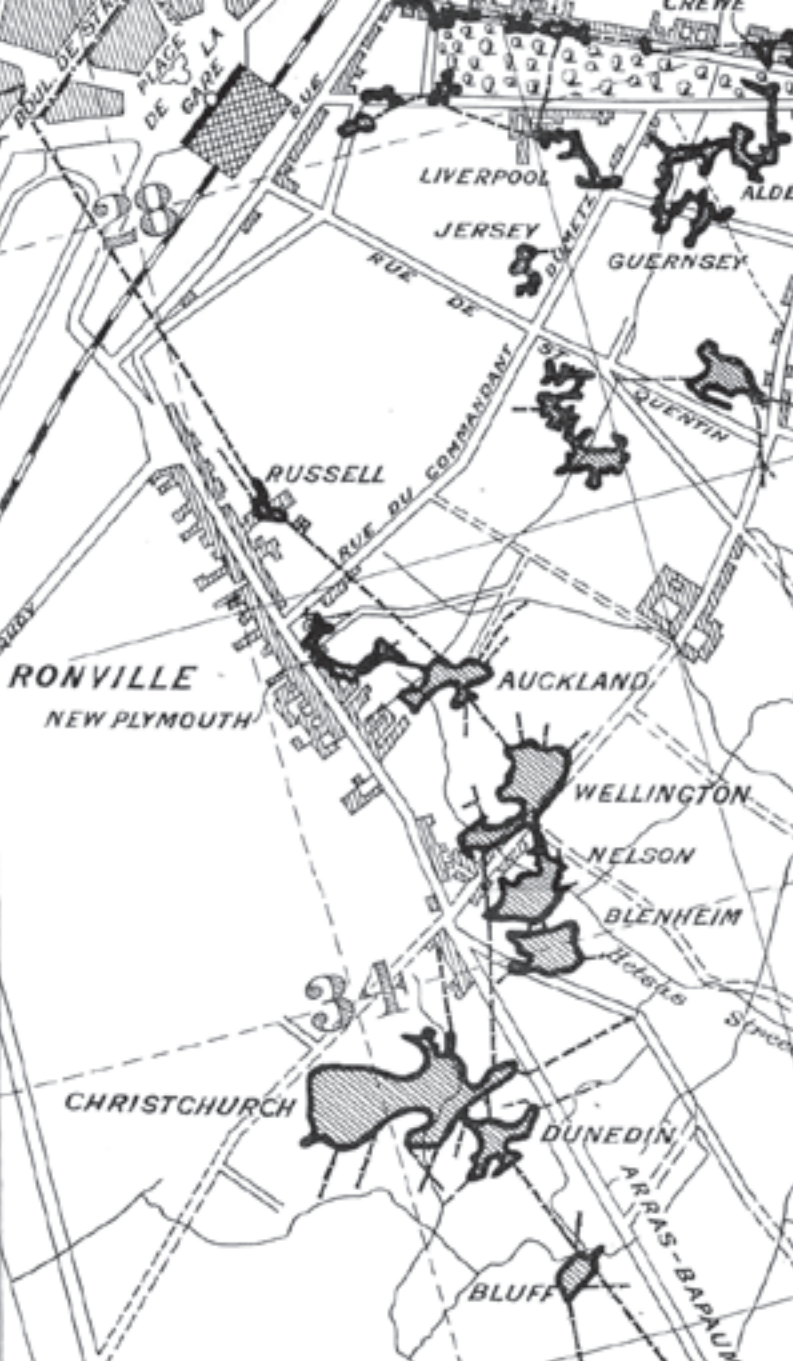
### THE ARRAS TUNNELS

The first New Zealand unit on the Western Front, the New Zealand Tunnelling Company, arrived in France on 10 March 1916 to help carry out the Empire's war strategy underground. During heavy fighting in 1916 and 1917 the NZTC built dugouts, roads and many kilometres of tunnels near the French town of Arras. The NZTC made its mark in the tunnels, naming key locations after New Zealand towns and cities. These markings, including the words 'Kia Ora NZ', are still visible today.









## THE ARRAS TUNNELS

Quarrymen, gold-miners and coal-miners of hard muscles and gnarled hands came together to form the New Zealand Tunnelling Company (NZTC), alongside some engineers. Numbering around 350 men, they were the first New Zealanders on the Western Front, on 15 March 1916. Soon they were known as the toughest company of the 35 Allied tunnelling units.

Digging largely with pickaxes, these units created a vast underground network providing access to the front line. In what's known as countermining, the tunnellers also tried to locate and destroy German tunnels by laying mines under them. The physically taxing work was also dangerous due to carbon-monoxide poisoning, German countermining, and tunnel collapse.

After successfully countermining at Vimy Ridge, the NZTC began work beneath the French town of Arras in November. Over five months, digging through chalk rock, the New Zealanders slowly but surely linked and greatly extended two medieval mines, digging 4,300 metres of tunnels from the Arras town centre to the German front line. To orient themselves from north to south, they named key locations Russell, Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch, Dunedin and Bluff.

At times, Allied tunnellers, infantry and Pioneers helped the NZTC. On December 16 Pioneer Solomon Isaacs was there when the tunnellers set a record by digging 100 metres in a day.

**PG11:** Steps carved into the floor of the Arras tunnels leading to Number 10 exit show the rugged underground conditions experienced by the NZTC.

**LEFT:** To help navigate under Arras, the New Zealanders gave one set of tunnels names that corresponded with the orientation of towns back home, and linked them all through Godley Avenue, named after the commander of the NZEF.



Solomon was one of many men who carved their name on a tunnel wall. As shown on this stamp, an unknown New Zealander carved 'Kia Ora NZ', flanked by ferns. Immortalised in the chalk, it's become a symbol of the crucial New Zealand contribution to this underground theatre of war.

The Arras Tunnels could eventually house 20,000-plus men, equipped with a railway, running water, electricity, kitchens, and a hospital. In April 1917, 15,000 men would assemble here for the first phase of the month-long Battle of Arras, an offensive that would successfully surprise the Germans.

In August 1918 the NZTC began construction work, largely building bridges. Continuing this work after Armistice, they were the last New Zealanders to leave France, in April 1919, having lost at least 62 men.

In 2007 a memorial to the New Zealand tunnellers was unveiled at Arras. In 2015 New Zealand got its own memorial when motorway feeder the Arras Tunnel opened under Wellington's Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, with poppies plastered on the walls.

Today the Arras tunnels are open to visitors. Solomon Isaacs' grandson Isaac Solomona plans to attend the 2017 Battle of Arras centennial, and run his fingers along his grandfather's inscription as though they're shaking hands.

War diaries such as this one from the New Zealand Tunnelling Company kept a record of the day-to-day progress made by the unit above and below ground.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### THE FIRST ANZAC DAY

25 April 1916 was New Zealand's first Anzac Day, one year after the landings at Gallipoli by New Zealand and Australian troops. With a parade in London, services for troops in Egypt and a half-day holiday at home, New Zealanders met en masse to recognise the loss of life on the Turkish peninsula. Local services like the one featured on this stamp on the Church Steps in Nelson were the first of many in the years to come.









Anzac Day Parade in London in 1916, showing New Zealand servicemen marching unarmed with the crowd close by, reportedly 'wanting to hug and nurture' them.

## THE FIRST ANZAC DAY

*With its dawn services and blood-red poppies, Anzac Day has been part of New Zealand's DNA for 100 years.*

In 1916 the government answered calls for a national commemoration of the Gallipoli landings by declaring 25 April to be Anzac Day. On the first half-day holiday 2,000 Anzac troops paraded in London, with a service at Westminster Abbey. In Egypt, Kiwi soldiers attended a service for their fallen comrades, then lifted their spirits with a sports day. Back home, returned and training servicemen didn't want to be split up among different church services, preferring to attend public gatherings at town halls and outdoor areas – and the public followed their lead. Thousands gathered in towns both big and small, including on Nelson's Church Steps, as shown in the photograph featured on this stamp.

**PG15:** This image from the first Anzac Day in Dunedin in 1916 illustrates the mood of the country, a mix of commemoration, celebration and nationalism.

This first Anzac Day met the need for New Zealanders to publicly express their gratitude and grief, especially when there were no funerals. How else could a heart-broken mother tell the world she was proud of her boy? As war moved onto the Western Front, recruiting meetings were also held on the first Anzac Day to rally troops and support for the war.

Throughout the war, Anzac Day symbolised national commitment and unity – and New Zealand's coming-of-age as a nation, not just a dominion. It also showed pride in the men now considered some of the world's best soldiers.

Post-war, Anzac Day was less about patriotism and more about honouring the sacrifices of servicemen. By 1920 the Returned Soldiers' (later Returned and Services') Association (RSA) had emerged as the guardian of Anzac Day, organising public commemorations. In 1921 Anzac Day became a full statutory holiday – and the poppy that grew on soldiers' graves became an international symbol of remembrance.



A gathering on Anzac Day at the top of Mount Maunsell, overlooking Tinui township. The original cross was erected in 1916, and replaced in 1965.



This French-made poppy from 1921 is from the same stock as those that were shipped to New Zealand for Poppy Day held on 24 April 1922.



**ABOVE:** This postcard produced by Whangarei-based Frederick George Radcliffe ('F.G.R.') commemorating Anzac Day 1916 features images of crossed flags, a photograph of His Majesty the King, photographs of New Zealand scenes and two New Zealand soldiers.

In most Commonwealth nations, cloth poppies are worn on Remembrance Day (11 November) to mark Armistice. But New Zealand and Australia prefer to remember their servicemen on Anzac Day. Since 1922, New Zealanders have bought cloth-poppy pins on Poppy Day (the Friday before Anzac Day) to wear and to raise money for the RSA.

Though the country has become more secular over the decades, Anzac Day services have remained rich in religious ritual to respect the beliefs and traditions of the earlier era. Outdoor war memorials usually host both dawn ceremonies (to acknowledge Gallipoli's dawn landings) and services later in the morning. Since World War Two, Anzac Day has also honoured those who served in later conflicts.

**ABOVE LEFT:** A programme titled 'Civic Religious Gathering in commemoration of the heroism of New Zealand and other troops in effecting a landing on Gallipoli, April 25th, 1915', Theatre Royal, New Plymouth.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

On 31 May 1916 the Imperial German Navy's Battle Fleet met the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet in a clash in the North Sea known as the Battle of Jutland. The Indefatigable-class battlecruiser HMS New Zealand was one of the 151 British vessels involved. At 18,800 tons and with a crew of 800, she was New Zealand's gift to the British Empire in 1909, and as part of the Royal Navy saw action in the major naval conflicts during the war.









The gun crew of 'P' turret of the battlecruiser HMS New Zealand posing after the Battle of Jutland.

## THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

*In the war's biggest naval battle, the Imperial German Navy's Battle Fleet attacked the larger Royal Navy's Grand Fleet on 31 May 1916, near Denmark's Jutland Peninsula. The Germans were trying to break the British blockade of the German coast so merchant ships could get through, but the British knew they were coming. By the early hours of 1 June, with 25 ships lost and 10,000 men dead across both sides, the Germans retreated. Tactically it was a draw, but strategically it proved a British victory as, from then on, the Germans avoided fleet-to-fleet battles with a greater naval power.*

During the battle, the HMS *New Zealand* helped the British hold the line. In 1909 New Zealand had gifted the battlecruiser to Britain during the naval-arms

**PG19:** A print copy of Gerald Burn's painting 'New Zealand's Gift to the Empire', 1913, produced by Alfred Bell and Company for the public.



race against Germany. Over 10 weeks in 1913 the ship toured her namesake nation. She was inspected by 500,000 New Zealanders – half the nation – and inspired the oil painting by Gerald Maurice Burn that features on this stamp. In Rotorua, a Māori chief gave a piupiu (flax kilt) and pounamu tiki (greenstone pendant) to the ship's captain, Lionel Halsey, saying that if he wore them in battle, casualties would be low.

Nine months after the ship returned to Britain, war was declared. The HMS *New Zealand* was no longer just a symbol of New Zealand's commitment to the empire. It was time for her to prove her worth.



**TOP:** A silk cigarette card dating from World War One depicting the HMS *New Zealand* battlecruiser crest printed on a white background. Silk cigarette cards were issued with packets of BDV Cigarettes and were keenly collected.

**ABOVE:** A piupiu gifted to the crew of the HMS *New Zealand* during her 1913 tour, with instructions that it should be worn by the captain of the vessel during battle.



## NEW ZEALAND'S 1916 STORY



The British Grand Fleet sails toward the Imperial German Navy's fleet on 31 May 1916.

Though it was usually on escort duty, the HMS *New Zealand* took part in the war's three major naval battles. At the Battle of Dogger Bank and the Battle of Heligoland Bight in 1915, the ship was never hit despite heavy fire. Was it a coincidence that Captain Halsey had put on the piupiu and tiki? When the Battle of Jutland began, new captain John Green knew what to wear. As ships sank around it, the HMS *New Zealand* was hit only on the turret, with no casualties. At least one New Zealander, Lieutenant Alexander David Boyle, served aboard the ship throughout the war.

Of the 5,500 New Zealanders serving with the Union Steam Ship Company when war broke out, around 500 served in the British and Australian navies and with British shipping lines. Aucklander William Sanders commanded a Q-ship in the British navy. In April 1917, under fire from a German submarine, Sanders crawled across the deck to launch a successful counter-attack, only to be killed four months later by a German torpedo. He's the only New Zealander ever awarded the Victoria Cross in a naval action.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### CONSCRIPTION INTRODUCED

Conscription was introduced on 1 August 1916 when the Military Service Act became law. All able-bodied Pākehā men aged between 20 and 46 were required to register for military service by 15 September – coincidentally, the first day New Zealanders would fight on the Somme. With newspapers the most effective form of mass communication, headlines like the one featured on this stamp informed and pressured men liable for conscription, while inside the papers were details of mounting casualties and war propaganda.



DOMINION OF



NEW ZEALAND.

# MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916.

## ENROLMENT OF EXPEDITIONARY FORCE RESERVE

BY PROCLAMATIONS dated respectively 1st and 2nd September, 1916,  
the enrolment of the Reserve is directed. Enrolment **MUST** be made not  
later than 15th September (First Division) or 10th September (Second Division).

### REMEMBER!

IT IS YOUR **DUTY**  
TO ENROL.

For the Protection  
of Reservists, uniform  
of enrolment will be issued  
as soon as possible after  
issue of notification at home  
provided.

Voluntary Recruits  
not accepted for service will  
have the list recorded in the  
Register as enrolling proof  
to the Government Statistician  
that they have volunteered.

### RESERVISTS' OBLIGATIONS.

The Reserve consists of men not less  
than 20 and under 45 years of age.

THE National Register is the basis of the  
Expeditionary Force Reserve Registers.

Men not already registered must supply  
enrolment-card not later than 10th September,  
1916.

Men already registered need not supply an  
enrolment-card, but must, not later than 10th  
September, 1916, notify present address if place  
of abode has altered since registration.

Men reaching military age or arriving in  
New Zealand after 10th September, 1916, must  
supply enrolment-card within fourteen days  
thereafter.

After enrolment every reservist who changes  
his place of abode must notify new address  
within fourteen days thereafter.

The Act makes the reservist's obligation to  
do any of the above things a personal one, and  
he is not relieved by information previously given  
to recruiting officer or committee.

### REMEMBER!

YOU **MUST** DO  
YOUR DUTY.

Enrolment may have the  
chance of the ballot.

Men not enrolled may be  
sent straight into camp.

Enrolment as Reservist  
to employ men who are  
not enrolled.

Men who fail to notify  
change of address may become  
liable on a charge of  
desertion.

### EMPLOYERS' OBLIGATIONS.

Employers must not employ a reservist who is  
not enrolled.

Penalty on conviction—Minimum fine, £25.

Employers must not employ a deserter.

Penalty on conviction—Minimum fine, £50, or  
imprisonment not exceeding three months.

**ONUS OF PROOF in every case is ON THE DEFENDANT.**

Call at nearest post-office

For cards, forms, information, and assistance.

(By Order.)

**MALCOLM FRASER,**  
Government Statistician.





The first conscription ballots took place in November 1916, with marbles drawn to determine who would be called up for service.

## CONSCRIPTION INTRODUCED

*In 1916 New Zealanders had to come to terms with the forced enlistment of their men.*

After two years of war, a country traumatised by heavy losses at Gallipoli could see no end in sight as war moved to the Western Front. Men reading casualty lists could see they'd be in for far more than an adventure, and volunteer numbers fell well short of the reinforcements promised by New Zealand. Essentially, supply didn't meet demand.

When the government's intensive campaigns to encourage enlistment failed, it was time for Plan B. On 1 August 1916 the Military Service Act became law, with headlines like the one pictured in this stamp proclaiming the news – and word of mouth soon spreading it. The news wasn't unexpected. In November 1915 the War Census had compiled

**PG23:** This poster detailing the Military Service Act 1916 was one of many that spelled out the consequences of avoiding conscription for potential recruits and their employers.

a register of men aged between 16 and 60, and newspapers had warned that bigger sacrifices were ahead.

The Act required all able-bodied, single Pākehā men aged between 20 and 46 to register for military service by 15 September. Until 1918, only unmarried men, recently married men, and widowers with no children were called up. Māori were also exempt until 1917, although no Māori conscripts ever left New Zealand. Only 73 New Zealanders were ever exempted on political, religious or philosophical grounds, with Prime Minister William Massey declaring there was “no escape for the shirker”.

The first monthly ballot in October 1916 saw officials draw numbered marbles that had been scrambled in a barrel. Imagine the emotions felt by the men whose number came up – and by the families contemplating life without their loved ones.

Although most New Zealanders knew conscription was necessary, it was hard to be happy about the forced enlistment of a son, brother or father. However, few people actively opposed conscription. In a conformist society, most considered ‘doing



A ballot box used in 1916. Numbered marbles would be rotated in the box, and matched with enrolment cards.



your bit' a moral duty – and so-called 'shirkers' were often shunned by their communities. Some 170 conscientious objectors were sent overseas in non-combat roles, 2,600 lost voting rights for 10 years, and 273 were imprisoned. Future Prime Minister Peter Fraser and other members of the new Labour Party were jailed for sedition. (Labour opposed conscription of people when there was no simultaneous conscription of wealth.)

Conscription wasn't always a ticket to the trenches. Of the 135,000 men conscripted between 1916 and 1918, 32,000 were sent to training camps and fewer still to war. Over the war, volunteers made up nearly three-quarters of New Zealand troops.



Some conscientious objectors were depicted as shirkers, and their reasons for objecting portrayed as a convenience, like this supposed religious shirker in the *Observer*, 1916.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### THE MIDDLE EAST

New Zealand troops continued to play an important role in the Middle East theatre throughout 1916 and beyond. In March the New Zealand Mounted Rifles joined the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, and over the next few months would push back Ottoman forces from the Suez Canal, a strategically critical thoroughfare to Europe for the Empire's antipodean troops. The final battle of the year, at Magdhaba, involved many New Zealanders serving in the Imperial Camel Corps and the Anzac Mounted Division.





NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED FIELD  
AMBULANCE

N.Z.E.F.

*Freitoun 1914 - Gallipoli 1915  
Sinai 1916.*



## THE MIDDLE EAST

*By 1916 the escalating conflict on the Western Front saw New Zealand headlines and attention shift away from the Middle East. But it didn't become a mere stopover for New Zealand troops en route to Europe. Indeed, the Middle East remained an important theatre of war, with approximately 2,500 New Zealand troops fighting as Mounted Rifles before Armistice.*

When the infantrymen of the New Zealand Division left for France in April, the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade (consisting of the Auckland, Canterbury and Wellington Mounted Rifles) stayed on in Egypt, assigned to the newly formed Anzac Mounted Division alongside the Australian Light Horse brigades. Joined by several British mounted-rifle regiments, these men made up the horsemen of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Their mission was to defend the British-controlled Suez Canal from Ottoman attack – and protect the vital railway and water pipeline now being built.

Unlike the static trench war in Europe, things could change quickly in the Middle East. On 3 August the Ottomans tried to sneak up on the railhead at Romani, but the men protecting it were forewarned. After an all-night battle, reinforcements – including the rest of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade – forced an Ottoman retreat. The Anzac Mounted Division suffered over 900 of the 1,130 casualties, including 202 killed. But the Battle of Romani was the first victory against the Ottomans – and a major

**PG27:** By 1916 the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance had seen three years of service with the NZEF. This Christmas card traces their route from Zeitoun to Gallipoli and Sinai.

turning point. Deterring more ground attacks on the Suez Canal, the win marked the end of a defensive campaign – and the start of an offensive to drive the Ottomans back into Palestine.

On 19 December 1916 the Imperial Camel Corps (ICC) was formed from various battalions, including two New Zealand companies. Just two days later, the ICC and the Anzac Mounted Division rode all night to surprise an Ottoman outpost at Magdhaba. The Battle of Magdhaba was captured by official Australian war artist Harold Septimus Power in the painting featured on this stamp. It depicts artillery fire falling on a Turkish redoubt as the cameliers dismount to attack on foot.



Corporal Reginald (Rex) Williams of the Imperial Camel Corps poses with a camel in the Sinai or Palestine between 1916 and 1917.





The Battle of Romani was the last ground attack by the Ottoman and German forces on the Suez Canal, and a decisive victory by the Anzac Mounted Division marked the end of the Defence of the Suez Canal campaign.

The cameliers captured a redoubt first, with 10 New Zealanders wounded but none killed. Soon the Anzac Mounted Division took a redoubt, with nine Kiwis killed and 36 wounded. Victory on 23 December was the best possible Christmas present for thirsty, exhausted, sleep-starved men sick of sand blowing into their faces.

After losing Magdhaba, the Ottomans withdrew their Sinai outposts except one garrison in Rafa. On 9 January 1917 the New Zealand Mounted Rifles broke through the Rafa defences. The Allies had taken the Sinai Peninsula.



Turkish troops surrender at Wellington Ridge, Sinai, during the Battle of Romani on 4 August 1916.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### THE SOMME

*In September 1916 the first major offensive involving the NZEF got under way near the River Somme in northern France. The Battle of Flers-Courcelette began on 15 September as part of the much larger Somme Offensive. By the time New Zealand troops and artillery were withdrawn from the front line 40 days later, more than half of the 15,000 NZEF troops involved had been killed or wounded in New Zealand's costliest campaign of the war.*









The bleakness of the Western Front is captured by official New Zealand war artist George Edmund Butler, whose paintings are described as capturing the war through the eyes of the New Zealand civilian soldier.

## THE SOMME

*In April 1916 the New Zealand Division arrived on the Western Front in what was a very different theatre of war from Gallipoli. This was industrial-scale warfare, thanks largely to the sheer scale of the artillery: large military guns like howitzers that quickly and accurately fired high-explosive shells long-range.*

However, the Western Front was still relatively 'static' warfare, with little territory gained despite many lives lost. Under fire, the soldiers climbed out of trenches, ran through no-man's land, and cut through barbed wire to try to take German ground. Conditions were abysmal. The trenches were a breeding ground for not just disease and fear but also extreme discomfort. Think terrible cold, pouring rain, knee-deep mud, lumpy ground, little sleep, minimal rations, and ringing ears.

**PG31:** A dressing station established during the Battle of Pozzières shows a New Zealand ambulance and its fern leaf insignia in support of Australian and British forces.

As the French and Germans clashed in the 10-month Battle of Verdun, the British attacked German lines around the river Somme from 1 July. After two major offensives failed, a third push in September marked the New Zealand Division's first major campaign on the Western Front.

The New Zealanders' first task was taking the village of Flers and its surrounding defences in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. For three days, the New Zealand artillery bombarded German trenches. Then at 6.20am on 15 September, using a new tactic dubbed the creeping barrage, the artillery opened fire on German strongholds as a protective screen for the infantrymen who followed. Imagine the blast of the howitzers, the rat-a-tat-tat of machine guns, the shriek of the poison-gas shells, the squelch of the mud, and the screams of the wounded.



New Zealand troops of the 9th (Wellington East Coast Rifles) Regiment using a periscope rifle and a trench periscope in a front line trench near Fleurbaix, June 1916.



The photograph on this stamp shows a quieter moment that day, as New Zealand troops made a trench by joining up shell craters. By nightfall Flers had been taken, but of 6,000 New Zealand troops, 1,200 were wounded or missing, and 600 were dead. The New Zealand survivors fended off counter-attacks for six days.

On 25 September the New Zealanders' dawn attack in a creeping barrage began the three-day Battle of Morval. The Kiwis took some German trenches but the 1st Otago Battalion lost many men. At the Battle of Le Transloy, the New Zealanders again captured their targets but suffered heavy losses.

By the time the New Zealand infantry withdrew on 4 October, and the New Zealand artillery followed on 25 October, the New Zealand Division had captured nine kilometres of trenches and 1,000 Germans – and earned praise for their bravery. But it was New Zealand's costliest battle of the war. Of the 15,000 troops who fought there, a staggering 6,000 were wounded and 2,000 killed.

By 18 November the Allies' attack had ceased, after advancing only eight kilometres and suffering 623,907 casualties. Those staggering losses would change the way the British waged war. The Somme wasn't exactly a victory, but it would be a cog in eventual victory – thanks partly to New Zealand troops.



Making trench art was one way for soldiers to pass the time, with a surplus of empty bullet and artillery shells providing a ready source of metal for creating souvenirs.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### AWAY FROM THE FRONT

While the reality of war had set in by 1916, many New Zealanders serving on the Western Front were still able to satisfy their sense of adventure and explore European soil. The main base for NZEF soldiers was at Sling Camp on Salisbury Plain, but London would prove irresistible for many soldiers on leave, providing easy access to recreational activities unseen back in New Zealand. The NZEF would soon have a permanent presence in the city; its Bloomsbury Square headquarters is shown on this stamp.









In May 1916 the Pioneers moved to Armentières in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of northern France. The town gave them some relief from the daily tasks of trench-digging and laying railway tracks for troops at the front.

## AWAY FROM THE FRONT

*A century ago, only the rich could afford to travel overseas, and the tradition of the big OE hadn't yet begun. But the mother country – still referred to as 'Home' by many – had a strong pull. Young men were motivated to enlist not just by patriotism and duty but also by what defence officers called adventure, travel and curiosity. Plus, most thought victory would be swift. As the war escalated in 1916, fewer New Zealanders were volunteering, but many were already training in New Zealand or on the boat over. Over the year, 21,275 New Zealand troops left for overseas, most disembarking in England for further training.*

When the New Zealand Division moved from Egypt to France in April 1916, the New Zealand Expeditionary Force set up bases in England. Buildings, hotels and estates countrywide became

**PG35:** New Zealand Military Headquarters in Bloomsbury Square around 1917, painted by G. E. Woolley.

training camps, hospitals, depots and administrative offices. The painting featured on this stamp by official New Zealand war artist George Woolley depicts the NZEF Headquarters in Bloomsbury Square, London.

While on leave from fighting, training camp or hospital – or while waiting to deploy or return home – New Zealand servicemen eagerly went off in groups to see the sights. London was top of the list. For instance, when the 2nd Otago Battalion arrived in Sling Camp from the Somme on 30 October 1916, they promptly left for four days' leave in London. Turned into homes away from home, the New Zealand Soldiers' Club and others like it housed most men. Organisations including the New Zealand War Contingent Association and the YMCA welcomed the New Zealanders by organising activities like free guided tours of London and dinner invitations to private homes.



New Zealand soldiers on leave were free to explore London and surrounds, with Melville Mirfin writing home to his sister of the 'glorious time up in Darlington', including the 'great sight of the changing of the Horse Guards'.



## NEW ZEALAND'S 1916 STORY



Railway was crucial to the war effort, transporting troops, horses, and military equipment around the war zone. Soldiers on leave would also take advantage of the rail system to explore behind the lines.

The men became colloquially known as 'Bill Massey's tourists' in Egypt in 1915, in a nod to New Zealand's Prime Minister at the time and the name soon caught on throughout Europe.

Many used complimentary rail passes to explore surrounding towns and visit relatives in the wider United Kingdom. And while rotating out of the trenches, New Zealand troops stayed in huts, houses and halls in French towns and villages, where they socialised in pop-up cafés run by French women from barns and cellars. Of course, in both England and France, there were romantic relationships, with some men bringing home war brides.

It was a much more sophisticated, cultured world than the men were used to. For many, the experience strengthened their ties to the mother country and Europe, making them even more committed to the cause. At the same time, the differences between themselves and the Europeans gave the men a distinct identity as New Zealanders.

## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



### THE HOME FRONT

By late 1916 pressure on postal and telegraph services to connect men abroad with loved ones at home was greater than ever. Letters, postcards and telegrams were relied on to share precious news and packages of home comforts were sent to the front line. As well as being the place to enrol for military service, the local post office delivered news of deaths and injuries to anxious families. The Kaikoura Post & Telegraph Office was one of many in New Zealand that played a crucial role in meeting the growing communication needs of wartime.



# THE AUCKLAND WEEKLY NEWS

With which is incorporated "THE WEEKLY GRAPHIC AND NEW ZEALAND MAIL."

AUCKLAND, N.Z., THURSDAY JULY 27, 1906



THE AUCKLAND NEWS

THE AUCKLAND NEWS

THE AUCKLAND NEWS





The Anzac Club (Anzac Hall) on opening day, 16 October 1916, in Featherston. The hall eventually provided recreational amenities for the 60,000 soldiers who trained at the Featherston Military Camp between 1916 and 1918.

## THE HOME FRONT

*Today, it's hard to imagine the tyranny of distance between New Zealand and Europe a century ago. Worried New Zealanders relied entirely on the post office for news of the war – and the fate of their men. The Kaikoura Post & Telegraph Office, pictured on this stamp, was one of many that became the heart and hub of the community.*

The post office was the place to share news, to sympathise with others, to express concern. The place where men volunteered, enrolled for conscription, and got telegrams calling them up. The place where mothers got longed-for letters from their sons. The place where wives posted letters to their husbands. In a country with few telephones, the average New Zealander sent more than two letters and postcards a week, and a telegram a month.

**PG39:** Lists of casualties were printed regularly in local papers, detailing the losses suffered alongside the more positive proclamations of success at the front.

Deaths and injuries were usually announced to next-of-kin in telegrams delivered by bicycle. By 1916, the dreaded knock at the door had become far too common.

As war escalated on the Western Front, conscription began and the ongoing human cost sunk in, conversations at the post office lost much of their optimism. Patriotic fervour for the war was fading fast, and weariness and wariness were setting in.

As censorship applied to letters home, self-censorship became second nature to soldiers. Most tried to be stoic and even cheerful, usually leaving out the worst of it. Why worry their loved ones even more?

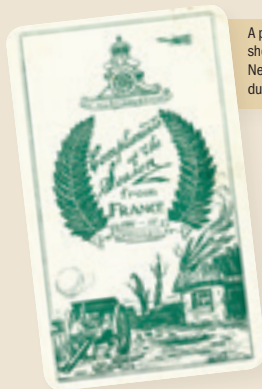
As concern grew at home, so did New Zealanders' determination to support their men. Women, many now working men's jobs, were the driving force behind around 1000 patriotic societies that sprung up countrywide.



Members of the Spinsters Club in Wellington knitting socks for World War One soldiers. From left: Miss Daisy Isaacs, Mrs V. Gray, Dora Levi (later Mrs Stephenson), Mrs L. M. Hyams, Miss M. Lyons, Miss Eileen Driscoll, Mrs I. McIntyre, Mrs A. McKillop.



## NEW ZEALAND'S 1916 STORY



A postcard sent from France during the First World War shows two fern leaves, a coat of arms and motto of the New Zealand artillery, 'Quo fas et gloria ducunt' (Where duty and glory lead).

The more imaginative the fundraising idea, the better. Think growing vegetables, collecting bottles, running lotteries, and staging sports, music and art events. At Queen Carnivals, women even competed

against each other to raise the most money.

As the war escalated during 1916, fundraising focused less on the foreign civilians displaced by the war and more on New Zealand soldiers. Care parcels containing comforts like cheese, chocolate, cigarettes, cake, hankies, socks and Vaseline came from patriotic societies, the Red Cross, and Māori women's committees. Funds raised also helped soldiers' families pay rents, rates and insurance, and helped returned soldiers find homes and jobs. Donations were considered a duty – and not just for the well-off – with even financially stretched New Zealanders giving every penny they could spare. An estimated £5.7 million – equivalent to NZ\$500 million today – was raised by 1920 (quite separately from the government contribution). What a remarkable commitment to their men and the cause.

*"Somewhere between the landing of Anzac and the end of the battle of the Somme New Zealand very definitely became a nation."*

Ormond Burton



## 1916 COURAGE & COMMITMENT

NEW ZEALAND'S STORY





1916  
**COURAGE & COMMITMENT**  
 NEW ZEALAND'S STORY



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COVER AND STAMP	Solomon Isaac's Family, Aitutaki, Cook Islands	21	blogspot.co.nz
iv	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA Q554	21	Museum Victoria Collections 1191652
vi	Getty Images	22	2007.1.1 National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy
2	Historic Trentham, 1914-1917: The Story of a New Zealand Military Training Camp, Wellington Publishing Company, 1917	22	Public Domain
3	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand 1/1-006732-G	23	STAMP <i>NZ Truth</i> , 26 August, 1916 – Papers Past, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand Eph-D-WAR-WI-1916-01
5	Brett Killington	23	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand Eph-D-WAR-WI-1916-01
6	Isaac Solomona, Rarotonga, Cook Islands	24	Auckland Weekly News, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 23 November 1916.
STAMP	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand 1/2-011079-F	25	Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand GH003641/1-5
7	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand A-312-1-088	26	Observer, July 1916
8	Auckland Libraries 7-A14562.	27	STAMP Australian War Memorial ART09230
9	L. Osborne Collection	27	Glenn R. Reddix, private postcard collection, <a href="http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz">http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz</a>
9	<i>Auckland Star</i> , 15 March 1916.	29	South Canterbury Museum L2014/017.14
10	Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand GH021065	30	Public Domain
10	<i>Auckland Weekly News</i> , Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19160413-46-8	30	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 950-2
STAMP	Brett Killington	31	Imperial War Museum (Q 193)
11	Brett Killington	31	Public Domain
12	J. C. Neill (ed), <i>The New Zealand Tunnelling Company 1915-1919</i> , Whitcombe and Tombs, 1922	32	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA 514
14	Archives New Zealand New Zealand Tunnelling Company - War Diary, 8 March - 30 May 1916 (R23903815)	33	Imperial War Museum (Q 667)
STAMP	Nelson Provincial Museum, F N Jones Collection: 311332	34	National Army Museum, Waiouru 1984.1535
15	Dunedin City Council Archives Photo 210 (Public Domain)	STAMP	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA 549
16	Museum Victoria Collections 390921	35	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA 549
17	Masterton District Library and Archive 01-25/108	36	Glenn R. Reddix, private postcard collection, <a href="http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz">http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz</a>
18	Programme Anzac Day Puke Ariki ARC2008-054	37	Mirfin Family, Nelson and Geraldine
18	Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association	38	Archives New Zealand IA 76/13 H286
18	Glenn R. Reddix, private postcard collection, <a href="http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz">http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz</a>	STAMP	Glenn R. Reddix, private postcard collection, <a href="http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz">http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz</a>
STAMP	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA 539	39	<i>Auckland Weekly News</i> , 27 July 1916
19	National Collection of War Art, Archives New Zealand AAAC 898 NCWA Q169	40	Masterton District Library and Archive 91-055/50A
20	Glenn R. Reddix, private postcard collection, <a href="http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz">http://100nzww1postcards.blogspot.co.nz</a>	41	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand Eph-A-WAR-WI-1916-08
		42	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand 1/2-030986-F

The images in this book are reproduced courtesy of the above sources.  
Copyright of all images remains with these sources.





**COLLECT A UNIQUE PART OF NEW ZEALAND**

For regular information on current and future stamp issues, contact us and ask for your name to be placed on our mailing list:

Collectors' Mailing List  
New Zealand Post  
Collectables and Solutions Centre  
Private Bag 3001  
Whanganui 4540  
New Zealand

Visit us at: [nzpost.co.nz/stamps](https://nzpost.co.nz/stamps)

Join us at: [facebook.com/NZStampsandCoins](https://facebook.com/NZStampsandCoins)

---

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of New Zealand Post Limited.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the above publisher of this book.

New Zealand Post would like to thank the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, the New Zealand Defence Force, WW100 and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association for their assistance in bringing together this stamp issue.