

The New Zealand
Curriculum

LEVEL

3



SCHOOL JOURNAL

JUNE 2014



FIRST WORLD WAR
1914-1918



TITLE	READING YEAR LEVEL
New Zealand at War	6
Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū: The Māori Pioneer Battalion	6
Grey Angels	5
Chunuk Bair	5
Das Piano	6
Harry's War	5
Windfall	5

This Journal supports learning across the New Zealand Curriculum at level 3. It supports literacy learning by providing opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to meet the reading demands of the curriculum at this level. Each text has been carefully levelled in relation to these demands; its reading year level is indicated above.

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Level 3 June 2014



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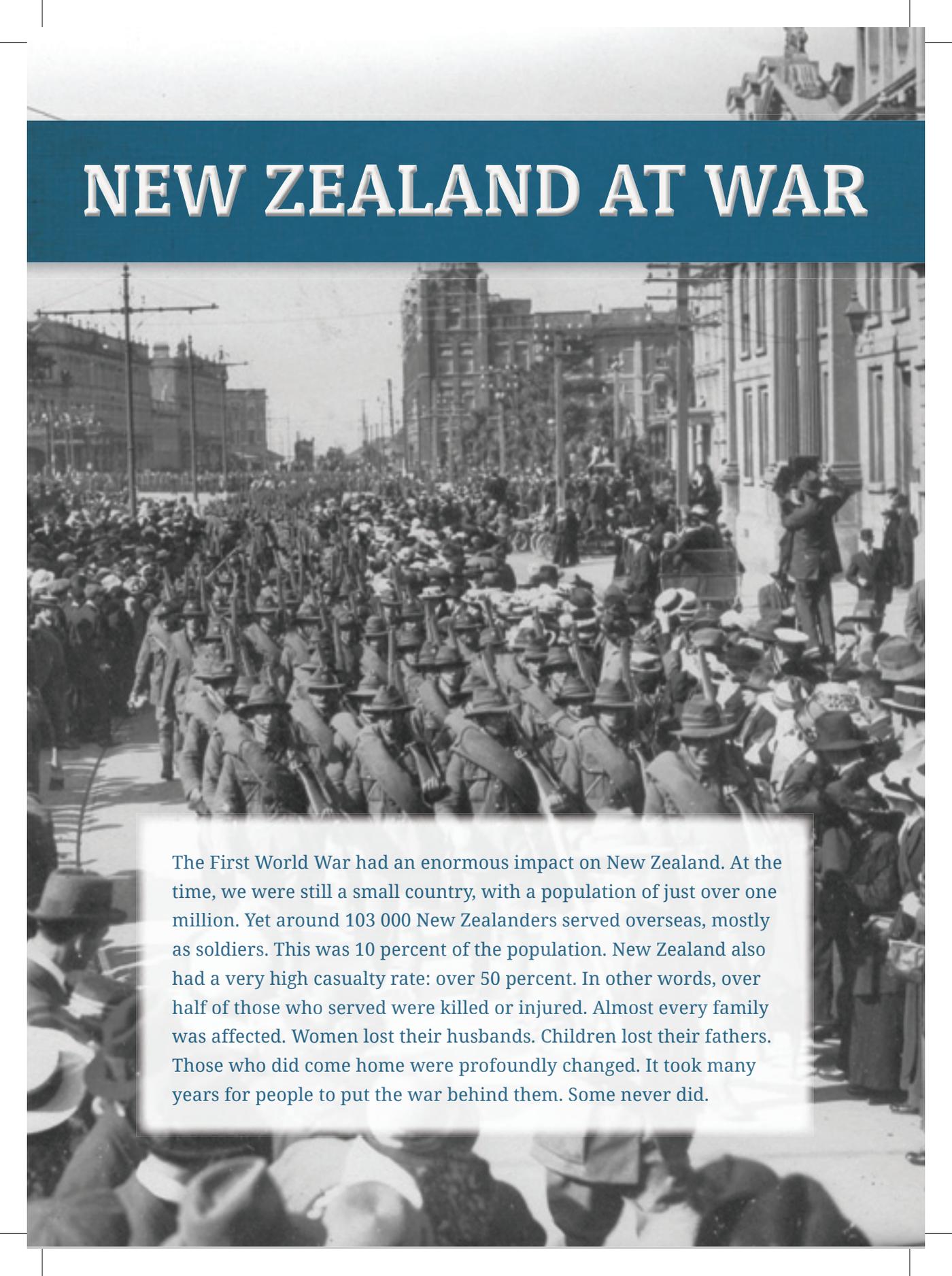
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NEW ZEALAND AT WAR

The First World War had an enormous impact on New Zealand. At the time, we were still a small country, with a population of just over one million. Yet around 103 000 New Zealanders served overseas, mostly as soldiers. This was 10 percent of the population. New Zealand also had a very high casualty rate: over 50 percent. In other words, over half of those who served were killed or injured. Almost every family was affected. Women lost their husbands. Children lost their fathers. Those who did come home were profoundly changed. It took many years for people to put the war behind them. Some never did.



THE FIRST WORLD WAR A TIMELINE



1914

28 JUNE

Archduke Franz Ferdinand (who was the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne) is shot and killed in Sarajevo. This causes old tensions in Europe to resurface.

4 AUGUST

Germany invades Belgium, so Britain declares war on Germany and its allies. This means that New Zealand, as part of the **British Empire**, is also at war. Within four days, fourteen thousand New Zealand men have volunteered to become soldiers.

16 SEPTEMBER

The New Zealand government announces there will be a Māori **Contingent** going to the war. Over the following weeks, hundreds of Māori sign up.

◀ 16 OCTOBER

The **New Zealand Expeditionary Force** (NZEF) leaves Wellington on ten troopships. On board are 8454 soldiers and around 3000 horses.

8 DECEMBER

The NZEF joins with the Australian Imperial Force and the word **ANZAC** is born.

1915



3 FEBRUARY

New Zealand soldiers see their first **combat** when they help to defend the Suez Canal against the Ottoman Turks. William Ham becomes the first New Zealander to die in the war.

◀ 25 APRIL

The landings at Gallipoli, Turkey: Wiremu Moeke becomes the first Māori soldier to be killed in the war.

6–10 AUGUST

The Battle for Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli: This was a short-lived victory for the New Zealanders that cost many lives.

15–19 DECEMBER

Allied soldiers are evacuated from Gallipoli. Around a fifth of all New Zealanders who fought there died (2721).

1916

FEBRUARY ▶

After training in Auckland, the first soldiers from Niue and the Cook Islands sail for Egypt. They are eventually sent to the **Western Front** (see the map on page 37) as part of the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion.

APRIL

New Zealand soldiers arrive in France. They are headed for the Western Front. For the rest of the war, this is where most New Zealanders will fight.

25 APRIL ▶

The first anniversary of the Gallipoli landings. Anzac Day services are held around New Zealand.





1 AUGUST

Conscription is introduced in New Zealand. By the end of the war, around 32 000 men will become soldiers in this way.

4 AUGUST

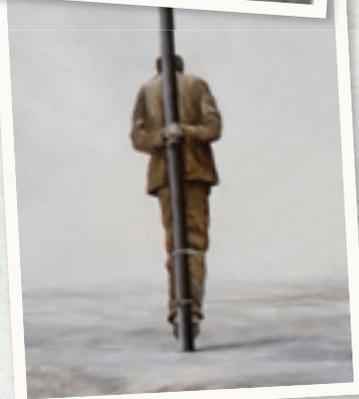
The Battle of Romani: The New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade (1800 men) fight against the Ottoman Turks in the Sinai Desert.

SEPTEMBER

New Zealanders fight in the Battle of the Somme. Six thousand of our men are wounded, and two thousand are killed.

◀ NOVEMBER

Archibald Baxter is called up for military service, but he refuses to go to war. He becomes one of New Zealand's most famous conscientious objectors.



1917

7-9 JUNE

New Zealand soldiers help to capture the village of Messines. They suffer heavy **casualties** from German shells (3000 wounded, 700 killed).

12 OCTOBER

The Battle of Passchendaele: the worst day of the war for New Zealanders. By the afternoon, the New Zealand **Division** had 2700 casualties, with 845 men either dead or dying on the battlefield.

*An officer's funeral,
the Western Front, August 1917*



1918

JANUARY

Fighting continues on the Western Front. Over five thousand New Zealand soldiers will be killed in this last year of the war.

MARCH

The Germans launch a major **offensive** in a final effort to win the war.

4 NOVEMBER

Le Quesnoy: New Zealand troops liberate this French town from the Germans. They take two thousand German prisoners.

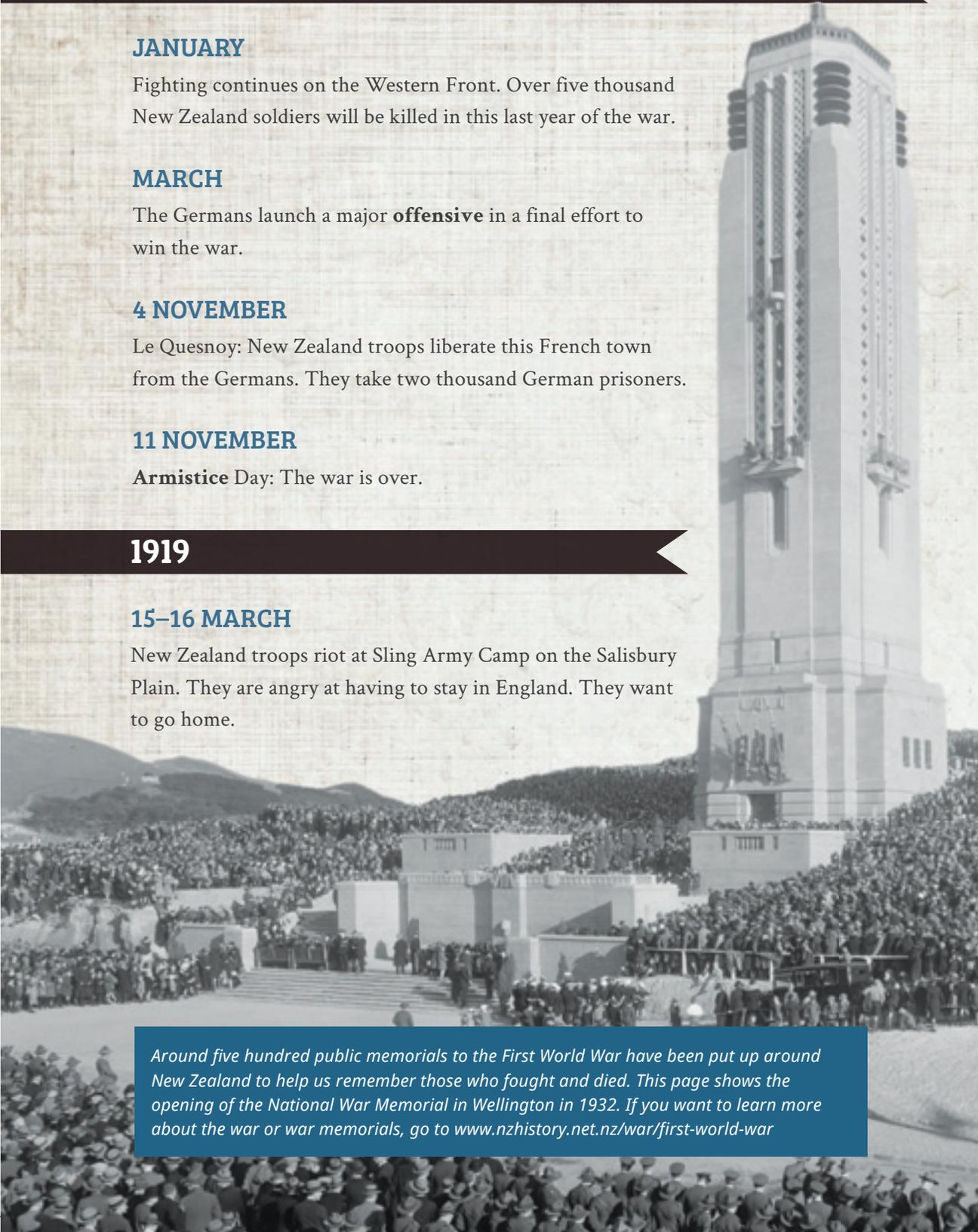
11 NOVEMBER

Armistice Day: The war is over.

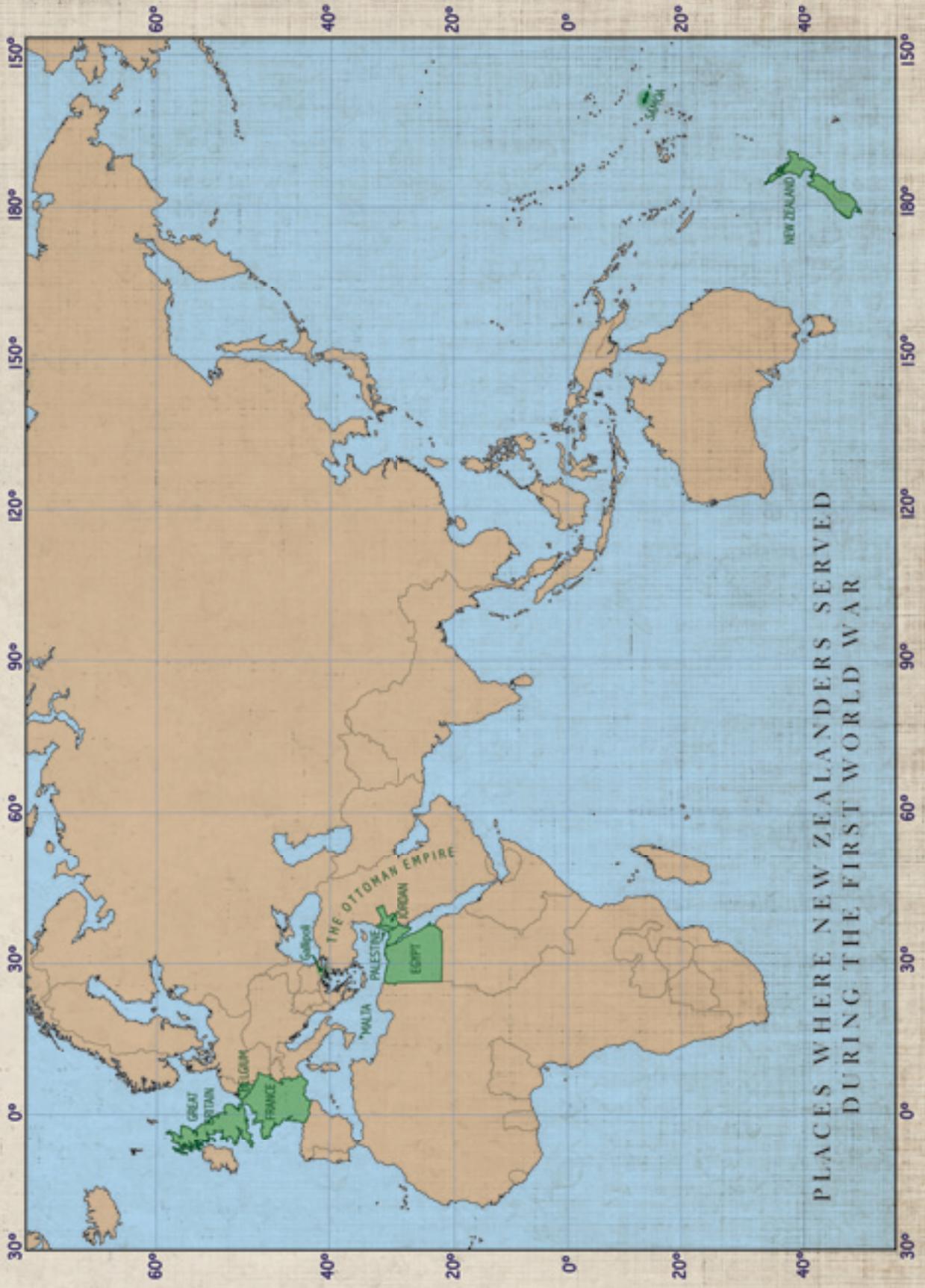
1919

15–16 MARCH

New Zealand troops riot at Sling Army Camp on the Salisbury Plain. They are angry at having to stay in England. They want to go home.



Around five hundred public memorials to the First World War have been put up around New Zealand to help us remember those who fought and died. This page shows the opening of the National War Memorial in Wellington in 1932. If you want to learn more about the war or war memorials, go to www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/first-world-war



PLACES WHERE NEW ZEALANDERS SERVED DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

CHUNUK BAIR



At night we climbed a ridge
from the beach up to where
the Turks stood over us.

Finally we were equal warriors,
cresting like a wave,
not washed against a fiery cliff.

We held our ground for two days.

At daybreak, their leader –
a great man with a pocketwatch
and a whip – rose up.

His men surged towards us,
firing from their motherland,
and we fell like rain.

When the snow came,
we left our dead behind.

Robert Sullivan

The fighting at Gallipoli went on for nine long months. During this time, over two hundred thousand Ottoman Turkish soldiers defended their homeland. They were led by Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal. In early August 1915, the **Allied soldiers** attacked the high ground overlooking Anzac Cove. On 8 August, the New Zealand soldiers took Chunuk Bair, one of the peaks. Two days later, at dawn, the Ottoman Turks counter-attacked. It's said that Kemal used his whip to signal to his men that they should begin firing. During the battle, he was hit in the chest by **shrapnel**. The watch in his pocket was smashed to pieces, but it saved his life. Kemal became a national hero. After the war, he went on to be Turkey's first president and was given the name Atatürk, meaning "father of the Turks". Today, there are memorials in Turkey and New Zealand to remember the more than 120 000 men who lost their lives at Gallipoli. Several of these memorials display Atatürk's famous words:



“Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us, where they lie, side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.”

Kemal Atatürk, 1934

TE HOKOWHITU-A-TŪ

The Māori Pioneer Battalion

by Monty Soutar



*It's often said that New Zealand "grew up" during the First World War. At the time, our country was part of the **British Empire**, which meant Britain still decided our foreign policy. Most Pākehā weren't bothered by this. Many still thought of Britain as home. But by 1918, this attitude was changing. People were proud of what their small nation had done in the war. They were especially proud of their brave soldiers – soldiers who were beginning to use a new name for themselves: Kiwis. It was a name that was to become part of our country's new identity.*

But what about the 2500 Māori soldiers who fought during the First World War? How did the war change things for them? And why did they fight in the first place?





“E te iwi, whītiki! Whiti! Whiti e!”

When war was declared on 4 August 1914, Pākehā were eager to help. The government decided to send eight thousand men to fight, but within four days, thousands more had volunteered. This main group of soldiers was called the **New Zealand Expeditionary Force**.

Although many Māori wanted to join up, at first, only a few did. This quickly changed when the government said it would include a special group of soldiers called the Māori Contingent. A war cry went out: “E te iwi, whītiki! Whiti! Whiti e!” (“O people, prepare yourselves for battle! Spring up! Spring up!”) In those days, most Māori lived in rural villages near their marae. So the four Māori members of parliament helped to spread this war cry. They travelled the country, encouraging Māori to “do their bit”.

While soldiers were meant to be at least twenty years old, boys as young as fifteen enlisted for the Māori Contingent. Few Māori had birth certificates, which made it easy for boys to lie about their ages, especially those who were keen for adventure, just like many young Pākehā. In no time at all, places like the East Coast and Rotorua had given more than enough men. Māui Pōmare, the MP for Western Māori, praised the loyalty that Māori were showing. “The British cause is their cause,” he said. “The British king is their king.” Āpirana Ngata, the MP for Eastern Māori, was also pleased. He hoped Māori would become more equal with Pākehā if they fought beside them.

Rebels?

Not all Māori felt the same way about the war. Some iwi, in places like Taranaki and Waikato, had a very different attitude. Fifty years earlier, the government had attacked their tīpuna. The government called them “rebels” and took most of their land.

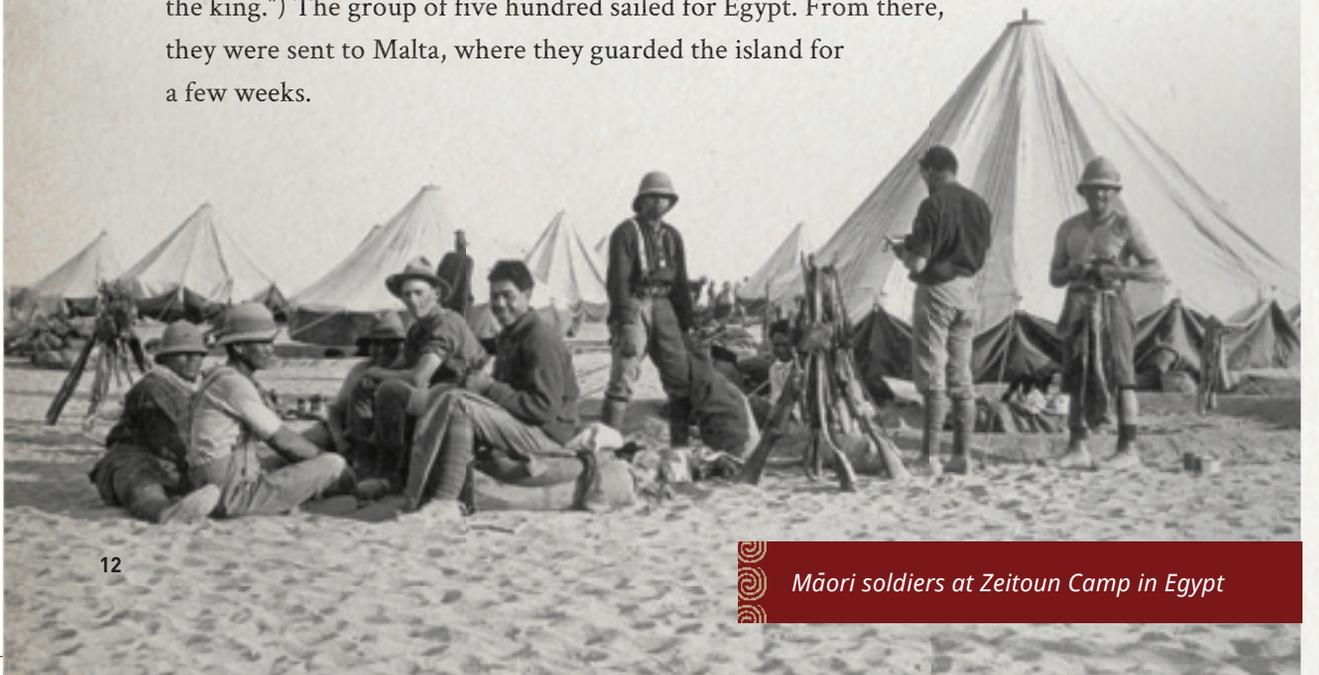
These iwi were still deeply unhappy about what had happened. A whole generation had grown up seeing their land being used by other people. This loss also meant Māori had no way to grow their own food. Why would men from these places want to risk their lives for a government that had caused poverty and suffering?



The soldiers of Te Hokowhita-a-Tū on board their troopship just before leaving, February 1915

Haere e tama ma

The Māori Contingent became known as Te Hokowhita-a-Tū. In February 1915, after training in Auckland, the soldiers were farewelled. “Haere e tama ma,” their whānau said. “Haere me te whakaaro ki te pupuri i te rongō toa a o tatou tipuna. Kia wehi ki te Atua. Whakahonoretia te kingi.” (“Farewell, young men. Go and uphold the name of our warrior ancestors. Fear God. And honour the king.”) The group of five hundred sailed for Egypt. From there, they were sent to Malta, where they guarded the island for a few weeks.



Māori soldiers at Zeitoun Camp in Egypt

Then, in July 1915, the men were sent to Gallipoli. The British high command was uncomfortable with the idea of native people fighting alongside Europeans. So at first, the Māori soldiers were kept busy digging trenches and building supply depots. But these men had joined the army to fight – and because of heavy **casualties**, they finally got their chance.

On the night of 6 August, the Māori soldiers were ordered to attack the Turkish trenches along the foothills of Chunuk Bair. Before they left, their chaplain said a prayer. “Remember you have the mana, the honour, and the good name of the Māori people in your keeping this night.” That evening, the haka “Ka mate, ka mate” could be heard around the hills as the Māori Contingent captured enemy trenches, one by one.

Conscription and Māori

Most people thought the war would be a “quick victory”. But this wasn’t the case. Governments around the world, on both sides, soon faced the problem of finding enough men. In 1916, New Zealand began using military **conscription**.

At first, conscription was only for Pākehā. In June 1917, it was extended to Māori – but only those living in the Waikato, where very few Māori men had volunteered because most didn’t support the Crown. However, the policy failed. By 1918, over a hundred Waikato Māori had been sent to prison for refusing military training, and there were warrants out for the arrest of a hundred more. In the end, only a handful of Waikato Māori ever made it into uniform.



THE SPIRIT OF HIS FATHERS.

This cartoon was published in a New Zealand newspaper in 1915 to encourage Māori to sign up. In the background, it shows the Māori God of War, Tūmataua.



Brave warriors

Seventeen Māori died on the slopes of Chunuk Bair. Eighty-nine more were wounded. After this battle, Māori soldiers became known as brave fighters. One Pākehā officer wrote that “no matter how desperate the fighting may be ... they are amongst the best bayonet fighters in the world, and they are perfect sentries. As trench fighters, you can’t beat them.” But like other troops at Gallipoli, the number of dead, wounded, and sick Māori soldiers grew. Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū was slowly reduced to a shadow. By the time the contingent finally left in December, only 134 of the original group of five hundred were left.

Pioneer battalion

After Gallipoli, soldiers from Te Hokowhitu-a-Tū joined with soldiers from the Otago Mounted Rifles Regiment. The two groups became the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion. The orders were that men in this battalion weren’t to fight as **infantry**. Too many Māori had already been killed at Gallipoli.

Along with the rest of the Expeditionary Force, the men arrived in France in April 1916. They began to dig trenches and build roads behind the front line. But it was still dangerous work, often done under fire. A few months later, the Pioneer Battalion became involved in the Battle of the Somme and much later, Messines. Many more Māori soldiers were killed on the **Western Front**.

Around the middle of 1917, the Pioneer Battalion was reorganised. The Otago men were replaced with around 470 soldiers, mostly from Niue and the Cook Islands. The battalion became known as the New Zealand (Māori) Pioneer Battalion.



The Māori Pioneer Battalion on the Western Front, building a road just after the Battle of Messines



Soldiers in the Māori Pioneer Battalion taking a break in the trenches, France, July 1918



War's end

The day the war ended, **Armistice Day**, the Māori Pioneer Battalion had been heading towards Germany. Suddenly, high command changed its orders. "Native troops" wouldn't be allowed to **occupy** Germany. Instead, the soldiers would be sent back to New Zealand. The men were angry to be treated this way – but also pleased that they were going home.

The Māori Pioneer Battalion was the only one to return to New Zealand as a complete group. The Māori soldiers were given a huge welcome, with parties and parades all over the country. The men knew they had "done their bit" – and done it well.

One soldier's story

The Māori Pioneer Battalion suffered many casualties. Each soldier was an individual with his own story. Hēnare Mōkena Kōhere (Ngāti Porou) was one of these men. He served in France as an officer with the battalion and was badly wounded during a night raid in the Battle of the Somme. He died two days later on 16 September 1916. Hēnare left behind three young children. He was thirty-six years old.



Placing soil from the battlefields of Belgium in the Whanganui Māori War Memorial on Anzac Day, 1925

Afterwards

During the war, 366 Māori soldiers were killed and more than seven hundred were wounded. (These numbers include Māori who served in other parts of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.) Those who did make it home were changed. They had seen friends killed and injured. They had learnt about hardship and stress and how much a person can endure. Most of all, they had earned respect that would last for a lifetime.

The returning soldiers had also seen the world. They were able to help their whānau understand the opportunities that lay beyond their villages. Many became strong supporters of their local schools, and this focus on education was positive for the community. Many soldiers were now well-connected. They had made strong friendships on the battlefield, and some of these were with Pākehā. This helped to form a better understanding between the two races.

Still, these changes weren't as deep as they might have been. Āpirana Ngata and the other Māori politicians had hoped for equality. But after the war, most Māori and Pākehā continued to see one another as "different". There was more goodwill and social contact, but a gulf remained. Māori stayed poorer, had worse health, and had the lowest-paying jobs. Many were still without their land – and it was to stay that way for a long time. Mostly, the hopes of Māori hadn't been realised. It would take many decades, including another world war, for any real change to begin.

DAS PIANO

BY BERNARD BECKETT



I've been at war with my teacher, Mrs Biggs, a long time. About as long as the Empire has been giving it to the Hun. I know this is true because the day our fathers marched through town on their way to war, my knuckles were red from Mrs Biggs's ruler. I remember it hurt to hold the flag I was waving as my dad and Rex's dad and Syd's dad and Jimmy Kitchener went past. We all knew Jimmy had lied about his age to get in. It made us proud.

I don't remember what I'd done that time to have Mrs Biggs's ruler cracked over my knuckles. Talking in class, probably. With her, things can blow up over nothing. Unfortunately – though obviously not for me – the ruler busted with an almighty crack. A splinter flew through the air and landed in Betty Carrol's golden locks. Nobody laughed, although everybody wanted to. And I didn't cry, which meant I'd won. After the broken ruler, Mrs Biggs really came after me. That's when the war between us truly began – and when the piano trouble started.

I'd invented a game called Catch the German. I don't have time to explain all the rules, but we played it every lunchtime. The day I'm talking about, the day the piano trouble started, I was being a German. Being a German meant I had to get to the gorse bushes behind the goalposts without being seen. That's why I was running crouched low, to make myself small and invisible ... and that's why I had my eyes on the ground instead of in front of me, where Mrs Biggs was standing.

Let's just say Mrs Biggs's name is about right. She's wider than a troopship, which is why I bounced off her. It knocked the wind right out of me when I hit the ground. Mrs Biggs wasn't hurt at all. If you ask me, she was waiting there, standing in my way on purpose. Setting a trap like enemies do.

"What do you think you're doing?" she asked. Her breath smelt of tea and stale biscuits.

"Being a German," I whispered. I didn't mean to whisper. It's not like I was scared. I was just waiting for my breath to come back.

Mrs Biggs's eyes narrowed, and her eyebrows joined together. Her mouth looked like she'd accidentally chewed on something the dog left. "German?" she screamed. She was so loud that the whole playground went silent. "You're being a *German*?"

Everybody playing the game was made to stand outside the staffroom for half an hour. We waited in silence, imagining our punishments. When Mrs Biggs came back, she let all the boys who'd been Allied soldiers go back to class. But the Germans (there were six of us) had to stand beneath the flagpole and sing "God Save the King" ten times. She knows I hate singing and was trying to embarrass me.

By the end, Mrs Biggs was smiling again. She changes like the weather. She said our singing had given her an excellent idea. She would invite the mayor to school, and we would perform a concert of patriotic songs. She said it would raise everybody's spirits.







Then Betty said she could play the piano. So Mrs Biggs went on a piano hunt. In the end, she found one in the house of old Mrs Forbes who lived up on the hill and had died eating her dinner. Talk about bad luck.

The piano arrived on the back of McLeod's milk truck. We practised singing twice a day, under the flagpole, for the next week.

Betty's fingers danced over the keys like they were on fire. Mrs Biggs made me stand at the end of the line, right under her nose, so she could enjoy my pain.

The day of the concert, Mrs Biggs made sure I was in the same spot. The mayor and his wife came over to shake Mrs Biggs's hand. Because I was right next to them, I got to watch a drip of sweat run down the mayor's red nose and plop onto the dirt. It served him right for wearing a suit on such a hot day. Too full of himself, my mother says.



What happened next was an accident. Nobody who thought about it for more than a second could come to any other conclusion. Anyway, I sneezed – and you can't sneeze on purpose. It just isn't possible. And when you sneeze, sometimes tiny bits of bogie fly through the air. There's nothing a person can do about that, right?

So Mrs Biggs looked down at her arm, where the you-know-what had landed. Then she looked at me. Her eyes blazed.

"We will start with a solo, Mr Mayor," she said, fixing those blazing eyes on me. "Thomas here would like to sing 'God Save the King' to us – on his own."

I don't sing in front of an audience. I don't even sing for my grandmother. Betty sat at the piano and smiled prettily. My face burnt with shame.

"I can't sing," I said.

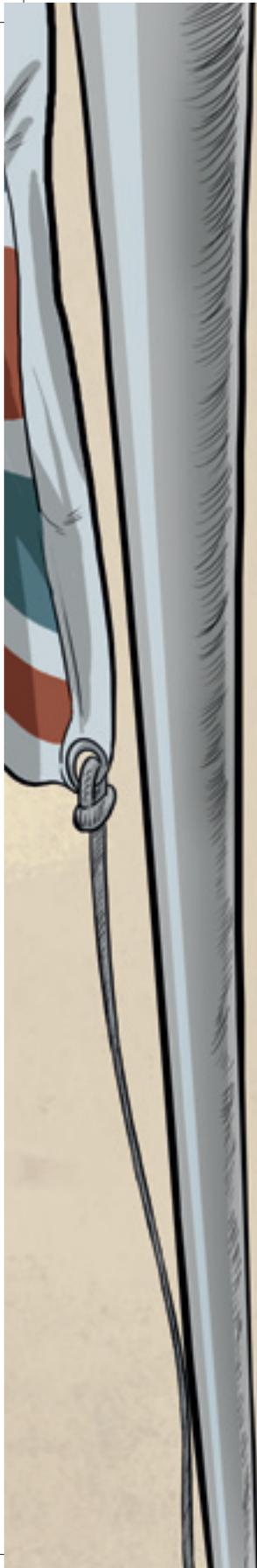
"Of course you can. I've heard you," said Mrs Biggs. "Come on, open your mouth."

I was desperate. And when I get desperate, the strangest things pop into my head.

"No, I can't sing," I said. "Not with a German piano."





A vertical illustration on the left side of the page shows a flagpole with a flag. The flag has horizontal stripes of red, white, and blue. A rope is tied around the pole, and a grey, textured vertical element, possibly a rope or a shadow, runs alongside it.

I didn't know that the piano was German. It was just a guess. My grandad had been a piano tuner, and he'd told me that the Germans made some of the best pianos in the world. But this time, I got lucky. There was a little plaque on the inside: "Made in Dresden". It was the mayor himself who checked.

Mrs Biggs's face turned the same colour as her special-occasion jacket. A vein pulsed in her forehead. She was more furious than the time the ruler broke. Somewhere down the line, a brave student snorted.

Mrs Biggs stormed off, muttering. She returned with an axe from the caretaker's shed. She took the first swing. That sound again, wood splitting clean in two. Then came the saddest music I've ever heard ... like the piano was crying out.

When the mayor stepped up, I thought he was going to stop her. I thought he was going to say, "Mrs Biggs, you can't smash a beautiful piano. Not with all these children watching."

But adults are confusing. Every kid knows it. Instead, Mr Mayor took the axe and stood up straight.

"Boys and girls, your teacher is quite correct. We can't let the Germans into our school. It wouldn't be right, not when your fathers are off fighting them. We're at war – and we must never forget!"

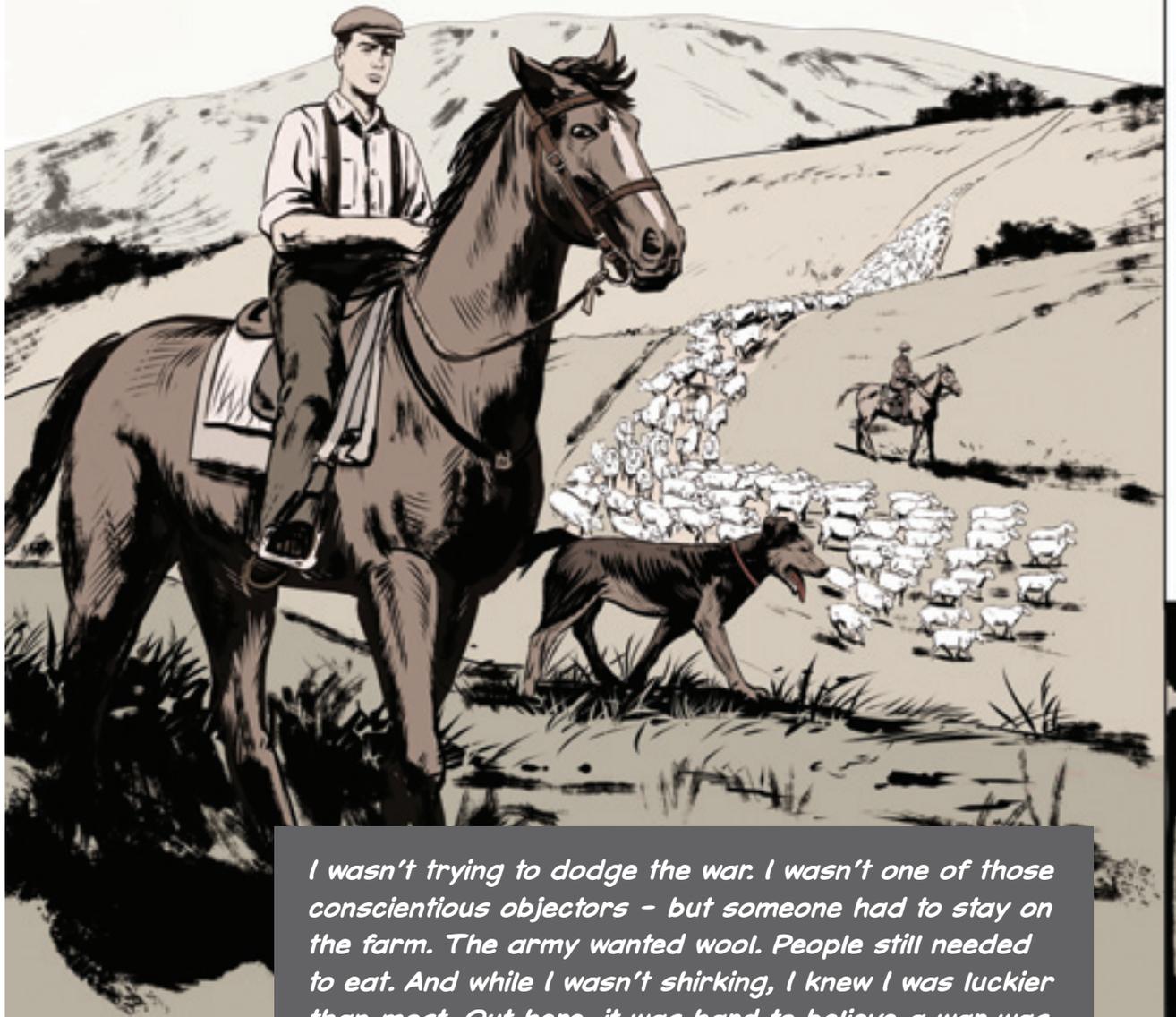
Our teacher and the mayor took turns with the axe. In ten minutes, the piano was a pile of firewood.

Then Mrs Biggs made us sing our songs while she stood on top of the debris and conducted. Betty fingered the notes on her legs. We sang "God Save the King" last. We sang it with all our hearts, just in case.

Jimmy Kitchener once told me that King George is part German – but that can't be true. That would make no sense at all.

HARRY'S WAR

BY MARK DERBY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANDREW BURDAN



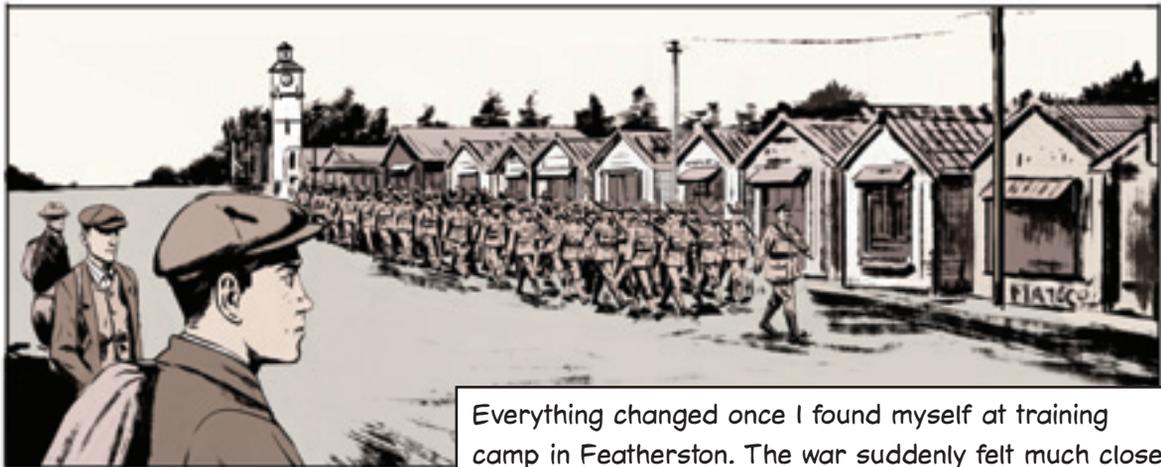
I wasn't trying to dodge the war. I wasn't one of those conscientious objectors - but someone had to stay on the farm. The army wanted wool. People still needed to eat. And while I wasn't shirking, I knew I was luckier than most. Out here, it was hard to believe a war was even going on.

And then, in the autumn of 1918,
my luck ran out.



Looks like they've finally
caught up with you, Harry.

Take care, lad.
Keep your head down.

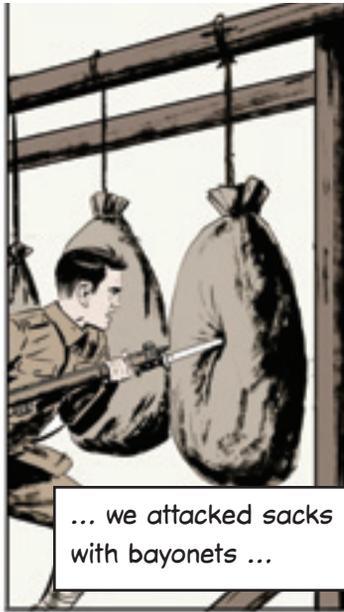


Everything changed once I found myself at training
camp in Featherston. The war suddenly felt much closer.



I was used to sharing digs with just old Ted.
The army treated us like sheep in a pen.

The days were busy. We learned to fire rifles and throw hand grenades ...



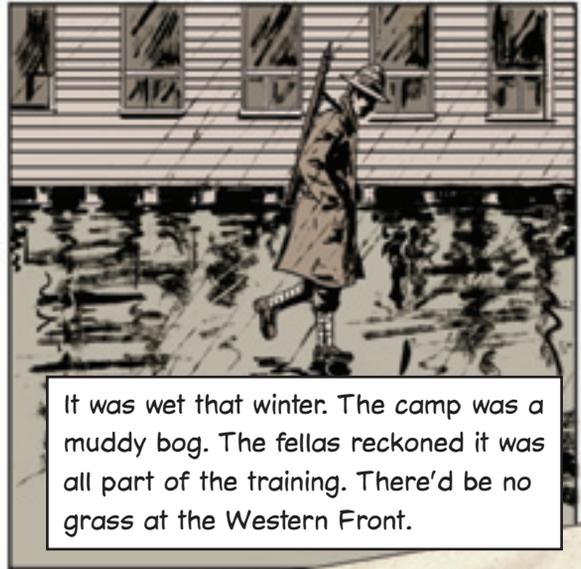
... we attacked sacks with bayonets ...



Keep in step!

... and we marched.

Sentry duty was the only thing I didn't mind. It was a chance to be alone - a chance to think.



It was wet that winter. The camp was a muddy bog. The fellas reckoned it was all part of the training. There'd be no grass at the Western Front.

I was fair miserable - and the war hadn't even begun for me.

Stretcher inspection, Captain, Sir!



Disgraceful. You're not on the farm now, soldier.



POSTCARD

Dear Ted,
It's OK here, I guess. Tucker's good, and the other men are friendly enough, though the officers are a stiff bunch. They're checking all our teeth before we go. I'm expecting a few fillings. Who'd be a soldier?
How's the farm?
Your friend
Harry

By July, we were at the end of basic training. We had a week's leave before they shipped us off. On the way to Wellington, we stopped at Cross Creek Station to change engines. There was snow, and the boys were feeling frisky.



Oi, Collins.



You know the rules.
Your leave is cancelled.

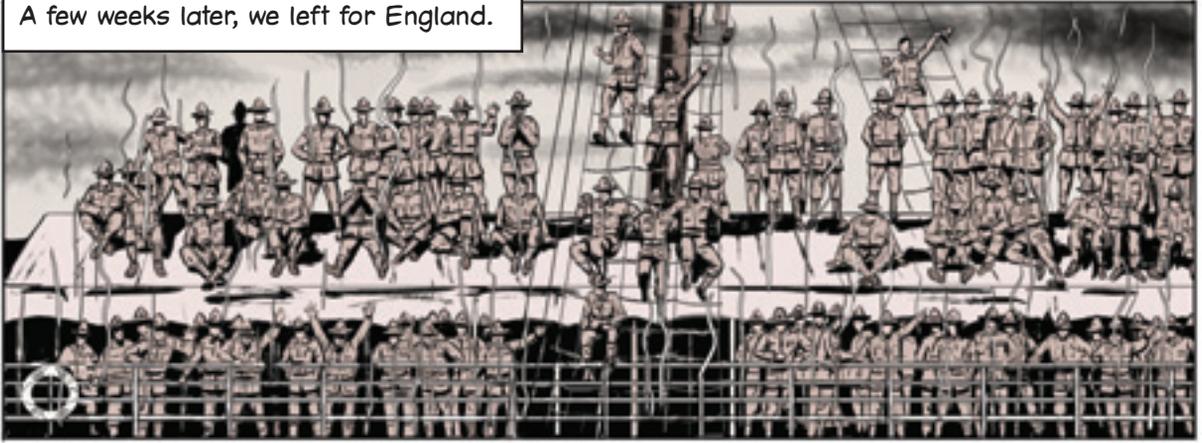


Come on, Sir, that's not fair.
They were just larking about.

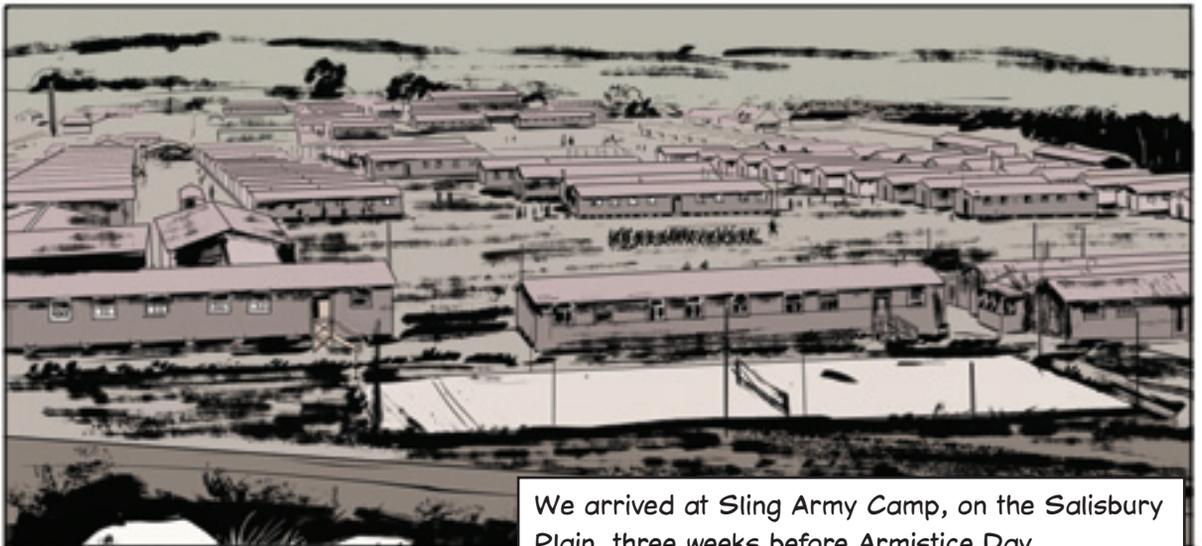


The mood turned fast that day. I guess it wasn't surprising. Ypres, Passchendaele ... we'd all heard what went on at those places. After Cross Creek, we spent our leave cleaning latrines.

A few weeks later, we left for England.



Hey, Harry. A penny for your thoughts.



We arrived at Sling Army Camp, on the Salisbury Plain, three weeks before Armistice Day.

The war was over. We couldn't believe it.
I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

*Cheer up, Harry.
We're going home!*



But it wasn't really over. We were stuck in England with
no way of getting home. The boys weren't happy.

*The army could find
enough ships to get us here!*



*Another game
of cards, anyone?*





They still expected us to follow orders, of course. I didn't like the way the army was treating us - but some of our jokers weren't behaving right, either.



One day, things boiled over in the officers' mess.



Quick, hop in and get down.



Thanks, Private.

You're all right.

The men rioted for two days. So the army came up with a new plan to keep us occupied. We were ordered to carve a kiwi into the chalk hillside.



So that was my life as a soldier ... my war.
A chalk kiwi. It's funny the way things turn out.



KIWI Emblem cut out of Chalk by the N.Z. Forces to commemorate their occupation of Sling Camp, Bullford, during the Great War. The Body covers an area of 1 1/2 acres, Height 420 ft., length of Bill 150 ft. Height of letters N.Z. 65 ft. Total area enclosed 4 1/2 acres. The Emblem has been registered as a Military Emblement by the Imperial Authorities and on behalf of the N.Z. Forces, its maintenance has been undertaken by the KIWI POLISH CO., Pty. Ltd., London.

Grey Angels

by Anna Rogers

8 April 1915: A large crowd has gathered on Wellington's Glasgow Wharf. The nearby buildings are decorated with flags, and a brass band plays patriotic songs. Fifty New Zealand nurses, in bonnets and grey dresses, are boarding the SS *Rotorua*. They are on their way to the war that is raging in Europe.



Edna Pengelly on the deck of the SS *Rotorua*



The Vast and Boundless Ocean

One of the nurses setting off that day was Edna Pengelly. When war was declared, Edna wanted to help – and she was lucky. Nursing was the only official way New Zealand women could go overseas to help the fighting soldiers. Edna applied to go on **active service** in January 1915, and three months later, she sailed away on the “vast and boundless ocean”.¹

The long, cramped journey to Britain was difficult. But there was still lots of excitement about the exotic sights along the way. Edna wrote about Cape Horn with “whales spouting in the distance” and the flying fish near Rio de Janeiro. After the *Rotorua* reached Plymouth, England, on 19 May, the nurses travelled to London. From there, they thought they'd be going across the English Channel to nurse the men wounded on the **Western Front**.



Nurses enjoying the exotic sights in Egypt around 1915

To Egypt

But the New Zealand soldiers weren't on the Western Front – they were fighting at Gallipoli. The nurses were sent to the four British-run hospitals in Egypt where the sick and injured men from Gallipoli were being taken. The women arrived in Alexandria in mid-June, and Edna was sent to No. 19 General Hospital.

The work was punishing. It was very hot, and the nurses worked long hours. Some of the patients were sick with illnesses like **dysentery** and pneumonia. Others had serious bullet or **shrapnel** wounds or broken bones. There were no antibiotics. Sometimes a soldier's arm or leg had to be amputated, and the nurses would help with the operation.

For some patients, nothing could be done. The nurses would simply sit and hold their hands. Still, they were glad to be there. As one nurse, Cora Anderson, said in a letter to her brother, "We feel that we are doing what we came for."²

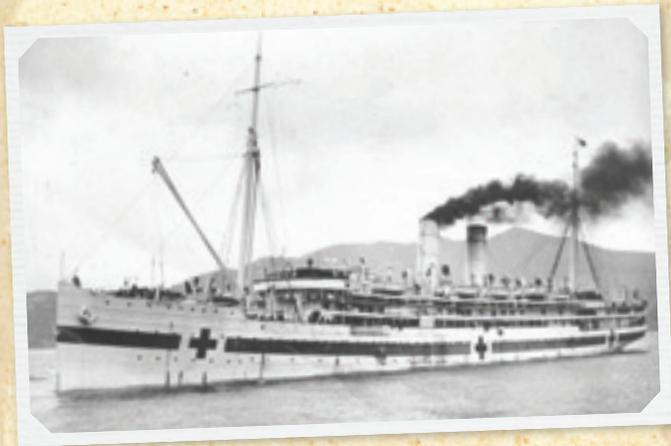
Later in the year, the weather got very cold in Turkey. Soldiers coming from Gallipoli sometimes had terrible frostbite, and some of these men needed to have their feet amputated. Patients who recovered from their injuries or illnesses would be sent back to fight. Those who were very ill were sent home on a hospital ship.



Hospital Ships

Hospital ships (also known as “white ships”) were used to treat and transport sick and wounded soldiers. New Zealand had two: the *Maheno* and the *Marama*. Like nurses, the ships went wherever they were needed.

During the Gallipoli campaign, the *Maheno* spent time at Anzac Cove. Soldiers were brought from the beach to the ship on small barges. The ship’s two operating theatres were in constant use, and the eight wards overflowed. Often mattresses had to be put on the decks. From Gallipoli, the *Maheno* took sick and wounded soldiers (up to five hundred at a time) to the Greek island of Lemnos. The men were then transported to hospitals in Egypt. The very ill were usually sent home. By the end of the war, New Zealand’s “white ships” had transported 47 000 patients.



“Our ship is beautiful. A great, white monster with three large red crosses and one thick green stripe on each side. An angel on a mercy mission.”

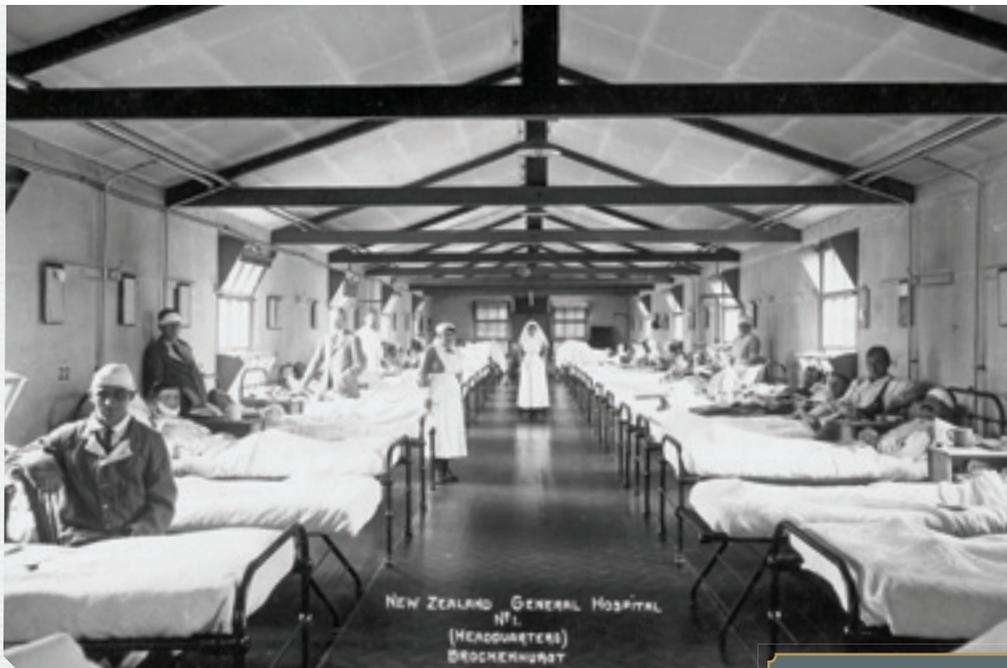
(Nurse Lottie Le Gallais)

Brockenhurst

After a year in Egypt, Edna was sent to England. She went to work in the New Zealand hospital at Brockenhurst, near Southampton. This was one of five hospitals for New Zealand soldiers. The men were glad to be cared for by women from their own country. One visitor even thought the New Zealand atmosphere was the best “tonic” the patients could have. Edna also liked Brockenhurst, especially the smell of the woodlands and hayfields. It was a world away from the heat and dirt and flies of Egypt.

The hospital was busy, but it got even worse after the fighting on the Somme. In mid-September 1916, when New Zealand soldiers became heavily involved in the battle, Edna wrote in her diary, “They say there will be plenty of men coming across soon. It is a ghastly place.” Ten days later, patients were “pouring in” and there were “operations galore”. Sometimes, Edna scarcely knew what to do first.

The ambulances kept coming. “Poor fellows,” Edna wrote. “They have a rotten time, and some come here only to die.” On 16 October, Edna described the arrival of yet another convoy. “So busy that at 3 p.m. I felt quite hopeless ...”



NEW ZEALAND GENERAL HOSPITAL
N^o. 1.
(HEADQUARTERS)
BROCKENHURST

Nurses and patients in one of the wards at Brockenhurst

Carrying On

Most of the soldiers Edna looked after came from the battlefields of France. They travelled on an ambulance train to Le Havre, where they crossed to England on a hospital ship. There were never enough stretchers or beds, and the “walking wounded” had to get around as best they could. One observer described these men boarding the *Maheno*: “The mud from the trenches is scarcely dry upon them. The blood from their wounds soaks their clothes. They come forward, still dazed by the crash and roar of rival **artillery**.”³

There was no shortage of sad sights, but Edna and the other nurses were careful to hide their feelings. Florence de Lisle, who also nursed in England, remembered: “My first shock was when I went to make a man’s bed and I found he had no legs. They hadn’t told me. That was a terrible shock, but I just had to carry on. We never let on we were upset.”⁴ The patients also tried their best, despite their suffering: “The men bear pain wonderfully well; they never complain, never grumble,” said Jean Muir, a nurse on the *Maheno*.⁵



Inside a British ambulance train, which was used to transport the seriously wounded

The Somme and Passchendaele

Edna described the Somme as a ghastly place. She was right. Although New Zealand soldiers didn't become heavily involved until near the battle's end, the cost was still high: two thousand New Zealand soldiers were killed.

(At least half of these men still have no known grave.)

But a more terrible experience for the New Zealanders came a year later in 1917. This was when they took part in a series of battles near the Belgian village of Passchendaele. The campaign, which began in June and lasted many months, was poorly executed. During the fighting, men sometimes struggled through barbed wire under machine-gun fire. They were also shelled and gassed. The soldiers could hardly move because of the freezing cold and deep mud – and the surrounding countryside was said to look like a moonscape.



A ghastly place: New Zealand soldiers on the Somme battlefield, 1916



On the Move

During the war, nurses were sent wherever they were needed, although never to the front line. Still, some New Zealand nurses got very close, especially those who worked in the **casualty clearing stations** or in the hospitals in France, where there were terrifying air raids. Edna stayed in England, moving first to the New Zealand hospital at Codford and then to the one at Oatlands Park.

Many of the patients at Oatlands Park were "**limbies**". But the hospital also cared for other seriously wounded soldiers. In October 1917, the long convoys of ambulances came again. This time, they carried survivors from Passchendaele. The men were, as Edna put it, "dreadfully knocked about".



An ambulance convoy leaving a field hospital near the Western Front

The End

In March 1918, the Germans launched their last huge attacks. Again, Edna described wards full of wounded men. The hospital had to put up tents to provide extra room. Many soldiers had been affected by **mustard gas**, which was used later in the war by both sides. These men had burnt, swollen eyes and blistered throats – and some would develop fatal pneumonia. “Their breathing was dreadful,” said Florence de Lisle – and many suffered the effects “all their lives, like asthma”.⁶

That year, there was also a new problem to deal with: influenza. This worldwide **pandemic** killed between 20 and 40 million people. Many of the flu patients ended up in hospital.

In October, Edna described Oatlands as being “like a beehive – at least a thousand here”.

Finally, the war came to an end. “We heard rumours at 8.30 that the **armistice** had been signed but, of course, could not believe it. At noon we heard it was a fact.” Some people went to church, and others celebrated. Edna wrote in her diary that many people went to London, where it was “quite mad”, with dancing in the streets.

Edna came home on the *Marama* in 1919. Soon afterwards, she went to work at Queen Mary Hospital in Hanmer, nursing soldiers recovering from the war. Some men had long-term injuries. Others had shell shock.

Shell Shock

Soldiers were shot at, shelled, and gassed. They watched their friends die. They lived in mud with huge rats, and there were always lice in their uniforms. All this could become overwhelming. Some men stopped talking or became very confused. Some had nightmares – or couldn't sleep at all. Others lost control of their limbs and trembled a lot. These men were suffering from what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder. At the time, it was known as shell shock. For some people, especially **civilians**, shell shock was difficult to understand. Some even thought that shell-shocked soldiers were cowards. But nurses like Edna understood and tried to help. It's thought that around 40 percent of the **casualties** from the Battle of the Somme had shell shock.



The New Zealand nurses who served overseas were highly respected for their work. By the end of the war, 550 of them had served with the New Zealand Army Nursing Service. The soldiers never forgot these brave and selfless women and the care they gave.

¹ From Edna's autobiography *Nursing in Peace and War* (all of Edna's words are from this book)

² From *While You're Away: New Zealand Nurses at War 1899–1948* by Anna Rogers

³ From Anna Rogers's book

⁴ From *An Awfully Big Adventure: New Zealand World War One Veterans Tell Their Stories* by Jane Tolerton

⁵ From Anna Rogers's book

⁶ From Jane Tolerton's book

Windfall

by Paul Mason

The crowd went up together, arms stretched, mouths wide, caps tumbling like fruit blown from a tree. Try! Right under the posts. Anna cheered at the top of her voice. There was more clapping, more yelling.

Then she noticed her father.

His hands were balled, eyes fixed on something far off beyond the field ... something that lurked in the charcoal clouds rolling in. Something that had come home with him from the war.

Her mother had seen, too. "Come on, love," she said. "I left washing on the line."

"But the game ...," Anna protested.

"I don't like the look of those clouds."

Anna's mother touched her husband's elbow. At first, he flinched. But then, seeing where he was, he began pushing through the crowd, desperate to be away. Anna trailed behind. "It's not fair," she grumbled, just loud enough for her mother to hear. She didn't remember any washing on the line.





"How about a cuppa?" Anna's mother suggested back at the farm.

Father nodded. "It was a good game."

"We didn't win the whole time you were away," Anna said, getting down the tea cups.

Her father didn't seem to hear her. "I'll take mine in the other room if it's all the same," he said.

Anna heard the creak of the armchair in the front room. Her father would sit there for hours, like a ghost, not saying a word until teatime. After that, he'd retreat to bed. And in the middle of the night, the nightmares and the shouting would come, along with her mother's soothing voice. Even with a feather pillow pressed against her ears, Anna couldn't escape it.

The doctor had said her father wasn't the only soldier like this. He just needed time. But Anna wanted her father now. She had longed for him to come home. For months, all they'd had was a few letters to share around the kitchen table. When her mother wasn't looking, Anna would run her fingers over the paper, imagining her father's hand touching it. Now he was back – but trying to get close was just as hopeless. Hadn't she waited long enough?

At church the next day, everyone trooped outside in their Sunday best. Her father avoided the crowd. Instead, he went and stood among the graves, next to the one where the flowers were always fresh. Anna watched him, his shoulders hunched inside an ill-fitting jacket. His eyes were fixed on the name of their neighbour, wounded at Messines. He had died five months later.

Anna went over and took her father's hand. He tried to smile, to say something, but then Mr Bedford came over.

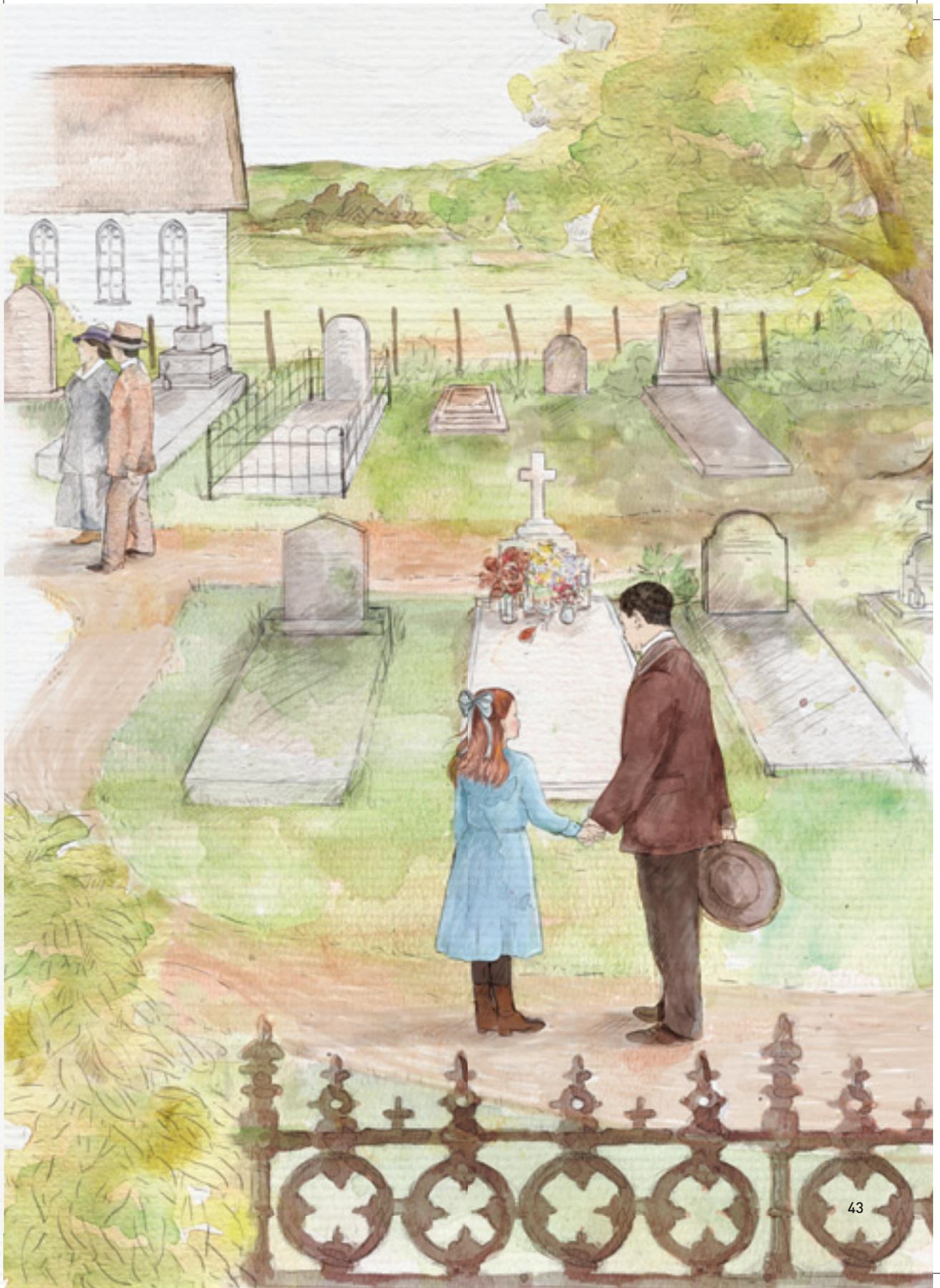
"I'd have done my bit ... if I'd been younger," the old man said. "You lads did a fine thing, James. A fine thing."

"You reckon he would agree?" Anna's father said in a dark voice, nodding down at the grave. "You don't know what you're talking about." He dropped Anna's hand and walked off.

Anna looked at her boots. Had her father forgotten that Mr Bedford used to be her headmaster? Her mother had seen and came rushing over. "I'm so sorry," she said. "Ever since he's come back ..." Her voice faded away.

Mr Bedford smiled kindly. "No need to apologise," he said. "I understand." But Anna could see he was hurt, and she avoided his eye.

"We'd better go," said Mother.





The storm came at teatime. Hard rain made the roof clatter like a train. Her father was quiet. "I think I'll turn in," he said. "I've got a fearful headache."

He stopped briefly to brush cold lips against Anna's forehead. She wondered whether he knew how ashamed she'd been at church. Perhaps he didn't care.

"Do you think the sheep in the back paddock will be all right?" her mother asked wearily once he'd gone.

"I suppose," said Anna.

"Then let's get an early night, too."



Anna was woken by a lantern in the hallway. Her mother had pulled on gumboots and an oilskin and Father's wide hat. Then she saw that Anna was awake. "I'm worried about the stream," she said. "I'm going to check the flock."

"Are you going on your own?" asked Anna. Her mother nodded.

Anna pushed off the eiderdown. "Then I'm coming, too."

They made their way across the paddock, the rain driving hard at their faces. Mother did a quick count. "There's some missing," she shouted. They stumbled over to the ravine and dangled their lanterns into the blackness. Dark water rushed past. But was that a smudge of white below?

Anna's mother led the way down the slippery slope. They trudged along the water's edge, mud sucking at their boots, until the river cut them off. There was nothing.

"We'd better get back," Mother shouted. She tried to clamber back up the bank – but couldn't get a foothold. So Anna tried, her useless boots clogged with dirt. But the incline was too steep, too muddy – like the wall of a trench.

In the weakening light, Anna's eyes fixed on the rising water. Not long now and the torrent would be at their feet. They were trapped.

Anna felt fear rise like stormwater, flooding her head. She felt so weak, and the water was so strong. Suddenly she caught a flash of her father at the rugby game. In the cemetery. Was this how he had felt? Was this the feeling he'd lived with, month after month on the Western Front?

"It'll be all right," said Anna's mother, and she pulled Anna close.





A shout ... definitely a shout came from above. It came again. On the ridge, a lantern glowed. It was her father, a length of rope slung over his shoulder.

“James!” Mother yelled.

Father waved. “Hold on!” he shouted. He disappeared, then was back and tossed one end of the rope to them.

“You first,” said Mother. Leaning back on the rope, Anna started carefully pulling herself up. At the top, her father grasped her. Finally she was in his arms, strong and solid in the storm.

“You two chose a funny time for a picnic,” he said. He held Anna tight for a second and then turned to help her mother.

The three of them headed back across the paddock. By the water trough, they passed three clumps of white. The missing sheep.



The storm was gone by the early hours, leaving behind a syrupy dampness in the air. “Just look at all that windfall,” Mother said, looking out at the orchard. “There’ll be plenty of apples for a pie, I’d say.”

After breakfast, Anna took a basket and went out to the fruit trees. Her hand searched for apples in the long, damp grass.

“That was some storm,” Father said, appearing beside her. He examined some of the fallen fruit, then gathered them in silence.

“I was scared last night,” Anna said at last.

“You weren’t the only one.” Her father stopped for a moment, a battered apple in his hand. “You know Grandma always liked her fruit to be perfect.” He passed the apple over. “What do you reckon?”

Anna searched her father’s face. There were grey smudges around his eyes. Smudges like bruises. But in his eyes, there was light – a light she hadn’t noticed before.

“It looks fine to me.”



Glossary

active service: taking part in a war, often on or near the battlefield

Allied soldiers: soldiers from one of the Allied nations (the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and France were the main Allied nations fighting against Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria-Hungary)

ANZAC: the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

armistice: a truce

artillery: very big guns that needed several men to fire

British Empire: all of the territories under the control or leadership of Britain

casualties: soldiers who are dead, wounded, sick, captured, or missing

casualty clearing stations: places very close to the front line where soldiers received medical treatment

civilians: people who aren't soldiers or part of an army

combat: fighting

conscription: when the government orders people to be soldiers

contingent: a group of soldiers

division: a very large group of soldiers (usually many thousands)

dysentery: a serious infection that causes severe diarrhoea

infantry: soldiers trained to fight the enemy on foot and up close

limbie: a term used by nurses to describe a patient waiting for an artificial limb

mustard gas: a poisonous gas used in battles during the First World War

New Zealand Expeditionary Force: the main part of the New Zealand army in the First World War

occupy: when an army takes control of a place

offensive: an attack or series of attacks

pandemic: an outbreak of a disease that spreads across a huge area

shrapnel: small pieces of metal thrown out when a shell explodes

Western Front: one of the main lines of fighting in the First World War (there was also an Eastern Front), the Western Front stretched around 700 kilometres across northern and eastern France and Belgium (see the map on page 37)

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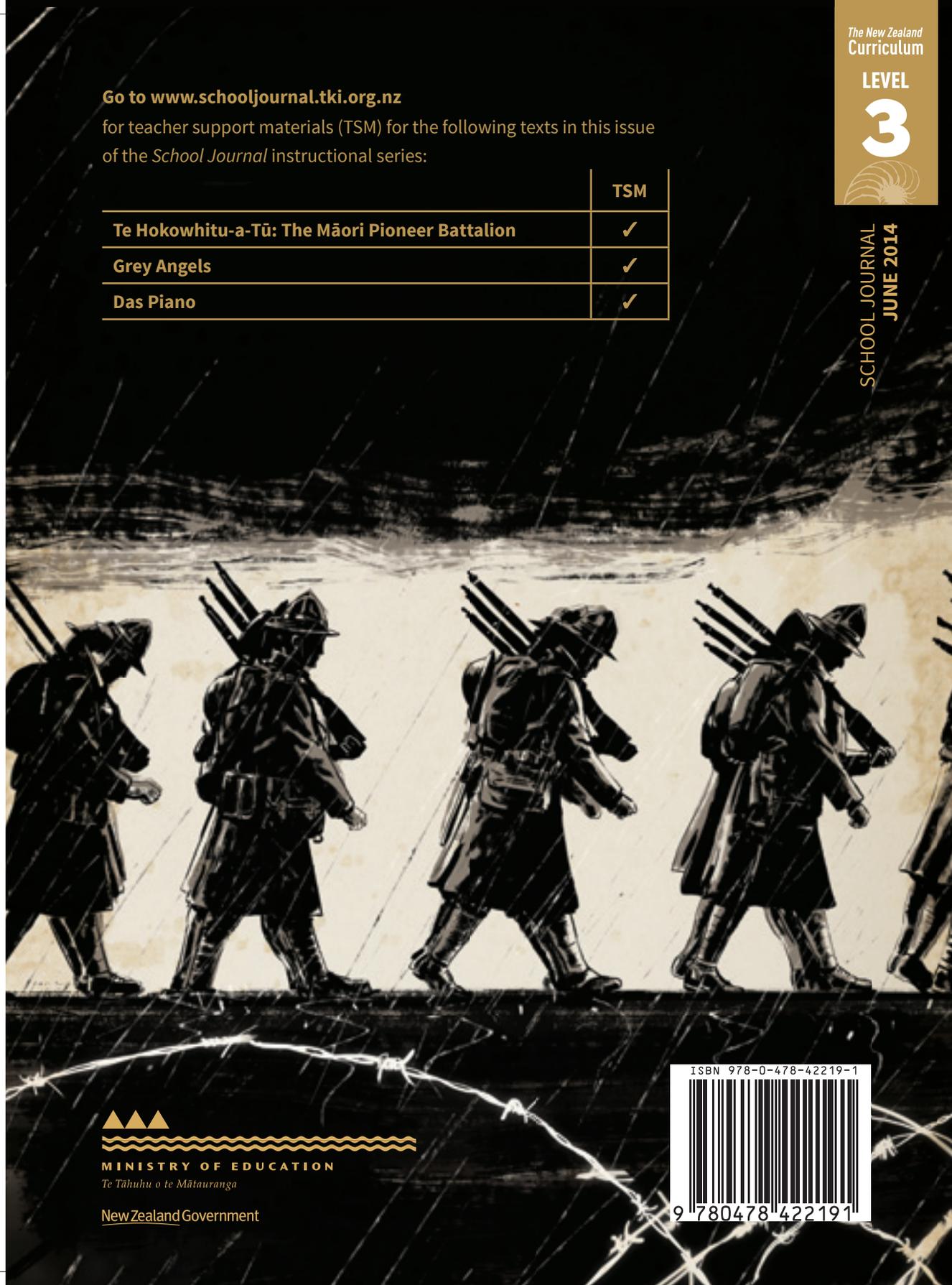
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