

JOHN WALKER

AKA: J HONE WAAKA

21 Aug 1900

Mr John Walker, who left with the Fourth Contingent from Gisborne for South Africa, has joined the Artillery.—Opotiki Mail.

30 Oct 1900 THE GISBORNE BOYS

THE GISBORNE BOYS.

Trooper J. Walker, of the Fourth Contingent, writing from Ottoshoop to Mr J. Stewart, of Gisborne, describes the fighting in which the Gisborne boys were engaged. He says they were ordered out under Lieutenant Arthur to try and find the position the Boers held. They had ridden round a good many kopjes close to the main position, when, as they were advancing to a low-lying range, they saw an iron shed. They were riding in extended order, and when within about 300 yards of the shed, suddenly the enemy, about 400 strong, rushed out of the shed and simply peppered them. As the odds were about twelve to one, the Gisborne boys decided to take cover, and suddenly wheeling files, they travelled across the veldt as they had never done before, the Boers pouring in volleys at them. When they reached a place of safety they found that their corporal was wounded, but not seriously, and three horses had been shot. A few hours later orders came from camp to assist in general operations against the enemy. The New Zealanders, with bayonets fixed, led a frontal attack against the enemy, who held a strong position on the kopje, and compelled them to flee, sending after them showers of lead. General Carrington subsequently thanked them for taking one of the strongest positions the Boers held. It was in this engagement that Captain Harvey and Corporal McDougall were mortally wounded. A few days later Corporal Gannon's section, to which Walker belongs, had an unfortunate experience. They were out scouting, and found the enemy were making for a kopje on which they were. Gannon returned to the column to inform the captain, and returned with reinforcements. Whilst he was away their three horses were shot down, and when he returned he found the men lying down behind rocks peppering away at the enemy as hard as they could.

They kept at it until late in the afternoon, and compelled the Boers to retreat. Whilst the rifle duel was on, Walker placed his hat on a rock not far from where Gannon and he were lying, and the enemy thought it was a man's head, and simply peppered the hat with bullets, dust flying all around. Walker encloses a number of letters taken from a Boer camp. They are written in Dutch, and have not yet been translated.

July 1901 GISBORNE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

Staff-Sergeant-Major Tom Porter, writing to a friend here from Standerton on June 19th, gives the following interesting particulars of our boys at the front with the Seventh Contingent:—

“Standerton, Transvaal, June 19th.— Just a few lines to let you know how the war is progressing. So far nothing of any importance has been done by the Seventh, but the grit is here. There is only one fault with the men, that is, they are too eager for the fray, too daring, in fact, when in action. Of course you know we are under command of Colonel Gray, who we nicknamed Fighting Grey. He was in the '96 Jameson raid, and I am now on his staff as staff-sergeant-major of the Intelligence Department in command of the heliograph section. The column only numbers about 3000 men of all ranks now—expect to get more. The pater is in command of the New Zealanders, and he has the artillery and pom-pom guns. He was in action the other day for the third time since we have been here. He was in the advance guard of the convoy, and the Boers tried very hard to prevent the convoy from advancing, and made a fierce attack from the front, and not long after another troop of Boers attacked the rear, so we got about four hours of good solid fighting, and the Gisborne boys proved themselves the best men of the day. We killed between 20 and 30 Boers. Two of our fellows were wounded and one killed. Five Queenslanders were wounded, and we buried one; several horses were shot. Of the Gisborne men, J. Hone Waaka (Johnny Walker) was recommended for the Distinguished Service medal for bravery, and Denny, Teesdale and Cato are all mentioned in despatches, and also Willy Parker and Carlyle. All of these of the latest selection were very cool in

action. Not a word out of them. They simply fire away, and laugh and talk just as if nothing happened, and told me afterwards, "What a grand sport fighting is," and I had to admit it was a good sport, as long as a man didn't happen to catch a stray pill. Robert and Raymond, my two brothers, came in to get remounts. They were with General Plumer's column. Their horses were shot away from under them, and they were nearly ambushed. They are transferred to us, and also young Law, of Gisborne, is coming to us. Tommy Trotter got fired on the other day by the Queenslanders, who mistook him for a Boer. Three or four of the Gisborne fellows have been picked out as scouts. Sergeant Collett, the man killed, was alongside of me. He re-engaged from the Fourth Contingent. I forgot to mention young A. Gannon. He took my place as divisional sergeant as soon as he was put on the staff. Very funny—he was out scouting the other day with a couple of fellows named Corporals Matthews and Hardgrave, the latter a Taranaki rep. footballer. As they passed over a spruit, or hole, in which the Boers were in hiding. They up like a shot and covered them with their rifles, and sang out; "Hands up." Gannon fired a shot, but missed, and they held up their hands, and everything was taken from them, four miles from the camp, and they had to walk back. The Boers left their money with them, so it wasn't bad."

21 September 1901

Sergeant John Walker, of Opotiki, a returned trooper from South Africa, who has been laid up in the Wellington Hospital as the result of an attack of enteric fever, is reported to be "doing nicely." The Sergeant, who had, prior to reaching New Zealand, been laid up in the Melbourne Hospital with measles, contracted enteric on the voyage across from Australia. Sergeant Walker's intention is to return to South Africa as soon as possible, in order to take up a commission in the Imperial Army.



SERGEANT JOHN WALKER,

20 Jan 1902 **SOUTH AFRICA.**

Lord Kitchener's despatches of December 8th mentioned Lieut. G. D. Shern for gallantry in attacking a laager at Pongolabosch and for good services; Sergt. J. Davidson and Lance-Corporal W. Rutherford for bringing in wounded under heavy fire, all belonging to the New Zealand Seventh Regiment; Sergt. J. Walker, Fourth New Zealand Rifles, for capturing, unaided, three armed Boers on a farm at Standerton. A number of Australians are also mentioned.