

The Story of Alan Charles Davies



N.Z. NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD



On Active Service.

Catholic Hut, Burnham Military Camp

Date 28/6/43

451522. Pte. Davies. A.E.
No. 1 Platoon. E. Coy.
2nd. N.Z.E.F.
B. Block. Burnham.

Dear Nan & Fran.

Well here I am settled down now I came back yesterday afternoon, after 2 days A.U.O.L. but I think we will get away with it. I have got leave. Tues. Wed. Friday & probably weekend leave, so that will not be so bad.

I received your very welcome letter on Saturday morning.

I have not seen Les Roberts yet, I have had a look around for him.

There are still chaps coming in from their leave.

I went out to Templeton on Friday morning with Ken, he stayed at our place Thursday night. and Percy is in good trim. he gave me a L.I.

Percy & Chubby Earl were out at the camp yesterday afternoon.

I got a seat in the train coming home.

They had a good Social & Dance up at Papamui Hall, there must have been about 24 of us & we each got a wallet each with our initials on it.



N.Z. NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

Associated with the following Churches:
Presbyterian
Methodist
Baptist
Congregational
Church of Christ
Roman Catholic
Jewish Congregations



ON ACTIVE SERVICE.
Write Home First.

Reddusson Camp
Date

My Dearest Mothers all,

I am very sorry in not being able to come home tonight, but it is not my fault it is the Army. We were getting leave as far as we went till 4 o'clock this afternoon.

I hope you don't get worried over my not coming home tonight, but I will be OK, and I always think of you all.

Poor Eileen will be waiting for me tonight, but these things cannot be helped.

When you see Ted, tell him not to put No. 1 Company of 106 Group as the address has changed again for about the 10th time.

You can send Nan my new address and also Chubby Earl.

The telephones are out of use for 3

N.Z. NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD



On Active Service.

Catholic Hut, Camp

Date

I got a nice set of hair brushes from the Workshops in a nice leather case, and also a photo wallet. I also got a nice suede money belt from the Thistle football club.

Well that is all the news for now so I will close with lots of love from your
Loving Grandson
Alan.

xxxxxx

N.Z. NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

Associated with the following Churches:
Presbyterian
Methodist
Baptist
Congregational
Church of Christ
Roman Catholic
Jewish Congregations



ON ACTIVE SERVICE.
Write Home First.

..... C.A.M.P.
Date

days & mail is held for 3 days to and they will not accept telegrams. I will try and get this mail posted in town if possible.

It was just as well I got my towel last night, but the rocks it does not matter about them as I have about 7 pair here, and you can keep the pyjamas, as there is no need to have them.

Well that just about cuts it so I will close with lots of love and kisses to all.

Letter from Chubby Earl. I remain your loving son
just arrived.
Alan.

451522. xxxxxxxxxx
Pte. A.E. Davies. xx xx xxxxxxxx
10th Hq. 2nd N.Z.E.F.
N.Z.A.P.C. 1000.

a photo taken at Burnham

I have known Alan Davies for some years, he is a very good boy. His father who was a Government employee died some time ago leaving a widow and four young children, Alan is the eldest. If he got constant work, I am sure he would be of great assistance to his widowed mother in supporting the family. He is of decent parents, well brought up, willing and obedient and of good moral character.

I am very pleased to be able to give him a high recommendation.

(Rev) J P O'Connor.

Addington

25. 1. '38,

Phone 35-865
P.O. Box 688.

Telegraphic Address,
WENO, CHRISTCHURCH.



751, COLOMBO ST. Christchurch, NZ 22nd April, 1938.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

The bearer Allan Davies has been with us for five months as a messenger, and is leaving us to learn a trade.

We have much pleasure in stating that he has given us every satisfaction, he leaves us with our best wishes for his future success. His present wages are 17/6 per week.

Yours faithfully,
OWENS LIMITED.

R. E. Owen

Signature of bearer:

Allan Davies



New Zealand Government Railways.

CERTIFICATE OF HAVING PASSED
ANNUAL EXAMINATION OF APPRENTICES

In accordance with Regulation No. 143 and amendments thereto of the Regulations under the Government Railways Act, 1908.

This is to Certify that No. 258, A.C. DAVIES, Apprentice
COFFERSMITH (Designation.), in November, 1940, passed the prescribed
Annual Examination, having gained 65 Marks out of a possible 100 Marks in his
4 Year Examination, and 78 Marks out of a possible 100 Marks for his Trade
Efficiency, thereby gaining a

Second-class Pass.

Subject.	Percentage obtained.
Trade Theory and Practice	78
Drawing	72
Mathematics	45
Total average	65
Application to Trade	78

Wellington, 10th January, 1941.

E. T. Spence
Superintendent of Workshops.

140,000 New Zealanders served in World War II.

Most were involved in the Mediterranean region, in Greece, Crete, North Africa and Italy. New Zealand forces also fought against the Japanese in the Pacific and took part in the post-war occupation of Japan.

12,000 New Zealanders died in the conflict. Uncle Alan was one of those.

**Great Uncle Alan was like all the others
Taken away too soon from their mothers**

**But his is a story that needs to be told
Like all the others, so brave & bold**

Top left: Alan and his Mother Bridget.

Middle left: Alan and Keith.

Middle: Alan - 1 year.

Middle right: Alan - 8 years.

Bottom left: Alan next to Keith's pram.

Bottom right: Alan, Keith Bridget, Trevor, Moira.



DAVIES.—In loving memory of 451522, Private Alan Charles Davies, killed in action in Italy, December 15, 1943.
Loving memories.
Inserted by Gran, Nan, and Aunt Lari.

DAVIES.—In loving memory of Alan Charles, killed on active service Italy, December 15, 1943.
Always remembered.
Inserted by Desmond and Joyce.

DAVIES.—In sad but loving memory of Private Alan Charles, killed in action in Italy, December 15, 1943.
Inserted by Keith and Shirley.

DAVIES.—In sad but loving memory of Private Alan Charles, killed in action in Italy, December 15, 1943.
Inserted by Grant family.

DAVIES.—In loving memory of a dear son and brother, Private Alan Charles Davies, killed in action Castel Frentano, Italy, December 15, 1943. R.I.P.
Dearly loved, sadly missed.
Inserted by his loving mother, Keith, Moira, and Trevor.



Alan played high level football
for Thistle Club.

Alan is pictured kneeling over
the ball.

They grew up at 66 Lincoln
Road, which is now gone. They
walked to Sacred Heart
Primary School, 1.5Km away.

The family moved to 171
Matsons Avenue in Papanui.

The eldest of 7, football was his sport
A waste that his life was cut down so short

Brother John Davies was born
June 5th, 1924, died 3 weeks later

Next were twins Aileen Edith &
Desmond Russell Davies born
July 11th, 1925, died both 3 days
later.

Keith Raymond Davies was born
July 11th, 1926, Keith died 12th July
2015

Sister Moira was born September
15th, 1928, & died 22nd Feb 1995

Finally, there was youngest
brother Trevor born Dec 6th, 1935,
died 24th June 2017



Thistle Club Has Now Lost Six Members Killed In Action

A prominent member of the Association Football Club's senior A team, A. C. Davies has been killed in action. His death brings the total killed in the Thistle Club's first eleven to six.

Expressing his regret at the news, the president of the Thistle Club (Mr A. McAnulty) said to-day that Davies was one of the younger players of the club and he had had the distinction of playing in every grade of the com-



Mr A. McAnulty

petition. He qualified for the first eleven prior to his departure for overseas in July last year. For a little time before that he played for Army.

Mr McAnulty said that while the club was proud of the way in which its members had rallied to the colours, it felt keenly the loss of so many promising young men.



Search result

66 Lincoln Road, Hillmorton-Addington,
Christchurch City

[Zoom to](#)

Alans journey to the front started in Lyttleton on the 20th of July (bottom right).

He stopped over in Perth, writing letters along the way.

He crossed the equator on the 11th of August by Neptune's approval.

He landed in Egypt on the 20th of August.

**A man, fit & young, he was selected to serve
Sent to Africa & Italy, a test of his nerve**

The 2nd New Zealand Division saw its first action of the Italian Campaign at the end of November 1943 when they joined the Allied effort to breach the Germans' Gustav Line.

The Gustav Line was a series of fortifications that stretched from coast to coast across Italy, strategically using the peninsula's many rivers and mountainous terrain.

The Div was tasked with attacking the Line's eastern margins in the hills above the Sangro River with the hope of commencing an advance towards Italy's capital city, Rome.

LOYALS
Burley Blend
Roll your own
SMOKING TOBACCO BB

This is a detailed historical map of the world, likely from the 18th or 19th century, showing the continents and oceans. The map is oriented with North at the top. A blue line traces a path across the globe, starting from the Atlantic Ocean, passing through the Indian Ocean, and ending in the Pacific Ocean. The map includes various geographical labels such as 'North Atlantic Ocean', 'South Atlantic Ocean', 'Indian Ocean', 'Pacific Ocean', 'Arctic Ocean', 'Canada', 'United States', 'Brazil', 'Russia', 'China', 'India', 'Australia', and 'Africa'. A compass rose is located in the bottom left corner, and several sailing ships are depicted in the oceans. The map is framed by a decorative border.

Union Steam Ship Coy. of N.Z., Ltd.
T.E.V. RANGATIRA 278
GANGWAY AND BERTHING CARD.
SECOND CLASS
This card to be produced at Gangway, also to
Steward on board who will direct Passenger to
Berth. Steamer ticket to be surrendered at
Gangway.
FROM LYTTTELTON
Sailing Date 20 JUL 1943

5 medals awarded for doing his bit Ensuring you're able to sit where you sit

Before dawn on 28 November two of the Div.'s brigades crossed the icy-cold Sangro River and made good initial progress against the Germans.

While they advanced, the New Zealand engineers opened access for the rest of the Division by skillfully using pre-fabricated Bailey bridges to ford the Sangro - one of a seemingly endless succession of rivers to be traversed in the long advance up the Italian peninsula.

On 2 December, the Div secured the tactically important village of Castel Frentano, and were poised to capture the nearby stronghold of Orsogna.

On 15 December Alan Charles Davies died at a train station in Sangro under heavy shelling.

Top left: The Italy Star is a military campaign medal, instituted by the United Kingdom in May 1945 for award to British Commonwealth forces who served in the Italian Campaign from 1943 to 1945, during the Second World War.

Top right: The 1939-1945 Star is a military campaign medal instituted by the United Kingdom on 8 July 1943 for award to British and Commonwealth forces for service in the Second World War.

Middle left: The New Zealand War Service Medal (NZWSM) was a New Zealand campaign medal for service in World War II.

Middle right: The War Medal 1939-1945 is a campaign medal which was instituted by the United Kingdom on 16 August 1945, for award to citizens of the British Commonwealth who had served full-time in the Armed Forces or the Merchant Navy for at least 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.

Bottom: The New Zealand Memorial Cross is awarded to the next of kin of New Zealand service personnel who, since September 1939, have been killed on active service or later died of their wounds.

B.B.
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
"RAILHEAD."
POSTAL ADDRESS:
"PRIVATE BAG, WELLINGTON C. 1."



HEAD OFFICE,
WELLINGTON.

R:-501/78/7327.

Mrs. B.M. Davies,
171 Matsons Road,
PAPANUI.

28th January, 1944.

Dear Madam,

I am in receipt of your letter of 15th January, 1943, and wish to take this opportunity of extending to you the sincere sympathy of the Department in the sad and irreparable loss sustained by you in the death of your son while on active service overseas.

I may say that I have received, from the Registrar-General a death certificate which discloses that your son was killed in action on 15th December, 1943.

His estate is due a refund of the value of leave which accumulated while he was serving in the armed forces at the rate of two weeks for each year of service. In addition there is an amount of £28. 1. 0d standing to the credit of the estate in the Government Railways Superannuation Fund.

In order to enable action to be taken in connection with the disposal of these monies arrangements are being made for a representative of the Works Manager at Addington to call on you with a view to securing the necessary information to enable this to be done.

Yours faithfully,

E. B. B. B.
GENERAL MANAGER.

Form B.R.-1.]

JLG/CDW

New Zealand Military Forces,

Base Records,

P.O. Box 3044,

WELLINGTON.

IN YOUR REPLY

451522

please quote this number.

Mrs. B. M. Davies,
171 Matson's Road,
Papanui,
CHRISTCHURCH.

9th April, 1946

Dear Mrs. Davies,

In reply to your letter of 18th March, I have to inform you that your son, the late Pte. Alan Charles Davies, entered camp on 15-7-40.

For your information, the dates of his Army service, which was not continuous, were as follow:-

New Zealand: 15 - 7 - 40 to 5 - 10 - 40
10 - 4 - 41 to 19 - 4 - 41
29 - 9 - 41 to 20 - 7 - 43

Overseas: 21 - 7 - 43 to 15 - 12 - 43
(killed in action).

Yours faithfully,

J. R. McByde
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.

NEW ZEALAND POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS

TELEGRAM

O.T. 5pm. Urgent readdressed

Papanui 53/3/2

Mrs B. M. Davies

Stafford

(Office Stamp.)



Received at

5.35pm

Initials of Operator

M.H.

Deeply regret to inform you that your son 451522 Private Alan Charles Davies has been reported killed in action 15th Dec. The Prime Minister desires me to convey to you on behalf of the Government deepest sympathy in your loss

F. Jones

Minister of Defence

Tel. 14 5,000 pda/2/27-14000

Note—This form must accompany any inquiry made respecting this telegram.

Campaign Stars, Clasps and Medals instituted in recognition of service in the war of 1939-45

Order of Wearing	Description of Ribbon	Clasp or Emblem (if awarded)
1 1939-45 Star	Dark blue, red, and light blue in three equal vertical stripes. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder	Battle of Britain
2 Atlantic Star	Blue, white, and sea green shaded and watered. This ribbon is worn with the blue edge furthest from the left shoulder	Air Crew Europe or France and Germany
3 Air Crew Europe Star	Light blue with black edges and in addition a narrow yellow stripe on either side	Atlantic or France and Germany
4 Africa Star	Pale buff, with a central vertical red stripe and two narrower stripes, one dark blue, and the other light blue. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder	8th Army or 1st Army or North Africa 1942-43
5 Pacific Star	Dark green with red edges, a central yellow stripe, and two narrow stripes, one dark blue and the other light blue. This ribbon is worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder	Burma
6 Burma Star	Dark blue with a central red stripe and in addition two orange stripes	Pacific
7 Italy Star	Five vertical stripes of equal width, one in red at either edge and one in green at the centre, the two intervening stripes being in white	
8 France and Germany Star	Five vertical stripes of equal width, one in blue at either edge and one in red at the centre, the two intervening stripes being in white	Atlantic
9 Defence Medal	Flame coloured with green edges, upon each of which is a narrow black stripe	Silver Laurel leaves (King's Commendation for brave conduct. Civil)
10 War Medal 1939-45	A narrow central red stripe with a narrow white stripe on either side. A broad red stripe at either edge, and two intervening stripes in blue	Oak leaf
11 N.Z. War Service Medal	Black, watered, and edged with white stripes	



451522

Reg. No. 24/48 Name: A.C. DAVIES Regt.: 1ST. CHNT

Date of birth: 1/7/42 Place: NZ DESCRIPTION OF SOLDIER ON ENLISTMENT.

Religion: R.C. Age: _____ Height: _____

Single, married, or widower: SINGLE Complexion: _____ Eyes: _____

Occupation: COPPERSMITHS, APPRENTICE Hair: _____ Trade or occupation: _____

Place of enlistment: CH. CH. MEDALS AND DECORATIONS.

Last employer: NZ R

Last New Zealand address: 171 MATSONS RD. PAPAHU

Particulars previous military service: NONE

RECORD OF PROMOTIONS, REDUCTIONS, TRANSFERS, CASUALTIES, PUNISHMENTS, ETC., during service (as reported through routine orders or other official documents).

No. Home Unit	Place	Seniority, and Date of	Rank
No Home Unit	Place	Seniority, and Date of	Rank
1st Home Unit	Ch. Ch.	5.8.40	Private
1st Home Unit	"	7.8.40	Private
1st Home Unit	"	12.8.40	Private
1st Home Unit	"	13.8.40	Private
1st Home Unit	Addington	29.9.41	Private
1st Home Unit	Bham	28.12.41	Private
1st Home Unit	Bham	15.12.41	Private
1st Home Unit	"	15.12.41	Private
1st Home Unit	"	2.9.42	Private
1st Home Unit	"	17.12.42	Private
1st Home Unit	"	2.5.43	Private
1st Home Unit	"	2.6.43	Private
1st Home Unit	"	2.6.43	Private
1st Home Unit	Bham	27.6.43	Private
1st Home Unit	"	21.7.43	Private
1st Home Unit	Bham	20.7.43	Private
1st Home Unit	"	18.8.43	Private
1st Home Unit	"	26.9.43	Private
1st Home Unit	Ch. Ch.	5.10.40	Private
1st Home Unit	Addington	24.10.41	Private
1st Home Unit	"	24.10.41	Private
1st Home Unit	"	27.10.41	Private

Particulars of Will:

Executor—Name: Bridget Mary Davies Will already made and in possession of: B/R.

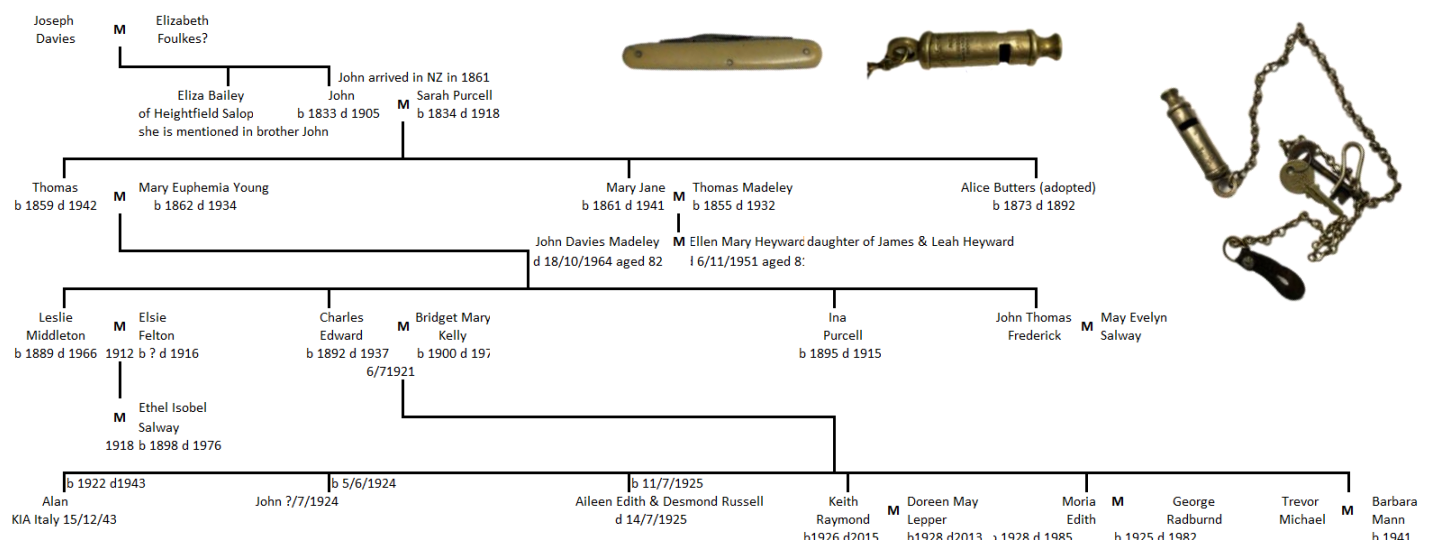
Address: 171 Matsons Rd. Papahu, Ch. Ch. Address:



Ghazra pyramids & Nile River
Received Dec 10th 1943

Alan

Elaine





NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

Letter No. 1/

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

August 20th 1913.

451522.

Pte. A. C. Davies

31st Battalion.9th Inf. Brigade2nd N. L. B. F.

M. E. F.

My Dearest Mother, Keith, Moira, Trevor.

Well here I am in the land of
Wog & Lypos, Egypt, our camp is not far from
Cairo, and we can see the River Nile &
also a few pyramids.

We have been rather fortunate as we
arrived here just in time for the cool
season, it has been hot here for the
last few days, but we will get used to
it in time.

I have seen one chap I know, he used
to play in the old pipe band, he has been
here for 2 1/2 yrs, I have not seen Alec yet
but I suppose I will strike him one of these
days.

We have not had any leave yet, but we
are getting some soon, we passed through
Cairo, and it seems a nice place, what
we have seen of it anyway.

The Wog's dress in dresses which were
white (years ago,) tattered & torn, the Wog
himself looks as though he has not seen
a cake of soap for years.

They have a gang of them working here
making concrete, and they are very comical
in the way they go about things, the
way the mix concrete, is to have one on
the shovel and a piece of rope tied to it
and 4 or 5 more pulling the shovel through
the cement, their boss who is known as the
Pice stands over them with a whip, if
one decides on having a spell he gets
a cut across the pants very smartly.

They sing while they work the same
old words all the time, what they are
singing I don't know, but they get on
your nerves.

We get payed once a week we cannot
draw more than a £1 a week in Egyptian
currency if a £1 is a 100 Piastres or Achers
~~we~~ we need not draw any at all if don't
need, I have still got £8-10 of my own
yet, so I am not doing bad so far, well
that is all till I get some leave, and I will
have some more to write about.



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

2/

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Well here I am again, I had my leave
yesterday, and quite enjoyed it by looking
around the bazars, and pyramids, & tombs.
The bazars are real good, where fine
oriental things are made, and anything
from a needle to an anchor can be
bought.

The Tombs of Mamelukes are about
1 mile from Cairo, and although practically
in ruins, and there are still some very fine
minarets.

The Tombs of Khalifs, these can be
reached quite nicely by riding donkeys
these fine buildings contain the tombs
of of the families of the Circassian
Mameluke Sultan, who ruled over
Egypt from A. D. 1382. 1517.

Off amongst other tomb mosques there
is that of Barkuk, where this Sultan,
his son, and various other relations are
buried, there are some very fine specimens
of stonework in this tomb.

The Virgin's Tree, and it situated at
Matarik, about 5 miles from Cairo.
The tree is a sycamore, and the Holy



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

4

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Family is said to have rested there.

The Mosque of Mohamed Ali inside
the Citadel is built of Alabaster, and
has a very beautiful effect. It has lofty
and elegant minarets, and is visible
from many points around Cairo.

I had two teeth filled and my wisdom
tooth taken out before, and they are O.K.

My eyes have been very sore lately
and have been going to the Doc. but
they're not much better.

Well that skins so I will close
with heaps of love to all.

I remain your affectionate
son

Alan.

XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

Dear Mum

Sending some material
that might come in handy, received
mail, day of going into action.

Still well & safe. Had a bit of
fun with the Hun, took 4 prisoners.

Love to all from
your aff. son
Alan.

Answer mail
when get a spell.

X X X X X X X

Received Jan. 1944

L18783
2/KS FF MASS 54

28 Dec/43

B Coy

21 Bn

2 NZEF

MEP

Dear Mrs. Davies,

I wish to express my
most sincere sympathy, and of 10 Platoon
to you and your family in the great
loss of your son Alan.

He was greatly liked and held
in good esteem by all of us who lived
& worked with him and our sorrows was
terrible. I can guess how much will be
yours who is his mother. He was a
grand fellow, always cheery and willing
to help others - he was a good soldier
and his loss is greatly mourned by us.

However, you may find some
solace in knowing that his death was
instantaneous and that he did not
suffer the agonies of pain. It was
during an attack on the 16th Dec & he
was killed by a shell blast.

He had a Catholic service and is
buried temporarily by our RAP but
later he will be removed to an Army
Cemetery.

If there is anything which is
humanly possible for me to do for you
please let me know. I was proud to
have him in my platoon and was very
upset at his loss for he was the first
but unfortunately not the last. There is
a wee bit of comfort I think in knowing
that he will not have to face the hell
of future battles but I know you'll say
"Why was it Alan?" Perhaps it was
God's will and in any case he is in
His care now and far from the troubles
& trials of this world.

Again I express my deepest sympathy
Yours sincerely
Frank Massey

NEW ZEALANDERS IN ITALY



N.Z.E.F. PERSONNEL IN ITALY—Top: Troops wait for their trucks to move off near the forward areas of the Italian battle line. Included in the group is J. S. Johns (Christchurch). Bottom: The Kiwi's good luck charm is well to the fore on this truck that has crossed the Sangro River. On the sides of the truck are: C. H. Lawrence and F. Ross.

The War Day by Day

Eighth Army's Dogged Advance In Mud

Into Action

A CANADIAN artillery officer went out with an infantry patrol behind San Leonardo to seek a forward observation post for the guns battering the approaches to Ortona, write the former New Zealand Journalist, Douglas Brass, from Italy on December 12. The patrol was dispersed when enemy tanks and infantry approached.

"You'd better come back if you want to get out alive," the patrol leader told the gunner.

"I'm staying here. See you later," was the reply.

The gunner took up his position in the upstairs of a semi-ruined house on a rise and got his signaller working to the battery. The Germans soon surrounded the house, bringing up equipment for an attack on our Moro bridgehead.

The gunner, peering from the window, watched the enemy, signalled his own map spot to the guns and gave the firing orders. The first shells fell rather wide.

The gunner signalled through corrections. The guns swiftly adjusted their fire to murderous accuracy.

Then the gunner called for a concentrated shoot. It was an artilleryman's dream—the target asking for it and providing full reports.

Suddenly the reports ceased. The officer and his two assistants—his understudy and the signaller—were gravely wounded, but not before the Germans in the vicinity of the house had suffered heavily, being forced to retire with whatever equipment they could save.

Some days previously three German gunners were captured doing a similar suicide job from a church steeple, but the German target was some distance from the church.

Grim Work

Eighth Army gunners to-day are pounding German positions in front of Ortona, in the same non-stop way as they pounded the Germans after the Sangro assault.

It is often fire directed to break up enemy counter-attack or support our tanks and infantry, which are thrusting every time they see a chance. More often it is counter-battery work described in the expressive artillery term "harassing fire." Whatever the fire it is, it doesn't cease. It burns constantly all along the front, so monotonously that the ear tends to exclude its heavy sound.

The gunners are toiling in the gunpits, whose surface approaches are glistening with clay and mud. Their supplies come up along tracks so soft that mules are often used instead of trucks.

Around the guns there is no comfort, no respite. The ground is muddy and

boggy. There is an all-pervading dampness. The trodden ground squelches and stinks. Men look like pigs, yet the gunfire rolls over with few interruptions.

The gunners remember there is mud at the other end, too.

"Just Like Flanders"

Montgomery is still making the utmost use of artillery. The guns have played a big part in every local engagement on this northern side of the Sangro. Right up to San Vito there is hardly an acre of ground unblasted by shells, hardly a house unsmashed.

The gaunt winter trees have been split and uprooted, rain-filled craters are thickly spread and the towns have an "Ypres" appearance, which provoked a tank corporal to remark, "Just like Flanders pictures in the last war."

However, bomb-wrecked towns and strongpoints on other and earlier fronts never looked the same somehow as these recent gun targets across the Sangro.

The Germans are also using artillery. They have more guns facing the 8th Army than they have ever previously used against Montgomery's troops on a comparatively narrow front.

An infantryman told me how he found, on entering one of these Adriatic coast villages, three Italians living in the only remaining room of their house whence they had not budged during a week-long bombardment. All the other villagers had fled. The youngest of these three was 98. "They weren't what you'd call 'shell happy'," said the soldier. "They did not seem to understand what it was all about."

"There were two old women, and a man who talked American English. He asked me for food. When I left I said 'Good-bye, Ancient.'"

"Don't call me Ancient. Ninety-six ain't so old round here," he retorted.

Tank Battles

You get some idea what the Sangro battlefield is like from the case of a Manchester corporal, Frank Lea, who was decorated early in the Sicily campaign for his share in the capture of an Italian general.

Lea's head was protruding from a tank moving through a recently-captured village when a sniper in a house opened up against him, and chipped the tank turret six inches from his rear. A Tommy-gunner riding on the back of the tank quickly returned the fire and "chopped the sniper's blinking head right off."

Lea's tank battalion two days later came up in support of the forward infantry at the Moro bridgehead and got into position just in time to meet a German counter-attack. The Germans sent in seven Mark IV Specials,



An 8th Army tank goes into action on an Italian road.

each mounting a terrific gun. They got out with two. The English and German tanks were engaging each other across 150 yards of shell-torn olive orchard.

We took Lea back to his formation in our jeep today. While sheltering from shelling two days ago he tripped on a wire and set off a mine. They found him five hours later stunned and unable to see, but otherwise unhurt. He was impatient today to return to his tank.

Bitter Opposition

There has been no abatement in the fury of the fighting on the 8th Army's front. German counterattacks in strength occur daily. Local advances are often nullified or reduced in value, the Germans showing no inclination to pull back anywhere without exacting a heavy price.

Men who have caught up with this protracted battle are therefore sometimes puzzled, if not indignant, when they hear facile broadcasts about the 8th Army sweeping on, surging on, cracking on to Pescara.

They feel these smooth reports are not related to facts.

The 8th is certainly moving on, but gradually, doggedly, in face of brave and bitter opposition. Sweeping on is no terms for these torn battlefields where trucks sink axle-deep and little graveyards crop up overnight.

25 YEARS AGO, January 21, 1919

At the opening of the Peace Conference President Wilson said that the conference must be regarded as the supreme crowning of diplomatic history. Mr. Clemenceau said that the ambitions of those assembled were great. They wished to avoid a repetition of the world catastrophe. The question of the League of Nations would head the agenda at the next meeting.

