

**William Alexander Brown (#22184), Date of Birth 14.07.1883, enlisted on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1916 (age 32)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Otago Infantry Regiment, 14<sup>th</sup> Company.**



STATEMENT of the SERVICES of		Brown		William Alexander		No. 22184	
		(Surname.)		(Christian Name.)			
Regiment or Corps.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rank.	Date.	Authority for Entry.			
18 <sup>th</sup> R.C.O's	Posted to	Spl	4.5.16	H.O. 570			
14 <sup>th</sup> Coy 18	" " "	"	7.6.16	" 537			
"	Promoted to	Serq	9.7.16	" 570			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Otago Coy.	Marched into Sling	Serq	29.12.16	Dom Roll (R9 R16) BR27/10			
" " "	To be Temp Corp.	7/cpl	29.12.16	" " " "			
" " "	Proceeding overseas from Sling	Corp.	1.3.17	Dom Roll (1.3.17) BR24/4			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Res Batt (ant Otago Reg)	Granted substantive rank of Cpl.	Cpl.	1.3.17	Pt O 52 Sling 1.3.17.			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Res Otago Reg.	Joined Bn posted to 14 <sup>th</sup> Coy	Cpl.	12.4.17	Pt O 16 Rouen 12.4.17			
" " " "	Reverts to rank as on request	Priv	23.4.17	B213 (P2/19/195)			

**William Alexander Brown** was a commercial traveller, employed by Rattray & Son in Dunedin. His next of kin was his mother Mrs John Brown of 363 Cargill Road, Dunedin.<sup>(9)</sup> He enlisted in Gore and joined the **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Otago Infantry Regiment, 14<sup>th</sup> Company**, as a Corporal. He was just about to turn 33. On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1916 he was promoted to Sergeant and left Wellington with the 18<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1916. He was killed one year later on **12<sup>th</sup> October 1917**.

From Plymouth England, the 18<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements marched to Sling Camp on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1916. Sling Camp was near Bulford and served as a training camp for New Zealand troops. Upon reaching Sling Camp **William Brown** became a temporary corporal, presumably at his own request. When he proceeded overseas from Sling Camp on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1917 he was granted the rank of Corporal. On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1917 he joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Otago Regiment and was posted to **14<sup>th</sup> Company**. This was recorded at Rouen in France.



Memorial Death Plaque WW1 (Death Penny)



British War Medal



Victory Medal



## The Mines of Messines (7<sup>th</sup> June 1917-14<sup>th</sup> June 1917)

The Battle of Messines was characterised by careful planning and preparation; there was precise definition of tasks and detailed briefing at all levels. This resulted in confident troops inspired with spirit. It took teams 6 months to dig 21 tunnels from the British trenches up to the German lines. They then filled them with explosives. The NZ Division were constructing trenches in a sector near Wulvergem, about 3Ks from the Messines Ridge and on 16<sup>th</sup> April, the regiment marched 50 miles back from the line to the Quelmes area, in France. This took **NZ Troops in training** them three days. **William Brown's** brigade, marched from Etaples on the coast to Quelmes and joined the NZ Division. He was posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Otago, 14<sup>th</sup> Company when they arrived from the front line on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1917. The whole of the NZ Division did some intensive training in the back line aided by an exact model of the German defences over the Messines Ridge. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1917, **William Brown** at his own request reverts to the rank of Private. On May 1<sup>st</sup> the Division returned to the front line and lost no time in resuming the trench construction.



On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1917, the mines went off. The explosion was so huge it was heard in London. The New Zealander's objective was to take the town of Messines. There is a monument to the New Zealand Division on the outskirts of Messines, on the ridge which the New Zealand troops gained on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> June. Once this was taken they then marched into Messines and captured the town. Messines remembers and has erected a statue of a New Zealand soldier. In 2018 we had coffee at one of the cafes and were honoured to be shown a whole room at the back of the café dedicated to the New Zealand soldiers. The Deputy Mayor had posted photos of every New Zealand troop who was killed in the Battle of Messines and talked in awe of the New Zealand Division.

The post-Messines period was costly to the NZ Division. Although there were only a series of minor operations rather than a full-scale battle, the division had 3843 total casualties in the month of August alone. At the end of August, the NZ Division proceeded by train to the Second Army reserve at Lumbres west of St Omar (France) for a period of rest and some training.

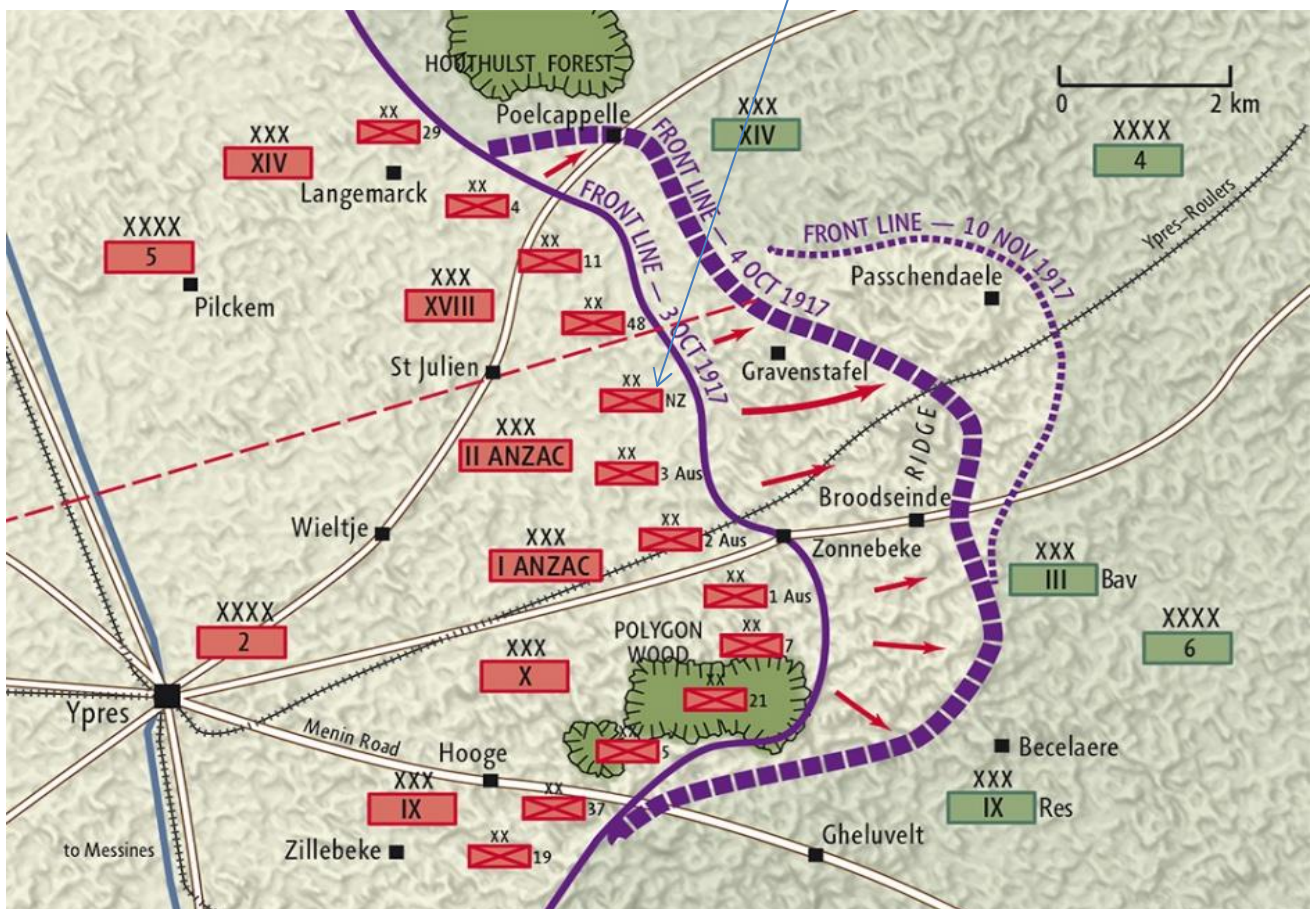
### Third Battle of Ypres or Battle of Passchendaele

On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1917, the Division moved back to the front to hold the Saint Jean sector, a mile north east of Ypres and on September 29<sup>th</sup> the Otago frontage extended from the Wieltje Road on the left to Pommern Castle trenches on the right. The line reached had been wrested from the enemy only a few days previously and the area presented every phase of the devastation caused by concentrated shell fire maintained over a period of several weeks. The whole sector was in a badly damaged and waterlogged condition and the entire area and its approaches bore remarkable and gruesome evidence of the havoc created by the violence of modern warfare. The line headed north-west and south-east and was approx. 1,000 yards west of Gravenstafel. In August the area received the worse rainfall in years and this bad weather made the conditions abysmal.

From 30<sup>th</sup> September to 5<sup>th</sup> October, there was fierce artillery combat, with both German and British aeroplanes hovering over the lines. The New Zealand Brigades were relieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, marching back to the old British front line by way of the Wieltje Road and then in turn regularly relieved other Battalions until the area of around and south of Gravenstafel was captured and consolidated.

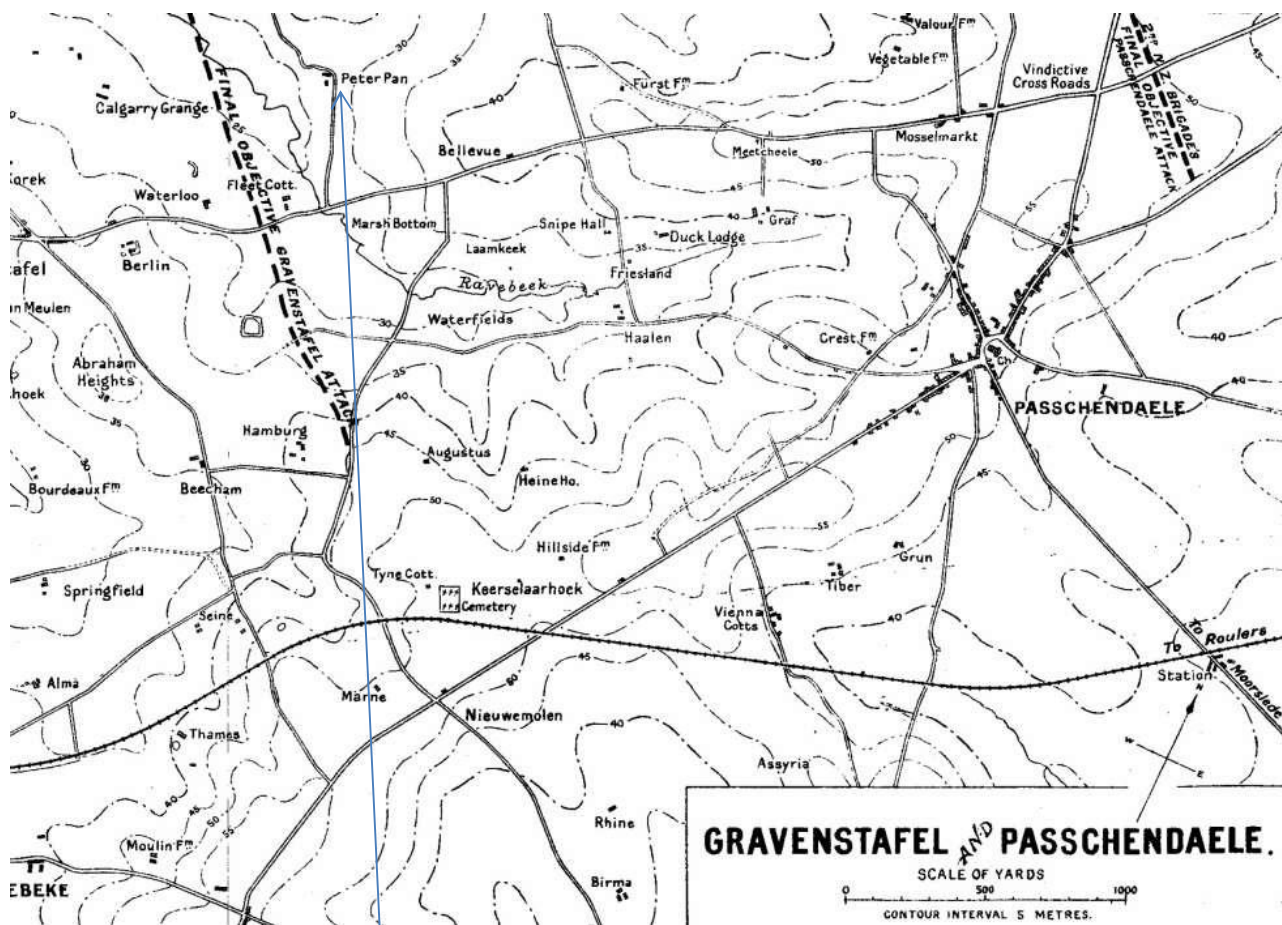
The Battle of Broodseinde was on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917. The Australians were sent up the Broodseinde Ridge and the New Zealand objective was Gravenstafel Spur, the first of 2 small rises leading to the **Passchendaele Ridge**. The attack was successful but cost the New Zealand division 1700 casualties and more than 450 lives.

Sergeant Dave Gallaher, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Auckland, captain of the All Black Originals from 1905 to 1906 was mortally wounded during the attack at Gravenstafel Spur on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917 and died a few hours later and is buried at Nine Elms Cemetery, Poperinge.





The success of 4-5<sup>th</sup> October led to a fatal miscalculation by the British high command. Mistakenly concluding that the enemy resistance was faltering and unaware the Germans had little in the way of prepared positions behind Passchendaele, Field Marshall Haig now wanted to deliver the 'knockout blow' and ordered his cavalry<sup>(5)</sup> to move up ready. On 9<sup>th</sup> October in rapidly deteriorating conditions the



attacking forces in front of the ANZACS struggled to get into position. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was in readiness near 'Peter Pan'. Artillery preparations were hindered by problems in getting guns forward. The gunners failed to open the way, especially by cutting the enemy barbed wire. The attack collapsed with heavy casualties.

On the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> October the 2nd Battalion (Including Otago 2<sup>nd</sup>) proceeded to take over the line from the Ravebeek River to Peter Pan. The whole countryside, under the continuous rain and heavy shelling, was rapidly approaching the state of a deep morass through which the relieving troops blindly floundered in the darkness of night. There was overwhelming and gruesome evidence of the disastrous results of the British attack launched on the 9th. To say nothing of the dead, scores of men, wounded and near to death, still lay out over the country, unattended and without protection from the weather. At Waterloo Farm the congestion was such that many of the wounded were still lying above ground and in the open, and frequently enemy shells burst among or near them and put an end to their miseries. There were probably 200 stretcher cases lying over the area, and it was doubtful if any of them had been fed until our troops provided them with rations on the morning of the 11th. The urgent necessity of clearing these wounded and the large number of stretcher cases at Waterloo Farm, and elsewhere, was pointed out to Brigade by Lieut.-Colonel Smith (Commanding the 2nd Battalion of Otago), in view of possible congestion on the 12th, and at the same time it was strongly advised that a large number of stretcher relays be held in readiness in connection with our own impending attack. This, serious enough in itself, reveals only one phase of the situation.

The enemy defences along the slopes and high ground of Bellevue Spur, which struck westward from the main Passchendaele Ridge, had not suffered materially from the attack delivered on October 9th. Rather the enemy strengthened in his belief as to their impregnability. The seriousness of the position which confronted Otago on taking over the line overlooked by Bellevue Spur was disclosed, or rather confirmed, by an exhaustive reconnaissance made during the night of the 10th and the early morning of

the 11<sup>th</sup>. No Man's Land was a mass of shell-holes three parts filled with water, and scattered among them were broken wire entanglements. Overlooking this waste, and commanding approximately 1,000 yards of the valley and the country as far back almost as Korek, were many concrete "pill-boxes," or block-houses, hemmed in by wire. At least six of these were discovered along the front of the Battalion sector, four in front of 8th Company, and two in front of **14th Company** (In front of Pte **William Brown**). The enemy, who overlooked our lines from a gradually sloping spur, was distant only 100 to 150 yards from our forward posts, and the volume of machine gun and rifle fire at night would indicate that his positions were strongly held. The block-houses which the reconnaissance disclosed were still intact; the belts of wire which surrounded them still uncut. A request was made that the fire of our heavy artillery should at once be brought to bear on them. Nothing followed; and so a further urgent request was made in the afternoon of the 11th. After a lengthy period of time the heavy artillery opened out on the Bellevue Spur, but only briefly, and the damage





done was negligible. At intervals throughout the day small parties of the enemy could be seen moving about in the village of Passchendaele, all dressed in fighting order. Under the Red Cross flag German wounded were being carried from "pill-boxes" opposite our front, there being six men to each stretcher. At 4 p.m. a further report had been forwarded from the 2nd Battalion to Brigade Headquarters in reference to the condition of the Ravebeek, No Man's Land, and the enemy's wire and block-houses.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of Otago comprised the leading wave across the Brigade frontage of approximately 750 yards and during the day and evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> October, the **14<sup>th</sup> Company** was on the left of the Battalion ending up in the Battalion reserve behind 4<sup>th</sup> Otago, right, 8<sup>th</sup> Coy, centre and 10<sup>th</sup> Coy, on the left. Throughout the night the enemy frequently shelled the Division on our right, using many gas-shells.



▼ Medics struggle through knee-deep mud with a wounded soldier on a stretcher.

## STUCK IN THE MUD

August 1917 was the wettest August in Belgium for many years. The whole area turned into a muddy swamp. Tanks got stuck in the mud and soldiers could not walk through it. Troops laid wooden walkways, called duckboards, across the mud. Men that fell off could drown in the flooded craters.

## OUTCOME

The battle ended when Canadian forces captured Passchendaele on 6 November. The Battle of Passchendaele gained the Allies just 8 km of land, but there were about a quarter of a million casualties on both sides.

▼ Canadian soldiers carry wooden duckboards across the muddy landscape of Passchendaele.



## New Zealand's Blackest Day- 12<sup>th</sup> October 1917

Zero hour on 12 October was 5:25am. There was very little preparation. Batteries were not completely in position; those that got forward were set up in mud; ammunition remained limited.<sup>(6)</sup> No systematic bombardment of the barbed wire or the pillboxes had been undertaken. Nor were the gunners able to deliver an effective creeping barrage.<sup>(7)</sup> Opening with an impressive roar, this soon became ragged or petered out. Worse, many of the shells at first fell among the waiting infantry.

After enduring a searing few minutes of shelling from their own side, the infantrymen moved off in drizzle that soon turned to driving rain. On the right of the attack, 2nd Brigade rapidly came up against barbed wire that sloped obliquely across the New Zealand front. The greater proportion of officers and men comprising the leading waves were shot down almost as they left their trenches. On the left **14<sup>th</sup> Company** made practically no headway. A few determined individuals got through the barrier, but they were quickly killed. Most of the rest were forced to take cover in shell holes.

Orders came for another push at 3pm, but this was mercifully cancelled at the last moment and the troops eventually fell back to positions close to their start line, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of Otago holding a line at least 150yards in rear of the enemy's wire and extending from the Gravenstafel Road to Peter Pan on the left. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion from the Gravenstafel Road to the Ravebeek, on the right. After the reorganisation only 170 men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion could be accounted for. For badly wounded soldiers lying in the mud, the aftermath of the battle was a private hell; many died before they could be rescued. Extensive efforts were made to get them out in the next two days, assisted by an informal truce that developed as Germans refrained from firing on stretcher parties.

The toll was horrendous. There were about 2700 New Zealand casualties. They included about 950 men who were either dead or mortally wounded; 843 men are officially listed as dying on 12 October, and the rest succumbed to their wounds in field ambulances and hospitals behind the lines in Belgium, France and the UK, some many weeks later. While some of the 843 killed in action may have died on 13 or 14 October — it was impossible to know exactly when wounded men lying between the lines may have died — 12 October is undoubtedly, in terms of lives lost in a single day, the blackest day in New Zealand's post-1840 existence.

Oral testimony Sydney George Standford<sup>(8)</sup>

*"An ordinary infantryman at Passchendaele was a pretty dumb beast. That's how he's treated you see. He was only gun fodder and when all is said ... that's what I feel. We were pretty dumb beasts you see, or we wouldn't have been thrown into that sort of warfare, because it was hopeless before you started. We all knew that. We all felt it couldn't succeed .. But you go on, you know, if you could, and if it was possible to get through the wire, they would have got through the wire all right. Fellas did try to get through, crawled under it and did all sorts of things to get through, but you'd get shot as soon as you stopped"*







New Zealand Memorial at Gravenstafel



This marks the Passchendaele start line for the battle on 12th October 1917



Bellevue Spur (left) Passchendaele on the skyline (right)

**Tyne Cot Memorial  
NZ Apse, Panel 3**



William Alexander Brown 22184

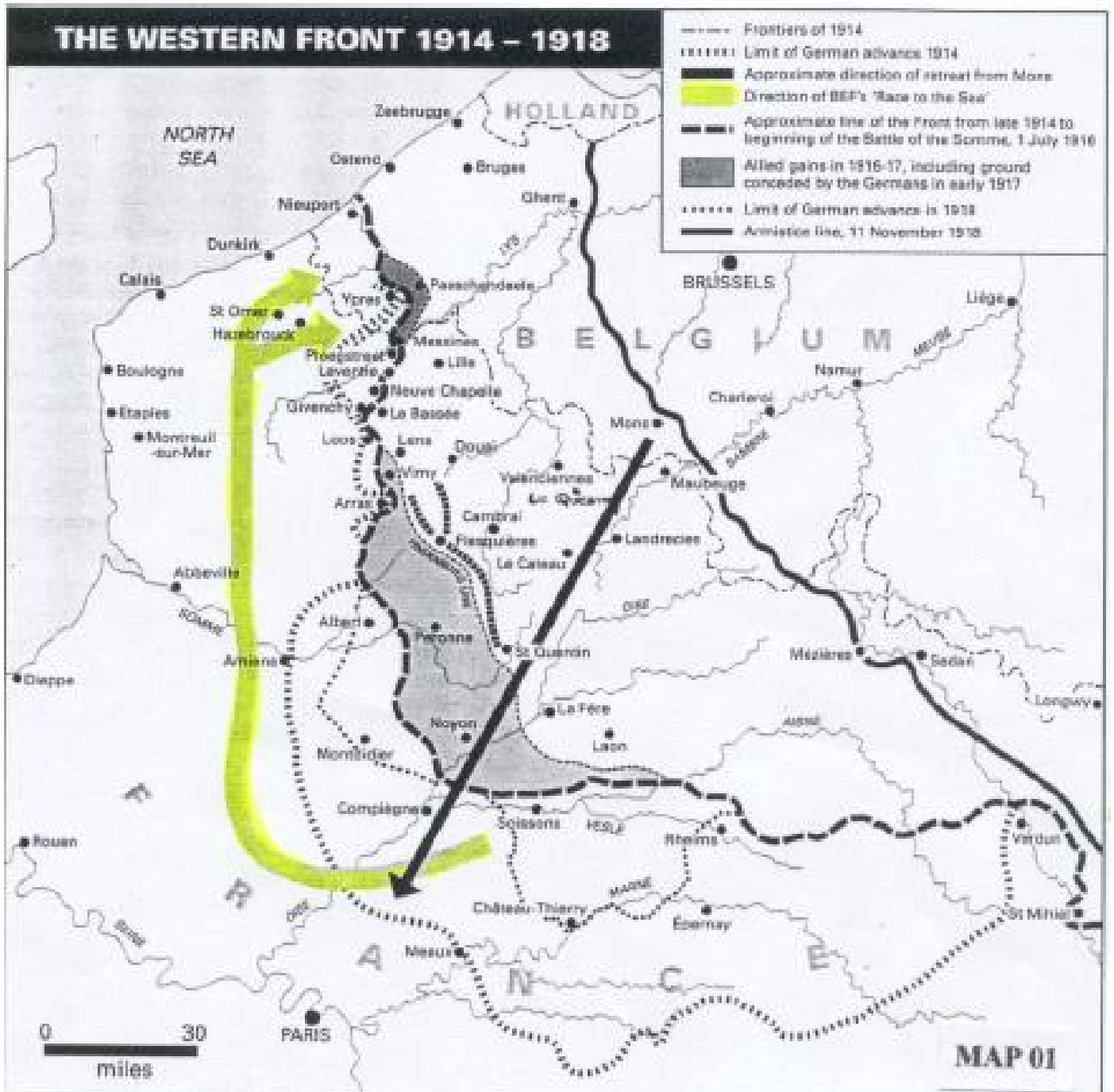




SOUTHERN CEMETERY DUNEDIN,  
PLOT 133/16

... and Corporal William Alexander, second son of the above who was killed in action whilst helping his comrade ....





“He was no hero, my great-uncle. But I admire his courage. He kept going amid the slaughter and the mud. Other armies mutinied or fell apart ... At Passchendaele, **William Alexander Brown** and his fellows did the hard yards, yard by sodden yard. That’s courage of a kind. It’s something to hold onto 100 years later”.

The tragedy of it all (WW1) is summed up in this map. For the British Empire forces involved, it started near the town of Mons in Belgium in August 1914 – where it also finished in November 1918. The first and last British casualties – of 22 August 1914 and 11 November 1918 respectively – lie a few paces apart there, in the same St Symphorian Military Cemetery.

*“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.”*

		Agnes (1885) Frederick (1886) Charles (1888)	David DAVIDSON NEXT OF KIN: 11 Archer St Timaru (A) NEXT OF KIN: 23 Edward St Timaru (M) DOB: 01.10.1856 Died: 15.05.1928
		Dad's Father Edward DAVIDSON DOB: 21.12.1889, Died 29.12.1960	Married
	Ivy RUSSELL	<b>Arthur DAVIDSON</b> DOB: 24.07.1893 KIA: 26.09.1916	Ann DORWARD DOB: 27.08.1861 Died: 28.04.1948
	Arthur Edward DAVIDSON DOB: 21.08.1921 Died: 21.06.1981	<b>Mark DAVIDSON</b> DOB: 10.11.1895 KIA: 08.10.1918	
Brian John DAVIDSON, DOB: 02.12.1949	Dorothy McMILLAN	Henry (1897) Georgina (1901)	
	Gwen SMITH		
Cheryl Joy HANSEN, DOB: 05.01.1953			
		Jane Laurie Hastie (1872) Robert John (1874) Eliza Finnie (1875) Janet Louisa Fulton (1877)	
Richard Warren DAVIDSON, DOB: 05.01.1964	Alexander Raymond BROWN Uncle Ray	Agnes Kate BROWN, 363 Cargill Road, Dunedin, DOB: 21.12.1879, Died:02.02.1948	
	Ella Elizabeth DAVIDSON DOB: 26.12.1919 Died: 25.03.1887	Julia Chalmers (1882)	
	William Alexander BROWN Uncle Bill DOB: 26.02.1918	<b>William Alexander BROWN</b> DOB: 10.07.1883 KIA: 12.10.1917	John BROWN DOB: 31.12.1839, Died: 25.12.1888
	John Renfrew BROWN Uncle John	Mum's Father Alexander James BROWN DOB: 13.09.1884, Died: 24.10.1937	Married
		John Renfrew (1886)	Catherine Meek HASTIE NEXT OF KIN: 363 Cargill Road Dunedin DOB: 24.11.1847 Died 26.01.1931



## NOTES

(1) We first thought George Herbert Hansen, Gray's grandfather, was recommended to receive the Military Medal because of acts of gallantry in the field on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1917 at Passchendaele but, following research and contacting various authorities, we have since found that it was on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1918, during the Battle of Bapaume. George Hansen was a driver for the Divisional Ammunition Column and attached to the Light Trench Mortar Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. Mark Davidson was in the Canterbury 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion which was positioned east of the Bapaume-Beugnâtre road, on the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> August and in the afternoon it was sent back into bivouacs in and round Biefvillers and engaged on digging trenches for the defence of the village. Meanwhile on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1918, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades had crossed the Bapaume-Beugnâtre road, but had made little progress in front of St. Aubin and beyond Avesnes. The 1st Battalion remained in the line till the following night (27th/28th).

(2) Conscription in New Zealand was effective because the New Zealand Division had a constant 20,000 troops throughout the war, consisting of both experienced and fresh soldiers. Australia did not have conscription during WW1. Australian enlistments totalled 416,809 and less than 10% of enlistments were in the years 1917 and 1918. Canada did have conscription but apparently it was ineffective.

### (3) Life in the Trenches

While the drama of combat – going over the top, facing machine-gun fire and enduring terrifying artillery barrages – naturally dominates historical accounts of the Western Front, in reality, large-scale battles were rare. Most of a soldier's time in the trenches involved tedious scheduled rotations through various trench lines and rear area billets.

The troops spent only a few days a month in a front-line trench. Daily life here was a mixture of routine and boredom – sentry duty, kit and rifle inspections, and work assignments filling sandbags, repairing trenches, pumping out flooded sections, and digging latrines. Any free time was usually spent reading or writing letters or diaries, playing cards or trying to snatch a few moments of sleep. Still, life in the front line was always dangerous. Snipers' bullets and stray shell-bursts were constant hazards. The enemy also day and night engaged in harassing barrages of shell fire (as we did) hoping to hit our lines. Periodically, the trenches were subjected to heavy artillery bombardments in support of raids and patrols, or against groups of troops moving up to the line.

#### **Surviving in mud**

Apart from the Germans, the New Zealanders' biggest enemy on the Western Front was the mud. Indeed, the flooded trenches and churned landscape of the battlefields are among the most potent symbols of the First World War. This was particularly evident at Passchendaele, which was notoriously sodden due to the wet weather and the high water-table of this low-lying area, much of which was reclaimed marshland. Conditions were made much worse by the shelling, which had disrupted normal drainage.

Finding a dry spot to rest or sleep was often a challenge even though pumps were used to remove water from trenches and dugouts. Many troops succumbed to trench foot, a fungal infection caused by immersion in cold water. Rats and lice were soldiers' constant companions: rats, having gorged on corpses, allegedly grew 'as big as cats'; lice were the (then unknown) vector of another common wartime ailment, trench fever.

#### **The stink of war**

Then there was the smell. Stinking mud mingled with rotting corpses, lingering gas, open latrines, wet clothes and unwashed bodies to produce an overpowering stench. The main latrines were located behind the lines, but front-line soldiers had to dig small waste pits in their own trenches.

#### **Gas attacks**

Soldiers in the front line trenches had to guard against gas attacks. By 1916, both sides were using poison gas and had developed measures to minimise its impact, notably increasingly sophisticated gasmasks. While the sulfide-based blister agent 'mustard gas' – so-called because of its smell – was

only used from late 1917, it became notorious because of the injuries it caused to skin, lungs and eyes. The choking agents chlorine and phosgene were more commonly used gases.

The application of chloride and lime to protect against disease and infection only added to the stink. While the sights, smell and noise of the front line frequently overwhelmed new arrivals, old hands quickly became hardened to the discomforts and dangers of trench life.

### **Night work**

At night, the trenches often became hives of activity. Despite the continued risk of night bombardment or trench raids, the cover of darkness allowed troops to attend to vital supply and maintenance tasks. Rations and water were brought to the front line, and fresh units swapped places with troops returning to the rear for rest and recuperation. Construction parties beavered away repairing trenches and fortifications, laying duckboards and wire and preparing artillery positions.

To help detect enemy activity along the front, both sides established observation ('listening') posts in front of their trenches. Patrols were also sent into no-man's land to help familiarise soldiers with the battlefield terrain, locate enemy listening posts, and identify gaps in the wire defences where German patrols entered no-man's land. An hour before daybreak, everyone would stand to in readiness for action as another day dawned over the bleak battlefield.

- (4) The letter from Arthur Davidson to his brother Henry implies that Henry tried to enlist prior to July 1916. Henry was only 18 then. The Military Service Act was passed on 1 August 1916. This required all men aged between 20 and 45 to register for the conscription ballot. Ballots were held almost every month between November 1916 and October 1918 and resulted in 138,034 men being called up for military service, but only 19,548 ultimately served overseas, some 20% of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Henry was called up to enlist in December 1917 but appealed the decision and was allowed leave until 1 April, 1918. He was called up again on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1918 and trained in camp in New Zealand for several months. He was demobilised on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1918. Frederick was called up for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1918. He was 32, married with one child. He spent time at Featherston Camp before being demobilised on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1918.
- (5) Douglas Haig was a top British military leader during WW1. He was a cavalryman, and he always optimistically anticipated breakthroughs (the decisive offensive), followed by cavalry exploitation, rather than a step by step advance. Haig's major offensives at the Somme in 1916 and at Passchendaele on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 failed. On 9<sup>th</sup> October he again commanded his cavalry to deliver a decisive blow but this also failed, due to the unfavourable conditions on the front. Cavalry could not charge forward and attack in those extreme muddy conditions. Haig has been criticized for his ignorance of conditions at the front. His distant but powerful personality (and the possibility of dismissal) tended to intimidate liaison officers, staff officers, and senior commanders, who often told Haig what he wanted to hear. Additionally, Haig's Staff College training decreed that a commander should set strategy and then step aside and leave tactics to subordinates. Together, these two factors detached Haig from reality at the front and from the tactical side of day-to-day action.
- (6) Each man was wearing a heavy trench coat and had to carry his rifle and bayonet, Mills bombs, smoke grenades, a satchel with clothing, rations and contraband additions – books, diary, letters, photos etc, and tied to their backs - a groundsheet with a cardigan and blanket wrapped up in it - plus a pick or a shovel to dig in. His bayonet, scabbard and his own personal entrenching tool would be attached to his webbing. Plus ammunition, normally 200 rounds if it was available, steel shrapnel helmet, gas helmet, filled waterbottle. At least 65lbs.
- (7) A 'Creeping' Barrage moved slowly forward, throwing up dirt clouds to obscure the infantry who advanced close behind and to break up the German barbed wire. The barrage would reach the enemy lines and suppress as normal (by driving men into bunkers or more distant areas) but the



attacking infantry would be close enough to storm these lines (once the barrage had crept further forward) before the enemy reacted. That was, at least, the theory. It had to be arranged well beforehand because if it did not advance in almost perfect synchronization there were problems. If the soldiers moved too fast they advanced into the shelling and were blown up; too slow and the enemy had time to recover. If the bombardment moved too slow, allied soldiers either advanced into it or had to stop and wait, in the middle of No Man's Land and possibly under enemy fire; if it moved too fast, the enemy again had time to react.



- (8) Private Sydney George Stanford was 15 1/2 when he enlisted and went to France with the 14<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements. He was a stretcher bearer at Passchendaele and was only 17 in October 1917. These are transcripts from his Online Cenotaph:-

*On being a stretcher-bearer at Passchendaele 12–14 October 1917. It rained and rained and bloody rained, and rained and rained, see. Just like here in the autumn time, when it comes to rain and it was cold. And we were picking them up from a gathering point as a regimental aid post. Well there were hundreds of men laying out, around. You couldn't get them inside, it was an old German concrete emplacement and you couldn't get them all inside, but the doctors were working inside.*

*And they were just laying around where they'd been dumped by the stretcher-bearers from off the field and at one period I believe there were 600 stretcher cases laying round the place in the wet and cold, just dying there where they were dumped off. They weren't even laying on stretchers, just laying on the ground with an oil sheet tied over them if anyone thought to do that, or if one of their mates could do it. Just laying there, because the stretchers were used for picking up other men, you see, there couldn't be a stretcher for every stretcher case. We just carried till you couldn't carry any more. You just went until you couldn't walk really, you just went until you couldn't walk.*

*How men died. And poor Jim was laying there cuddled up in a heap as men die. Don't forget we was all young, we didn't die easy. You don't die at once, you're not shot and killed stone dead. You don't die at once. We were all fit and highly trained and of course we didn't die easy, you see. You were slow to die and you'd find them huddled up in a heap like kids gone to sleep, you know, cuddled up dead.*

*Wounded men at Passchendaele. There was one place at Passchendaele ... where we heard a man crying at night out in front and went out and we couldn't find him and we heard him crying part of the next day. Calling, you know, calling, sort of crying, not screaming or anything, crying out. We just knew there was a wounded man lying down under something you see. We never found that man. That's the only thing that's stuck in my memory. The others, I've seen them lay gasping and panting and scratching up the dirt with their fingernails on their face and all crawling around semi-delirious and all sorts of things.*

- (9) Cargill Road changed its name to Hillside Road in the early 1950's. Agnes Brown continued to live at 363 Hillside Road until her death in 1948. My husband's parents lived at 325 Hillside Road when Gray was born in 1956 and he lived there until he was seven.

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Online Cenotaph  
Archives New Zealand  
Gallipoli to the Somme, Reflections of New Zealand Infantryman – Alexander Aitken

## Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month – 100 Years – Armistice Day 2018

