

WILLIAM HAMILTON 1892 to 1965

William (Bill) was the second boy and third child of John Knox and Alice Julia Hamilton. He was born on 1 May 1892 at Wellington.

Bill attended Wellington College where he won medals for Boxing and for Cross Country running.

On leaving school, Bill obtained a farm cadet position and worked on a number of farms around Longbush in the Wairarapa region, north east of Wellington. He did this work until the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914.

On 14 August 1914, Bill enlisted at Longbush which was in the Wellington Military District and he joined the 1st Wellington Infantry Battalion. At the time, he was a shepherd employed by W. H. Booth at Carterton. Booth was well known and respected around Carterton and was a Vice-President of the NZ Sheepbreeders' Association. On 10 August 1914 there had been a mass meeting of farmers and others at Masterton to obtain assistance towards the Expeditionary Force to be sent from New Zealand. This obtained donations and also stimulated men to volunteer for the forces. W. H. Booth was one of a number appointed to act in conjunction with the Defence Department to secure horses for the troops in the war.¹

Bill's Attestation Form indicated that he had previously been a member of C Company, 5th Regiment, as a Volunteer. At the time of his enlistment he was member of C Company, 17th Ruahine, which we believe was a Territorial Unit.

Throughout 1914 men responded to the Government's call to arms. When they enlisted in the Wellington District, they were sent to camp at Palmerston North for training. There was a gradual build up of the army over the year leading towards embarkation for Europe. This significant day was 15 October 1914.

The Wellington Infantry Battalion was transported to Suez, Egypt on two transport ships, the *Limerick* and the *Arawa*. The *Limerick* carried 21 Officers, 495 men and 348 horses. It carried part of the N.Z. Field Artillery Brigade and No. 7 & 8 Platoons of the Wellington Infantry Battalion. The *Arawa* carried the Wellington Infantry Battalion less the two platoons on the *Limerick*. It also carried the Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment (less 2 troops), the Signal Troop (NZE) and part of the Field Artillery Brigade. There were 59 Officers, 1259 men and 215 horses.

On 24 September, the people of Wellington assembled at Newtown Park to witness the farewell parade of troops. The troops were inspected by the Governor-General, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and then marched through cheering crowds to the transports which, at half-past five, pulled out. However, the ships were recalled because their escort contingent was not

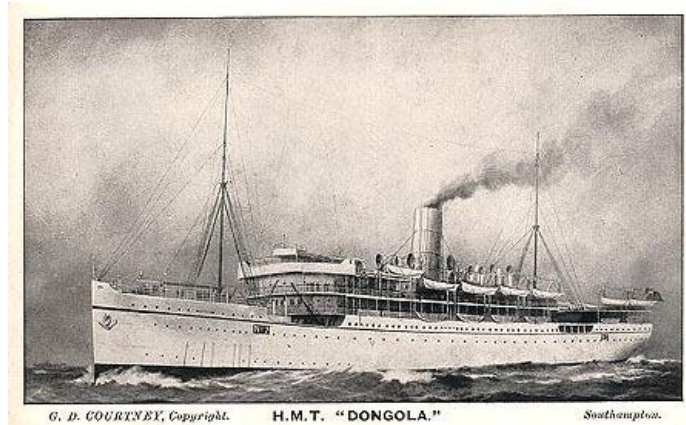
¹ Wairarapa Daily Times 10 August 1914

yet available. The mounted units and horses were disembarked and scattered to camps around Wellington and were to remain until a more powerful naval escort was available.

For three weeks the troops were exercised in musketry and route marching. At nights they crowded into Wellington for a little amusement. *"The women of Wellington rose splendidly to the occasion."* By 15 October ten transports were assembled, and the four cruisers made ready to convoy the troops on the first stage of the long journey.

The contingent sailed to Suez via Fremantle and Colombo. On arrival they went by train to a camp at Zeitoun just out of Cairo. Here they were engaged in further training while there was a build up of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force with men from France, the United Kingdom and other parts of the British Empire. The Anzacs were among these and comprised the 1st Australian Division and the composite New Zealand and Australian Division commanded by Major General Sir Alexander Godley, an English General selected for the role by Lord Kitchener. They trained from December in preparation for transfer to the Western Front. The decision to make a land attack on the Turkish defences in the Dardenelles changed all that.

The Anzac landing commenced on 25 April 1915 but it appears that Bill did not land until 2 May being carried by *HMT Dongola*.



A Gallipoli diary recorded action on 8 May 1915²:

"The steadiness of our Wellington Battalion being favourably commented on by English officers. They were subjected to heavy fire of shrapnel & machine guns but steadily advanced and entrenched their positions. The action was very fierce throughout the day and at 5-30 pm a general advance of the whole front line of the force was ordered and with fixed bayonets. Ruahine coy had been in reserve until now and were ordered to support W.W.C. Coy at this time. In going forward they were badly cut up by machine guns & suffered some 60 casualties."

This was very close to the time that Bill was wounded. The note on his record is "GSW L. Extremities." His injury was reported in Wellington on 10 May 1915.

² Gallipoli Diary Edward P. Cox. nzetc.org

WELLINGTON BATTALION.

- 10/248 Pte. Sidney Hector Dixon (Wm. Dixon, Bannister-street, Masterton, father).
 10/704 Pte. Henry Guy Fearon (Henry Wm. Fearon, Chatham-street, Mount Roskill, Auckland, father).
 10/170 Pte. William Hamilton (Mrs. J. K. Hamilton, 5, Boulcott-street, Wellington).

Evening Post 10 May 1915

Bill was treated on a hospital ship and on 20 May was repatriated to England on *HMS Letitia*. He was admitted to 1st Southern General Hospital at Edgbaston in Birmingham. This hospital was one of many large military hospitals that were developed to treat the flood of casualties coming back to England from the war. Buildings at the University of Birmingham were established as a 520 bed hospital in August 1914 and the first convoy of 120 casualties arrived on September 1st 1914. By Spring 1915, more University buildings had been taken over, providing up to 1,000 beds with a further expansion adding another 570 beds in Summer 1916. At the peak, the hospital could cater for 130 officers and 2357 other ranks

Bill's Service Record is not precise on all his movements and the next entry is not until 2 February 1916 when he was attached to the NZ Base Depot at Hornchurch in London. This was a convalescent Hospital and indicates that he spent quite a few months there.

Bill returned to Egypt but it was not long before he was again wounded in action. This was on 1 March 1916 at Ismailia in an action to defend the Suez Canal from a Turkish attack. He was attended to at an auxiliary hospital before being admitted to a NZ General Hospital at Abbasia on 6 March. He was then admitted to Lady Godley's Home at Zeitoun on 13 March.

According to letters received in Wellington from Egypt, Lady Godley is doing good service in tending to the wounded New Zealanders from the Dardanelles. When the mail left she had already been instrumental in establishing two convalescent homes, one at Cairo and the other at Alexandria, and had been active in getting many of her English friends to billet convalescents.

Poverty Bay Herald 24 June 1915

Lady Godley was the wife of Sir Alexander Godley, commander of the NZ and Australian Divisions. He had come under criticism for taking his wife to Egypt but it is clear that she carried out a very worthwhile role in assisting the injured Australian and New Zealand troops. She had initiated

a major fund raising effort to contribute to the establishment of her convalescent homes

The Abbasia military hospital was formerly an Egyptian army hospital taken over by the NZ Army, There were about a dozen similar hospitals that were all full of wounded English, Australian and New Zealand troops. They were staffed with nurses from around the Commonwealth. A further comment was located on the hospital and Lady Godley:

 The grounds about Abbasia Hospital are kept by soldiers of the Egyptian army. The flowers are beautiful all the year round, and just now the mulberry trees are heavily fruited with big purple-black berries. From hospital it was found necessary to transfer many of us to convalescent camp to make room for wounded. To meet this emergency and to ensure favorable conditions for the speedy recovery of those discharged earlier than under usual circumstances, Lady Godley established a convalescent home in a large two-storey dwelling. In addition to the numerous other cares she has taken upon herself, Lady Godley finds time to visit and supervise matters at the home. It is from this home that this letter is written.

Press (Canterbury) 26 June 1915

Bill was discharged to Base Depot at Ghezirch, Cairo, on 25 March and on 7 April rejoined the second battalion of the Auckland Infantry Regiment at Moascar, a military camp near the town of Ismailia about 110 kilometres north east of Cairo. On 8 April the unit travelled the short distance to Alexandria and embarked on the HMT Ascanius for France.

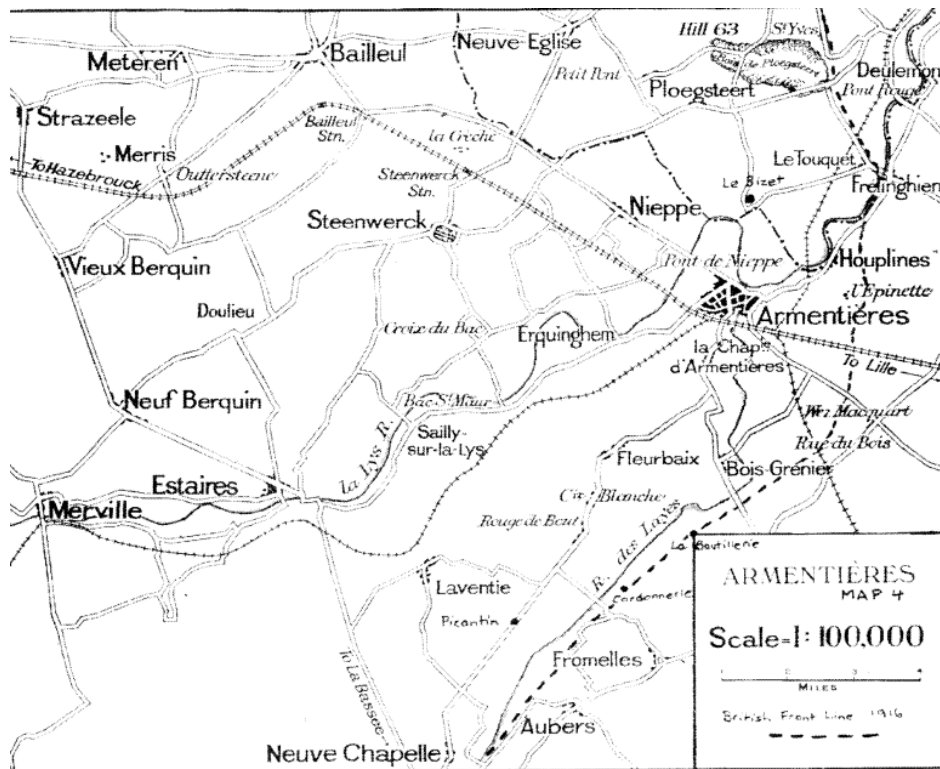


Bill was part of the newly established New Zealand Division which left Egypt for France. It was commanded by Major-General Sir Andrew Russell and was formed in Egypt on 1 March 1916 out of the former New Zealand and Australian Divisions which had fought at Gallipoli. Its units

were assembled in little over a month and by the last week of April the whole division of three infantry brigades and supporting arms and services had concentrated in Northern France in villages to the west of Armentieres. In a fortnight it was to take over the Armentieres Sector of trenches. The demands of reorganization and a long sea and rail journey meant that opportunities for training had been inadequate. Accordingly the division was ill-equipped for its immediate tasks.

The 1st NZ Infantry Brigade was made up of the 1st Battalions of each of The Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago Regiments, with the 2nd NZ Infantry Brigade embodying the corresponding 2nd Battalions³.

On 13 May 1916, 1st Brigade took over the L'EpINETTE sub-sector on the right. The next day 2nd Brigade of which Bill was a member went into the Houplines sub-sector on the left with its left flank on the River Lys. These reliefs were carried out without casualties.



This first trench system occupied by the New Zealanders extended for 4 miles east and south-east of Armentieres from the River Lys at Houplines to Pear Tree Farm, just south of the Armentieres – Lille railway. These were the initial deployments and over the next three months units were withdrawn into reserve and replaced by the 3rd Brigade. This commenced with the 3rd replacing the 2nd Brigade on 22 May.

Armentieres was a substantial town of 25,000 people before the war and was little damaged by shellfire at this stage. About a third of the population remained and commercial activity still thrived. It was a mere 20 minutes walk from the town centre to the trenches. Houplines however, was largely in ruins. Yet even there, some civilians remained within easy range of

³ The NZ Division in France & Flanders May 1916 to November 1918

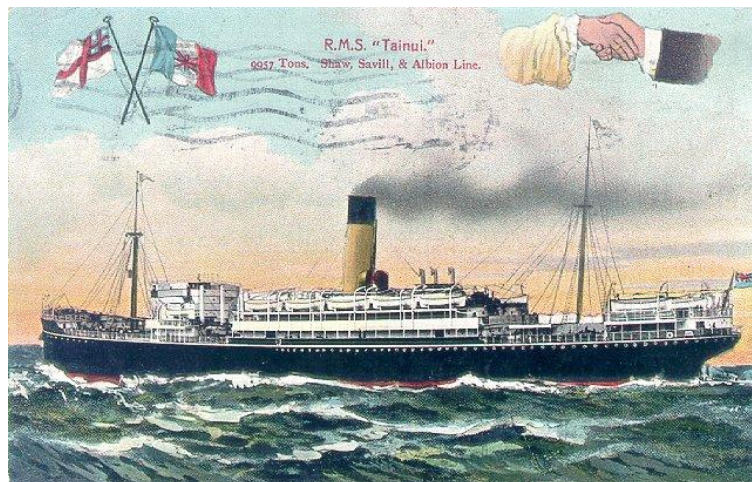
German light field guns. The soldiers were also surprised to find peasants still working their fields - old men, boys and women in the main. They were frequently forward of the British gun lines and behind the trenches but well within the zone of enemy shellfire. Eventually Armentieres was largely destroyed and most of the remaining population fled or were evacuated.

The NZ Division engaged in raids on enemy positions as part of a policy to apply pressure on the enemy while preparations were being made far to the south for the Somme offensive. On 16 June a composite party of 88 from 2nd Brigade units raided a suspected new trench at the extreme northern end of the sector near Frelinghien. Bill could well have been a member of this party.

On 13 July 1916 Bill was again wounded in action in the field. He suffered a gunshot wound in his lower thigh. There has been family feedback that he was the victim of Mustard Gas attacks but this is not in his records. However, this does not mean it did not occur as large numbers were subject to Mustard Gas and many died. The common occurrence of the event may well have been the reason for it not being recorded.

Bill was initially treated by the No.2 NZ Field Ambulance and later at the No. 35 NZ General Hospital. He was repatriated to England on *HMS Newhaven* on 17 July and admitted to the Second London General Hospital at St Mark's College, Chelsea. He was there for about 10 weeks and he was then attached to the NZ Command Depot at Codford on the Salisbury Plains at Wiltshire. He was admitted to the NZ General Hospital at Codford in December and was treated as an outpatient. (Codford was only a couple of miles from the village of Heytesbury, the birthplace of my great grandfather Samuel Harford and closer still to Boyton, the scene of riots for which he and many others were convicted and transported to Van Diemen's land).

In February 1917 Bill was again admitted to the NZ Convalescent Hospital at Hornchurch, London. He was examined by a Medical Board on 21 March 1917 and was classified as unfit for duty. On 26 April 1917 he embarked from Plymouth for New Zealand on the *RMS Tainui* and was struck off the strength of the NZ Expeditionary Force.



RMS Tainui

Bill was discharged on 3 August 1917. His file was stamped "*No longer physically fit for war service on account of wounds received in action.*" Bill had done his duty in serving his country in

a war in which there were a very large number of men killed. While he had been wounded three times he had survived and at 24 years of age now had the opportunity of a full life before him.



William Hamilton 10/170 WW1



Bill's War Service Medals

On his return Bill participated in the land acquisition arrangements made for returned servicemen and through a ballot system bought land at Hatuma. This land would have been

undeveloped at this time and have a lot of scrub that had to be cleared before it became useful. Ultimately Bill ran sheep on the farm. The property was called “*Te Kowhai*”.

Starting his working life as a shepherd, it is not surprising that Bill would have held a strong affinity with other shepherds. In the 1920’s, Bill engaged a young Scottish immigrant bachelor shepherd named Angus Forbes. Angus remained at “*Te Kowhai*” for decades thereafter and reputedly subsisting on nothing more than porridge, cold meat, potatoes and fruit cake – and without ever seeing a doctor. On Bill’s retirement from his farm, Angus, still a bachelor and then full of years, remained at ‘*Te Kowhai*’ under the care of Knox and Anne Hamilton and there peacefully ending his pastoral days.

In 1922 Bill married Ethel Mavis Sebley at Porangahau. They lived on the farm until Bill died on 23 November 1965. He is buried in the returned Servicemen’s plot at Waipukurau Cemetery. After his death Mavis moved into a house in 11 Fleming Road, Waipukurau. She died in 1982 and is buried at Porangahau Cemetery,



Bill and Ethel Mavis had two children:

1. **John Knox Hamilton**

John Knox, known as Knox, was born on 24 July 1923. He went to Wanganui Collegiate School.

He spent a short time in the Army during World War 2 although he was never required to serve overseas. He was stationed at a camp at Ngaruwahia.

After the war he worked organizing farmers to help each other. He went to Dannevirke where he got a job as an apprentice to a Fat Stock Buyer and was involved in buying fat lambs.

Knox returned and took over his father’s farm when Bill retired. On 22 October 1949 Knox married **Anne Josephine Deardon** and he built another house on the farm where they lived with their family.

They had three daughters:

Sally Anne born 1950. Married **Roy Darby** in 1983. They have one child:

Christopher Edward born 1984.

Susan Knox born 1952. Married Hamish John Woodhouse in 1980. They have three children:

Benjamin John born 1982.

Hollie Deardon born 1984.

Felicity Knox born 1984.

Phillipa Mary born 1954. Married Graham George Medill in 1975. They have two children:

Ann Elizabeth born 1975.

William Arthur Knox born 1978

John Knox died in 2004. He was cremated and his ashes scattered. There is a memorial plaque at St Mary's Waipukurau.



John Knox Hamilton

2. Mary Hamilton

Mary was born on 2 October 1926 at Waipukurau. She went to school at Nga Tawa College finishing in 1944. During the war Mary joined a girls' auxiliary where they collected and parceled up biscuits and other goods to send to servicemen overseas. In 1945 Mary went to Christchurch to do her nursing training at Christchurch Public Hospital. She graduated in 1949.

Mary married Thomas Morgan Mulvaney in 1950 at Waipukurau. He was known as Tom at school but to the family as Morgan. He was born on 26 April 1924 at Eketahuna and was educated at Kings College, Auckland. He was in the navy for two years during World War 2.

On his return from the War, Morgan purchased a land near Takapau under the servicemen's rehabilitation arrangements. He established an Angus Cattle Stud on the property at Ashley Clinton.

Mary returned to nursing in 1972 at the Pukeora Home for the Physically Disabled where she relieved as the afternoon supervisor. She worked there for eight years. In 2000 Morgan had a stroke and Mary had to stop work to care for him. He had a further stroke in 2002. Morgan died on 24 May 2008. Mary and Morgan were then retired from their farm and living at Havelock North.



Elizabeth & Mary at Havelock North February 2012

Morgan and Mary had three children:

Christopher John born 6 December 1951. Married **Jacqueline Silcock** (born 1951) in 1973 at Fielding. They have three children:

Hamish Morgan born 1978

Anna born 1980

Fraser born 1982

Anthony Knox born 22 September 1953. Married **Jean Stewart** (born 20 March 1955) in 1978. They have three children:

Margot born 1979

Lucy born 1983

Thomas Knox born 1986

Jillian Mary born 19 March 1956. Married **Victor France** in 1980. They have three children:

Meagan Mary born 1981

Samuel Michael born 1982

Benjamin Morgan born 1987



Mary Mulvaney