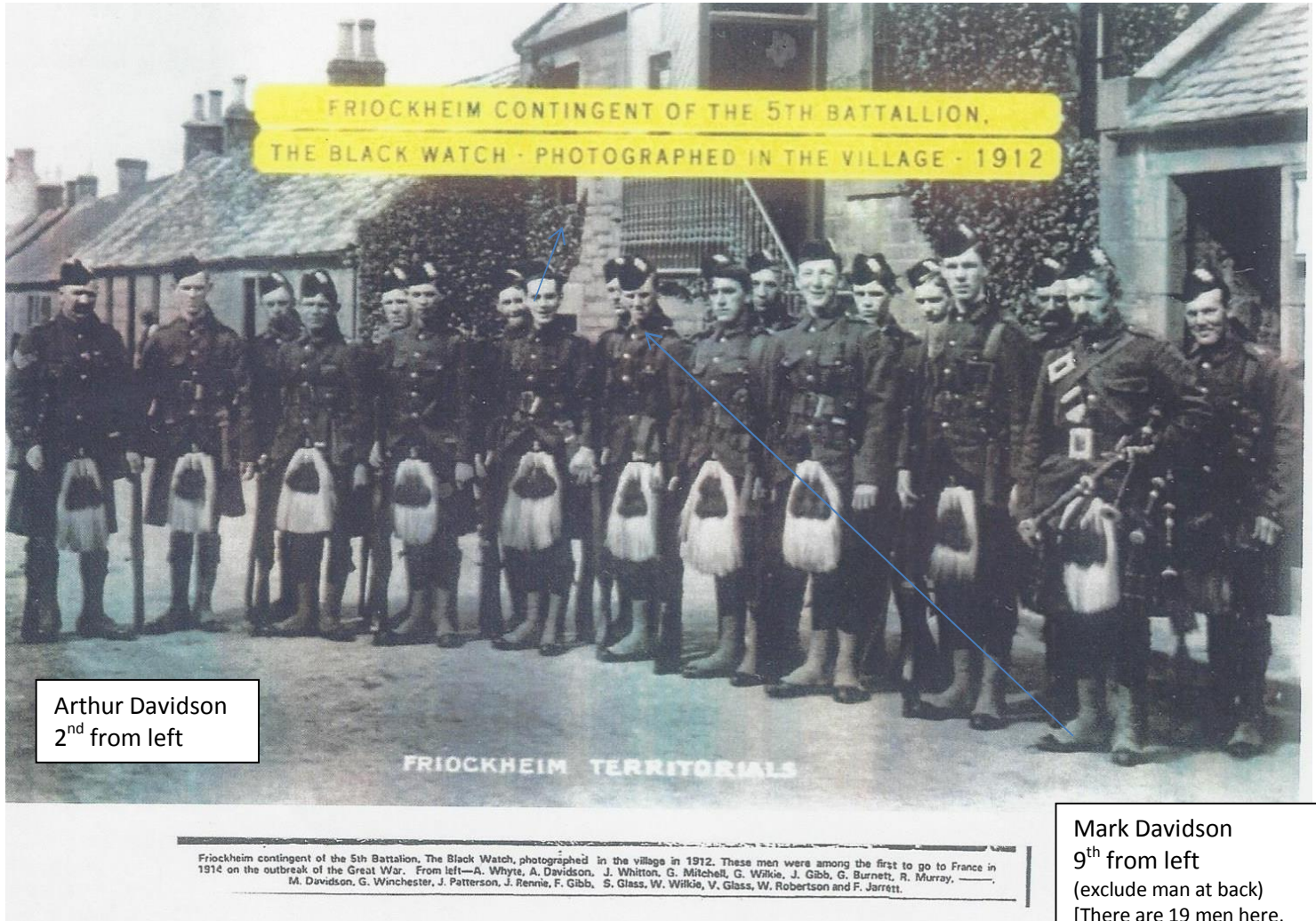


**Mark Davidson (#6/2113), Date of Birth 10.11.1895, enlisted 17th November 1915 (age 20)
2nd Battalion Canterbury Infantry Regiment, 1st Company.**



Arthur, Mark and their younger brother Henry served in the 5th Black Watch Territorial Force in Scotland prior to embarking for New Zealand.

The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) raised 25 battalions during the course of World War I and mainly fought in France and Flanders, with the exception of the 2nd and 10th Battalions which fought in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the Balkans. The Regiment was awarded 25 Battle Honours and 4 Victoria Crosses during the course of the war and lost 8,000 men.



Arthur Davidson
2nd from left

Mark Davidson
9th from left
(exclude man at back)
[There are 19 men here,
only 18 are captioned]

Arthur Mark and Henry were discharged from the territorial Force when they “proceeded abroad”. They arrived in New Zealand with their parents and two sisters, Agnes and Georgina, in July 1914. My grandfather, Edward Davidson was 4 years older than Arthur and married my grandmother in 1917. My father, Arthur Edward Davidson was their second child and he was born in 1921.



Henry, second from left standing

The Battle of the Somme 1916. The 15th September 1916 was the first day of battle for the New Zealand troops. Their objective was to secure Switch Trench.

Lieutenant George Tuck, one of the Auckland Regiment's great fighting soldiers throughout the war, describes approaching the Switch Trench

This was the Battle of Flers-Corcelette which finished on 22 September 1916, with the New Zealand Division located in Flers Trench, just at the intersection of Goose Alley. They had advanced less than one kilometre in 7 days.

"One man recoils from me against another. They both drop to the one shot. I turn about to get the one nearest to me. Then the next. All this in a few moments. Then our men flood the trench...Almost with the naked hands the fight is waged...As soon as they entered the Hun wanted to surrender. I do not blame our men that they would make them fight or die – or not fight – but die anyhow. One boy of mine, subsequently badly hit and now dead went screaming along the trench "Come on you b.....!"

Then there was running to and fro digging them out of their shelters. On the left about a dozen Germans bolted back across Country. Our Lewis guns had come up with us, and one of them was hastily placed on the back of the trench. Soon there were no running Germans."



Soldiers of the 2nd Canterbury Battalion, New Zealand Division, resting in a shell hole. Battle of Flers-Corcelette, 15 September 1916. [Creative Commons](#)

"By this time, thank God I have lost all consciousness of rifle or machine-gun fire, tho' I still hear the appalling crash of the artillery. The first and second waves, now one, get to within 10 to 20 paces of the trench. The Huns commence throwing showers of hand grenades. He always relies a lot on the moral effect of these to defeat an attack. Our men pause. They hesitate and begin to throw their own grenades. The 3rd wave is within a few paces and I realize that our men are standing off and throwing grenades. I scream again and again 'Don't stop! Go on!!'"



New Zealanders joining up shell-holes to form a trench forward of the Switch Trench.

Courtesy of Matt. Pomeroy.

“The Corps Commander congratulates Major-General A.H. Russell and the New Zealand Division on the success gained last night (20th/21st September) by the 2nd Battalion Canterbury Regiment. The repeated attacks, renewed and delivered with such energy and determination, speak highly of the fine fighting qualities displayed by all ranks.”

Under cover of darkness, the 2nd Battalion Canterbury Companies 1st, 2nd and 13th advanced and crept up Goose Alley. Once detected the Battalion suffered heavy casualties but rushed the trench and cleared it of the enemy and established blocks beyond it in both Flers Trench and Flers Support. Despite a determined counterattack down all the trenches and some desperate trench fighting the 2nd battalion Canterbury cleared the trenches to the northern end of Drop Alley. Casualties were heavy. Out of the 541 officers and other ranks, 40 were killed, 160 wounded and 49 were missing.

On the night of 21st/22nd the 2nd Canterbury Battalion was relieved and went back to Thistle Dump and rested September 22-28th (**Arthur Davidson** was killed at Factory Corner 26th September).

The Battle of Transloy Ridges 1-3 October

The objective of the 1st Company 2nd Canterbury Battalion was the Circus Trench from Gird Trench to the High Wood-Le Barque Road. The assaulting companies of the 2nd Canterbury assembled in the new trenches on the south-east edge of the hollow, in Gird Trench and in Goose Alley. At 3:15am on October 1st they advanced under creeping barrage, assisted by a special detachment of Royal Engineers discharging oil drums from trench mortars. The aim of the bombers was inaccurate, however and fell short in front of the left flank. As a result 1st company did not have the advantage of “dead” ground and suffered severe casualties from machine-gun fire from their right and front.

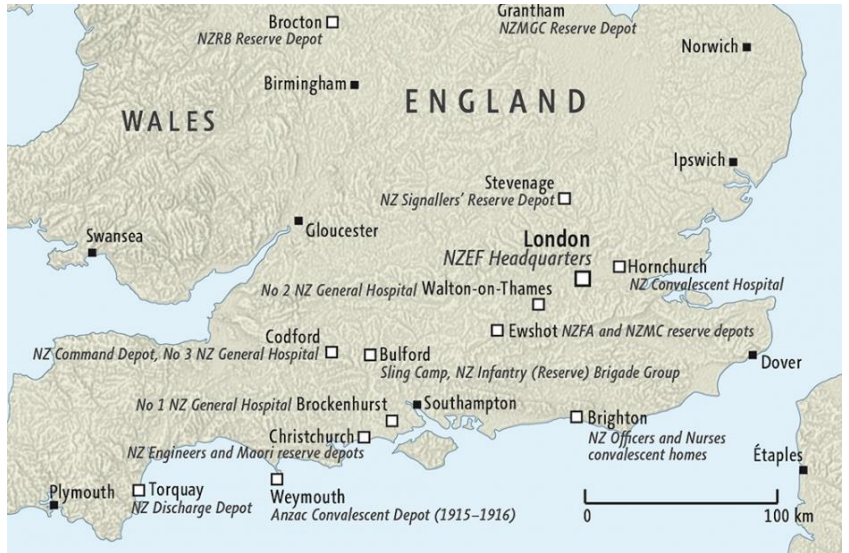
Mark Davidson was wounded on 1st October 1916. The 2nd Battalion’s men, who had been tired out before this attack suffered severe losses during the Battle of Transloy Ridges, 33 killed, 116 wounded and 24 missing.



England November 1916 – October 1917

Mark Davidson embarked on a hospital ship from Rouen for England on 5th October 1916 and was admitted to the 1st S Gen Hospital Birmingham on 6th November 1916. On 11th November he was discharged and transferred to Base Depot Codford.

When the wounded or invalided soldiers were sufficiently recovered to leave Hornchurch they were sent to the Command Depot at Codford to be "hardened" for further active service training. Established in somewhat straggling fashion among the bleak, bare, undulating downs of Salisbury Plains, a few miles by road from Sling camp, Codford camp was not popular for its surroundings or its exterior attractions. Sling Camp was occupied by New Zealand soldiers beside the then-military town of Bulford on the Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England.



No.		Date	Where Soldier located.	Message and Remarks
Wounds	BR 27	19/10/16	Rouen	Embarked on Hosp. ship for Eng. wond. 5/10/16
	BR 28	12-10-16	London	On strength 1/11/16 Birmingham 6-10-16
	BR 29	11-11-16	-	Leaving from 1/11/16 to Walton 6-11-16
Sick	BR 30	15-11-16	London	Trans. to Base Depot, Codford 11-11-16
	BR 31	11-11-17	4/11	On strength 1/12/17 Codford 6-11-17 arrives
	BR 32	2-11-17	-	Discharged to Command Dep. 2-11-17
	BR 33	17-11-17	-	On strength 1/12/17 Codford 16-11-17 arrives
	BR 34	7-11-17	-	Discharged to Command 19/11/17 Codford 12-11-17

Wd - Met. Entrance in front of child joint
 Sent to Etaples. Case of Southern Gen. B. H. H.
 Infection made along front fold of R. Arm
 & shrapnel ball extracted.
 On admission W. healed after removal
 of jaw.
 Rec'd 14 days of furlough.

STATEMENT of the SERVICES of *Dawson* *Rank* No. *4702*

Regiment or Corps	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Rate	Date	Authority for Entry.
<i>C Coy 10th</i>	<i>Joined to</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>17/11/15</i>	<i>R/O 254</i>
<i>9th Batt: C.I. Regt.</i>	<i>Attached to Training Battalion</i>		<i>11/1/16</i>	<i>Trans. orders P.2. No 3 5/6/16</i>
	<i>Joined Motor Section to P.I. Regt.</i>		<i>15/5/16</i>	<i>Re. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>C.I. Regt</i>	<i>Proceeded on leave from 11/11/16 to 11/11/16</i>	<i>P.I.</i>	<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>N.Z. Comm. Dep.</i>	<i>Replied from 11/11/16 taken on leave from 11/11/16 to 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>	<i>P.I.</i>	<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>3rd Regt. 11/11/16</i>	<i>Transferred to 3rd Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>Transferred to 4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>		<i>11-11-16</i>	<i>Reg. let: P.2. No 9 24/7/16</i>

CONDUCT-SHEET.

Regiment or Corps.	Place	Date	Offence	Punishment	Authority for Entry.
<i>C.R.</i>	<i>Brockenhurst</i>	<i>27-11-16</i>	<i>Absent 48 hours from 27-11-16 to 1-12-16</i>	<i>Forf 5 days pay by P.I.</i>	<i>(5-12-16) O.P. 2069 Conford P.2. No 9</i>
<i>N.Z. Command Depot</i>	<i>Codford</i>	<i>24-3-17</i>	<i>Absent 48 hours from 24-3-17 to 1-4-17</i>	<i>Forf 5 days pay by P.I.</i>	<i>O.P. 2069 (24-3-17)</i>
<i>N.Z. Command Depot (C.I.)</i>	<i>Codford</i>	<i>4-6-17</i>	<i>Absent 24 hours from 4-6-17 to 5-6-17</i>	<i>Forf 2 days pay by P.I.</i>	<i>O.P. 2069 (4-6-17)</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>7-7-17</i>	<i>Absent 24 hours from 7-7-17 to 8-7-17</i>	<i>Forf 2 days pay by P.I.</i>	<i>O.P. 2069 (7-7-17)</i>
<i>4th Regt. 11/11/16</i>	<i>Sling</i>	<i>5-9-17</i>	<i>Arrested in Reading with a fake Railway Warrant</i>	<i>7 days C.S.</i>	<i>In default case of 10/11/17</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>and confined to Barracks</i>	<i>28 days pay.</i>	<i>O.P. 2069 (10-10-17)</i>

CONDUCT SHEET

- 27.11.16 Absent 48 hours 27.11.16 to 1.12.16, Brockenhurst, forfeited pay
- 5.12.16 5 days furlough Codford, NZ Command Depot
- 24.3.17 48 Hours absent and received 168 hours detention and loss of pay - Codford
- 6.4.17 5 days NZ Gen Hospital Codford with Scabies
- 8.5.17 Discharged to Command and attended Sling Camp
- 4.6.17 Absent 24 hours and forfeited pay
- 8.7.17 Absent 24 hours and forfeited pay
- 11.7.17 Admitted NZ Hospital Codford – Scabies
- 4.8.17 Discharged to Command Depot Codford
- 5.9.17 Arrested in Reading with a fake Railway Warrant, confined to Barracks, 28 days pay
- 11.9.17 Transferred to Reg Group and Sting Camp
- 13.10.17 Sling Camp



NEW ZEALAND (COMMAND) DEPOT,
GODFORD,
WILTS.

June 24th 1917

Dear Brother

received your letter last week, and was very pleased to hear from you, and to see that you have not joined the army yet. I am still hanging on over here yet, and expect to be here for a week or two yet. I have had the time of my life over here, been up to Scotland 3 times, and had 14 days in London that is the place for the girls, but you have to be very careful. I expect to be going on leave in a week or two again, so I am beginning to find my way about here now. Met Jim Richardson over here about a month ago, but I see they have been in that smack near Ypres, so I have not had any word on him yet. Tell Charlie that Jim Anderson the tailor died at Walton On Thames from pneumonia. I received the two cables all right, about a month ago, but I sent away



NEW ZEALAND (COMMAND) DEPOT,
GODFORD,
WILTS.

away for another one, and expect it any day now. I had my photo taken about a week ago, so I am sending one to you, to see what you think of them. Well I think I will close now. Hoping you are all well at home.
Mark

24th June 1917 (from Godford)

Dear Brother (Henry)

Received your letter last week and was very pleased to hear from you, and to see that you have not joined the army yet. I am still hanging on over here yet, and expect to be here for a week or two yet. I have had the time of my life over here, been up to Scotland 3 times and had 14 days in London that is the place for the girls, but you have to be very careful. I expect to be going on leave in a week or two again, so I am beginning to find my way about here now. Met Jim Richardson over here about a month ago, but I see they been in that smack at near Ypres, so I have not had any word on him yet. Tell Charlie that Jim Anderson the tailor died at Walton On Thames from pneumonia. I received the two cables all right, about a month ago, but I sent away another one and expect it any day now. I had my photo taken about a week ago, so I am sending one to you to see what you think of them. Well I think I will close now. Hoping you are all well at home.

Mark

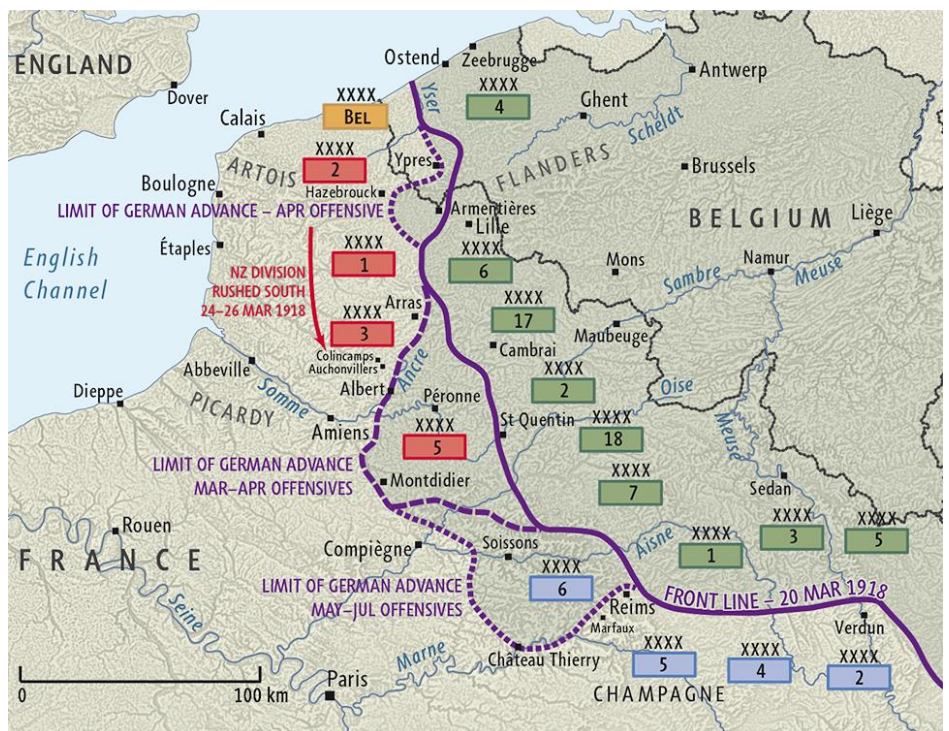
On 22.10.17 **Mark Davidson** proceeded overseas with 4th Res Batt Cant Reg via Estaples and on 11th November 1917 he re-joined 2nd Canterbury Battalion, **1st Company**.

The New Zealand Division took command of the right sector of the Corps on 16th November 1918 and continued to operate in the Ypres area until February 1918. The waterlogged conditions, bleak winter weather and depressing memories of the Passchendaele fiasco combined to make this a particularly trying experience.



Another failed attack, this time at Polderhoek in December 1917, added to the misery. The priority of the Allies was to strengthen defences in difficult winter conditions. Minor raids and skirmishes by both sides and from time to time artillery fire intensified. There was a great deal of shelling on crossroads and other centres of activity and casualties were occasioned in rear areas. In January 1918, Mark was admitted to hospital and re-joined his unit once again on 19th February 1918. On 24th February the NZ Division withdrew to a reserve area at Staple, North West of Hazebrouck for rest and open warfare training. By January 1918 both armies were exhausted but the Russian collapse would be followed by a German drive on the Western Front and on 21st March the Germans launched major attacks along the Western Front.

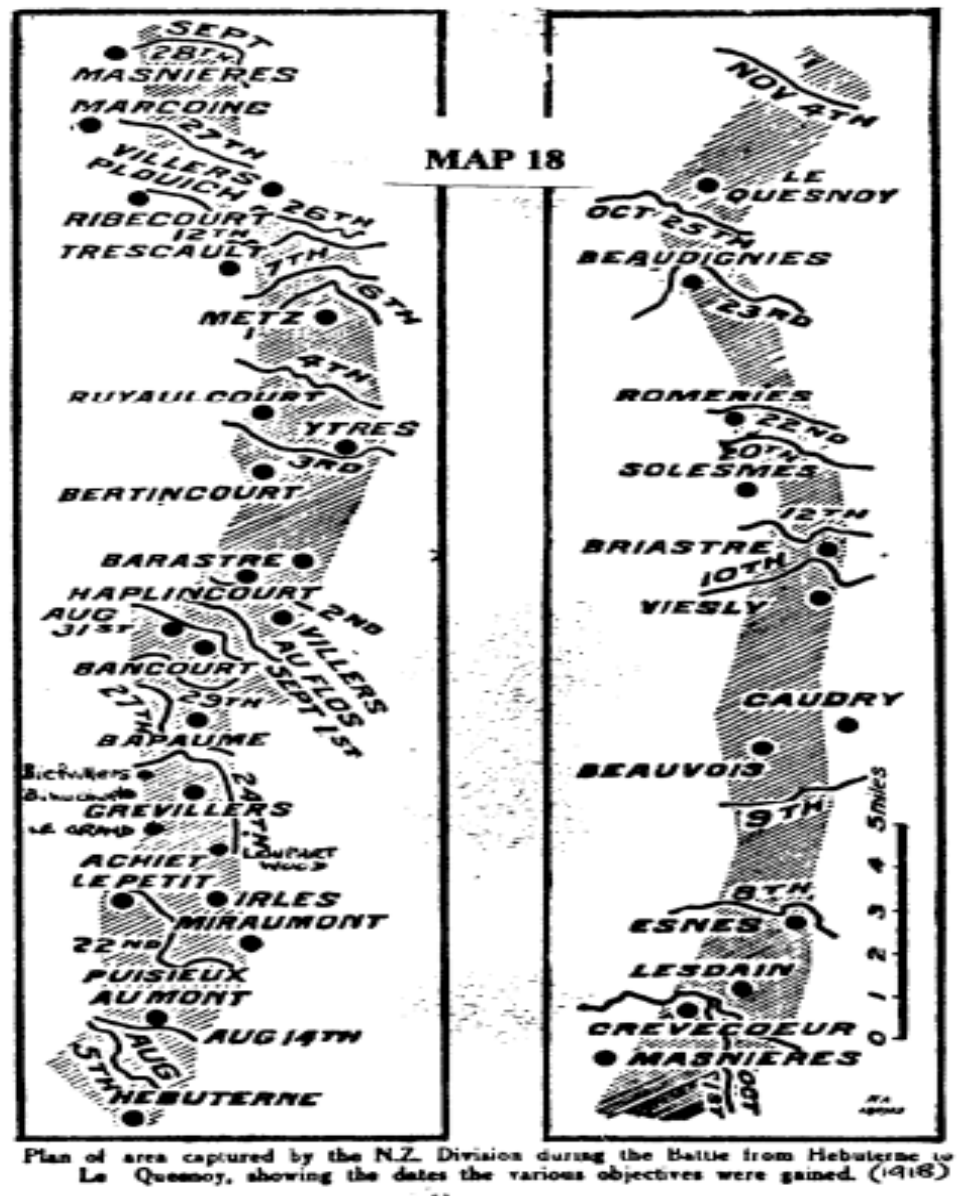
The New Zealand Division was one of the units rushed south in late March to establish a new defensive line. At Colincamps and Auchonvillers, the Division helped to stop the German advance on Amiens – the rail hub that linked the British armies in Flanders to the rest of France. In a series of battles the Germans advanced up to 60 km into Allied-held territory, extending the front line from the solid purple line to the line of dashes in the centre of the map. In rushing forces south, the British had left the Flanders region around Ypres and the Channel ports vulnerable. On 9 April the Germans attacked in this area, but for logistical reasons stopped short of the strategic town of Hazebrouck (extending the front line to the purple dotted line at the top of the map). The final German advances were made in late May and early June in the Aisne sector, where the front line was pushed south to the Marne River (indicated by the purple dotted line at the bottom of the map). During the Spring Offensive the



Germans gained more ground in one day, than the Allies had achieved in several months, and they could have won the war. However, the speed of the advance exhausted the Germans. Food supplies and artillery could not keep up, and the soldiers had to carry all of their own supplies. As the Germans struggled, the Allies, including America by this time, struck back. In September, the Allies started bombarding The Hindenburg Line (a series of fortifications built by the Germans in 1916 – it was 140K long and up to 5K wide, each section had concrete barriers, trenches, barbed wire and machine-gun posts). By the end of the month, the line had been broken and from then on, the German army was in retreat.

The New Zealand Div began its advance north by securing Bapaume on 25th August. ⁽¹⁾ Note that the 1st Company Cant 2nd encountered opposition on the high ground between Gréville and Biefvillers and was not able to enter Biefvillers, working around it from the south but was held up by machine-gun fire from the trenches east of the village. One platoon, however, succeeded in establishing itself in a trench to the north-east of Biefvillers. It was rightly surmised that the enemy only intended to hold Bapaume until it became practicable to fall back on the Hindenburg Line.

Mark Davidson was appointed Lance Corporal on 10th September 1918 when the 2nd Brigade was resting in reserve. The next day the Cant Battalions to the north of Villers-au-Flos. There they remained till the 14th, when the New Zealand Division withdrew well back into reserve, near Biefvillers, the 2nd Battalion in a trench system. This area was a peaceful one, out of range of the naval guns and was even left unmolested by the enemy's bombing 'planes. During the period of rest the usual attention was given to games, particularly football. The NZ Div was ordered to continue the advance on 29 September 1918 and by 5th October the whole of the Hindenburg Defence System was in British hands.

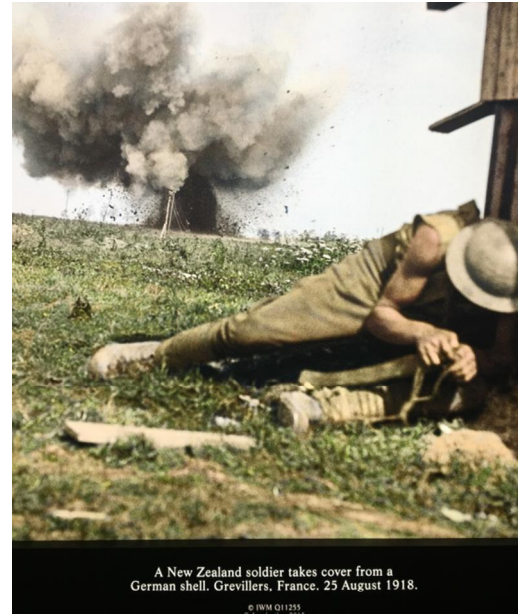


Plan of area captured by the N.Z. Division during the Battle from Hebuterne to Le Quesnoy, showing the dates the various objectives were gained. (1918)

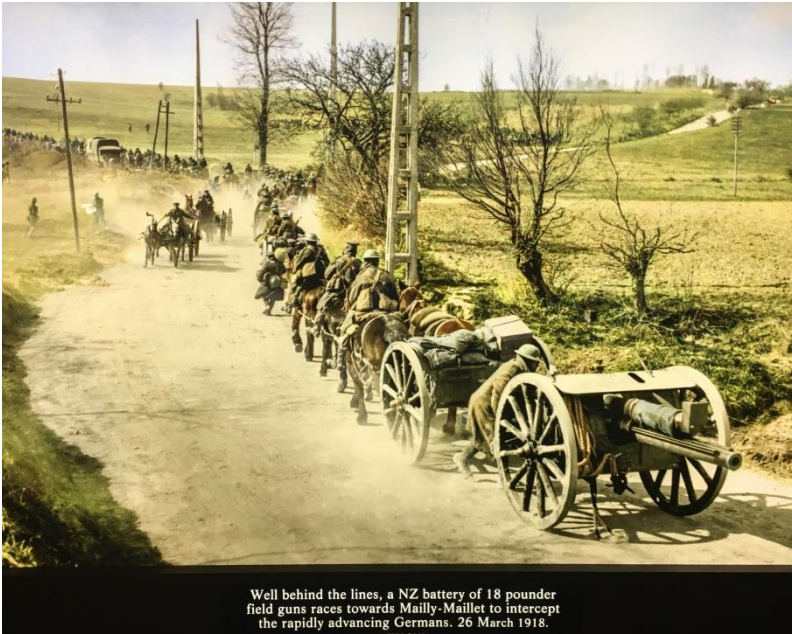
Images of Photographs on Display at The Great War Exhibition – Peter Jackson Display in 2018



Delighted New Zealanders score a prize for home. Many captured German field guns came to NZ as war trophies, and several still survive. Greveliers, France. 25 August 1918.



A New Zealand soldier takes cover from a German shell. Greveliers, France. 25 August 1918.



Well behind the lines, a NZ battery of 18 pounder field guns races towards Maily-Maillet to intercept the rapidly advancing Germans. 26 March 1918.

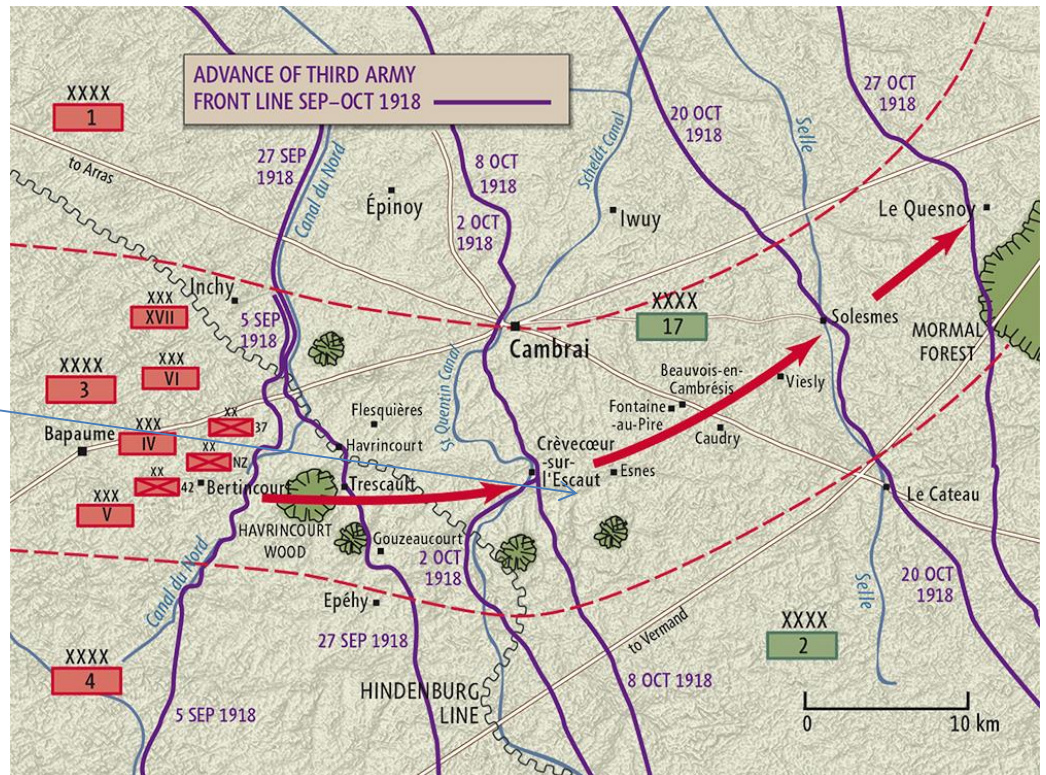


New Zealand officer inspecting a captured German machine gun position, Greveliers, 24 August 1918



The ruined Cloth Hall of Ypres. Within a few months, German shelling had destroyed the 600 year old Hall and surrounding Ypres township – yet it was doggedly defended by the British for four years, to become one of the most iconic symbols of the Great War.

By 7th October, 2nd Cant's line continued due north of the front line previously held by the battalion, with the right flank resting on the road from Rues des Vignes to Bel Aise Farm. **The left flank Held by the 1st Company was in the Masnières line itself, opposite the factory west of Lesdain. The frontage not much wider than five hundred yards, and on 8th October the Commanding Officer decided to use only the 1st Company (with two platoons in the front line) and half of the 13th Company (with one platoon in the front line).** The wire in front of the Masnières



line was successfully cut by the medium trench mortars on the afternoon of October 7th. This no doubt warned the enemy of the impending attack, as he shelled the assembly areas heavily during the night, and caused numerous casualties. **The attack was made at 4.30 a.m. on the 8th, but despite a severe artillery barrage at zero hour, and heavy machine-gun fire from Bel-Aise Farm on the right flank, the attacking troops reached the Masnières line on the right and the factory on the left, in good order. Here they met with considerable resistance, particularly from machine-guns which had been over-run by the first waves. The first objective, a sunken road running south from the eastern edge of Lesdain, was reached at 6.30 a.m.;** but here the resistance was much less vigorous, in spite of the fact that the garrison captured numbered about three hundred. The 1st Company was then "leap-frogged" by the 2nd Company who took the sunken road north of Pélu Wood. The 12th Company, coming up close behind, immediately went through the 2nd Company, cleared Le Grand Pont village (which was still being shelled by British "heavies") and Leauette Farm, and passed to the north of the village of Esnes, where touch was gained with the 3rd (Rifle) Brigade on the left at about 8 a.m.

Mark Davidson was in the 1st Company and was killed in action, during the capture of the village of Lesdain on **8th October 1918**. This was just 28 days before the New Zealand Division fought its last battle of WW1 on 5th November and 34 days before Armistice Day on 11th November 1918.

His military record reads that up to at least July 1919, his body was buried in the Lesdain German Cemetery. The LESDAIN GERMAN CEMETERY, at the South-East corner of the village, contained the graves of 350 German soldiers, six soldiers from the United Kingdom buried by the enemy as prisoner and **26 New Zealand soldiers and two from the United Kingdom who fell on the 8th October 1918 in the capture of the village.**

Mark Davidson's body was brought to the Honnechy British Cemetery during the remake in 1922 and 1923 when British graves were moved to this cemetery from German Cemeteries. **Mark Davidson** is buried in the Honnechy British Cemetery, Nord, France, **Reference** I.B. 46.

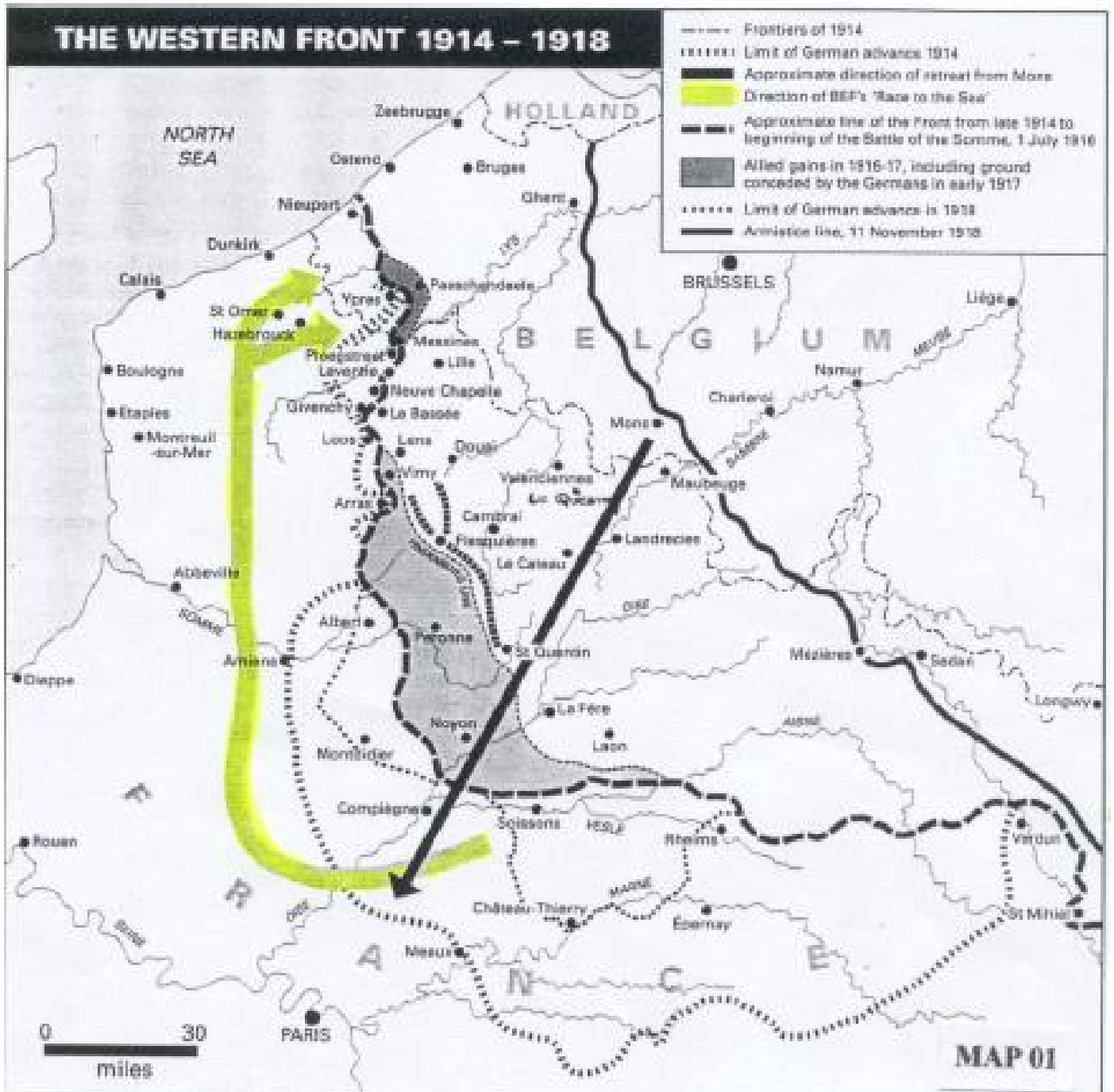
Mark sent a handkerchief to his sister Agnes which arrived after his death. "Souvenir de Belgique" - lace edge embroidered lavender pansy.



HONNECHY BRITISH CEMETERY NORD (I.B.46)



HILLTOP CEMETERY, LESDAIN,
between Lesdain and Seranvillers,
which contained the graves of 17
New Zealand and six German
soldiers who fell in October, 1918



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."*

ROLL OF HONOUR

ARBROATH AND DISTRICT

1914 : 1919



SECOND EDITION.

PTE. ARTHUR DAVIDSON, N.Z.

PRIVATE ARTHUR DAVIDSON, New Zealand Contingent, was a native of Frioekheim, and was, before going to New Zealand, employed at the Frioekheim Bleachfield. When the call to arms came he and his younger brother, Mark, gave a ready response. He was killed in action in France in October 1916.

p 78

PTE. MARK DAVIDSON, N.Z.

PRIVATE MARK DAVIDSON, New Zealand Division, who belonged to Frioekheim, was killed in action in France on the 6th of November 1918. He and his brother, Arthur, had both left Frioekheim for New Zealand, and they were amongst the first to join up when war was declared. They both made the supreme sacrifice.

p 78

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY T. BUNCLE & CO.,
MARKET PLACE, ARBROATH.

DAVIDSON.—In sad and loving memory of our dearly beloved son and brother, Private Arthur Davidson, who was killed in the Battle of the Somme, on September 26, 1916; aged 23 years.
His warfare o'er, his battles fought,
His victory won though dearly bought,
His fresh young life we could not save,
He slumbers now in a soldier's grave.
—Inserted by his loving father, mother, brothers and sisters, 23 Edward Street, Timaru.

DAVIDSON. In loving memory of my brother, Arthur, killed in action in France, September 26, 1916.
For King and Country.
—Inserted by his brother Ned.

ROLL OF HONOUR.

Timaru Herald, Volume XCVIII, Issue 170320, 8 October 1920.

About this newspaper View computer-generated text

ROLL OF HONOUR.

DAVIDSON.—In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Mark Davidson, killed in action at Lesdain, France, October 8th, 1918. Also Private Arthur Davidson, killed in action at the Battle of the Somme, September 26th, 1916.
They sleep beside their comrades,
In hallowed graves unknown,
But their names are writ in letters of gold
In the hearts they left at home.
—Inserted by their father and mother, brothers and sisters.

Timaru Herald, 13th October 1916

DAVIDSON:— In sad and loving memory of our dearly beloved son and brother, Private Arthur Davidson, who was killed in the battle of the Somme, on September 26, 1916, aged 23 years

His warfare o'er, his battles fought,
His victory won, though dearly bought,
His fresh young life we could not save,
He slumbers now in a soldier's grave.

Inserted by his loving father, mother, brothers and sisters.

Timaru Herald 8th October 1920

ROLL OF HONOUR

DAVIDSON: - In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Mark Davidson, killed in action at Lesdain, France, October 8th, 1918. Also Private Arthur Davidson, killed in action at the Battle of the Somme, September 26th, 1916.

*"They sleep beside their comrades,
In Hallowed graves unknown'
But their names are writ in letters of gold
In the hearts they left at home."*

Inserted by their father and mother, brothers and sisters.



G V R I

HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

*Lt Col. Marie Davidson
Canterbury Inf. Regt., N.Z.F.*



G V R I

HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

*Pte. Arthur Davidson
Canterbury Inf. Regt., N.Z.F.*



**PRIVATE
ARTHUR DAVIDSON
KILLED IN ACTION
26th SEPT. 1916 AGED 22
AT REST.**

**LANC E CORPORAL.
MARK DAVIDSON
KILLED IN ACTION.
8th OCT. 1918 AGED 22.
AT REST.**

		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	Arthur DAVIDSON 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	Mark DAVIDSON 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	William Alexander BROWN 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 12th October 1917 at Passchendaele but, following research and contacting various authorities, we have since found that it was on 26th 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 1st Brigade. Mark Davidson was in the Canterbury 2nd Battalion which was positioned east of the Bapaume-Beugnâtre road, on the morning of the 26th 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 26th August 1918, the 1st and 3rd 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 5th April 1918 and trained in camp in New Zealand for several months. He was demobilised on 23rd November 1918. Frederick was called up for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 14th May 1918. He was 32, married with one child. He spent time at Featherston Camp before being demobilised on 29th 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 31st July 1917 failed. On 9th 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 14th 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.

References

The New Zealand Division 1916-1919 (Printed 1920) – Col H. Stewart

The New Zealand Division in France and Flanders May 1916 to November 1918 (Revised Edition 2005) – John H Gray

The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F. 1914-1919 (Published 1921) – Captain David Ferguson

Official History of the Otago Regiment, N.Z.E.F. in the Great War (Published 1921) – A.E. Byrne

New Zealand Artillery in the Field 1914-1918 (Published 1922) – Lieut J.R. Byrne
Honours & Awards to the NZ Expeditionary Force in the Great War 1914-1918 – Wayne McDonald
Sean Brosnahan – Curator Otago Settlers Museum – Dunedin
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

