

New Zealand War Memorial Museum


Le Quesnoy, France

Remembering the New Zealanders who fought and died for our freedom in World War I and World War II.

George Edmund Butler, Capture of the walls of Le Quesnoy.



NEW ZEALAND
WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM
LE QUESNOY FRANCE
— A PLACE TO REMEMBER —

A black and white photograph of World War I soldiers in a town street. In the foreground, two soldiers on horseback are prominent, wearing helmets and heavy coats. They are moving down a street lined with European-style buildings. Other soldiers are visible in the background, some on foot and some on horseback. The street appears to be in a town that has been recently liberated, with some debris visible on the ground.

We are seeking your help to establish the first permanent New Zealand War Memorial Museum in Europe, in the French town of Le Quesnoy. Driven by Kiwi ingenuity, our brave New Zealand soldiers single-handedly liberated this small French town without the loss of any civilian lives.

“The storming of Le Quesnoy becomes almost the cornerstone around which we build New Zealand achievements in the first World War”.ⁱ

Dr Chris Pugsley, War Historian



New Zealand's Great Achievement

The New Zealand Memorial Museum Trust – Le Quesnoy is raising funds to purchase and repurpose the historic former Mayor's residence in Le Quesnoy, France, which has been the headquarters for the local Gendarmerie since 1952. The Mayor and Council of Le Quesnoy are providing their full support to this special project.

The site will be developed to include upgraded accommodation for visitors and a new annex. The accommodation is much needed, as visitor lodgings are sparse in Le Quesnoy. This project is named the New Zealand War Memorial Museum, Le Quesnoy.

The Trust aims to complete the fundraising by November 2018, marking the centenary of the liberation of Le Quesnoy by New Zealand soldiers on 4th November 1918.

Together the historic building and annex will form a museum that will tell the soldiers' extraordinary stories and exhibit educational and interactive historic collections from both World Wars.

New Zealanders, young and old, are eager to retrace their loved ones' steps, as well as to visit and base themselves in a permanent location where they can pay their respects and learn more about the sacrifices their forefathers made.

Sarah Ulmer, the Olympic cyclist, recalls the time she visited Le Quesnoy and felt overwhelmingly proud to be a New Zealander.

“To see the gratitude and respect that the locals have for New Zealanders today was just awesome, there are streets named after New Zealand, there are pubs named after New Zealand and the whole town knows the story so well, to be a Kiwi in a small foreign town like that is just amazing.”ⁱⁱ

France, in the early morning, after its capture.
The building on the left is the city hall which was destroyed by bombing. Photograph taken by Henry Armytage Sanders on the 5th of November, 1918.
Divisional commanders entering Le Quesnoy, France, after its capture. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013708-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Ingenuity From The Uttermost Ends Of The Earth

During World War 1, 70,000 New Zealanders served in Europe and on the Western Front. The majority of those served with the New Zealand Division.

By 1918, this Division was one of the most formidable fighting divisions of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. As the only colonial division in the British Third Army, it led the 'Advance to Victory'.ⁱⁱⁱ New Zealanders led the way for 49 of the 56 hard fought miles over 77 days from Hebuterne to Le Quesnoy.

During that period the Division was engaged in 55 days of combat and sustained over 10,400 casualties with more than 2,700 dead. Figures as staggeringly incomprehensible today as they were long ago. The New Zealand Division was well aware that a significant number of people lived

in Le Quesnoy under German occupation. To ensure the least amount of damage to the town and potential loss of residents' lives, artillery was instructed not to fire beyond the ramparts into the town. Instead, Livens Projectors placed by the Royal Engineers fired 300 flaming oil drums onto the ramparts of the west walls, to create smoke and obscure the Germans' response. The 'flaming oil drums' were a supporting device to aid our infantry attack.

Our soldiers utilised their Kiwi ingenuity and accessed Le Quesnoy by placing long ladders against the fortified walls surrounding the town; and in a hand to hand battle, took the Germans prisoner without the loss of any civilian lives.



New Zealand military transport moving along a road in Le Quesnoy, France during World War I. Shows lorries and horse-drawn wagons. Photograph taken 30 October 1918 by Henry Armytage Sanders.

Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013696-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

France NOV 18

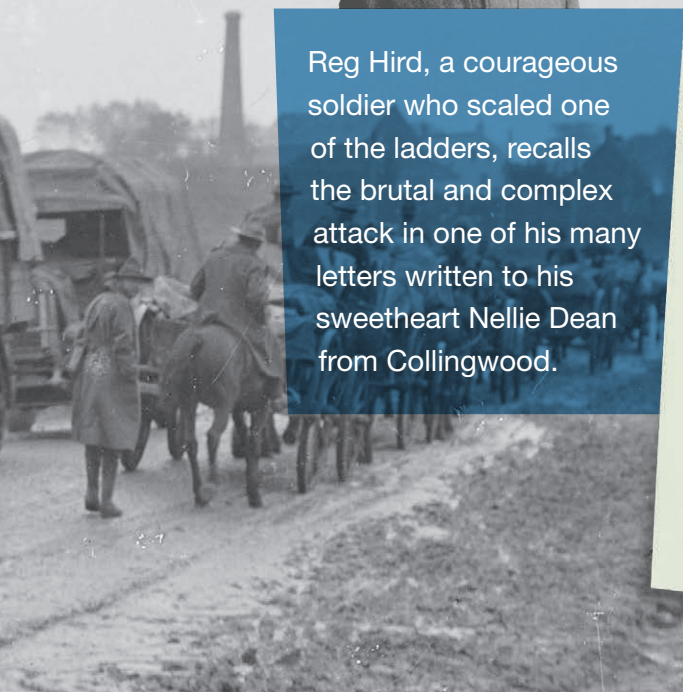
At 5.30am every man was at his post and the barrage opened and it was a barrage! Just one mighty crash, I never heard anything like it before. The ground shook and trembled and the bursting shells lit the ground up. It was like Hell let loose. Volunteers were called for men to place long ladders against the wall for the storming party to get over. Well I volunteered for one and had a good mate. The smoke screen was intensified and we slipped down into the moat and got almost to the foot of the wall when he spotted us and opened out on us from the top of the wall with machine guns and rifles and not more than 40 feet from our heads. How on earth he did not kill the pair of us I don't know.


He tore the ground up at our feet but we placed the ladder and took off for our lives. It was lucky for us that he had to shoot down at us and not straight at us, else napoo! We got behind an angle in the wall and dashed back into the thick screen and got back safely and after a severe fight we had won the inner rampart and were faced by another moat and the walls of the citadel. It was just about 12 o'clock now and we had a bit of a spell for a while but by 4 o'clock we had got a footing on the walls of the citadel and after a sharp fight had captured the whole garrison of 2000 men one of the greatest feats yet done by the New Zealand troops.

We marched up to the city square and it was a splendid reception that we got from the civilian population. There were over 1000 of them and they swarmed out of the tunnels and cellars where they had been hiding while the fighting was on. They cheered and feted and even kissed us. Little boys and girls hung onto our hands and it was impossible to march along. Young and old put their arms around our necks and it got quite embarrassing but poor souls they had been harshly treated.^{iv}

Reg Hird, a courageous soldier who scaled one of the ladders, recalls the brutal and complex attack in one of his many letters written to his sweetheart Nellie Dean from Collingwood.

Dear
Nellie
...with love





The cost in human terms was enormous for a country whose population only just exceeded one million.

Three New Zealand soldiers with a six inch trench mortar at Le Quesnoy, France, during World War I. One of the soldiers is sponging out between the rounds. Photograph taken by Henry Armytage Sanders in October 1918. *Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013686-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.*

Research undertaken by New Zealand historians indicates that 135 New Zealanders were killed that day. Many of our young men, some only in their twenties, had survived the sacrifice of the Division from the Somme to Passchendaele, only to be killed just seven days before the end of World War 1.

The cost in human terms was enormous for a country whose population only just exceeded one million.

During 32 months of service in France and Belgium, the New Zealand Division was to incur in the region of 48,000 casualties. Over 12,400 men are buried in France and Belgium.ⁱⁱⁱ

Reg was one of the lucky ones to make it home after the end of the War. On the 9th of July 1919 he arrived in Collingwood, proposed to Nellie and they then became engaged.



Our Special Bond

This special connection between New Zealand and France remains today and, in particular, the people of Le Quesnoy maintain a strong affinity with their Kiwi visitors.

The Captain of the 2000 All Blacks, Todd Blackadder, recalls his own visit to Le Quesnoy.

“We walked around the town... (to the memorial) and we laid a wreath there. I was standing next to a Frenchman who had tears streaming down his face. He was moved by the generosity of the New Zealanders all those years ago.”^{vi}

Le Quesnoy is continually grateful to New Zealand soldiers and has remembered them with warmth over the last 100 years.

Marie-Sophie Lesne, the Mayor, said the people of Le Quesnoy would never forget the sacrifice made by such a small nation from so far away.

“We will always be very grateful to the men from your country for liberating our town. They rest here with us and our bond is very strong with New Zealand. It will never be forgotten.”^{vi}

A crowd, with umbrellas, stand around a New Zealand regimental band playing in Le Quesnoy, the day after its capture. Photograph taken by Henry Armytage Sanders on the 5th of November 1918.

Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013705-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Flag presented to the town of Le Quesnoy by the New Zealanders. Photograph taken late November 1918 by Henry Armytage Sanders.

New Zealand flag presented to Le Quesnoy. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013787-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



The New Zealand War Memorial Museum, Le Quesnoy

The New Zealand Memorial Museum Trust – Le Quesnoy will create a museum complex with functional exhibition floor space.

The New Zealand War Memorial Museum, Le Quesnoy will focus on New Zealand's military involvement in Europe and our significant contributions in both World Wars. An integral part of the experience will involve the The New Zealand War Memorial Museum, Le Quesnoy supporting research into our service record in Europe,

and the location of New Zealand graves and our monuments to the missing.

Alongside the The New Zealand War Memorial Museum, Le Quesnoy will also be self-catering accommodation for visitors. This unique project also aims to support and contribute economically to the French community and region where New Zealand remains honoured and respected beyond living memory.



You Can Preserve History

Almost 100 years on, New Zealand has no permanent or dedicated war memorial museum in Europe to honour and preserve our legacy; no place to tell the many remarkable stories of bravery and sacrifice.

Imagine being a young person today and giving up your freedom and potentially your life to fight in a war on the other side of the world. We cannot possibly comprehend what it must have felt like for the thousands of young New Zealanders who through accident of birth fought and

died in the two World Wars of the Twentieth Century. We want to encourage and inspire each person who reads this to put themselves in the shoes of another.

Our vision is to remember the New Zealanders who fought and died for our freedom and to illustrate New Zealanders' role in both World Wars in Europe, by establishing the first permanent New Zealand War Memorial Museum in the town of Le Quesnoy.

**PRESERVE OUR HISTORY AND HELP
TURN THIS VISION INTO A REALITY.**



*Conceptual drawings only



This 17th century former Mayor's residence in Le Quesnoy, France, has been the headquarters for the local Gendarmerie since 1952. The Mayor and Council of Le Quesnoy are providing their full support to this special project. The site will be developed to include upgraded accommodation for visitors and a new annex. The annex will be designed to provide a modern and secure repository for the records and memorabilia of New Zealand's participation in both World Wars.

New Zealand War Memorial Museum Le Quesnoy, France

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FOUNDER AND GENERAL SECRETARY

Herb H Farrant

TRUSTEES

Greg Moyle (Maj. Retd) Chair

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Neil Ingram

Peter McKinnon

STRATEGIC ADVISERS

Rt. Hon. Sir Donald McKinnon *ONZ GCVO PC*

Rt. Hon. Sir Lockwood Smith *KNZM PhD*

Andrew Collow

Celia Caughey

Peter Hanson

Alastair Bell

Kerry Underhill

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Rt. Hon. Sir Lockwood Smith *KNZM PhD*

If you have any queries or you would like any further information, please feel free to contact Sarah at nz.lequesnoy@gmail.com or PO Box 105190, Auckland 1143. Alternatively visit our website:

www.nzwarmemorialmuseum.co.nz

Acknowledgements

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Khaki' - the story of Reg Hird's experiences in World War I told through letters and postcards to his sweetheart Nellie Dean.

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- iv. "Good bye Bill Massey No More Khaki – Reg Hird's Letters from the Great War", Rachel Hird, 2015.
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New Zealand 4.5 howitzers and soldiers, in an orchard in Le Quesnoy, France, 29 October 1918. Photograph taken by Henry Armytage Sanders. The loader (with one sleeve rolled up) has been identified as A C Hall by one researcher, and as Hamish Howard by a second researcher. The second researcher has also identified the layer (man smoking a pipe) as Geoffrey Challies.
Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013684-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

LEST WE FORGET

1918 – 2018