



9<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Compiled and Presented by Sandie Gorst

### “Our Boys, Their Lives”

In this section of the programme, I am going to talk a little about the men listed on our memorial and give you an insight into their lives. Their very short lives.

Accessing war records through Archives NZ, using digitised copies of newspapers on Papers Past and viewing the Electoral Rolls online to confirm family connections, my research started off well, but hit a few snags when I could find no mention of Glenfield or surrounding districts for some of these fellows. We were confused as to why some of them were appearing on our local memorial at all.

When I found the one and only mention of the Memorial Tablet ceremony in the 1919 NZ Herald article it stated that all of these lads had been members of the local Sunday school, and I realised *that* was the connection and the reason why they were being commemorated here. Wherever that local Sunday school was originally held, it was interdenominational, as Army records tell us we have Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Church of England families. By 1919 this Mission Hall was the new community meeting place and the local families who gathered here had their reasons for including each of these eleven boys – I’ve yet to make the connection in some instances.

Just pause a moment and reflect on the fact that the families of the eleven men immortalised by our memorial actually sat in this very room some 100-or-so years ago.

The genealogist in me has been fascinated by the journey these boys have taken me on, piecing together their lives from various sources, and enabling me to at least put a face to the names etched in marble.

We would be here all weekend if I was to tell you everything I have learned of their journeys, but I’ll try and keep it brief. I know you all really just want a cuppa and a biscuit.

**Alexander Gracie**, also known as Harry, was born 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1893, the youngest son of Alexander and Frances. He was just 22 years of age when he presented at the Drill Hall in Auckland on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1915 for his medical.

He was a tall man for the time at 6'1" but weighed just 86kg. He had light brown hair, blue-grey eyes, and of medium complexion. To the question "What is the condition of his Teeth?" the medical examiner notes: "None above".

Harry's occupation was listed as a Carter in the employ of P. Faville of Takapuna, and a quick check in the newspapers of the day told me that Mr Faville owned a bakery. Harry's address at the time of enlistment was given as c/- P. Faville, Takapuna. Newspaper reports tell us he was born in Auckland but had resided in the Glenfield District for 22 years. He had previously been employed in the Chelsea Sugar Refinery laboratory and by Messrs Leonard and Clow of Birkenhead. (A carrying and contracting business with a storeroom in Hinemoa Street near Birkenhead wharf).

Harry was educated at the Glenfield School and was an enthusiastic cricketer who played for the Waitemata Club and was recognised as an excellent bowler.

The Auckland Star dated Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1915 reports:

"The following volunteers for service have been warned to be in readiness to leave Auckland on Monday to go into special training as non-commissioned officers preparatory to the mobilising of the 9<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements. The men will leave for Trentham by the midday express."

Three months later he was back in Auckland and the NZ Herald reported:

**Sergeant H. Gracie and Private W. Moon, of Birkenhead, who are proceeding to the front with the ninth reinforcement draft, were entertained last night at a farewell social in the Foresters' Hall, Birkenhead.**

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 1916 Harry disembarked his transport ship at Suez, and two days later was admitted to Hospital with the measles.

In March he was appointed Temporary Lance Corporal and in April he embarked for France. In July he was admitted to a Field Ambulance station with multiple gunshot wounds to his arm and index finger, but 2 ½ weeks later he rejoins his unit.

At his own request he relinquishes the appointment of Lance Corporal, and two weeks later, a mere 13 months since signing up, Pte. Alexander (Harry) Gracie, is killed in the field on the Western Front on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1916

He is remembered with honour at the Caterpillar Valley (NZ) Memorial, Somme, France.

**George Hall** was born on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1895, the youngest son of John and Annie Hall who lived in Onewa Road, Birkenhead.

He was educated at the Mayfield and Northcote schools and followed the vocation of an ironworker and blacksmith under his father in the firm of Hall Bros, who were Bolt and Nut manufacturers in Drake Street Freeman's Bay.

George and his mates Tom Forrest, Fred Wheeler and Eric Monteith signed themselves up in 1915, and George was deemed fit for service on 25<sup>th</sup> May. He is described in his medical examination as 5'9" tall, 11 stone 4 lb (72kg), of dark complexion, with grey eyes and brown hair. His teeth are in a fair condition, he has no illnesses, no fits, and just in case we need to know... he had dysentery 3 years ago!

In early August a social and dance were held in the Glenfield schoolroom (just up the road from here) in honour of George, Tom Forrest, Harry Marshall, Eric Monteith, Lionel Malcolm, Fred Wheeler and Harry Gracie.

The newspaper report states "the room and anteroom were crowded and the proceedings were most enthusiastic. During the evening Mr Andrew Geddes, on behalf of the residents, presented each of the departing recruits with a safety razor outfit as a memento of the occasion and of the good wishes of their numerous friends and said they felt proud to have them going forward to do their duty".

George left Auckland with 480 other men and was enlisted at Trentham on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1915. We know he was admitted to hospital at Trentham Camp at 9.30am on 13<sup>th</sup> September where he spent the week, but no ailment was recorded.

George departed our shores with the 8<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Auckland Infantry Battalion. He was 20 years of age.

Arriving at Suez in December he served temporarily with the transport service before being returned to the infantry and embarking for France.

We are told he "forfeits 1 days ordinary pay for Breaking from Battalion" and the following day he was admitted to hospital at Armentiers listed simply as "Sick".

The Auckland Star reports:

"In a recent letter he stated that after reaching Marseilles they were conveyed by train for about 60 hours through France before reaching their destination. They then billeted at a farm some 15 to 20 miles from the firing line, to which he expected to be sent a few days afterwards. Several Birkenhead "boys" were together with him."

At some time between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July George was admitted to hospital in the field, suffering a gunshot wound of right leg and a fractured femur.

Not even a year since leaving New Zealand, he died at 2.35pm on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1916 at the casualty clearing station.

George Hall is buried at the Bailleul [Bay-yule] Communal Cemetery Extension, in Nord, France (which is near the Belgium border).

**John Gifford Wilmot Parsons (aka Jack)** was born in Wellington in June 1896, the son of Margaret and James. By 1905 the Electoral Rolls show the family at Mayfield and family lore suggests they chose Glenfield to start a business growing Ramie (a natural fibre) however the venture was not a success and they packed up and moved to Devonport. Jack was schooled here and then at Auckland Grammar.

The obituary in the Grammar chronicle reads:

PRIVATE JOHN GIFFORD WILMOTT PARSONS, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. W. Parsons, of Victoria Road, was born at Devonport, and attended Devonport Public School before entering the Grammar School in 1910. He was a boy of much literary ability, and won the second prize for languages in IIB., and the first prizes in IV.C. and V.B. He also had well-developed artistic feeling, wrote a beautiful hand, and won both the junior and senior writing prizes at the School; he sketched well, and his skill in modelling had made his friends think of allowing him to devote his future to the sculptor's art. He was a keen swimmer, and figured prominently on more than one occasion at the Calliope Dock. ~~He had a month's training in England, and had been in France just six weeks when he was killed in action in the battle of Messines.~~ After leaving School he held a cadetship in the office of the Town Clerk. The *Observer* had the

At the time of enlisting, Jack had a job as a clerk at the Chelsea Sugar Refinery. He stood 5'6" and weighed 9 stone (57kg). He had a fresh complexion, blue eyes and brown hair.

Tragically his soldiering life was a short one. After signing up in October of 1916, he lost his life in the field on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1917.

The Grammar chronicle says: He had a month's training in England and hav been in France just six weeks when he was killed in action in the battle of Messines.

Jack's army records contain the following eyewitness accounts of his death:

N. Z. Wellington Fm.

Parsons, J.C.W. 38741

K. 20-7-17

*a78103 #111  
Killed in action  
20 July/17 in the  
Dredger's Bay*

The only Parsons I knew was in the Wellington West Coast Company. He was a young chap - about 19 and rather short and thin. He was killed outright by a shell, hit in several places, about 300 yards behind our line in front of Ploegstreet, on or about 20th July. He was washing himself in a flooded shell crater at the time. It was a risky thing to do as there was a good deal of shelling going on. I saw him hit and I saw his body carried away by S/P G. Watt, Wellington West Coast Co. Hart is still with the En. and could probably give details of Parsons' burial. Mason was afterwards wounded and went to Hospital somewhere. Parsons would be buried at Ploegstreet, I expect. It was in the morning that he was killed.

Reference: Cpl. Contessa M/1421  
Wellington W. Coast Co.  
N. Z. IED.

NECESSARY  
APR 1918

New Zealand 2nd Well. Inf.      <sup>Clifford</sup> PARSONS, John Clifford Wilmot,  
3864I, 7 Coy.

K. July 20th / 17. Det D. 7 B.

I saw Parsons killed by a shell about July 20th near Messines, he was down in a crater having a wash, I was at the top of the crater when a shell dropped right into it and killed him at once. It happened about mid-day. His body was taken back to Prowse Point and buried in the military cemetery there. He was in 7 Coy. I Ptn. He was in the rifle section.

Eye-witness: Yes

Description: Young chap, about 20, 5'4 or 5'5, medium complexion, clean-shaven, he spoke very good French.

Informant: Pte. Thomas Bailey Wilson, 33492,  
N.Z. 2nd Well. Inf. 7 Coy. I Ptn,  
Tooting Military Hospital, London.

Home Address: 18 Jessie Street, Wellington.

18th Feb. 1918.

a 213 103 - Killed in action 20 July 1917 in The Field France or Belgium

J. H. W. Parsons. (4)  
86 Ticksaw Rd.  
Devonport Auckland



To the burial in Belgium  
I have been seen in London  
I was seen in Belgium  
Maanie

28.6.18

Staples  
21-1-18

*Parsons Gen. 38741  
6/27/18*

Parsons belonged to the West Coast Co. We had just shifted into the supports at Ploegstreet. The day after he got in he was down washing at the mine crater when a shell came and burst near him. He got the full force of it and was wounded all over. We heard the shell burst and saw him drop face down in the water. Peter McLachlan (now D/W) was the first man to run up to him, turned him over and saw he was dead. The Platoon QM Cpl. Contessa, took over his things. The body was removed by two stretcher bearers, Geo. Hart and Tiny Cottell and was probably taken to Prowse Point or Charing Cross Cemetery which were near.

Reference: Private W. E. Hastie 5/447  
West Coast Co.  
N. Z. I.R.D.

*a 48/03  
killed in action 20 July/17  
in the Field House on Belgium*

Staples  
22-1-18

FILE  
1-APR 1918  
NO ACTION NECESSARY  
*48/10*

Re J. B. W. Parsons 15th, July, 1917

At Ploegsteart (Red Lodge) when we were in the support line about 9 a.m. he went to wash in a crater; a shell came over and killed him instantly. I saw him killed and afterwards put on a stretcher. Geo. Hart was one of the stretcher bearers. He was buried in a small cemetery about 2 miles behind the line. He belonged to Devonport, Auckland.

Reference: Pte. J. H. McCorquodale 38732 No. 7 Coy.  
N. Z. I.R.D.

Staples 23rd Jan, 1918

*a 48/00 - killed in action 20 July/17  
in the Field House on Belgium*

NO ACTION NECESSARY  
*48 15-1-18*

The Observer printed the following obituary in August 1917...

Deep regret was felt at "the Shore" when it was known that Private **John Gifford Wilmot Parsons**.

N.Z. Infantry, had been killed in action. "Jack" was the only son of Mr Henry **Parsons**, of the Survey Dept., Auckland and Mrs **Parsons**, of Devonport. "Jack" seems to have been a schoolboy hardly longer than yesterday, a talented artistic and lovable youth of a singularly modest and retiring disposition and devoted to his parents. Like all the **Parsons** he was musical—he had music in his breast and was a gifted exponent. He was in great request in musical circles before he left N.Z. and helped to organise the many concerts on the troopship which took his reinforcement away. "Jack" had also a gift for modelling and many exquisite examples of his art are a valued family possession. His father is a fine singer and has exceptional ability as a painter. He belongs to the very well known "singing **Parsons**," of Wellington, a family well known and deeply respected for many years in the Capital City. Mrs W. F. **Parsons**, the grandmother of "Jack" resides at Lower Hutt.

Pte John Gifford Wilmot Parsons is buried at Mud Corner Cemetery. He was 21 years of age.

## Joseph Thomas Marshall

Born 8<sup>th</sup> July 1894 to Jacob and Catherine Marshall, fruit growers of Mayfield, Joseph was the second son. Of the 3 brothers who went off to war he was the only one who did not return home to his family.

The very sad thing was, he never even left New Zealand shores.

We know nothing of Joseph's younger years in the Glenfield area however we do know he was a member of the Eden Cadets in Auckland.

A small man, standing 5'5", he weighed 139 lb (just 63kg). He had a dark complexion, black hair and blue eyes.

He married Elizabeth Davies in Te Aroha in November 1915 and their first child, Thomas Henry was born there the following year. The family lived in Whittaker Street.

Records tell us he was a Fireman for the NZ Railways in Te Aroha when he was summoned by ballot for active service in April of 1917, aged 24 years.

Despite indicating he was willing to serve overseas he was volunteering for Home Service. His medical examination turned up the fact that he had flat feet and a weak ankle. He had received an injury to his left shin 7 years previous and had been off work for two months. He had difficulty in marching and with certain exercises.

Throughout 1917 there were a number of appeals and hearings regarding his medical status, and he was classified as fit C2, which meant: Free from serious organic diseases, able to stand service in garrisons at home. Able to walk 5 miles, see and hear sufficiently for ordinary purposes

In a revision by the medical board at Featherston camp in mid-1918 his progress was listed as "good" and that his leg "only affects him on very rough ground".

It is at this time that Elizabeth is listed as next of kin, but her address is given as Glenfield, Birkenhead, Auckland.

We can only surmise that at the time Joseph was sent to Wellington, Elizabeth headed north to stay with family and even, perhaps to give birth of their second child. We know from the army records that their daughter Gladys Eileen was born in Auckland, but as she does not appear on the NZ BDM index we can assume the 100 year privacy law applies and her birth was sometime between 1917 and 1918.

As if a world war was not enough, the other disaster to hit our shores at this time was the lethal influenza pandemic, which struck between October and December 1918. In two months, New Zealand lost about half as many people to influenza as it had in the whole of the First World War.

It was to this horrid disease that Joseph succumbed.

But in the cruellest twist of fate, while the world was about to be told that the war had ended and the Armistice was about to be declared, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918, at 6.48pm, Corporal Joseph Thomas Marshall died of influenza pneumonia at Trentham military hospital.

He is buried at the Wellington (Karori) Cemetery.

**Lawrence William Read** born 26 July 1894, and **Claude Raymond Read** born in Auckland on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1895, were the middle and youngest of 3 sons of Betsy and William Read of Mt Eden.

William is listed as the boy's next of kin, living at Pencarrow Avenue Mt Eden, and both Lawrence and Claude give Pencarrow Ave as their address on enlistment. Earlier electoral rolls also show William as living in Mt Eden.

This family is one of our mysteries as nothing found as yet indicates conclusively that they were in the Glenfield district, however, Betsy's maiden name was Kendall, and there are Kendalls on the electoral rolls living in Mayfield. This may well be the connection.

**Lawrence William Read** signed his attestation papers and enlisted in Trentham on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1914 as a current serving member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Auckland Regiment.

He was a Clerk for the United Insurance Company in Fort Street Auckland. At 5'8" tall, he weighed 126 lb (57kg), had a fair complexion, blue eyes, dark brown hair, and good teeth. There were no other remarkable medical conditions.

Lawrence left New Zealand as a corporal in one of the early contingents, arriving in Egypt on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1915 where he was attached to Staff HQ, and was given the temporary rank of Sergeant in the February. His promotion through the non-commissioned grades was rapid and he was discharged from the NZEF on 19 April 1915 when he was granted an Imperial Commission with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Essex Regiment as temporary acting 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, and fought for some time in Gallipoli and the western front.

The Auckland War Memorial Online Cenotaph states in its biographical information: "According to his surviving brother, Sgt George Edward Read, Horrie had wanted to be where the action was... and so transferred into Essex Regiment".

The Essex Regiment War Diary records that Lawrence was wounded between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August 1915 but recovered and served for a further 16 months.

An excerpt from the War Diary dated 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> December 1916 records: "to firing line in front of Les Boeufs, relieved 4<sup>th</sup> Worcesters, weather very bad, trenches in very bad condition. Lieut Read killed".

Lt. Lawrence William Read was killed in action on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1916 and is honoured on the Thiépval Memorial, Somme, France. He was 22 years of age.

**Claude Raymond Read** was an Insurance clerk and Surveyor for the Royal Insurance Co Ltd in Auckland.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1916 the Auckland Star reported:

The Auckland district's quota for the 19<sup>th</sup> Reinforcement draft and the probationary non-commissioned officers for the 20<sup>th</sup> and succeeding reinforcements will leave for the various camps on Tuesday next by three trains during the day. The men from the City group will assemble at the Drill Hall, Rutland Street at 9.30am and after the roll-call will be dismissed till 1.30pm when they will again fall in prior to marching to the train. Farewell addresses will be delivered before their departure. The platform at the railway station will not be open to the public until after the men have deposited their luggage on the train. The men going south are advised to provide themselves with rugs to ensure comfort in the colder parts of the journey.

Following in his brother's footsteps, Claude signed his attestation papers in Trentham on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1916 while still serving with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Signallers.

Also 5'8" tall, but weighing heavier at 138 lbs (63kg), Claude had a medium complexion, blue eyes and dark brown hair. (But no mention of his teeth!).

Claude left Wellington mid-November of 1916 and marched into Sling camp at the end of January, however, unlike his brother, he never saw active service due to a series of illnesses...

By April, he was admitted to hospital in Brockenhurst with Bronchitis, transferred to hospital in Hornchurch in June, was back in Brockenhurst in December with a Nasal Obstruction, and by February 1918 was placed on the Dangerously Ill List with Meningitis.

He was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley on 16<sup>th</sup> February where he died on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. (Thinking Day for those Girl Guides and Boy Scouts amongst us).

Pte Claude Raymond Read is buried in the Parish Churchyard of St Nicholas in Brockenhurst, England.

**Frederick Sturge Redfern** was born 27 March 1892, the youngest of nine children to Alice Mary and George.

Early electoral rolls show George as a photographer, initially in Eden Terrace and later from Hellyer's Creek. By the time Frederick enlisted his mother was widowed and had moved the family to Greenhithe.

At 5'7", and 150 lbs (68kg), Frederick was of fair complexion, with brown eyes and dark brown hair. He had good teeth and no other remarkable medical conditions.

Aged 22 on enlistment, Frederick was a Farmer at Wainoni and had been enlisted for compulsory military training in Takapuna.

As a Lance Corporal he joined the main body of the Auckland Mounted Rifles and with several hundred other men, including his brother Arthur, was sent to the mobilisation camp at Epsom (Alexandra Park) in August of 1914.

Frederick and Arthur, a Quartermaster Sergeant with the Auckland Mounted Rifles, departed Wellington on 16 October 1914, arriving Suez at the beginning of December.

We know Arthur contracted Malaria in the middle of July 1915, but rejoined his unit 2 weeks later. It appears the boys fought side by side until the 15<sup>th</sup> August when Trooper Frederick Sturge Redfern was killed in action at the Dardanelles.

I will now read a letter Arthur sent home to "Ella". We are unsure exactly who Ella was, but she was obviously a very special family friend...

2022/648/9

SUEZ,

2nd September, 1915.

Dear Ella,

I am very much afraid that the bad news this letter contains is only too true. We have been fighting lately on a scale hitherto unknown on Gallipoli. Whole regiments have been practically exterminated, hardly a man left untouched, and the A. M. R. has been no exception. Those who were not killed or wounded in the scrap that started on 6th September were put into it again about a fortnight later, or rather about a week after the main slather up, and finished off. I was slightly wounded on Sunday the 8th and sent to hospital in Cairo. Fred was going strong when I left and got through that scrap untouched, only to be killed in the later fight, such was the information I got just before I left Cairo. Col. Mackay told me, he got it from Sgt. Major Manners who helped to carry him out of the trench. Fred was engaged with Corp. Barnes in throwing dead Turks out of a captured trench when they were both shot. It is deuced hard. Hard luck for Fred, but harder for Mother. It will just about kill her. I am being sent home for a change and I think my presence at home may make things somewhat lighter for the Mater. I had only reported fit for duty after the malaria four days when I got smacked. That Sunday was the most awful day I ever lived through, and I never want to see another like it. I got a rifle bullet through the muscle of my right shoulder. It is nothing serious, but all of us who have been through the whole Gallipoli campaign and have been wounded have been sent either to England or New Zealand.

I can hardly realise that Fred is gone. He was the best trooper I had in the Squadron and now he is dead, and the rest of the Squadron are either dead or in hospital. If there was any shortage of men for fatigue Fred was always there to help, and he more than looked after me when I returned from Lemnos hospital after the malaria. Well, Ella, Fred has died doing his duty as a soldier.

It was more by good luck than management that I escaped doing the same. I had two bullets through the shade on the back of my cap, and the man next me was killed, but I got out with only a flesh wound.

I don't know how long I will be at home but I can only hope that this war will soon end. I feel that my place is at home with Mother, but I am afraid that I will be needed again to do some more of this ghastly work. I have seen enough of the glory of war but where duty calls a soldier must go.

I won't be sorry to see the last of Egypt for a while with its niggers, heat, flies, and sand. I can do with a spell. My wound is nearly healed but I feel just as weary as I know how to and I long for a sight of home and Mother. Well Ella, I know you were fond of Fred but don't grieve, I know it is hard and he was a good lad, but a soldier could not die for a better cause, or in a better way.

Address the next letter to me care of Mother.

I remain ever

Your sincere friend,

ARTHUR J.

**Frederick Joseph Wheeler** born 4<sup>th</sup> August 1894, was one of 6 children to Helen and Frederick of Glenfield. Local fruitgrowers, Fred worked the farm with his father as an orchardist.

Together with his mates mentioned earlier, Fred nipped across to the Drill Hall in Rutland Street Auckland in July of 1915 and was accepted medically fit as a recruit for the reinforcement drafts of the NZ Expeditionary Force.

At 5'7" and 11 stone (70kg), he was of fair complexion, with brown eyes and dark brown hair. It is noted he had a lower rubber plate and otherwise "good" teeth. He presented with a scar on his right side, having suffered from a Hernia "6 weeks ago". He was however deemed fit for service.

Fred was an active member of the Waitemata Cricket Club, and also played in the Waitemata hockey team. He was educated at the Glenfield public school and was a member of the "Coast Defence, Auckland". It is said he was always keenly interested in military matters.

He left NZ with the 8<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements.

We have to be very grateful for the journalists of the time... the Auckland Star printed the following:

Private F. J. Wheeler, of Glenfield, writing from France on May 5, says:—  
 "We have been in the trenches, but our battalion has now been relieved for a short spell. I must say our neighbour, Fritz, makes himself very disagreeable. During the time we were there, we had a little bit of everything, i.e., rifle and machine-gun fire, artillery fire, and gas attack. The artillery fire is the worst of all, by far. Tom Forrest and I are still 'on deck,' and quite well. George Hall has a slight rash on the arm. I went through the trenches to Eric Monteith's company, but did not see him. He was at a sniping school, it seems.' I saw Jim Edmunds, also Alec. Forbes, who asked to be remembered to you. We are at present quartered in what has been a lovely French town. It is one of the towns that suffered so much at the Germans' hands earlier in the war, and, in fact, is still within range of their guns. The town is, of course, half deserted. It is only after seeing these places that one can realise what a terrible thing war is. Just fancy Auckland in such a state. We all hope to be home by Christmas." ~~The writer has~~

At some time between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July Frederick was admitted to hospital in the field, suffering a gunshot wound of left leg – fractured.

At 3.40am on 5<sup>th</sup> July, Pte F.J. Wheeler died of his wounds.

Is this sounding familiar? Remember Fred's mate George Hall who died 4<sup>th</sup> July of a fractured femur?

They played together as kids, joined up together, fought alongside each other and died within a day of each other.

Both are buried at Bailleul [*Bay-yule*] Communal Cemetery Extension, in Nord, France.

**Edward Watson Edmonds (aka Eddie)** was the second son of Edwin and Eleanor, and brother to William, Arthur and James.

**James Frederick Edmonds (aka Jim)** was the twin brother of Arthur and these two were the youngest of the family.

Oddly, both boys give their birth year as 1893 on their attestation papers, with one being born in June and the other in December! (NZ Birth Register records give Edward's date of birth as 29 June 1892)

The Edmonds family are well known and documented in the Glenfield area, and we have been fortunate to have had correspondence with Eddie's granddaughter, Mrs Helen Benton. Unfortunately Helen can't be with us this morning, however, in 2006 she delivered a tribute to the Edmonds family at the local Glenfield ANZAC parade and I am going to read some of that here.

Eddie and Jim died within a month of each other, and most cruelly, within a month of Armistice Day. There were four sons in this family – three went to war and one stayed home to support the family. Only ~~one brother~~, the eldest, ~~our~~ Uncle Willie, returned. ~~This devastation of a family was not unusual during that war.~~

Great-Grandfather Edwin Edmonds ~~had emigrated from England~~ and Great-Grandmother Eleanor ~~from northern Ireland.~~ They married in Auckland, bought land in Mayfield (later Glenfield) and built a house which still stands today in Stanley Road and that was where their four boys were brought up. They all went to Mayfield School which was a bit of a walk through Manuka lined tracks. Their mother was a devout woman who no doubt expected her boys to attend the Sunday School classes that she gave at her home until the Mission Hall was built. As was common in the community, their social life centred around the church.

Like many early settlers in Glenfield, the Edmonds were market gardeners and it seems as if William, the eldest son, began a carrying business at quite a young age. There was a great need for such a business with all the produce grown in the area having to be transported to the Birkenhead ferry and over to the Auckland markets. Our grandfather Eddie noted on his enlistment form that he was a driver for his brother William.

*(Le Kinwah)*

James, our great-uncle was just about to turn 25 when he died on November 4, 1918 at Le Quesnoy in northern France. He was a Corporal. Le Quesnoy was captured by the New Zealand division on that day. James and his twin brother Arthur were the youngest in the family and he enlisted when he was 20. Although our generation does not know much about him, we have been able to draw from diaries written by Chrissie Runcieman (later Gregory), who although they were not officially betrothed, was his special girlfriend. Following are quotes from her diaries, *'The battle of the Somme swelled the casualty lists and almost every day there was someone's name that you knew and loved.*

*My boyfriend was wounded and one of my cousins died of wounds. But still life had to go on.... I used to get a letter from Jim that he wrote, one each week, but sometimes they would arrive four or more by the same mail, so he numbered them so I knew which order to read and understand them. For three and a half years his weekly letters would arrive in due course. (The mails were very erratic and the letters were all censored so we had no way of knowing what part of the world they had gone to.) The only time he didn't write was when he was badly wounded on the Somme and was ultimately sent to England where he spent almost all the rest of the time. At first I received short notes written for him by kind visitors who would help patients, both by writing for them and reading to them when their mail arrived.... He was moved from one hospital to another until at last he was able to pass the fitness test and was moved to Sling Camp where all the rehabilitated wounded were retrained for the trenches again.*

*It was a strange experience living through that time, because we were all seemingly in two lives at once; one the daily life that had to keep going and behind it all the war which took all our real thoughts and interests, our loves and fears.'*

Finally her father delivered the news that Jim, who had just returned to the trenches in time for the last battle of the war, the battle of Le Quesnoy, was killed in action. Chrissie writes *'I don't remember any more of that day. I was glad it was not 'Died of Wounds' because he had had enough of the suffering so long. And I didn't cry. I was just frozen inside. Next day I walked down to see his mother...Life was never the same again...'*

Rifleman Edward Watson Edmonds died 8<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and is buried at the Naves Communal Cemetery extension.

Corporal James Frederick Edmonds died 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and is buried at Le Quesnoy Communal Cemetery Extension.

**Adderley James Willcocks** was born in Napier in 1894 to Emily and William, and was one of seven children.

He attended Auckland Grammar School and at the time of joining up he was a Driver for a Mr Rennie in Te Kuiti.

The Auckland Star reports he had been getting farm experience as a cadet since the time he left the Grammar School on to the time of his enlistment.

Private A. J. Willcocks, son of Mr. Willcocks, of Fairfax Road, Epsom, entered the School from Bayfield School in February, 1910. He was a member of the Main Expeditionary Force, and was killed in the landing at Gaba Tepe. He was in the Modern Third of 1910, and left before the end of the third term to go farming.

(Bayfield school is in Herne Bay).

There is only one mention I can find of this family being local, and that is the Public Trust probate notice in the NZ Gazette of 1899 for Adderley's father. Under the heading "Colonial Residence" it gives "Birkenhead".

Adderley left Auckland with the 3<sup>rd</sup> reinforcement draft and at Trentham was drafted into the Canterbury Infantry Battalion. He served with them in Turkey.

He is reported wounded in hospital in Malta, and a later report says he was recently admitted to hospital suffering from acute rheumatism, though the official word that came through regarding his inclusion in the casualty list stated that he had been wounded. He has since completely recovered and has returned to the trenches.

Pte Adderley James Willcocks was killed in action at the Dardanelles on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1915.

He is remembered at the Chunuk Bair (NZ) Memorial.

