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Viewpoints on the Veldt: Attitudes and Opinions of New Zealand Soldiers during the South African War, 1899-1902

A thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to take a critical look at the attitudes and beliefs of New Zealander who served in the South African War, 1899-1902, through a close and critical reading of letters, diaries and reminiscences written by over 60 soldiers during and after the conflict. This was intended to correct social myths and historical distortions revolving around the soldiers and their experiences in South Africa, and to reveal the diversity of attitudes expressed by historical actors rather than continuing to see attitudes in generalised and popular terms.

The thesis is structured thematically, with the first chapter analysing attitudes to writing, followed by two chapters concerning attitudes to people - the Others encountered while at war and themselves and their own identity - while chapter four investigates attitudes about the war itself, their motivations, and the duties required of them. The results revealed that the attitudes of the New Zealanders cannot be generalised to the degree attempted by many scholarly works and that, in most cases, dissenting opinions are displayed regarding the topics analysed. The implication of this thesis is that research into the historical past is made richer by taking a microhistorical approach, and by acknowledging contradictory and competing beliefs and individual thoughts, rather than propagating unproblematised social myths.

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Introduction

Introduction

Nearly 6500 New Zealanders travelled to South Africa between 1899 and 1902 to take part in the fighting between the British Army and the Boers republics. This thesis is aimed at revealing the lived experiences and thoughts of some of these New Zealand soldiers who served in the South African War. It seeks to compare widely-held generalisations and assumptions about their experiences in the army and attitudes about the war with the broadly different experiences and attitudes revealed in their personal writings.

Thesis Topic and Main Argument

Discovering what New Zealand soldiers thought about their circumstances, their duties, the people around them, and about themselves, through a reading of their letters, diaries and reminiscences, is an important project. There is a lack of scholarship about the mentality and opinions of New Zealand soldiers, in particular during the South African War, and this is reason enough for this investigation, even without taking into account how such a study can broaden and improve popular, and often simplified, historical depictions. In addition, it contributes to both New Zealand social and military history.

A central purpose of this thesis, following the advice of British historian and historiographer John Tosh, is to look past the distorting effects of 'social memory' – born of tradition and nostalgia, and which is about 'belief, not enquiry' – and challenge socially motivated misrepresentations of the past.¹ Military historian Michael Howard also thought that the historian must discover and record the 'complicated and disagreeable realities of the past regardless of

¹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2002), pp. 20-21.

their implications for social myths.² The call for a broader and more nuanced engagement with New Zealand military history by Deborah Montgomerie, a New Zealand historian whose interests include war and society, must, of course, also be recognised as an important influence on this thesis: she wrote that ‘the role of the historian is fundamentally hermeneutic... Commemorating and memorializing war requires that we approach these sources with respect but does not preclude analysis.’³ With regard to New Zealand participation in the South African War this involves a reading and analysis of personal documents and the investigation of common themes, to discover individual points of view about issues, rather than examining more traditional scholarly narratives.⁴ This thesis does not intend to find ‘typical’ soldier beliefs, but to demonstrate common patterns as well as idiosyncratic accounts, to compare similarities and differences in experiences, and to reveal individual identifications.

The investigation of the relation between the soldiers’ attitudes and opinions and those of public mythologies surrounding the New Zealand troopers follows the lead of works by historians Alistair Thomson and James Burns, as well as Nicholas Boyack. Both Thomson and Burns used individual memories and writings, the former through oral interviews with World War One Australian diggers and the latter through the personal documents of South African War Kiwi soldiers, to debunk public myths about the soldiers, their qualities, and their attitudes.⁵ The New Zealand and Australian myths about soldiers, eventually coming under the ‘Anzac myth’, were very similar, emphasising the troopers’

² David Curtis Skaggs, ‘Michael Howard and the Dimensions of Military History’, *Military Affairs*, 49, 4 (October 1985), pp. 179-183 (p. 179).

³ Deborah Montgomerie, ‘Reconnaissance: Twentieth-Century New Zealand War History at Century’s Turn’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 37, 1 (2003), pp. 62-79 (p. 71).

⁴ While this type of study has not been performed about New Zealanders and the Boer War, similar works have been written about other conflicts and armed forces: for example, Nicholas Boyack, *Behind the Lines: The Lives of New Zealand Soldiers in the First World War* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1989), and Paul A. Cimbala, *Soldiers North and South: The Everyday Experiences of the Men Who Fought America’s Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

⁵ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994). James Robert Burns, ‘“New Zealanders” at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902’ (unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University, 1996).

enterprise, independence, loyalty, courage, egalitarianism, and cheerful ill-discipline when out of the line.

Limitations of Thesis

The primary limitation of this thesis concerns the representativeness of the sources. The representativeness of the personal documents, especially of the letters, is problematic for a number of reasons. The first reason is that the initial stock of documents does not represent the writings of all New Zealand soldiers because not all soldiers wrote letters home.⁶ This could have been the result of illiteracy, severed family ties leaving the soldier with no one to write to, or a dislike for writing.⁷ The same goes for the representativeness of diaries, since only a minority of soldiers bothered to keep one during the war. Second, the representativeness of the sources is problematic because of the limited number of sources surviving, with only a minority of the original letters and diaries (or copies of the same) preserved in archives. Third, in the case of the letters from soldiers, only a single side of a usually two-way exchange is accessible. The loss of the other side of the correspondence can influence readers' understandings of the remaining letters and present difficulties of interpretation.

Other limitations are inherent in the reading of the sources. For example, there is the possibility that some soldiers practised self-censorship (rather than official censorship, which was not enforced during the South African War), and that this could influence the attitudes displayed in their writings.⁸ In addition, historians need to be aware of issues of accuracy and veracity in letters and diaries. There are also limitations on interpretation and understanding resulting from changes in language and phraseology between the late-nineteenth century and the

⁶ In addition, the 'New Zealand soldiers' studied were not necessarily New Zealand-born, e.g. Corporal Claude Lockhart Jewell, Captain Montagu Cradock, and Lieutenant Colonels Stuart Newall and William Messenger.

⁷ As it is, the level of literacy in the sources examined varies widely, from extensive and eloquent to writings relying on a rudimentary literacy and resulting limited vocabulary.

⁸ Gavin McLean, "'Excuse the pencil but the ink bottle is full of flies" – writing in wartime', in *The Penguin Book of New Zealanders at War*, ed. by Gavin McLean and Ian Gibbons with Kynan Gentry (North Shore: Penguin Group, 2009), pp. 15-26 (p. 21).

present day, some of which cannot be reconciled through historical research. Reminiscences also have problems when it comes to their reading by researchers, however, nothing that critical thinking and an awareness of the problems cannot overcome to maintain their usefulness for historical scholarship. Historians analysing autobiographical writings need to be aware of issues of accuracy and reliability, including the possibility of author reticence, forgetfulness or inaccuracy of memory, exaggeration, or self-delusion.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Although this thesis recognises that the history discipline is a contested area and has been, and continues to be, shaped by a range of theories and methodologies of varying value and significance, the approach adopted in this study does not focus on any theory, but is informed to a greater and lesser extent by a variety. This study makes mention of, and quotes, authors, belonging to different epochs and, indeed, from disciplines other than history, but does not present a history of thought. Authors are invoked according to the requirements of the discussion, without concern for his or her epoch.

As with any historical investigation of worth, this thesis is influenced by the so-called 'linguistic turn'; the recognition that history is a narrative about the past written in the here and now, rather than some distanced mirror of it, and that history can have plural, mutable readings and interpretations. The past is a narrative and literary construction of the historian, with history's textual representation shaped by dominant ideologies. This idea is directly relevant to the analysis of the public image of the New Zealand soldier and the mythology of New Zealand military abilities which were constructed in the early twentieth century. It is also germane because of the emphasis on language as a system of

signification and the importance of taking due care with the use of language (both in terms of interpretation and composition).⁹

However, this thesis does not presuppose the poststructuralist extreme of manifest subjectivity of interpretation, instability of language and indeterminacy of meaning, instead taking the 'Practical Realist' approach of historians such as Joyce Appleby and others.¹⁰ This approach acknowledges that language is an invented human convention but one 'that had been developed through an interaction with the objective world' and a reality which is independent of the human mind, leaving open the possibility that meaning can be recovered from the evidence with a degree of conformance to an actual, lived past reality, and a degree of 'objectivity'.¹¹

Microhistory

The methodology used for this study is based, in part, on the idea of microhistory, the unifying principle of which, according to historian Giovanni Levi, is 'the belief that microhistorical observation will reveal factors previously unobserved.'¹² A microhistorical framework gives us the ability to observe what Levi calls 'the irreducibility of individual persons to the rules of large-scale systems.'¹³ Social historian István Szijártó offers four reasons why microhistory is a useful way of approaching history: it makes interesting and more readable history; it is based on the 'little facts', and therefore is more concrete, relying firmly on Roland Barthes' 'reality effect'; it can convey lived experience on the

⁹ For more on the linguistic turn and the question of narrative, see, for example: Hayden White, 'The Historical Text as Literary Artefact', in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. by Robert Danary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 41-62. Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 204-211. Elizabeth Ann Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), pp. 247-251.

¹¹ Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, pp. 247, 268

¹² Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (Unveristy Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 93-113 (p. 95).

¹³ Levi, 'On Microhistory', p. 95.

micro-level, investigating history through the experiences of individuals; and, it links the individual case to the general, presenting a diversity of contexts within the frame of a relatively limited investigation.¹⁴ In the introduction to their work *The Myths We Live By*, historians Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson write about this linking of the individual to the general, pointing out that the study of the individuality of each life can show 'the construction of consciousness, emphasising both the variety of experience in any social group, and also how each individual story draws on a common culture.'¹⁵ In the words of New Zealand historian Peter Gibbons, microhistory allows the historian to discover what the tribulations of individuals 'indicate about the attitudes, beliefs, mentality and values of communities or classes or local institutions.'¹⁶

Using Personal Documents (Letters, Diaries, Reminiscences)

Scholars have written much about the usefulness of reading personal documents in the course of empirical historical research. Irina Paperno, professor of Slavic languages and literature, writes that, in many ways, diaries and letters are similar: they are both 'archived intimate writings of potential historical as well as literary value.'¹⁷ The similarity between them has resulted in comparable writings about the use of letters and diaries for research purposes.

The primary usefulness of personal documents is that they have an immediacy and intimacy that can bring the historian closer to the person who wrote them,

¹⁴ István Szijártó, 'Four Arguments for Microhistory', *Rethinking History*, 6, 2 (2001), pp. 209-215. For more on the 'reality effect', on how realism is created through description, see, Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', *French Literary Theory Today*, trans. by Tzvetan Todorov (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 11-17.

¹⁵ Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, 'Introduction', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 1-22 (p. 2).

¹⁶ Peter Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 37, 1 (2003), pp. 38-47 (p. 45). Also of importance to this thesis is Gibbons' explanation that 'New Zealand' is a discursive construction, 'a shorthand device for referring to a multiplicity of places, people, products, practices and histories', and that 'New Zealand national identity' is likewise a discursive construction rather than something that develops 'naturally.' Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity', p. 2.

¹⁷ Irina Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', *Russian Review*, 63, 4 (October 2004), pp. 561-573 (p. 561).

and the way of thinking of that person.¹⁸ This goes beyond the simplistic, but still appealing and valuable, idea of 'looking over someone's shoulder, seeing what we're not supposed to see.'¹⁹ As suggested by Peter Gibbons, microhistory, especially using personal documents, is an excellent approach to *histories des mentalités*, the 'history of world-views' or 'history of mentalities'.²⁰ Burns thinks, and this thesis agrees, that the 'definite immediacy' of letters and diaries can reveal the views, attitudes and underlying beliefs of the author.²¹ Historian Miriam Dobson has also written that the study of letters 'enriches our understanding of past mentalities, allowing us to understand more fully the way in which individuals create their own place in the world', by permitting the historian access to people's experiences and thoughts.²² Frances Porter and Charlotte MacDonald likewise find letters important sources for studying the history of 'inner lives' rather than merely descriptions of 'outer life.'²³ Reminiscences are also useful sources for the study of mentalities, as historian Jennifer Jensen Wallach has explained: autobiography could provide a 'unique window into the interplay of thoughts and feelings, into how the universe felt from one particular point of view' and that the study of the individual thoughts, perceptions and misperceptions were constitutive of the 'historical reality' of a

¹⁸ Steven Stowe, 'Making Sense of Letters and Diaries', from the *Making Sense of History Series, History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web* [<http://historymatters.gmu.edu>], July 2002, p. 1.

¹⁹ Patricia Meyer Spacks and Bruce Redford (introduction), 'How to Read a Diary', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 56, 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 45-62 (p. 48). Although they were focusing on the diary genre, the historian can use all personal documents to imaginatively share the experiences of people in the past, to 'participate intimately in another's life.' Spacks and Redford, 'How to Read a Diary', p. 48.

²⁰ For a classic formulation, see Marc Bloch, 'Memoire collective, tradition et coutumes', *Revue de synthèse historique*, 40 (December 1925), pp. 73-83.

²¹ Burns, p. 6. Letters and diaries, generally, have this 'immediacy' because they are composed in the midst of experiences, without a lot of retrospection or the benefit of later understanding. Samuel Hynes, 'Personal narratives and commemoration', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205-220 (p. 207). Christa Hämmerle (translation by Andrew Evans), 'Diaries', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 141-158 (p. 142).

²² Miriam Dobson, 'Letters', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 57-73 (p. 64).

²³ Frances Porter and Charlotte MacDonald (eds.), *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates: The Unsettled Lives of Women in nineteenth-century New Zealand as revealed to sisters, family and friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), pp. 12-13.

particular moment.²⁴ In some cases the retrospection available to authors of reminiscences is an advantage, although they are also constrained by concerns that necessarily preoccupy autobiographers and not the authors of letters and diaries.²⁵ Primary sources aid in the historian's development of R.G. Collingwood's 'historical sensibility' or 'historical sense': the emotional and intellectual ability to envision the past through the eyes of those who lived it, a requirement for historians before they can criticise sources and describe past realities.²⁶

Historian David Ransel's discussion of the 'dull dailiness' – the mundane tasks of everyday life – reported in diaries, and the use of this to recreate the subject's life as part of a community through microhistorical study, is also relevant to this thesis.²⁷ He thinks a close study of a community such as this can be used to 'test the macrohistorical observations that inform the grand narrative' and discover 'social dynamics that not only do not appear in the larger picture but that may even be incommensurable with it.'²⁸ Likewise, Montgomerie approves of the study and interpretations of primary sources to tease out the interplay between 'cultural script' and personal experience.²⁹ The testing of macrohistorical assumptions and generalisations is an important aspect of this thesis.

Diaries, and letters, are useful both for 'the inconsistent detail, the residual reminder, the wild deviation' and for 'the ordinary, the mundane, and the regular that are in fact the hallmarks of the diary genre.'³⁰ However, awareness must be maintained about the truthfulness of personal documents.³¹ This goes

²⁴ Jennifer Jensen Wallach, 'Building a Bridge of Words: The Literary Autobiography as Historical Resource Material', *Biography*, 29, 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 446-461 (pp. 447-448).

²⁵ Jeremy Popkin, 'Historians on the Autobiographical Frontier', *American Historical Review*, 104, 3 (June 1999), pp. 725-748 (p. 726).

²⁶ R.G. Collingwood, 'Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycle', in *The Modern Historiography Reader*, ed. by Adam Budd (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 245-256 (p. 247).

²⁷ David L. Ransel, 'The Diary of a Merchant: Insights into Eighteenth-Century Plebeian Life', *Russian Review*, 63, 4 (October 2004), pp. 594-608 (p. 600).

²⁸ Ransel, 'The Diary of a Merchant', p. 600.

²⁹ Montgomerie, 'Reconnaissance', p. 71.

³⁰ Kathryn Carter, 'Death and the Diary, or Tragedies in the Archive', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 40, 2 (Spring 2006), pp. 42-59 (p. 48).

³¹ An awareness of what in studies of the diary genre has been called the 'myth of genuineness' and the 'myth of the veridical diary', the close connection with 'truthfulness' the diary has developed in popular imagination. Bernard Duyfhuizen, 'Diary Narratives in Fact and Fiction',

especially for autobiographical writing, as noted by sociologist Jean Peneff, who wrote that 'no life story should be taken a priori to be an authentic account', and that historians should always 'judge the degree of distortion, the strength of the refraction.'³²

Also of relevance to this thesis, especially the third chapter about New Zealand soldiers' identity and perceptions of self, is historian Jochen Hellbeck's notion that 'ego documents', such as diaries and memoirs, reveal testimony about 'self' and how it acquires a particular meaning in a given historical context.³³ Letters can similarly reveal attitudes about 'self', as well as, in sociologist Liz Stanley's words, act as a 'form of flight', containing 'traces' of a person for the historian to discover and analyse.³⁴

Studying personal documents is appealing because it begins from the assumption that the subjects, in this case New Zealand soldiers during the Boer War, were 'autonomous historical actors' who had 'the potential to shape, not simply respond to, their environment.'³⁵ Among the reasons provided by anthropologist Pat Caplan for the importance of personal narratives is the value of 'author

Novel: A forum on Fiction, 19, 2 (1986), pp. 171-178., and Lawrence Rosenwald, 'Some Myths about Diaries', *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 6, 3 (1987), pp. 97-112., quoted in Carter, 'Death and the Diary, or Tragedies in the Archive', p. 48.

³² Jean Peneff, 'Myths in Life Stories', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 36-48 (p. 41). See also, Francis R. Hart, 'Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography', *New Literary History*, 1, 3 (Spring 1970), pp. 485-511 (p. 486), who calls truth 'a definitive but elusive autobiographical intention.' Related to this is Philippe Lejeune's idea of the 'autobiographical pact', the belief that an autobiographer is always, by necessity, honest with his reader, even if what he says is almost always less than the truth. Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris, Seuil, 1975), pp. 13-46, quoted in Marc Eli Blanchard, 'The Critique of Autobiography', *Comparative Literature*, 34, 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 97-115 (p. 98).

³³ Jochen Hellbeck, 'The Diary Between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response', *Russian Review*, 63, 4 (October 2004), pp. 621-629 (p. 623). Anthropologist Pat Caplan also thinks that personal narratives (in the article, oral histories) are important partly because of what they reveal about the construction of self and the relationship between the individual and society. Pat Caplan, 'Anthropology, History and Personal Narratives: Reflections on Writing "African Voices, African Lives"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 9 (1999), pp. 42-59 (p. 290).

³⁴ Liz Stanley, 'The Epistolarium: On Theorizing Letters and Correspondences', *Auto/Biography*, 12 (2004), pp. 201-235 (pp. 223-224).

³⁵ An approach propounded by historian Aaron Sheehan-Dean in his excellent edited study of the U.S. Civil War. Aaron Sheehan-Dean, 'Introduction', *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. by Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), pp. 1-8 (p. 2).

representation', giving voice to the subject, and because it helps prevent the objectification of this subject by the researcher.³⁶ Irina Paperno also thinks that personal documents such as diaries are records of the authors' experiences that allow the 'subjects to speak', and not to read them as such would be to deny people their capacity for speech.³⁷

Burns' Thesis as Foundation

James Robert Burns' 1996 thesis, *"New Zealanders" at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902*, analysed the letters and diaries of 44 New Zealand soldiers (many of which have been re-examined for this study), with the aim of evaluating the extent to which their sentiments bear out the popular myths about Zealand's servicemen in South Africa. Burns concludes that the personal documents do not support these popular beliefs, and that the public images around New Zealand soldiers were even more clearly 'invented' than historians had previously thought, having been invented and propagated by the country's dominant elite. Aspects of Burns' study relate directly to sections of this thesis, particularly his investigation of soldier identity and identifications, and comments on views about the Boers, about motivation, and about the morality of anti-guerrilla measures. Recognising the importance of his work, the following chapters will, when required, enhance, refine and critique the conclusions drawn by Burns. In order to explicate an analysis of the sources it is necessary to summarise relevant information about the origins and course of the South African War.

³⁶ Caplan, 'Anthropology, History and Personal Narratives', p. 290. Although Caplan was writing about oral history, his points are also relevant to written personal narratives.

³⁷ Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', p. 573.

Summary of the South African War

The origins of the South African War – the conflict fought, primarily, between the British Empire and the two Boer republics (the South African Republic, also known as the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State), from 11 October 1899 to 31 May 1902 – were complex.³⁸ The war was the result of over a century of tension and conflict between the Boers and the British Empire.³⁹

Origins of the War

The Dutch East India Company established a permanent settlement at what is now Cape Town in the mid-seventeenth century, while British involvement began at the end of the eighteenth century as Dutch mercantile power waned. In 1806 the British conquered the Cape Colony, went on to formally acquire it after the Napoleonic Wars, and began to encourage the immigration of British settlers. Because of dissatisfaction with the British administration, including the abolition of slavery, many Boers decided to migrate away from British rule during the 1830s and 1840s in what became known as the Great Trek.⁴⁰ In the early- and mid-1850s the British recognised the two Boer republics established by the Voortrekkers, but annexed the Transvaal in 1877, causing resentment among the Boers, which resulted in the First Boer War (1880-81). The defeat of local imperial forces secured the Boers a limited form of independence.⁴¹

There was further destabilisation of the Transvaal after 1886 with the discovery of gold in the republic. There was an influx of thousands of prospectors and

³⁸ The war has been known by several names, including the Anglo-Boer War, the Second Boer War, and, by Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (the Second War of Independence) or *Engelse Oorlog* (the English War). However, it is now more acceptable to refer to it as the South African War in recognition of the fact that “not only the British and Boers participated and suffered, but all sectors of the subcontinent were affected – including its indigenous inhabitants.” Mike Dwight, *Walter Callaway: A Māori Warrior of the Boer War* (Hamilton: Mike Dwight, 2010), p. 14.

³⁹ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. xxi.

⁴⁰ Richard Stowers, *Rough Riders at War: History of New Zealand's Involvement in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 and Information on All Members of the Ten New Zealand Contingents* (Hamilton: Richard Stowers, 2002), p. 3. The Boers (*trekboers*) were, according to Pakenham, the ‘poorest and most independent’ of the Dutch-derived Afrikaners, ‘the wandering farmers whose search for new grazing lands brought them progressively deeper into African territory.’ Pakenham, p. xxi.

⁴¹ Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902* (Auckland: Arnold, 1999), p. 23.

settlers into the Transvaal, and the question of the rights of these *uitlanders* (foreigners) caused further tensions between the Boers and the British.⁴² In 1895, matters were exacerbated by the privately organised Jameson Raid, which sought to take Johannesburg from the control of the Transvaal government by triggering an *uitlander* uprising.⁴³ The uprising failed to materialise and the column surrendered to the Boers. The Transvaal continued to resist *uitlander* and British demands, and by mid-1899 both sides were preparing for war.⁴⁴

After negotiations between the British and the Boers failed, in September 1899 Joseph Chamberlain (the British Colonial Secretary) sent an ultimatum to the Boers, demanding full equality for the *uitlanders* of the Transvaal. In response, President Kruger issued his own ultimatum, demanding the withdrawal of British troops from the border of the Transvaal, with failure to comply being taken as a formal declaration of war.⁴⁵ Each side rejected the other's ultimatum, and war was declared on 11 October 1899 with a Boer offensive into the British-held Natal and Cape Colony areas.⁴⁶

New Zealand Support for the War

Even before the declaration of war, New Zealand offered its support to Britain. On 28 September 1899 'the New Zealand Parliament became the first colonial legislature, though not the first colony, to offer troops for service in the war that seemed imminent.'⁴⁷ By the time the war began a 215-man contingent was already encamped at Wellington, and on 21 October 1899 it departed for South

⁴² The *uitlanders* wanted equal rights with the Boer citizens of the republic, but these rights were denied to them by the Boers because the new immigrants now made up a majority of the population

⁴³ Pakenham, pp. 1-5. Also, Nasson, p. 30. Tabitha Jackson, *The Boer War* (London: Channel 4 Books, 1999), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Although the rights of the *uitlanders* were the immediate issue, the crisis was grounded in British determination to dominate South Africa and Boer determination to remain independent.

⁴⁵ Jackson, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Nasson called the South African War a conflict 'deliberately initiated in the conviction that the objectives of victory or staving off of defeat could not be pursued effectively other than through fighting', and one that was 'emphatically a British rather than a Boer war.' Nasson, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Ian McGibbon, 'The Origins of New Zealand's South African War Contribution', in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire and the South African War*, ed. by John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), pp. 1-11 (p. 1).

Africa. Eventually, approximately 6150 New Zealanders served in the ten contingents sent to South Africa by the New Zealand government.⁴⁸ The secondary literature has provided a range of reasons for the New Zealand government's decision to involve itself, and its soldiers, in the South African War; the analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis.⁴⁹

First (Conventional) Phase of the War

The South African War can be divided into two distinct phases: the first was characterised by conventional warfare; the second, by guerrilla warfare. The conflict began with Boer offensives into British-held territory in Natal and the Cape Colony, and the besieging of British garrisons at Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley during October and November 1899. In late-1899, General Redvers Buller arrived in South Africa with British reinforcements and launched a counteroffensive to relieve the three sieges. In what became known as Black Week (10-15 December 1899), British forces suffered defeat on each of the three major fronts, at the Battles of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso.⁵⁰

After these defeats, Buller was replaced as Commander-in-Chief by Field Marshal Lord Roberts, and the British government sent further reinforcements, both imperial troops and colonials, making the army in South Africa the largest force Britain had ever sent overseas. Another British offensive was launched in 1900 to relieve the sieges: the Siege of Kimberley ended on 15 February, while Ladysmith was relieved on 28 February.⁵¹ General Roberts soon advanced into the Orange

⁴⁸ Stowers, p. 4. This means that "New Zealand sent 5.5 percent of males aged 25-44, more than twice the percentage for Australia. Luke Trainor, 'Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand', in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. by David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (New York: Pelgrave, 2002), pp. 251-267 (p. 259).

⁴⁹ For scholarship on the official motivations for New Zealand involvement in the South African War, see: Francis John Crisholm McIver, 'New Zealand and the South African War of 1899-1902: A Study of New Zealand's Attitudes and Motives for Involvement and the Effect of the War on New Zealand and her Relations with Britain' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Otago, 1972); Simon Johnson, 'Sons of the Empire: A Study of New Zealand Ideas and Public Opinion during the Boer War' (unpublished BA thesis, Massey University, 1974); Garry James Clayton, 'Defence not Defiance: The Shaping of New Zealand's Volunteer Force' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 1990); and, Trainor, 'Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand', pp. 251-267.

⁵⁰ Pakenham, pp. 246-249. Jackson, p. 59-67.

⁵¹ Pakenham, pp. 327-8, 364-6.

Free State and captured Bloemfontein, the capital, on 13 March, meanwhile detaching a small force for the relief of Mafeking on 18 May. The Orange Free State was annexed ten days later, and renamed the Orange River Colony. Roberts then invaded the Transvaal and the republic's capital, Pretoria, was captured on 5 June. The South African Republic was formally annexed on 25 October 1900, and Kruger fled to the Netherlands.⁵²

Second (Guerrilla) Phase of the War

At the beginning of December 1900 Roberts told an audience in Durban that the war was 'practically' over, with the annexation of the republics and the flight of Kruger.⁵³ The conventional war, the 'war of set-piece battles', was over, but 'a new war – just as costly in time and money and human lives, and far more bitter, because it directly involved civilians – had only just begun.'⁵⁴ In late-1900, those Boers who were determined to resist British rule – the *bittereinders* (bitter-enders) – split up into smaller commandos, abandoned most of their transport and heavy equipment to improve mobility, and adopted guerrilla tactics aimed at disrupting the operations of the British army.⁵⁵ This hard-fought, but sporadic and largely unorganised, guerrilla war lasted another two years, and resulted in the deaths of more British and colonial soldiers than the first, conventional part of the war.⁵⁶

In December 1900, General Lord Herbert Kitchener succeeded Roberts as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces and implemented a 'Scorched Earth' policy in response to the guerrilla resistance, continuing Roberts' policy of farm

⁵² Nasson, pp. 190-191. Pakenham, p. 430.

⁵³ Pakenham, p. 458. Whereas Buller had predicted that the "set-piece war" would change into a "fragmenting war" and that the conventional idea of the "single blow" would not bring the conquest of the Boers closer, Roberts stuck to the conventional idea of capturing the capital and cutting the head off the enemy. Pakenham, p. 378.

⁵⁴ Pakenham, p. 459.

⁵⁵ Pakenham, pp. 493-495. Ian F.W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 13-14. Barbara R. Penny, 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War – a Study in Colonial Imperialism', *The Journal of British Studies*, 7, 1 (November 1967), pp. 97-130 (p. 120).

⁵⁶ John Crawford and Ellen Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland: Reed Books, 1999), p. 56.

burning and forming numerous mobile columns of men to locate, pursue and destroy the Boer commandoes.⁵⁷ The clearing of the countryside, in an effort to sweep it bare of everything that could give sustenance to the guerrillas, included the rounding up of civilian women and children into concentration camps run by the British army.⁵⁸ The concentration camps began as refugee camps to provide sanctuary for civilian families forced to abandon their homes because of the war. However, with Kitchener's systematic drives, the influx of civilians increased dramatically, and tens of thousands of women and children were forcibly moved into the concentration camps (and over 27,000 were to perish in the camps because of overcrowding, inadequate shelter, poor hygiene, and the resulting malnutrition and disease).⁵⁹ According to Pakenham, the turning point of the guerrilla war was late-1902, when the British military and civilian authorities in South Africa adopted a new three-pronged strategy designed to establish 'protected areas' and clear the country of all guerrillas and restore civilian life within them.⁶⁰

The End of the War

Eventually, the British tactics began to yield results against the guerrillas, who were 'slowly depleted and left hungry, ragged and poorly armed, mostly with stolen British weapons', and the last of the Boers surrendered in May 1902.⁶¹ On 31 May 1902, the war was ended with the Treaty of Vereeniging, by which the two republics were absorbed into the British Empire, with the promise of limited self-government in the future, which was granted in 1906 and 1907.

⁵⁷ Crawford and Ellis, p. 56. D.O.W. Hall, *The New Zealanders in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, War History Branch, 1949), p. 18.

⁵⁸ Pakenham wrote that this 'clearance of civilians' came to 'dominate the last phase of the war.' Pakenham, p. 493.

⁵⁹ Beckett writes that "perhaps 28,000 of the 116,000 Boer civilians held in the 40 or so camps had died by May 1902, largely from disease. In addition, between 16,000 and 20,000 out of 115,000 blacks held in a further 66 camps also died." Beckett, p. 39

⁶⁰ First, Boer civilians would no longer be interned in concentration camps, instead being left in the countryside where the guerrillas would have to take responsibility for them. Second, protected areas were established, guarded by lines of blockhouses linked by barbed-wire entanglements. Third, 'new model drives' were undertaken to propel the enemy towards the lines of blockhouses. Pakenham, pp. 534-535.

⁶¹ Stowers, p. 6.

By the end of the war the British and imperial forces numbered 450,000 troops into the field, including reservists and domestic and colonial volunteers, and had suffered over 100,000 casualties, with 22,000 deaths. Between 13,000 and 16,000 of the British fatalities were the result of disease and illness. The New Zealand Contingents suffered a total of 394 casualties, of which around 230 were deaths, including 59 men killed in action, 30 killed in accidents, and 120 killed by disease.⁶² The Boers, out of a total population of 200,000, including a Boer army of around 65,000 men, lost 7,000 in the field, and almost 30,000 people, most of them women and children, in concentration camps. These concentration camps also took the lives of 20,000 black and 'coloured' Africans, from the 115,000 interned in the camps.⁶³

Thesis Structure

Chapter One focuses on the common motivations for writing letters, diaries and reminiscences – including remembrance, relationships, entertainment, psychological relief, self-understanding and self-creation. The remaining three chapters involve the close-reading and analysis of these personal documents in order to reveal individual views about important issues and topics. Chapter Two examines attitudes toward the Other – the people of non-European New Zealand descent – encountered by the soldiers during the South African War. This focuses on views about ethnicity – by looking at thoughts about Māori, Aboriginals, and native Africans – and about the Boers who the New Zealanders were travelling to South Africa to fight. Chapter Three scrutinises the extent to which the New Zealand soldiers held the ideas contained in the popular mythology surrounding them, and compares their self-images (and identifications) to the public image,

⁶² Richard Wolfe, *With Honour: Our Army, Our Nation, Our History* (Auckland: Penguin Group, 2007), p. 71. Ian McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, Historical Branch, GP Books, 1991), p. 122. Laurie Barber, 'New Zealanders and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902', in *Kiwis in Conflict: 200 Years of New Zealanders at War*, ed. by Chris Pugsley with Laurie Barber, Buddy Mikaere, Nigel Prickett and Rose Young (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2008), pp. 46-65 (p. 59).

⁶³ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Boer War and the Media (1899-1902)', *Twentieth Century British History*, 13, 1 (2002) p. 1-16 (p. 1). Andrew Porter, 'The South African War and the Historians', *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), pp. 633-648 (p. 635). Nasson, p. 279. Jackson, p. 184.

with a focus on critiquing and enhancing Burns' study of these ideas. Chapter Four offers a closer examination of soldiers' thoughts and feelings the war itself – most importantly, their thoughts and feelings about volunteering for service in a foreign country, and about the duties they were required to perform while in South Africa, with a concentration on the commandeering, farm-burning and internment of civilians which dominated the second phase of the South African War.

Conclusion

Overall, this thesis intends to reveal the diversity of attitudes and beliefs held by New Zealand soldiers in the South African War, in order to remedy social and historical distortions and myths fostered by general histories of the conflict. This will contribute to the discipline both by uncovering the mentalities of the soldiers in this context and by demonstrating the usefulness of this type of examination for a range of contexts and topics.

Editorial Notes

While rarely required, some of the quotes used in this thesis have been rendered suitable for modern reading. The content remains true to the original, but easy comprehension is occasionally aided with the insertion of punctuation, regularised capitalisation, the replacement of ampersand with 'and', abbreviations spelled out in full, and the silent correction of lapses in spelling or unconventionalities (rather than signalling them using the intrusive [*sic*] convention). Consistent deviation from an orthodox form of expression has been retained uncorrected to preserve character. In another attempt to aid comprehension, quoted soldiers are given the rank with which they began in the army; therefore a soldier referred to as a private or trooper may, in fact, have been a corporal or lieutenant at the time he is quoted. Finally, while 'private' and 'trooper' ostensibly refer to the same rank, this thesis uses the term employed by the writer or by the archive.

Chapter One

Writing

Introduction

While it is impossible to know how many of the approximately six and a half thousand New Zealand soldiers who went in South Africa composed letters or kept a diary during their service, it is probable that most did write in one form or the other, but that – because the documents were not saved by family and friends, or have not been placed in an archive, or no longer survive because of the attrition of years – only a handful are available for study. This chapter undertakes a theoretical approach to the motivations behind soldiers maintaining diaries, and placing importance on the writing and receiving of letters, during wartime, and writing reminiscences of their experiences later in life. These motivations can broadly be attributed to concerns with remembrance and relationships, entertainment and morale, psychological and emotional significance, and matters related to identity and self-understanding.

Soldiers on Receiving Letters

Upon arriving at Bulawayo, almost two months into his service in South Africa, Private Moore and his fellow members of the Fourth New Zealand Contingent, called at the local Post Office.¹ He wrote:

Only those who have lived among strangers in a strange country, far removed from the family circle, and that have been deprived of home news for a considerable period, can understand how eagerly we had been looking forward to receiving our first mail call in South Africa. The contents of

¹ Note: the ranks of Private and Trooper are synonymous, but an effort has been made to refer to them by the term used in the primary sources themselves.

the bags were eagerly scanned in search of letters addressed in familiar handwriting; and we hurried back to camp to peruse, in the seclusion of our tents, our respective missives. The hair-cut, shave, and dinner we had promised ourselves on entering the town were all forgotten in the excitement of having received letters from home.²

Many of the New Zealand soldiers who fought during the South African War commented on the excitement of receiving letters from home and family, regardless of which Contingent they were in or how long they had been away from New Zealand. Private Ross of the First Contingent wrote enthusiastically in his diary:

Such a feast we have had of mail. My word such joy; we have at last struck oil. My word wasn't there excitement when I brought up the mail. I fairly devoured the letters, had no time to have any tea, read straight on didn't finish until 12 o'clock at night reading letters and papers. The mail was nearly three months old. Was dated from the middle of December until January. There wasn't a sound for over 2hrs. except the rustling of paper or letter. All were too busy.³

Private Wilkins of the Fourth Contingent wrote to his parents that he had 'received your long looked for and interesting letters and was very glad to get them.'⁴ Sergeant Leece, serving in the Fifth Contingent, wrote that receiving letters from his mother and brother 'were a great treat.'⁵ Likewise, Trooper

² James G. Harle Moore, *With the Fourth New Zealand Rough Riders* (Dunedin: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1906), pp. 57-58. He later wrote that, 'The arrival of a mail in camp marked a red-letter day in the life of a soldier, and was eagerly looked forward to by the officers and men of all ranks. Those who received letters from home stole away to some excluded spot in camp, and perused the contents. Others, less fortunate, would joyfully accept the loan of a newspaper from a comrade, and would hide their disappointment as well as possible.' Moore, p. 98.

³ Hugh Ross, diary (21 October 1899 to 3 December 1900), entry for 23 March 1900, MS-Papers-1436, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴ George Wilkins, letter to Father and Mother, 23 April 1901, MS 1232, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

⁵ George Leece, letter to Mother, 16 July 1900, MS-Group-1460, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Leece later served in the Seventh Contingent as well.

McFarlane of the Ninth Contingent thanked his brother, Frank, for his first mail from New Zealand, received six weeks after they were sent.⁶ For some this concern with receiving letters from home began during the journey over. Lieutenant Bosworth of the Fifth Contingent, aboard the Troopship *Maori*, hoped to receive a 'good long letter' from his wife when he reached Albany, which served as a port of call in Australia for transports and troopships heading to South Africa.⁷ As can be seen from these examples, the desire for correspondence with home was common across all ranks, enlisted, noncommissioned, and officers.

As well as writing to thank correspondents for letters received, soldiers commented when they did not receive the desired letters. In a letter to his 'Darling Sister' in March 1900, Lieutenant Todd of the Second Contingent complained that he had 'not received a lone letter from New Zealand so far and am looking forward to receiving a letter or two shortly.'⁸ Over two years later, Private James of the Eighth Contingent similarly wrote in his diary, lamenting that 'a mail arrived on the 6th but I did not get a single letter.'⁹ More contained, Trooper Tennent of the Seventh Contingent, after only a week or two in South Africa, wrote to his mother, 'We have not got any letters yet but I suppose we will get some soon', a gentle reminder of his desires.¹⁰

⁶ William John McFarlane, letter to Frank, 18 May 1902, in 'The Life and Times of William John McFarlane 1882-1967' by Donald John McFarlane, 1991.2451, National Army Museum, Waiouru. McFarlane's comments show the irregularity of mail service in the field. He wrote: 'My first N.Z. mail just come [sic] to hand on Friday so you will see it has been over six weeks on the way. Your letters of the 23rd and 31st March came together and I was very glad to get them.'

⁷ Jack Bosworth, letter to Maudie, date unknown [early May 1900], NZMS-914, New Zealand Manuscripts, Auckland City Libraries, Auckland.

⁸ Thomas John Todd, letter to Sister, 22 March 1900, MS-Papers-4598-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁹ Frederick William James, diary (4 January 1902 to 1 August 1902), entry for 7 May 1902, Bibliographical File, New Zealand Room, Tauranga City Libraries, Tauranga.

¹⁰ Hobart Cothter Tennent, letter to Mother, 3 June 1901, 2001.1057, National Army Museum, Waiouru. This joy of receiving mail and profound disappointment when not was in no way unique to South Africa, but was experienced by soldiers of all nations in all conflicts. For example, this was discussed in David Madden's social history of the American Civil War. David Madden, *Beyond the Battlefield: The Ordinary Life and Extraordinary Times of the Civil War Soldier* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 212.

Writing and Receiving Letters

While few of the soldiers explicitly stated their personal reasons for writing letters (and diaries and reminiscences), historical and literary scholars have written much about the theoretical intentions of writers, taking into account straightforward ideas of sustaining relationships and for recreational purposes, to abstract concepts involving psychological unburdening and the construction of identity.

Remembrance/Relationships

A common motivation for letter-writing discussed by scholars is related to the maintenance of relationships over distance and to remembrance – the act of remembering and the state of being remembered, to keep in mind the people left at home, and to be kept in mind by them. Like many of the possible motivations looked at in this section, these two ideas are very much related, in that sustaining relations relies on a two-way remembering of the bases of those relations.

At the most basic level letters written home could be intended ‘to share the experiences of soldiers’ new way of life’, with families wanting to hear about their loved ones’ adventures, and the men wanting to describe their situation and experiences.¹¹ The writing of letters by men engaged in warfare in a foreign country acted in the same way as the immigrant letters analysed by North American historian David A. Gerber, ‘in seeking to preserve a bond across time and distance, and in using writing as a substitute for the intimate, personal conversation they most desired...’¹² Deborah Montgomerie calls remembering home and being remembered at home ‘important aspects of the emotional

¹¹ Madden, p. 215. In addition, this connection to a comparatively stable world of home served as a soothing support system.

¹² David Gerber, ‘Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters: Personal Identity and Self-Presentation in Personal Correspondence’, *Journal of Social History*, 39, 1 (Winter 2005), 315-330 (p. 318).

economy of war.’¹³ Historian Michael Roper also writes about the use of letter-writing by soldiers to sustain family relationships during the First World War. No different than during the First World War, the men’s expressions of disappointment at failures to receive mail and of delight when mail arrived ‘convey a desire for familiar intimacy’ during the South African War.¹⁴ This was especially true when the correspondence was between the man and his mother, a point also elaborated by Jenny Hartley, Head of English and Creative Writing at Roehampton. She writes that the construction of bridges by letter-writing was often clearly aimed at maintaining an intimate link between mother and son:

Letters from adult children invariably expressed appreciation for their mothers’ letters. This correspondence clearly meant much to both sides. Even when fathers were at home too, children might address their letters to their mothers, apparently leaving their fathers out. This practice may have stemmed from the convention that letters should be addressed to only one person. But it also suggests that the child particularly wished to communicate with [his] mother.¹⁵

In terms of the sources analysed, it is unclear how much of a role the one-recipient convention played in the sending of letters. Many letters were clearly addressed to ‘Everybody’ or ‘Mother and Father’, but mothers received a disproportionate number of letters compared to fathers.¹⁶

¹³ Deborah Montgomerie, ‘Sweethearts, Soldiers, Happy Families: Gender and the Second World War’, in *The Gendered Kiwi*, ed. by Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), pp. 163-190 (p. 176).

¹⁴ Michael Roper, ‘Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 9 (Spring 2005), 57-72 (p. 64).

¹⁵ Jenny Hartley, “‘Letters are everything these days’: Mothers and letters in the Second World War”, in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. by Rebecca Earle (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 183-195 (p. 189).

¹⁶ Almost a third of the letters studied were addressed to the soldier’s mother, 32 compared to less than 20 addressed to fathers. This shows that, possibly, when facing the chance of death, soldiers thought more of the person who brought them into the world than of anyone else, or that it was more acceptable to share feelings with the mother than with anyone else. However, there is also the chance that there was an expectation and/or obligation (on the part of both the son and the mother) for the mother to be the point of epistolary contact.

Letters also served as important bridges between soldiers and their wives back in New Zealand, particularly through the narrative strategy of 'fictitious consensus' as outlined by Benjamin Ziemann and Miriam Dobson, scholars of modern history at Sheffield University.¹⁷ Soldiers would directly address their wives in letters, try to anticipate their reactions (or comment on what they hope or imagine their responses to be), and embed these reactions into their accounts, creating a dialogue even before the wife gets a chance to reply. As well as fostering a fictitious consensus between the spouses, such letters 'helped them to reassure one another of the continuing relevance of their marital relation over extended periods of separation.'¹⁸

Also related to the idea of remembrance, is the writing of letters as a way of leaving something for friends and family, the result of an awareness of impending mortality, the constant possibility of injury or death, during wartime. As well as providing a medium through which to enable remembrance of relationships in general, it allowed soldiers to say things to friends and family in the event they did not get the chance to return home and tell them directly, even if this was merely the soldier telling family members that he loved and missed them.

Like most of the possible motivations for letter- and diary-writing it is difficult to discover which motivations affected which soldiers, mainly because such motivations were rarely commented upon and may have been unconscious to the men themselves. However, some of the primary sources analysed do hint at the reasons (or, at least, a single part of one reason) for the writing of letters. Private Henry George Gilbert of the Seventh Contingent wrote in August 1901:

I am expecting a dose of letters from NZ there [at Kroonstandt, the next destination on their trek] as I have not heard from any of you for nearly two months. The last three

¹⁷ Benjamin Ziemann and Miriam Dobson, 'Introduction', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 9.

¹⁸ Ziemann and Dobson, 'Introduction', p. 9. For example: the letters Lieutenant Jack Bosworth sent to his wife Maudie.

mails has brought nothing for me although there was plenty for most of the others. I hope I'm not forgotten.¹⁹

This is a clear demonstration of a soldier seeking correspondence to sustain personal bonds and ensure remembrance. In a similar way, Lieutenant Bosworth also used his letters to maintain a connection with home, though his letters show that this connection was both emotional and practical, as when he writes his wife a little list of 'orders' and 'commissions', including sketching out a page-long 'plan of what I want done in the front garden this winter.'²⁰ Likewise, Private Harry York looked forward to receiving letters when he arrived in South Africa because he felt 'anxious to know how you all are.'²¹

Entertainment/Morale

As Deborah Montgomerie writes: 'There was a fine line between indulging in homesickness or self-pity and trying to maintain a sense of connection with people left back in New Zealand.'²² As well as providing a link to home and family, soldiers sought to maintain a regular (or, rather, as regular as possible within the constraints of a wartime mail service) correspondence with people back in New Zealand in order to relieve homesickness and loneliness, and alleviate boredom and poor morale. The maintenance of bridges to loved ones, especially with mothers, went a long way in minimising homesickness, as did the confidence inspired by letters which showed that the soldiers in South Africa were not forgotten. Jochen Hellbeck is correct in saying that letter-writing also offered an escape from the war. Linking the content and tone of letters to self-censorship aimed at protecting addresses, he writes that letter-writers at the front also 'misrepresented the reality of war' for the sake of 'self-protection', using the letters 'to escape from, rather than represent, extreme states of

¹⁹ Henry George Gilbert, letter to Mother, 2 August 1901, in *Soldier Boy: A Young New Zealander Writes Home from the Boer War*, compiled by Kingsley Field (Auckland: New Holland Publishers, 2007), p. 44.

²⁰ Bosworth, letter to Maudie, date unknown [early May 1900].

²¹ Harry York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 5 August 1900, in *Harry's Letters from the Boer War*, Vol. 1, edited by Frank Fyfe (Greytown: Wakelin House, 1993), p. 35.

²² Montgomerie, 'Sweethearts, Soldiers, Happy Families', p. 175.

existence in the proximity of death.²³ While soldiers during the South African War did not face the precise horrors experienced by those who fought in the trenches of the First World War, individual experiences of warfare (as in any war) could be just as traumatic and result in just as much desire to escape.

Letters also improved morale in the field by providing entertainment in the process of their writing and reading. New Zealand military historian Nicholas Boyack in his book *Behind the Lines* comments on the simple fact that soldiers, bored with war, looked forward to letters.²⁴ There is also the distinct possibility that letter reading itself was a social affair among soldiers. Rebecca Earle, Professor of Spanish American history, writes in the introduction to *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, that:

Letter reading... was until quite recently an entirely social affair. As a number of contributors to this volume note, letter-writers expected their missives to be read by more than one person. Letters were routinely read aloud, and a particularly interesting letter might be passed around an even wider readership. Letter-writers indicated those unusual passages which should not be circulated, rather than the reverse.²⁵

While there is not much evidence of the letters sent by New Zealand soldiers being widely circulated, many of the letters written by Trooper Gilbert were clearly intended as such, being sent to 'Everybody' or 'All.'²⁶ It is impossible to know how many other soldiers' letters, by pre-arranged agreement or by the decision of the recipient, were read by people at home other than the addressee.

²³ Jochen Hellbeck, "'The Diaries of Fritzes and the Letters of Gretchens': Personal Writings from the German-Soviet War and Their Readers', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 10, 3 (Summer 2009), 571-606 (pp. 575-576).

²⁴ Nicholas Boyack, *Behind the Lines: The Lives of New Zealand Soldiers in the First World War* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1989), p. 114.

²⁵ Rebecca Earle, 'Introduction: letters, writers and the historian', in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. by Rebecca Earle (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 1-12 (p. 7).

²⁶ Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 23 April 1901, in Field, p. 11; letter to Everybody, 14 May 1901, in Field, p. 27; letter to Everybody, 19 May 1901, in Field, p. 30; letter to Father, Mother and All, 29 January 1902, in Field, p. 121; letter to Father, Mother and All, 28 February 1902, in Field, p. 124.

Several extracts from soldiers' letters show the role boredom played in their decision to write. Private Boyd of the Second Contingent said in his diary entry for Christmas Eve 1900: 'No duty, wrote letters all day.'²⁷ Lieutenant McKeich, Ninth Contingent, told his son (in a letter sent two days before Robert's death) that, 'I have sent them plenty of letters home for I have nothing else to do.'²⁸ Some of the soldiers also appreciated letters for their news value. Private Gilbert, in the Seventh Contingent, told his mother that he hoped she will 'send something if it's even a line' because 'it's mighty stale out here week after week with no news at all.'²⁹ Sergeant Leece wrote: 'One hungers for letters from home not just for the sake of big news but just the fact of getting intelligence of you all.'³⁰ Corporal McKegg of the First Contingent, in a remark that furthermore shows a concern for being remembered by those at home, wrote to his sister, Mary, 'Now do not forget to write me plenty of your long newsy letters and I will write when I can.'³¹ His concern was probably just as much about getting what he called 'intelligence' of the family as getting 'big news'. More explicitly, Sergeant Gallaher of the Sixth (and, later, Tenth) Contingent thanked his own sister, Molly, 'for the cuttings from the Stars as every item of news is eagerly welcomed I can assure you,' though in his case the boredom was possibly aggravated by having to spend time in Charlestown Hospital.³²

Emotional/Psychological

As has already been seen, looking at letter-writing's role in preserving relationships and morale, soldiers valued letters because of their emotional and psychological significance. While it is true that soldiers were often wary of spreading feelings (in letters home), because it could, according to Hartley, lead the writer into sentiment - 'a minefield for the man at war' - their letters

²⁷ William Robert Boyd, diary (17 November 1900 to 17 May 1901), entry for 24 December 1900, MS-Papers-3846, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²⁸ Robert McKeich, letter to Walter, 2 June 1902, 1998.773, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

²⁹ Gilbert, letter to Mother, 2 August 1901, in Field, p. 45.

³⁰ Leece, letter to May, 1 June 1900.

³¹ Amos McKegg, letter to Mary, unknown date [1900], MS-934, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

³² David Gallaher, letter to Molly, 18 October 1901, 2000.266, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

nevertheless reveal the soldiers as men of feeling.³³ In *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates*, a collection of women's letters and diaries from nineteenth-century New Zealand, Frances Porter and Charlotte MacDonald suggest that letter-writing can serve as an outlet of feelings and as a way to unburden oneself.³⁴ In addition, Richard Aldritch, an author of several books looking at World War Two through the diary entries of both soldiers and civilians, writes that 'all [soldiers] were driven by a very basic need for comfort or self-expression when placed under pressure' and that this contributed to their writing, whether it be letters or a diary, or both.³⁵

The most common recipient of soldiers' letters was mothers. There are two dominant ways of looking at the letters written by soldiers to their parents, and their mothers in particular. First, is that soldiers wrote to their mothers because, '[w]hen facing death, they thought of the person who had brought them into the world' and found comfort in connecting with family and writing about their experiences to a sympathetic recipient.³⁶ Second, soldiers may have wanted to share the wartime horror, 'to make the parent endure at second-hand some of the terrible scenes the child has just witnessed.'³⁷ It is difficult to distinguish between these two motivations, but it is likely that the former was more dominant. As well as the desire to unburden, letters were also important for the desire to be reached. Communications about the frequency of correspondence could show that the soldiers wanted expressions of 'feeling' in letters from family.³⁸

David Gerber links his discussion of letter-writing's importance for preserving bonds between people separated by time and distance, to a psychological need

³³ Hartley, "Letters are *everything* these days", p. 191.

³⁴ Frances Porter and Charlotte MacDonald (eds.), *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates: The Unsettled Lives of Women in nineteenth-century New Zealand as revealed to sisters, friends and family* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), p. 12.

³⁵ Richard J. Aldritch, *The Faraway War: Personal Diaries of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (London: Corgi Books, 2006), pp. 24-5.

³⁶ Boyack, p. 114.

³⁷ Hartley, "Letters are *everything* these days", p. 191.

³⁸ Christa Hämmerle (translated by Amy Krois-Lindner), "You let a weeping woman call you home?": Private correspondences during the First World War in Austria and Germany', in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. by Rebecca Earle (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 152-182 (pp. 158-159).

for continuity. He writes that personal identity 'depends on the assurance that we are indeed the same person we have always been' and that this is 'served most profoundly through abiding relationships with significant others.'³⁹ While he was writing about the circumstances of immigrants, soldiers serving overseas also suffer the same dislocation from 'abiding relationships' and may turn to the craft of letter-writing to preserve their own identity.

Self-Creation/Understanding

As well as serving to maintain a personal identity through continuity in relationships, letter-writing, according to Miriam Dobson, 'is seen to be part of an individual's attempt to *establish* the meaning of their life (rather than just reflect or communicate existing truths)' and to 'make sense of who they are at the present moment.'⁴⁰ The second part of this is based on her assertion that human beings do this by telling stories, and that for those who are physically separated from loved ones 'the act of letter writing can provide a medium for reconciling past and present and fashioning a workable sense of self.'⁴¹ Jenny Hartley also writes that during the process of writing the letter, the writer constructs himself 'a continuous character and identity.'⁴² This self-reflection through dialogue, furthermore, gives the letter-writer the opportunity to 'bring unity and understanding to events which are incoherent and disturbing.'⁴³ Psychologist Edgar Jones, for example, writes that:

An infantryman fighting for his life did not have the time or inclination to record his thoughts and feelings. As a result, diaries and letters were written between battles or during quiet periods of front-line service. They formed part of the soldier's attempt to make sense of what he had gone

³⁹ Gerber, 'Acts of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters', p. 318.

⁴⁰ Miriam Dobson, 'Letters', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 57-73 (p. 60).

⁴¹ Dobson, 'Letters', p. 61.

⁴² Hartley, "'Letters are *everything* these days'", p. 192.

⁴³ Michael Roper, 'Splitting in Unsens Letters: Writing as a Social Practice and a Psychological Activity', *Social History*, 26, 3 (October 2001), 318-339 (p. 320).

through. For some they may have been a rationalization of what they had done and thought they should have done...⁴⁴

Many scholars also believe that letter-writing, along with the writing of diaries, serves as a means of self-expression.⁴⁵ Hartley calls this the 'ability to speak the individual voice' which 'guarantees and authenticates – or seems to – sincerity and intimacy', a welcome effect of letter-writing in wartime.⁴⁶ This is because, according to Hartley, in wartime the status of the individual is 'fragile and vulnerable': the soldiers are among strangers, under army regimentation and discipline, uniformed and facing danger and death.⁴⁷

Writing Diaries

In terms of the possible reasons why soldiers wrote, diaries and letters are similar. Among these reasons were: as a method of remembrance, to relieve boredom, for self-expression and the release of feelings, and for self-understanding and identity creation.

Just as for letter-writing, diary-writing could be a means of remembrance. This remembrance took two forms: the writer remembering what he has experienced, and leaving something through which others can remember the writer. The former is based on French specialist in the autobiography Philippe Lejeune's claim that diaries are intended to freeze time, 'to build a memory out of paper, to create archives from lived experience, to accumulate traces, prevent forgetting, to give life the consistency and continuity it lacks.'⁴⁸ The latter, writes Irina Paperno, comes from a person's 'fear of watching life grow shorter with each passing day' and results in the diary representing 'a lasting trace of one's

⁴⁴ Edgar Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41, 2 (April 2006), 229-246 (p. 233).

⁴⁵ For example: Elizabeth MacArther, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 119, quoted in Earle, 'Introduction: letters, writers and the historian', p. 2.

⁴⁶ Hartley, "'Letters are everything these days'", p. 185.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Philippe Lejeune, 'How do Diaries End?', *Biography*, 24, 1 (Winter 2001), 99-112, quoted in Kathryn Carter, 'Death and the Diary, or Tragedies in the Archive', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 40, 2 (Spring 2006), 42-59 (p. 54).

being – an effective defense against annihilation.’⁴⁹ This desire to leave something for friends and family may also have contributed to the motivation to write letters home. Both are relevant goals during wartime, in which the soldier is surrounded by situations and experiences outside normal parameters, and is confronted by the constant possibility of injury or death.

Diaries were also a form of entertainment, the writing of which could serve to relieve a soldier’s boredom while in the field, to fill in the spare time when the troops were not marching, eating, doing their camp duties, or sleeping. Related to this, and to the idea of remembrance, diaries could also help relieve the loneliness of a soldier serving in a foreign country.

Also in common with letters, diaries can facilitate self-expression and venting of feelings and the resulting unburdening and release that the expression provides. This is seen as a defining feature of the diary genre by Christina Sjödblad, professor of comparative literature, in her discussion of the development of the genre among Swedish women during the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Aldritch’s comment that personal writings were driven by a need for comfort or self-expression applies especially to diaries, because he sees them as functioning, during wartime, as ‘a solace, substitute friend and counsellor.’⁵¹

Probably the most discussed functions of diary-writing are self-creation and self-understanding. Irina Paperno, drawing on the work of Peter Boerner, a scholar of eighteenth century European literature, writes that this use of the diary genre shows the ‘modernist impulse’ for ‘deliberate self-creation, whether in an aesthetic or in a political key.’⁵² Paperno, furthermore, says that diaries allow the writer ‘to attain knowledge (and hence possession and control) of the self: the

⁴⁹ Irina Paperno, ‘What Can Be Done With Diaries?’, *Russian Review*, 63, 4 (October 2004), 561-573 (p. 563). See also Carter’s discussion of diary writing as motivated by the desire to commemorate, in Carter, ‘Death and the Diary, or Tragedies in the Archive’, pp. 42-59.

⁵⁰ Her primary subject, Metta Lillie, starts her diary as a family chronicle, but upon the death of her father she begins to write about personal feelings: ‘The main text, which has been kept within the margins, then flows all over the page – and at this moment, the diary genre is born. Metta Lillie discovers the possibility of giving vent to her feelings and experiences the release that the expression provides.’ Christina Sjödblad, ‘From Family Notes to Diary: the Development of a Genre’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31, 4 (Summer 1998), 517-521 (p. 519).

⁵¹ Aldritch, pp. 24-5.

⁵² Paperno, ‘What Can Be Done with Diaries?’, p. 563. See also, Peter Boerner, *Tagebuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), pp. 37-59.

narrative template of such a diary allows a continuous self-construction'; what literature scholar Stuart Sherman calls a 'running report on identities both shifting and fixed.'⁵³ This forging of identifications, which make up an identity, is related to Lejeune's idea that diary-writing can give life the consistency and continuity it lacks.

The psychological utility of the diary is also analysed by psychologists Wendy Wiener and George Rosenwald in their chapter 'A Moment's Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary'.⁵⁴ In this they

reviewed the psychological possibilities the diary offers a diarist: versatility and coordination of self and others as well as the management of emotions and of the experience of time. As the diary permits the evocation of fantasies about the self and the sedimentation of these fantasies on the written (and thus readable) page, the diary functions for the objectivation as well as the transformation of the self. The keeping of a diary is an activity that binds self in time, not only across the span of a long-term diary, but also within each entry. Each entry is made with an intention to read it later and to add further entries, to return as reader and writer. The diary writing thus serves as an instrument of self-continuity... In conclusion Wiener and Rosenwald suggest that the chief psychological utility of diaries emanates from the reflexive uses to which diarists put them.⁵⁵

⁵³ Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', p. 566. Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, an English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 8, 107, cited in Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', p. 566.

⁵⁴ Wendy J. Wiener and George C. Rosenwald, 'A Moment's Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary', in *The Narrative Study of Lives*, ed. by Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Newbury: Sage Publications, Inc., 1993), I, pp. 30-58.

⁵⁵ Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?', p. 564.

Historian Christa Hämmerle also sees the diary form as shaped by the 'reflective self which tries to envision objectify and recall itself, and maybe also project itself.'⁵⁶

Constructive and reflexive functions such as this are even more important to diary-writers during 'life transitions'.⁵⁷ Diaries which report unusual events, such as long journeys or the coming of war, are called 'diaries of situation' by Steven Kagle in his book on nineteenth-century American diary literature.⁵⁸ Part of this function is the diary's ability to strengthen an individual's sense of purpose in new surroundings and situations, as well as facilitate a search for meaning in these unusual circumstances.

Writing Reminiscences

The decision of a soldier to write a reminiscence – in the words of anthropologist Elizabeth Tonkin a 'representation of pastness' – was based on different reasons to the writing of letters or a diary contemporaneously with the events being written about.⁵⁹ It is good, however, to keep in mind the following comment from literary critic Francis Hart: 'No autobiographer writes without reasons for writing or readers to reach, but none has single reasons or readers, and the identifications of reasons and readers is itself an experimental feature of the evolving autobiographical situation.'⁶⁰ Also of note is the fact that memoirs and the like are 'focused less on the inner experience than on the external realm of

⁵⁶ Christa Hämmerle (translated by Andrew Evans), 'Diaries', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 141-158 (p. 142).

⁵⁷ Steven Stowe, 'Making Sense of Letters and Diaries', from the *Making Sense of History Series, History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web* [<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/>], July 2002, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Steven E. Kagle, *Early Nineteenth-Century American Diary Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p. 3.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Tonkin, 'History and the Myth of Realism', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 25-39 (p. 27).

⁶⁰ Francis R. Hart, 'Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography', *New Literary History*, 1, 3 (Spring 1970), pp. 485-511 (p. 491). Note: unlike the works of Hart and other scholars, this study does not make any effort to distinguish between modalities of autobiographical writing, for example, Hart's distinctions between confession, memoir and apology. Thus the term reminiscence is intended to be a convenient alternative to more specific terms such as autobiography and memoir.

fact' and 'significant happenings', so are less suitable for the study of attitudes and mentality than other personal documents.⁶¹

One reason for remembrance writing could be the same as letter and diary writing: the capacity for self-expression, self-reflection and self-creation provided by the writing of reminiscences.⁶² Karl Weintraub thought that autobiography was 'inseparably linked to the problem of self-conception', and this is true also for memoirs and reminiscences.⁶³

Unlike the personal documents produced during the South African War, reminiscences written after the soldiers had returned home could be motivated by a desire to make sense of war-time experiences and justify war-time actions.⁶⁴ Historian Alistair Thomson writes that people undertake a process of "composure" of their memories, a process of memory-making, to make sense of their past and present lives.⁶⁵ This making sense of the past can also be seen as a requirement of recollection because all recollections are told from a standpoint in the present, looking back at the past, and their writing demands the selection and ordering of events, and the construction of a coherent narrative.⁶⁶ Historians Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, also think that any life-story 'written or oral, more or less dramatically, is in one sense a personal mythology, a self-justification.'⁶⁷ This is an interesting point for a study such as this one, because, as sociologist Jean Peneff writes, reminiscences often feature 'a paucity of wrongful or immoral acts, of unjust or violent practices, fraudulent behaviour of

⁶¹ Karl J. Weintraub, 'Autobiography and Historical Consciousness', *Critical Inquiry*, 1, 4 (June 1975), pp. 821-848 (p. 823).

⁶² The late professor of history Karl Weintraub wrote that life writing 'may have such varied functions as self-explication, self-discovery, self-clarification, self-formation, self-presentation, self-justification.' Weintraub, 'Autobiography and Historical Consciousness', p. 824.

⁶³ Weintraub, 'Autobiography and Historical Consciousness', p. 834.

⁶⁴ Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, 'Introduction', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 1-22 (p. 8).

⁶⁵ Alistair Thomson, 'The Anzac Legend: Exploring National Myths and Memory in Australia', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 73-82 (p. 78). He writes that this composure happens from the moment an event is experienced, that the meanings of our culture are used to make sense of it, and that memories could be 'scrambled and entangled' by legend. Thomson, 'The Anzac Legend', pp. 77-78. In addition, elsewhere Thomson writes that this memory-making or life review is also shaped by the ways in which other people represent our lives. Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 184.

⁶⁶ Samuel and Thompson, 'Introduction', p. 8.

⁶⁷ Samuel and Thompson, 'Introduction', p. 10.

almost any kind on the part of the writer', providing clear evidence of the silences and repressions that reminiscences, just like diaries and letters, can contain.⁶⁸

In a short discussion of the relationship between the memories of World War One veterans and the popular national myth of the New Zealand soldiers, Alastair Thomson writes that, for soldiers at least, the act of recounting a life story ensures that a memory of their experiences, and the lessons learned along the way, live on after death, and provides them with the ability to articulate and make sense of the life journey.⁶⁹ Weintraub agrees that reminiscences could be a search for the meaning and purpose of life; or, when written by someone who has already discovered this meaning, allow the rearrangement and reinterpretation of past life based on the meaning that life is now considered to possess.⁷⁰ The writing can also be driven by the emotional and psychological need to come to terms with unresolved issues and experiences, to compose a past (a life history) with which they are comfortable, with particular emphases and silences.⁷¹ In addition, remembering is 'an important part of the process of personal and public affirmation of the worth of a life.'⁷² This motivation for the writing of autobiographical documents is also discussed by William Howarth, who thought many authors aspired to 'carve public monuments out of their private lives.'⁷³

⁶⁸ Jean Peneff, 'Myths in Life Stories', in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 36-48 (p. 38). Peneff thought that 'most life stories are apologies.' Peneff, 'Myths in Life Stories', p. 38.

⁶⁹ Alastair Thomson, 'Memory as a Battlefield: Personal and Political Investments in the National Military Past', *Oral History Review*, 22, 2 (Winter 1995), pp. 55-73 (p. 65). Remembering in later life can act as a 'life review'. Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p. 183.

⁷⁰ Weintraub, 'Autobiography and Historical Consciousness', p. 827.

⁷¹ Thomson, 'Memory as a Battlefield', p. 65. Thomson further discusses this selective nature of war remembrance – in which some experiences are highlighted while others are repressed and silenced – in *Anzac Memories*. Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 4, 184, *passim*.

⁷² Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p. 185.

⁷³ William L. Howarth, 'Some Principles of Autobiography', *New Literary History*, 5, 2 (Winter 1974), pp. 363-381. Some personal narratives could, according to British literary scholar Samuel Hynes, be memorial gestures that fix and communicate public meaning, like war monuments. Samuel Hynes, 'Personal narratives and commemoration', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205-220.

Finally, a soldier writing a memoir or remembrance could be motivated simply by an interest in recording and sharing memories of significant happenings without as much attention (as letters and diaries) to inner experiences and feelings. This lack of concern with more reflective or introspective writing, however, does not affect the personal documents' usefulness to this study.

Requests for Letters not to be published in Newspapers

Curiously many of the New Zealand soldiers looked at in this study explicitly stated in letters home that they did not want their accounts published in newspapers. This was sometimes based on a desire to keep private opinions private, such as Corporal McKegg's remark to his brother that, while he was happy for letters to be shown to friends, he objected 'to have them all published, of course you must know I say a great deal more in my letter to you than what I would care to have published.'⁷⁴ More often it was because the letters they did read in newspapers were considered exaggerated or even fabricated. Privates Gilbert and McFarlane both wrote home about such objections. Gilbert:

By jingoes there's some awful lies told in letters from here and to us who are on the ground and read them in the papers they look very ridiculous. For instance we were reading a letter yesterday from a trooper, or a Sergt I should say who was at Standerton. Among other things he said that Standerton was on the Natal border and from where he was writing he could see Laings Nek and Majuba. This is only one statement out of many but for downright untruth it put all the others into the shade. As a matter of fact the town mentioned is about eighty miles above the border and the nature of the country makes it just as possible to Hokitika from Oxford as to see either Laings Nek or Majuba either from there. What fellows can see in sending home such rot I

⁷⁴ McKegg, letter to Willie, 14 July 1900.

don't know more especially when the credulity of its readers makes it run a serious risk of getting into papers. Personally I can generally find enough truth to talk about without troubling my imagination by trying to think out lies, but all people are not alike in that way.⁷⁵

And McFarlane:

You have seen a lot of remarkable letters in the papers and no doubt wonder why my experiences are not more exciting but you must remember I am trying to keep strictly within the mark and not writing from imagination.⁷⁶

Trooper Tennent, on the other hand, offered no explanation for his final comment in a letter to his mother: 'PS On no account publish any of my letters by order of H.T.'⁷⁷ Statements such as these informed my decision to not include letters published in contemporary newspapers as part of this study, despite the rich wealth of material, because the required analysis of veracity was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

There were various incentives for the writing of letters, diaries and reminiscences. While the soldiers' themselves rarely commented on their motivations for writing, scholars have written much about these motivations, which included: remembrance and maintaining relationships, preserving bonds with family and friends left at home; entertainment and recreation to relieve boredom and homesickness; emotional unburdening during stressful and harrowing circumstances; and, making sense of life and identity at the present moment (or, in the case of reminiscences, a past experiences and actions), and self-expression. While it is difficult to know what each soldier intended to achieve with their personal documents, it is probable that the sustaining of

⁷⁵ Gilbert, letter to Father, 23 September 1901, in Field, p. 63.

⁷⁶ McFarlane, letter to Aggie (Sister), 18 May 1902.

⁷⁷ Tennent, letter to Mother, 3 June 1901.

relationships and remembrance were important for most letter- and diary-writers, as was the entertainment provided, while the search for meaning and the justification of actions were significant rationales for the writing of reminiscences.

Chapter Two

The Other

Introduction

A critical focus of this thesis is on what the diaries, letters and reminiscences of New Zealand soldiers in the South African War reveal about attitudes and views about people. This chapter analyses what the New Zealanders wrote about the 'Other' – in this case New Zealand Māori, Australian Aboriginals, South African Blacks and the Boers.

Attitudes about Race

Views about ethnicity, particularly attitudes toward non-white people, are revealed in the letters and diaries written during the South African War.¹ These included attitudes toward the New Zealand Māori, the Australian Aboriginals and the native Africans. Even something as simple as their choice of terminology reveals much about their attitudes to race.² While it must be remembered that the documents were written over a century ago, when such language was more acceptable, terms such as 'nigger' also signified the contempt whites held for blacks. However, the widely-held assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority in

¹ Note: While the personal documents of the soldiers could offer much for a postcolonial approach to history – such as a look at the production of knowledge about, and literary representations of, colonised peoples in the course of justifying imperialism, as endorsed by Edward Said and Dipesh Chakrabarty – this thesis is focused on the views and identifications of New Zealanders, not on deconstructing the views and identities of the Other. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995). Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

² About a third of the study's subjects used the word 'nigger' in their letters or diaries, for example: Hugh Ross, T.W. Brown, Joshua Nicholas Carver, William Robert Boyd, and Herbert Ernest Hart. Less common was the use of the word 'darky', used by only two men: George Henry Gilbert and James Madill. E.A.A. Potter, on the other hand, explicitly wrote in a letter that 'all the natives are called boys, even if they are sixty years old', displaying his patronising attitude toward them. E.A.A. Potter, letter to George, 23 February 1901, MS-Papers-2317 (David Hood Papers), Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

English-speaking lands also meant that the word could be used without deliberate insult.³

During the nineteenth century British considered themselves superior to all others and Britain was seen as the epitome of 'civilisation', and the attitudes of European New Zealanders were predominantly British, like the settlers themselves.⁴ In the second half of nineteenth century the concept of race was linked to Social Darwinism, in which history was 'a racial struggle... only the fittest races would have the right to survive', therefore the British 'race', which had created the finest of all civilisations, was inherently superior to all others and could treat inferior races as it wished.⁵ Specifically New Zealand racial superiority also developed during this century, the result of intrinsically related influences: the 'genetic model', the settler stock from Britain that colonised New Zealand; and, the 'environmental model', the rural character and climate of New Zealand which affected the development of that settler stock.⁶

While most of the soldiers unconsciously used terminology such as 'nigger', some, such as Private Moore, showed a degree of awareness about the bias inherent in its use. In Moore's case this is shown by his use of the word nigger in quotation marks.⁷ It is possible he called attention to the word in an effort to problematise its use, showing an understanding that it was commonly used but that he might not have felt entirely comfortable with its use himself. However, it

³ "Nigger." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian, 7 December 2011. [<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=nigger>]. On the other hand, most of the examples of the use of the word nigger occur in diaries, rather than letters, perhaps showing a degree of caution when using such terminology in correspondence.

⁴ K. R. Howe, *Race Relations Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Survey 1770s-1970s* (Auckland: Longman Pail Ltd., 1982), p. 11. P. J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Rice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 308-336 (p. 308).

⁵ Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, 'Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 28. (1999), pp. 175-199 (p. 177). Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', p. 309. Also see: Faye V. Harrison, 'Introduction: Expanding the Discourse on "Race"', *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (September 1998), pp. 609-631 (p. 621). Harrison wrote that it was only in the nineteenth century that the 'relatively new folk ideology became the preoccupation of a modern "science," which elevated the folk naturalization of different to one of society's most powerful legitimating realms.'

⁶ Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd., 1986), p. 7.

⁷ For example: James G. Harle Moore, *With the Fourth New Zealand Rough Riders* (Dunedin: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., Ltd., 1906), pp. 33, 39, 69.

is also possible that his use of quotation marks was an attempt to convey a neutral attitude or call attention to slang, without any deeper thought of the word's significance.

Unlike the use of the word "nigger", the use of "Kaffir" was completely unproblematised – used without an awareness of deeper associations or subtext – by soldiers during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. During the South African War Kaffir was still a neutral term for black southern African people, not yet containing the negative connotations it would develop during the twentieth century.⁸

Māori

There is very little mention of Māori in the diaries studied. One reason for this was because, under the imperial dictum that coloured colonial troops were not to serve in the 'white man's war', Māori were not authorised to take part in the war in South Africa.⁹ This meant that, supposedly, Māori were not to be encountered during the war, so the soldiers would not have the opportunity to comment on Māori in their writings. However, some Māori men – all with European names – did volunteer and served in the New Zealand contingents.

Private Raynes' diary offered a few comments on "half-caste" Māori aboard the troopship the Sixth Contingent was travelling on to South Africa. He wrote that Trooper Phillips from Raglan, '[b]eing half-caste' was 'low-spirited in his illness' when suffering from pneumonia.¹⁰ Four days later Raynes wrote about a Table

⁸ The word *kaffir* was derived from the Arabic *qafir* or *kafir*, meaning "unbeliever" or "infidel", a term used by Arab traders for the inhabitants of southern and eastern Africa during the 16th century, and later adopted by Portuguese explorers and European colonists. It was only around the 1930s that it became a term of abuse. "Kaffir." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. 7 December 2011. [<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=kaffir>].

⁹ Ashley Gould, "'Different Race, Same Queen': Māori and the War", in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire and the South African War*, ed. by John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), pp.119-127 (p. 119). Michael King, *New Zealanders at War* (Auckland: Penguin, 2003), p. 63. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), p. 402.

¹⁰ William Frederick Raynes, diary (1 January 1901 to 26 September 1901), entry for 28 February 1901, QMS-1676, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Note: Trooper Phillips was not among the 20-odd Māori or part-Māori men identified by Gould. Gould, "'Different Race, Same Queen'", p. 123.

Orderly (possibly Phillips, although it is not made clear), whom he called 'a half-caste and a fine fellow', going on to say that:

Although well educated and to all appearances one who has been brought up according to our own fashion, the Maori shows up now and then and I notice that sometimes when it is very hot at meals he takes off his jersey and singlet.¹¹

Raynes' comments are suggestive about contemporary attitudes toward race; for example, regarding the superiority of European (or, rather, Anglo-Saxon) constitutions – implying that all half-castes react feebly to illness – and the inherent incivility of Māori – evidenced by Phillips easily falling back into impolite manners of dress and behaviour. The comments made by Raynes also show that the rank and file soldiers were not overly concerned with following the Imperial dictum that no Māori served in the contingents during this 'white man's war.'

The most important place Māori and Māori culture had in the primary sources was in discussions of the 'Maori war-cry' used by the contingents. The war-cry contributed to esprit de corps among the New Zealanders, being drawn on by New Zealand soldiers to define themselves from the others they interacted with in South Africa. Historian Bill Nasson called the New Zealand soldiers' performance of the *haka*, the 'famous ritual of posturing masculinity', and the mark of a distinctive and evolving New Zealand representation.¹² The war-cry could also be used to arouse aggression or simply for entertainment purposes.

The official war-cry of the First Contingent and successive contingents was composed by John Walter Callaway. According to a biography written about Callaway, the lyrics were 'Kia kaha nu Tireni/Wha whai maea mo to Kuini to Kinga/Ake ake Ake', which translated as 'Be strong, New Zealand/Fight bravely for your Queen, your Country/Ever Ever Ever.'¹³ This was a different chant than that discussed by Trooper Linklater, of the Sixth Contingent, in his reminiscence. He wrote that during his contingent's voyage to South Africa they were busy in

¹¹ Raynes, diary, 3 March 1901.

¹² Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902* (Auckland: Arnold, 1999), p. 280.

¹³ Mike Dwight, *Walter Callaway: A Māori Warrior of the Boer War* (Hamilton: Mike Dwight, 2010), p. 33.

their spare time learning 'our Maori war-cry', which was 'Tutahi Hingatahi, Tutaki Hingatahi, Purutia te man ote Kingi. Ake-ake Kia toa, Ake-ake Kia taha. He, he, ha', translated as 'Together we stand, together we fall, and thus uphold the authority of our King. For ever and for ever be brave. For ever and ever be strong.'¹⁴ None of the other New Zealand soldiers provided details about the war-cries they mentioned.

The soldiers' use of the war-cry had an element of pride, as shown by Trooper Smith's report that 'each troop gave its war cry' as his troopship departed from Christchurch, and, likewise, by Trooper Tasker's comment that when the ship departed from Albany for its final leg to South Africa, 'the boys cheered and gave the war cry.'¹⁵ Both Smith and Tasker served in the Sixth Contingent. The arrival in South Africa also provided an opportunity for New Zealanders to show their pride through chant. For example, Trooper Ross wrote about his transport passing other troopships, 'simply packed with troops all Red Coats', while coming into Port Elizabeth, and the New Zealanders 'gave them our war cry', which he called 'a very good one in Maori.'¹⁶ Troopers Simpson and Perham, of the Third and Fifth Contingent, respectively, also wrote about the New Zealanders being 'prevailed upon' to give their war cry at concerts.¹⁷

Australian Aborigines

All the troopships travelling between New Zealand and South Africa stopped en route at Albany, a port city in Western Australia. For the vast majority of the New Zealand soldiers this was their first experience of Australia, and their first

¹⁴ Joseph Linklater, *On Active Service in South Africa with 'The Silent Sixth'* (Wellington: McKee and Co., Printers, 1904), 14 February 1901, p. 13.

¹⁵ S. Hooper Smith, diary (5 February 1900 to 10 June 1900), entry for 16 February 1900, 1987.2111, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Charles B. Tasker, *A slice of the life of my Uncle Charlie: a diary of Trooper C.B. Tasker, Service number 3561, 6th Contingent, New Zealand Mounted Rifles, South Africa*, transcribed by P.M. Tasker (Waikanae, NZ: P.M. Tasker, 1991), 15 February 1901, p. 5.

¹⁶ Hugh Ross, diary (21 October 1898 to 3 December 1900), entry for 21 November 1899, MS-Papers-1436, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁷ Frank Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column: Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African War of 1899-1902* (Timaru: Printers and Publishers, 1956), 1 January 1901, p. 36. Robert Simpson, *Military Papers*, 29 March 1900, MSC0078, Hamilton City Libraries, Hamilton.

encounters with Australian Aboriginals. The men judged the Aborigines in comparison to the Māori and found them wanting. For example, Private Gilbert explicitly wrote of how the Aborigines, the 'Albany niggers', compared unfavourably with Māori:

Well, we saw four in all and one wee spratt-nigger in arms. They were at street corners begging, two men and two women, if such a name can be applied to such objects. I have seen some specimens of Maories in the North Island but the worst I ever saw was a king to them. Both men and one of the women (a very old one) were dressed in kangaroo skins and you can guess their appearance when I tell you, and truthfully, that Old Hick would be fact compared to them, and both their person and their skin robes seem to call aloud for the intervention of a sanitary inspector. In fact, even yet you will hear chaps talking of them on board here and saying to each other 'just weren't they specimens and gum, didn't they pong'.¹⁸

Trooper Tennent also wrote home about the Australian Aboriginals he encountered in Albany, saying 'they seem to live by cadging. They are not to be compared with the Maoris.'¹⁹ Such negative perceptions of indigenous Australians in comparison to Māori were nothing new, and had been common since the British colonisation of New Zealand began: Māori were seen to be more attractive, more hospitable, and at a more advanced stage of civilisation than the Aboriginals, while Aboriginals were more commonly described in a pejorative manner compared to the more ambivalent tone taken with Māori. According to New Zealand historian Philippa Mein Smith, Māori 'were more intelligible than indigenous Australians to European senses of what was "civilised" because Māori were like themselves: Māori were more hierarchical, settled, competitive and

¹⁸ Henry George Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 23 April 1901, in *Soldier Boy: A Young New Zealander Writes Home from the Boer War*, compiled by Kingsley Field (Auckland: New Holland Publishers, 2007), pp. 11-12.

¹⁹ Hobart Cother Tennent, letter to Father, 17 May 1901, 2201.1057, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

materialistic, and they embraced European technology and ideas' and Aboriginal people were 'judged to be more "primitive" or "degenerate" than Māori, who were assumed to be superior because they were warriors and gardeners.'²⁰

Black South Africans

While some soldiers wrote about Māori and Aboriginals, it was more likely for a soldier to write about the black South Africans encountered in-country. New Zealand historian Gavin McLean was largely correct when he wrote that in South Africa 'Africans worked cargo, tended cattle, carried packs and slaughtered captured livestock, their fate of little concern to New Zealanders.'²¹ However, this comment does not express the range of attitudes felt by the New Zealanders.

Some of the New Zealand soldiers displayed a belief in the innate superiority of white men over black, and this was reflected in their rather condescending attitude toward blacks. Sometimes this belief could be discerned through an obvious appreciation of southern African black deference to white people. For example, Lieutenant MacDonald of the Fourth Contingent, in his account of a trip from Bulawayo to Fort Tuli and back again, wrote that the 'stray natives that we meet along the road have been well trained', removing their 'dilapidated hats' and uttering 'the significant word' "Baas" as the New Zealand troops passed.²² Likewise, Sergeant Leece wrote to his brother about seeing local Kaffir boys with signs on them saying 'property of _____' and considering getting one for himself

²⁰ Philippa Mein Smith, 'The Cartoon History of Tasman Relations', in *Remaking the Tasman World*, ed. by Philippa Mein Smith, Peter Hempenstall and Shaun Goldfinch (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2008), pp. 31-55 (pp. 38-39). Smith also wrote that European prejudice lead to the treatment of the nomadic and non-materialistic Aboriginals 'as beasts rather than humans.' See also, Denis McLean, *The Prickly Pair: Making Nationalism in Australia and New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2003), pp. 48-49: Europeans 'could not come to terms with the elusive, spiritual basis of Aboriginal life and culture' and interpreted their nomadic ways as 'deficient, a mark of a low order of civilisation.' In addition, according to Howe, Aborigines were seen as 'horrid, rural pests' without the potential for moral and social elevation that the Māori possessed. Howe, pp. 11-12.

²¹ Gavin McLean, 'Bullets! They were just like hailstones falling on cabbage leaves! – the South African War', in *The Penguin Book of New Zealanders at War*, ed. by Gavin McLean and Ian Gibbons with Kynan Gentry (North Shore: Penguin Group, 2009), pp. 75-88 (p. 76).

²² This account was published in Moore's *With the Fourth*. Moore, p. 61.

‘as a kind of bodyguard.’²³ This single sentence showed a distinct lack of human compassion towards the young black men, and Leece equated blacks with animals such as horses, seeing them as property.

Not all the New Zealanders were comfortable with the relationship between whites and blacks in South Africa. Sergeant Carver of the Fourth Contingent, when asked by his brother what chances there were for a working man in South Africa, thought that ‘there are none as all manual labour is done by the Natives’ and that white men ‘do not work out here if he does he is looked upon as of “no class” as they say here.’²⁴ He told his parents to tell his brother ‘not to be in a hurry to leave good old New Zealand.’²⁵ This suggests that he did not agree with the employment distinctions based on race in South Africa.

Less explicit was many soldiers’ apparent indifference to the fate of blacks. In May 1901, a New Zealander of Silverton Camp, near Pretoria, threw a cartridge into a fire, detonating the ordinance, resulting in the death of a ‘nigger’. The report of this incident in Private Raynes’ diary showed a lack of concern with the death itself; he merely scolds soldiers for being ‘foolish.’²⁶ Private Clarke, in the Ninth Contingent, reported a similar incident on 31 May 1902, cavalierly recording that ‘about 9 Kaffir boys were sitting round a fire this morning when a cartridge that by some means got into the fire exploded and 7 of them were more or less severely wounded.’²⁷ This indifference was also shown by Private Ross. On 31 December 1899, the First Contingent moved camp to near Colesburg, and Ross admitted in his diary that ‘we were actually camped on a

²³ George Leece, letter to Ned (Brother), 20 May 1900, MS-Group-1260, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²⁴ Joshua Nicholas Carver, letter to Mother and Father, 25 August 1900, 2000.550, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Raynes, diary, 8 May 1901. Signaller Lockhead’s diary also reveals indifference to the death of a black man: ‘The train we came back in from jo’burg ran into a wagon and killed the kaffir driver and one mule injured. Got back to camp tonight. Went to concert. Saw two trick cyclists. They were great.’ William Stewart Lockhead, diary (5 October 1901 to 1 June 1902), entry for 2 May 1902, ARC2001-55, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth.

²⁷ James N. Clarke, *Still Jogging Along: Being the Diary and some Letters of Private J.N. Clarke, 9th Contingent N.Z.M.R.*, ed. by Brian Connor (Dunedin: Otago Military Museum, 1989), 31 May 1902, p. 16.

Kaffir cemetery at Arundel, tents on top of the graves yet we took no notice.²⁸ However, that he wrote that they 'took no notice' in fact shows that Ross himself did notice, even if all his fellow soldiers did not, and may show that not everyone was comfortable with the choice of camping ground. On the other hand, it may just be a matter of choice of wording, and Ross was perfectly happy with the choice and unconcerned about the propriety of camping on a native cemetery.

The personal documents also show a range of attitudes by individuals when it came to sympathy, or perhaps pity (the two are often indistinguishable in the writings) for blacks. For example, in his diary entry for 15 February 1900 Private Ross showed sympathy for the blacks of Kimberley he met after the end of that town's siege, and wrote that 'Some little nigger boys came down to us this morning and we fed them up, they were just living skeletons, just the bones left, we haven't too much tucker ourselves, but these poor creatures want it more than us.' He matter-of-factly noted that the horse 'that had just died has been all cut up and carted away by the niggers for tucker, some haven't had meat for 4 months.'²⁹ However, in his entry for 24 February 1900, just over a week later, he wrote that 'it is a most disgusting sight to see the niggers rush our dead horses', an uncharitable comment when the blacks of Kimberley were still living under similar starvation conditions as they had been during the Boer siege.³⁰ Private Raynes likewise showed a contradiction in attitudes in his sympathy for blacks in South Africa. A couple of months before his apathetic diary entry about the death of a black in camp from an exploding cartridge, his diary shows – through the act of mentioning it in his diary at all – a measure of concern for the poor blacks seen on the march: 'Every here and there a family of blacks would come out and beg biscuits etc. Most were poorly clad and some not clothed at all.'³¹ And the next day, when the New Zealanders left camp: 'the place became

²⁸ Ross, diary, 31 December 1899.

²⁹ Ross, diary, 15 February 1900.

³⁰ Ross, diary, 24 February 1900. His contradictory attitudes are also obvious in this entry, in his description of a Kaffir village, 'such hovels of houses and made of all sorts of conceivable things' (sacks, mud and Kerosine tins), which leads him to sympathetically comment about the blacks: 'Poor brutes they have an existence but seem happy enough.' Ross, diary, 24 February 1900.

³¹ Raynes, diary, 27 March 1901.

swarming with niggers, both sexes and all sizes, who quickly collected any scraps that were left over.’³²

One of the dominant views of the black South African population which emerges from the documents was of a cheap and willing source of labour. A lot of the New Zealand soldiers’ interactions with blacks in South Africa were with black servants and orderlies working with the British Army, usually in the employ of officers like Lieutenant Bosworth, although soldiers of all ranks used the services of blacks, often in exchange for food or money. Bosworth wrote enthusiastically to his wife about his ‘nigger’, George, who was ‘a very good washer-man’, and the other officers’ ‘black-boys’. He wrote of how they ‘go to the creek together, and do not return until they have washed and dried the clothes’ and that it was ‘really wonderful how clean they can get things, and the neat manner in which everything is folded up.’³³ Trooper McFarlane also described that

All our officers now have niggerboys to wash their dishes and so on and they are mostly little chaps and dressed in full sized old uniforms the effect is rather amusing especially when they are on horseback with a rifle and a lot of other gear strapped all round.³⁴

Private Gilbert was also enthusiastic about ‘our nigger orderlies and cooks etc’ in a letter to his mother. According to Gilbert every squadron was ‘allowed to keep two nigger boys on Government rations, for their own use’, the blacks usually picked up from kraals on the march and coming to the army ‘without a name and unable to speak a word of English.’³⁵ He told his mother that he wished he had brought a camera to South Africa because written descriptions of these ‘swarthy

³² Raynes, diary, 28 March 1901. Other soldiers also commented about the begging of blacks, often showing a degree of sympathy, for example, Trooper Kirkbride, who described ‘Little niggers at every station for biscuits.’ Matthew Bruce Kirkbride, diary (1 November 1899 to 11 December 1900), entry for 28 November 1899, 1998/2570, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

³³ Jack Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 24 June 1900, NZMS-914, Auckland City Libraries, Auckland.

³⁴ William John McFarlane, letter to Cis, 14 May 1902, in ‘The Life and Times of William John McFarlane’ by Donald John McFarlane, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

³⁵ Gilbert, letter to Mother, 18 November 1901, in Field, p. 90. Note: *kraal* was a term used for a native settlement, although in modern ethnography it refers more specifically to a livestock ‘enclosure’ or ‘pen’ within a homestead. “Kraal.” *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian, 7 December 2011. [<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=kraal>]

little gentlemen' were insufficient: 'for some are half dressed, some three quarters, a few, whole, and a good many not at all, and yet taken all round they are as happy and light-hearted a lot as you could possibly find.'³⁶ Private Clarke wrote to his sister Jeannie that 'we live like lords here', explaining that he had a 'little Basuto boy' to look after his horse, wash his dishes, tidy his tent, and the like.³⁷ A letter from Lieutenant Tuckey of the Fifth (and Seventh) Contingent to his mother in June 1900 is also revealing about attitudes toward blacks in the army, when he describes his personal hygiene arrangements: 'We do have daily baths but they consist of three buckets of water, we spong ourselves with the first bucket, the nigger pours the second over us, and the nigger washes the soap off with the third.'³⁸ However, it should be noted that New Zealand officers also had New Zealand soldiers as orderlies, employed for similar services as the blacks, showing that many officers were just as comfortable with white servants as with black South African help.³⁹

Personal documents generally do not mention blacks serving as soldiers with the Boer or British forces. The South African War was thought of, by unwritten agreement, as a 'white man's war.'⁴⁰ Despite this, around 10,000 blacks were armed by the British and participated in the war, taking part in a variety of offensive military operations (in addition to many more serving in non-combatant roles), and blacks served with the Boers as well.⁴¹ Despite these

³⁶ Gilbert, letter to Mother, 18 November 1901, in Field, p. 90.

³⁷ The Basuto servant was called 'Bob' by Clarke. Clarke, letter to Jeannie, 17 June 1902, in Connor, p. 29.

³⁸ H.P. Tuckey, letter to Mother, June 1900, Micro-MS-553, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁹ For example: Tuckey, letter to Mother, 20 May 1900. Stuart Newall, diary (31 March 1900 to mid-1901), entry for 31 August 1900, qMS-1577-1584, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴⁰ According to Professor Bernard Mbenga of the University of the North West, Mafeking, there were three main reasons why the South African War was thought of as a white man's war: first, both sides considered it distasteful and immoral to use blacks in a war between whites; second, the British were confident in an early victory; third, both sides were concerned about rebellions against white control by armed blacks. Professor Mbenga, quoted in *The Boer War*, radio programme, broadcast on BBC Radio 4, September 1999.

⁴¹ Ian McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, Historical Branch, GP Books, 1991), p. 117. Fransjohan Pretorius, 'Boer Attitudes to Africans in Wartime', in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. by Donal Lowry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 104-120 (pp. 110, 118). Pretorius wrote that an estimated 20 to 25 percent of total Boer manpower was provided by black Africans – serving as labour, servants, and as combatants. Also, according to Bill Nasson, there were

numbers, Trooper Ross was the only soldier to mention blacks serving with the Boers. Ross wrote of a battle in January 1900 in which the 'wiley Boers' sent 'Kaffirs in front to draw the fire and then rushed after them', and that the British had no blacks fighting for them 'as this is a white man's war and should be fought by them.'⁴² While this comment was made early in the conflict, before the British were aware of man-power shortages and the possibility of remediating these by employing blacks, it is interesting that this was one of only two comments made about the arming of blacks by *any* New Zealand soldier. The other comment was made by Private Raynes when he described trekking through the farms of a Scotsman. He wrote that at the start of the war the farmer 'armed the 30 Kaffirs he had employed', but by August 1901 the British Government armed them.⁴³ He did not remark upon the arming of blacks or suggest whether this idea bothered him. The lack of reference about armed blacks in the diaries and letters of the soldiers studied suggests uneasiness with the notion and, perhaps, a deliberate effort to hide black participation from the people at home.

Some of the soldiers seem to have been amused by the blacks they encountered in South Africa, both in the towns and in camp, displaying a patronising and superior attitude toward them. Blacks had value as objects of entertainment and novelty. Private Gilbert, for all his apparent affection for the blacks he met and saw, showed this exact attitude when he wrote to his family that 'I can't give you the camp news, it would fill a book, but the Kaffirs are a never-failing source of amusement in thousands of ways.'⁴⁴ In addition, Private York of the Fourth Contingent wrote to his family that he would 'like for them 'to see the Blacks, talk about laugh, their funny ways, only wear a piece of sack around their bodies, they would do anything for a piece of biscuit, they work as slaves pretty well',

'perhaps as many as 14,000 African and Coloured commando auxiliaries and possibly 120,000 African, Coloured and Indian men in armed or non-combatant imperial army service.' Nasson, p. 282.

⁴² Ross, diary, 15 January 1900.

⁴³ Raynes, diary, 22 August 1901.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 14 May 1901, in Field, p. 28. His affection is obvious from his references to blacks as 'swarthy little gentlemen' and 'dusky brethren of ours.' Gilbert, letter to Mother, 18 November 1901, in Field, pp. 90-92.

showing his concern with blacks as novelties, as well as sources of labour.⁴⁵ A comment by Corporal Hart of the Ninth Contingent on 1 July 1902 also suggests a degree of amusement with blacks, with a description of 'some fun this morning' when Hart witnessed '2 Nigger Policemen trying to run in another nigger who was a bit too good for them.'⁴⁶ In fact, Trooper James reported that the troops themselves, during a visit to 'Elaansfontein' in April 1902, had 'great fun with the natives' trying to catch them, but found they 'ran too quick for us.'⁴⁷ This concern with blacks as a novelty was explicit in the diary of Private Ross, who, on arrival in Cape Town in November 1899, wrote that the 'niggers are real niggers' and that he had 'never saw niggers before they are the "Real Mackay".'⁴⁸ The novelty of blacks is also obvious in the letter from Sergeant Carver to his sister. In the letter, begun on the troopship trip over to South Africa, Carver described in great detail a rickshaw driver in Durban:

These rickshaws are niggermen who will run you up to town for a shilling or anywhere else. I had a fine man to pull me he was dressed up to kill with a fine pair of polished horns fixed on his head, [illegible] around the forehead and beads and earrings, his clothes consisted of kneepants and deckerated with red ribbons around the knees and when he was going at top his ribbons would stream out all over the place. The streets of Durban are just swarming with rickshaw men all dressed with horns beads and feathers.⁴⁹

This detailed description clearly shows Carver's fascination with the blacks in Durban. This attitude was also evident in comments made about giving blacks

⁴⁵ Harry York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 13 May 1900, in *Harry's Letters from the Boer War*, ed. by Frank Fyfe (Greytown: Wakelin House, 1993), p. 24. His sympathy for blacks in South Africa, however, is evident in a comment in the same letter about 'niggers' working 'there just like dogs, if he does not obey, he gets a crack over the head with a stick.'

⁴⁶ Herbert Ernest Hart, diary (8 February 1902 to 5 January 1903), entry for 1 July 1902, 1990.1024, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁴⁷ Frederick William James, diary (4 January 1902 to 1 August 1902), entry for 17 April 1902, Biographical File, New Zealand Room, Tauranga City Libraries, Tauranga.

⁴⁸ Hugh Ross, diary, 23 November 1899.

⁴⁹ Joshua Nicholas Carver, 9 May 1900, Troopship, to Annie (Sister). William B. Messenger also called Durban a grand place in part because of the 'kaffirs in fantastic attire with rickshaws.' William B. Messenger, diary, 16 May 1902.

food. The soldiers treated them like pets or animals. For example, Trooper James wrote in his diary that he met Kaffirs in Durban and 'threw biscuits and meat to them', while also buying trinkets – 'bracelets and others trophies' – from them, and Private Moore likewise wrote of 'niggers' scrambling for 'scraps of bread and biscuits' thrown to them by the soldiers.⁵⁰

Attitudes about Boers

Unsurprisingly, diaries and letters made much reference to the enemy the soldiers were in the country to fight, the Boers. These comments about the Boers were overwhelmingly negative. Private Ross, who before the war had defended the Boers at the Debating Society in Marton, wrote in his diary that his opinions had 'completely reversed' after arriving in South Africa.⁵¹ He commented on the hatred the people of Kimberley had for the Boers and thought 'right too', writing that the Boers 'are not human.'⁵² Derogatory remarks such as this one from Ross were the result of 'powerful abstractions of the enemy that are endemic to warfare' which make it easier for men to bypass inhibitions about killing and help to diminish individual responsibility.⁵³

The sources studied showed that contemporary stereotypes were undeniably strong, there being evidence of the popular views of the Boers as undeveloped,

⁵⁰ James, diary, 18 March 1902. Moore, p. 33.

⁵¹ Ross, diary, 27 February 1900.

⁵² *Ibid.* Jollie's attitudes also hardened after witnessing a Boer siege, in his case the siege of Mafeking: he wrote in his diary of the 'murder' conducted by the Boer 'brutes' and their artillery, to which the British could not reply, and that remarked that he thought 'the mildest of us feels as if he could cut any number of Boers' throats in cold blood too, after this.' Edward Jollie, diary (22 January 1900 to 27 May 1900), entry for 12 December 1899, pp. 25-26. MS-Papers-1446, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. The Jollie diary began as a letter to his mother; the entries detailing events before 22 January 1900 were written retrospectively.

⁵³ Jason Phillips, 'A Brothers' War?: Exploring Confederate Perceptions of the Enemy', in *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. by Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), pp. 67-90 (pp. 68-69). According to Jason Phillips, a North American historian of slavery and war in the nineteenth century, all soldiers fought at least two enemies: their actual opponents and 'the imagined foes – the caricatures, devoid of complexity and individuality, that animate fear and hatred.' Other elements of army service which helped diminish individual responsibility, according to Phillips, included group absolution, instinctual action acquired through drilling and experience, the chain of command, a combat 'high,' and the mechanical and physical distance between a soldier and his target – the distance at which killing takes place.

uncivilised, bullying, lazy, ignorant and dirty.⁵⁴ A few documents, on the other hand, provided evidence of positive opinions about the Boers.

Boer Cowardice and Treachery

The primary ideas discussed by soldiers when writing about the Boers was the enemy's cowardice and treachery – itself a form of cowardice, a refusal to fight openly and fairly.⁵⁵ In May 1901, Private Gilbert complained to his father that his unit had captured a dozen Boers 'but did not kill any as the cowardly brutes would fire at us like mad while they were in a safe position but as soon as we dismounted to get a crack at them up would go their hands and they would give up the sponge.'⁵⁶ Earlier in the letter he wrote of another encounter with the Boers that he used as evidence for them being 'great cowards': after the New Zealanders charged a Boer laager, the probably outnumbered Boers retreated, 'some were mounted and got away but three of them down with their rifles and up with their hands as soon as we came up to them.'⁵⁷ Gilbert was being harsh attributing three men's refusal to fight a vastly superior force to cowardice, when clearly retreat was impossible, and victory in a shoot-out highly improbable. The assumption of cowardice clearly shows contempt for the Boers, and an unwillingness to think of them in rational terms. Near the end of his service, Gilbert also clearly sums up his views by telling his father that the Boers could not be called soldiers.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ James Robert Burns, "'New Zealanders' at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902' (unpublished BA thesis, Massey University, 1974), pp. 22, 217. Laurie Barber, 'New Zealanders and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902', in *Kiwis in Conflict: 200 Years of New Zealanders at War*, Chris Pugsley with Laurie Barber, Buddy Mikaere, Nigel Prickett and Rose Young (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2008), pp. 46-65 (p. 47). For example: Ross, diary, *passim*, and Henry Gilbert, *passim*.

⁵⁵ As discussed by historian Reid Mitchell in regards to the attitudes of Union and Confederate soldiers during the American Civil War. Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1988), p. 29.

⁵⁶ Gilbert, letter to Father, 28 May 1901, in Field, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Gilbert, letter to Father, 28 May 1901, in Field, p. 34. Note: a *laager* is a formation of waggons designed for fortification. "Laager." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 21 January 2012. [<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/laager>]

⁵⁸ Gilbert, letter to Father, 12 April 1901, in Field, p. 132.

Trooper Swanwick, Fourth Contingent, also wrote home of the Boer preference to fight in way that was perceived as 'unfair'. He said that the Boers 'are very brave when they have a good position on a hill, and get us below, but when they get into close quarters, [illegible] hoist the white flag.'⁵⁹ Sergeant Carver wrote to his brother that the Boers 'are not very plucky and take very good care not to let us get too close to them.'⁶⁰ Sergeant Leece used a tone of indignation in a letter to his mother, saying the Boers 'are very fond of this sniping as it is termed.'⁶¹ Likewise, Sergeant Major Jollie, stationed with the British South African Police in Mafeking during its siege by the Boers, indignantly wrote that 'we are all very tired of being shelled and sniped at day after day, without a chance of retaliating, for the gentle Boer won't come to close quarters.'⁶² Also writing about the siege of Mafeking, Private York thought the Boers 'must have been the greatest cowards under the sun considering that they were nearly 8 thousand and the British about 800.'⁶³ Private Ross, writing about the shelling of Kimberley by the Boers, 'the brutes', 'never fired at all on the redoubts only on the city hoping to kill women and children.'⁶⁴

Private Wilkins, on the other hand, while reporting the surrender of Boers, did not attribute this capitulation to cowardice, but wrote that it was a reasonable decision because

they know if they don't they will be shot as soon as one of us comes near them. We don't stand any of their nonsense they have shown to many of their dirty tricks to the other troops belonging to the English regiments.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Frank Swanwick, letter to Lily (Sister), 11 November 1900, 1999.3194, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁶⁰ Carver, letter to Bernie (Brother), 6 October 1900.

⁶¹ Leece, letter to Mother, 12 August 1900.

⁶² Jollie, diary, 3 November 1899, p. 20.

⁶³ York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 5 August 1900, in Fyfe, p. 32. Note: the British defenders actually numbered around 1500 fighting men. Tabitha Jackson, *The Boer War* (London: Channel 4 Books, 1999), p. 33. Nasson, p. 96.

⁶⁴ Ross, diary, 17 February 1900. The next month Ross expressed dissatisfaction with the lenient British attitude toward the 'rebels', who he said 'are what one may term murderers' who should be shot if captured, not asked for their parole. Ross, diary, 27 March 1900.

⁶⁵ George Wilkins, letter to Father and Mother, 23 April 1901, MS-1232, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland. He also said that this no-nonsense approach had resulted in the Boers calling

It was these 'dirty tricks' born out of treachery that is another important aspect of the negative view of the Boers held by some New Zealand soldiers. The personal writings are littered with references to the Boers as 'treacherous gentlemen' and 'treacherous hounds', and the like.⁶⁶

Strangely though, the diaries and letters examined contain very few specifics about such Boer treachery; in fact, only four. First, treachery was reported in Private Ross' diary entry for 14 January 1900, when British men captured Boer troops about to surprise a camp, and they discovered that that the 'majority had signed the declaration and given in their so-called arms (the Mausers they bury and bring in an old sporting rifle).'⁶⁷ This duplicity, after signing an agreement ('the declaration' or oath of allegiance) that allowed them to return to their homes and families in return for giving up their arms and ending resistance to the British forces, deserved to be 'severely dealt with', according to Ross, who also wrote that shooting was 'too good for such gentlemen.'⁶⁸ Second, Private Boyd wrote about 'many acts of Boer treachery' during the engagement at Rhenoster Kop (29 November 1900), the last conventional battle of the war: 'our ambulance was fired upon, our Bearer party was fired upon while going in to carry out some of our fellows... some of our fellows was wounded while assisting a wounded man.'⁶⁹ The third example was the Boer sniping of an outpost, recorded in the diary of Private Pearce of the Fourth Contingent in January, 1901, during which the Boers captured a signaller and threw him 'over a cliff', and also shot two British troops in their beds.⁷⁰ Hinting at the unauthorised and unusual nature of such acts, Pearce said that 'Deleray' (presumably Boer General Koos de la Rey) said 'if he could find the men who did it, he would call for ten Tommies to

'us' (unknown if this refers to New Zealanders or Colonials, etc) as 'white savages because of the way we got at them and take everything they have got.'

⁶⁶ Ross, diary, 14 January 1900. Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 24 June 1900. Bosworth said they 'are very treacherous hounds and haven't got the heart of a chicken let alone a man.'

⁶⁷ Ross, diary, 16 July 1900.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Ross had, also, previously described the Boer shelling of Kimberley: 'The Boers have played Old Harry with it, knocked it about very badly with shells. Houses are burnt down and smashed to pieces by the brutes, even the hospital was smashed up. They never fired at all on the redoubts only on the city hoping to kill women and children...' Ross, diary, 17 February 1900.

⁶⁹ William Robert Boyd, diary (17 November 1900 to 17 May 1901), entry for 29 November 1900, MS-Papers-3846, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁷⁰ Richard Pearce, diary (8 February 1900 to 2 July 1901), entry for 26 January 1901, MS-Papers-1657, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

shoot them.’⁷¹ Fourth, Private Gilbert wrote home about a battlefield near the Mooi River Camp where he was stationed, and on a ridge above the camp

the grave of a soldier and a Boer side by side. On the Englishman’s mound is a rough cross with ‘Gone but not forgotten’ on it. The Boer being wounded was left behind by his mates when they hurried off. The Englishman went up to help him and as he approached the other raised himself and shot him. As he fell he bayoneted the cowardly brute and there they lay side by side.⁷²

Privates Pearce and Gilbert were not witnesses to the acts they reported; these accounts were possibly myths or rumours spread by British troops.

The belief in Boer treachery in military actions served to distinguish the enemy’s behaviour from the virtuous courage of the New Zealand soldiers, also reinforcing the men’s confidence in the justice of their cause.⁷³ This belief in Boer treachery and brutality, and the lack of concrete evidence of this treachery and brutality, however, could mean that ‘men saw isolated incidents... as symptomatic’ and evidence that ‘the enemy had let his civilized mask slip, revealing his true savage nature.’⁷⁴ It also suggests that this belief in savagery led some of the New Zealand soldiers to suspect the worst of their opponents in commonplace situations.

Boer Mistreatment of Blacks

Interestingly, given their own inherent racism, some New Zealand soldiers wrote disparagingly about the Boers in regards to their mistreatment of blacks.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Richard Pearce, diary, 26 January 1901.

⁷² Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 14 May 1901, in Field, p. 27.

⁷³ Such beliefs were a common feature of wartime mentality; for example, they are discussed by Reid Mitchell, in relation to both Confederate and Unionist beliefs in the treachery of the other side, in his book looking at the American Civil War. Mitchell, p. 29.

⁷⁴ Mitchell, p. 28.

⁷⁵ Note: New Zealanders did not necessarily regard themselves as racist because, as has already been mentioned, they were existed in a ‘climate of opinion’, created by British-descended white adult males of the colonial ruling class, which saw the British as the superior civilisation, with the inferiority of all other people taken for granted. Gibbons, ‘The Climate of Opinion’, p. 308.

Perhaps this was illustrative of New Zealanders' supposedly more 'tolerant' attitudes about race relations, in comparison to those of Australia and South Africa. Unsurprisingly it was Private Gilbert, whose diary and letters show affection for the native South Africans, who gave the most vigorous condemnation of Boer treatment of blacks, in a letter to his sister, Lottie, describing the aftermath of a Boer ambush in late-1901. The Boers, who Gilbert refers to as 'cold-blooded curs', captured three Seventh Contingent scouts and a Queenslander and one of 'our niggers', who they shot in cold blood, after they also 'mortally wounded another nigger who tried to escape.'⁷⁶ He told his sister that he was sharing this 'sickening news' with family so that they could see 'what sort of demons we are fighting' and to show their pro-Boer friends the error of their opinions.⁷⁷ Gilbert also wrote that the Boers had 'absolutely no excuse for this kind of conduct, as the niggers, as a whole, are practically a neutral people, and in any numbers do not assist either side, while black scouts are employed by both parties...'⁷⁸ He suggested that the shooting of blacks scouts by the Boers was common practice. The Boers' indifference to (or, in fact, deliberate wrongdoing against) the lives of blacks is also hinted at by Lieutenant McKeich, who wrote in his diary about kopjes near the Klep River where 'the 7th had some great scraps with the jackies who only a fortnight ago had been down and shot two niggers.'⁷⁹ This entry does not suggest that the killed blacks were legitimate targets (e.g. soldiers), although it is unclear if they were neutral natives or blacks in the employ of the British. Sergeant Major Jollie reported the murder of native runners by Boers in November 1899, 'One or two of the poor beggars have been caught and shot by the Boers, after almost being flogged to death first.'⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Gilbert, letter to Lottie (Sister), 3 December 1901, in Field, p. 109.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Fransjohan Pretorius estimated that Africans provided some 20 to 25 percent of total Boer manpower – for labour or military service or to provide food for the Boer commandos, or as servants accompanying the Boers to the front. Pretorius, p. 118.

⁷⁹ Robert McKeich, diary (1 January 1902 to 3 June 1902), entry for 10 May 1902, 1998.773, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Note: *kopje* refers to a small hill. "Kopje." *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. 21 January 2012. [<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=kopje>]

⁸⁰ Jollie, diary, 19 November 1899, p. 24.

One New Zealand diary entry does provide evidence for deliberate Boer misconduct against black civilians: in May 1901 Private Raynes wrote that 'most of the fighting Boers are merely gangs of looters and plunderers' who had lost all to the British advance and were surviving by robbing the black villages they came across. Raynes also reported that many of the black families 'say that they get no consideration if they fall into the hands of these gangs.'⁸¹ However, it should also be noted that the British, and New Zealanders, took part in the commandeering of black property and food stocks.⁸²

Negative Views of Abilities

Contrary to what was commonly reported in histories of the South African War, many New Zealand troops had a poor opinion of the military abilities, particularly of the marksmanship and shooting, of the Boers.⁸³ Both Corporal McKegg and Sergeant Carver called the Boers 'very bad shots', although Carver distinguished that he was talking about the Boers he had 'experienced', while McKegg was generalising about all Boers.⁸⁴ Sergeant Major Jollie also observed that, while one hears about the Boers being 'remarkably good shots', that his 'experience of them goes far to contradict it': he wrote that they 'shoot badly with the rifle, and their artillery fire is worse almost.'⁸⁵ Similarly, Private McBeth of the First Contingent was glad that the Boers were 'not as good shots as rumour made them, otherwise some of us might not have had an opportunity of writing to our friends.'⁸⁶ Private Ross wrote in a diary entry in December 1899 that the New Zealanders came close to the Boers during skirmishes but that were not overly

⁸¹ Raynes, diary, 4 May 1901.

⁸² See, Chapter Three.

⁸³ Examples of works mentioning New Zealanders respect for Boer abilities: Barber, 'New Zealanders and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902', p. 53. D.O.W. Hall, *The New Zealanders in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, War History Branch, 1949), p. 5. Writing about *British* attitudes, Nasson reported 'routinely respectful murmurs' about Boer horsemanship, marksmanship and endurance. Nasson, pp. 251-52.

⁸⁴ Amos McKegg, letter to Mary (Sister), Unknown Date, MS-934, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland. Carver, letter to Mother and Father, 25 August 1900.

⁸⁵ Jollie, diary, 25 October 1899, p. 16.

⁸⁶ Arthur McBeth, letter to Mrs Chaytor, 17 December 1899. *New Zealand History Online*. 10 May 2011. [<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/files/documents/arthur-mcbeth-letter.pdf>]

troubled because 'they can't shoot.'⁸⁷ Writing about an encounter with Boer artillery, Private Pearce said that they 'opened up' on the mounted infantry with their 'big gun but did bad shooting', giving the British time to bring in their own guns to shell the Boers and force them to retire.⁸⁸ More generous, Trooper Tennent, wrote in a letter that 'the Boers seem to get excited at a short range and don't do very accurate shooting although at a long distance they land the bullets very close.'⁸⁹ Private Ross, writing in his diary after a skirmish at Arundel, likewise called the Boers 'terrible shots', explaining that he saw them 'fire 200 shots at 2 of our fellows who got up too close, they turned and fled like fun. The Boers took pot shot but never hit them...'⁹⁰

Boer Dirtiness

Another important aspect of soldiers' writings about the Boers concerned the perceived Boer dirtiness. This stemmed in part from the pre-war popular image that surrounded the Boers.⁹¹ Another part was the conditions that all soldiers had to endure while on active duty in the field, as admitted by Private Ross when he wrote that the Boer men 'very seldom have a decent wash', but that he fancied 'our fellows will turn Boers in the latter respect – washing is a luxury.'⁹²

While some soldiers commented without reflection, such as Trooper Kirkbride of the First Contingent who visited a Boer laager early in the war and said 'Place stunk... glad to get away'⁹³, the link between a soldier's opinion and the pre-war view is made clear by others. For example, in March 1900, Private Ross visited a Boer position Alexandersfontein, and wrote of the Boers: 'My word the Boers are

⁸⁷ Ross, diary, 16 December 1899.

⁸⁸ Pearce, diary, 24 March 1901.

⁸⁹ Tennent, letter to Oswald, 20 June 1901.

⁹⁰ Ross, diary, 14 December 1899.

⁹¹ According to Simon Johnson, the pre-war popular view of the average Boer was of 'the image of a dirty backward farmer whose lack of intelligence could be taken for granted.' Simon Johnson, 'Sons of the Empire: A Study of New Zealand Ideas and Public Opinion during the Boer War' (unpublished BA thesis, Massey University, 1974), p. 17.

⁹² Ross, diary, 28 April 1900.

⁹³ Kirkbride, diary, 18 February 1900.

dirty brutes, you should see the dirt they used to live in. A pig lives far cleaner in N.Z. all the yarns about the Boers dirtiness is pretty well true.’⁹⁴

Sergeant Foster, who served with the First and Eighth Contingents, also made a point about Boer cleanliness, or lack of, in his reminiscence of his capture by Boers in 1900. About his time in the Boer camp under Commandant Coetzee, Foster wrote that ‘the ordinary Boer’s idea of ablution is decidedly crude’, involving a black boy bringing up a pannikin of water ‘into which about a dozen Boers would dip their fingers, and anoint themselves, not even troubling to remove their hats’. He expressed shock at this poor effort at cleaning themselves because he and the other New Zealanders ‘always bathed in any creek that we had an opportunity to get into.’⁹⁵ He also described that he caused ‘quite a sensation by asking for a piece of soap, and although there were over three hundred in the laager, there wasn’t such an article among them’ and it wasn’t until a week later that a ‘friendly disposed Boer’ gave Foster a small piece.⁹⁶

Treatment of Boer Dead

The attitude of some New Zealand troops toward the Boers is clearly shown in Trooper Gilbert’s description to his father of burying a Boer. The Boer had refused to surrender, leading Gilbert to declare that ‘his bravery was worthy of a nobler cause’, and was shot by the New Zealanders. The possibility of a proper burial ritual was dismissed, and a ‘couple of niggers were sent to dig a grave, if such a hole could be called by that name’. Gilbert wrote that it was exactly ‘the same as burying a dog’, with not a word of service, just the body being placed in a shallow trench with dirt shovelled in on top, ‘and even then his toes were left sticking out but that does not count out here.’⁹⁷ This incident was revealing because, although the Boer displayed bravery, he was not buried by the New

⁹⁴ Ross, diary, 17 March 1900.

⁹⁵ Trevor Foster, reminiscence, 1st New Zealand Rifles’ Association *Bulletin No. 3*, p. 79, qMS-0787, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁹⁶ Foster, reminiscence, p. 79.

⁹⁷ Gilbert, letter to Father, 21 August 1901, in Field, p. 49.

Zealanders with what was considered proper respect, implying that many, if not most, New Zealanders felt that all Boers deserved such disregard.

The treatment of dead Boers was also commented on by Trooper McFarlane, and is revealing about the New Zealand troopers', and his own, views of the enemy. On 4 June 1901, Lieutenant McKeich became the last member of the New Zealand contingents to die in South Africa, four days after the peace agreement that ended the South African War was signed. He was ambushed by three Boers who were unaware peace had been declared. Two Boers died along with McKeich. In his diary Trooper McFarlane wrote about handing the Boer bodies over to their kinsmen and the distinct lack of reverence that the act entailed: 'Our men tossed the bodies into the cart, bump, wallop, like a bag of oats'.⁹⁸ The fact that he chose to remark about his apparent attitude and actions, however, may suggest disquiet about them, and an awareness that the Boer corpses may have deserved more respect from the New Zealanders.

Positive Attitudes about Boers

Not all soldiers, however, used these abstractions to dehumanise or demonise the opposing troops, and not everything written about the Boers in letters and diaries was negative. As has already been mentioned, Private Gilbert wrote about Boer bravery in combat, showing that not all the diaries and letters indicated a belief in the inherent cowardice of the Boers. Gilbert wrote about a Boer who was killed after refusing to surrender, praising him as a 'poor chap' with bravery 'worthy of a nobler cause', and placing the blame for his 'wilful ignorance and stupidity' and subsequent death on the 'rascals' who led the Boers, such as Steys, De Wit and Botha.⁹⁹ After an engagement in January 1902, he also wrote to his father and mother that the Boers 'were very plucky and in that light behaved splendidly', just as the New Zealanders did.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ McFarlane, letter to Mother, 23 May 1901.

⁹⁹ Gilbert, letter to Father, 21 August 1901, in Field, pp. 49, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Gilbert, letter to Father and Mother, 3 January 1902, in Field, p. 116. Later that month, writing about a Boer ambush, he said they 'charged at the Hussars repeatedly and in the bravest fashion and carried their wounded out of the fire in the pluckiest style', although also reported that they

One New Zealand soldier also made it a point to discuss the courage of the Boers in his reminiscences, through clippings taken from the *Adelaide Critic*, in reaction to the fact that 'the courage of our foe has often been challenged, and accusations made against him of various outrages.'¹⁰¹ He was well-aware that the tactics adopted by the Boers were sensible in a war where they were outnumbered and outgunned, and that they were fighting not from 'any particular desire to die for his country' but to 'live for it, and make the British die for it.'¹⁰² In regards to claimed Boer treachery and outrages, he thought that 'British Fair Play' was a 'hypocritical, snuffle-bustering, catch word' and that he had never spoken to a British soldier who reported a real Boer outrage, though he did allow that there might have been 'an isolated case or so of a genuine outrage, there is a villain to be found in every Church congregation.'¹⁰³

Corporal Nathan, in the Sixth Contingent, similarly provided evidence that the Boers were not characteristically treacherous and brutal. On 3 January 1902 he recorded in his diary that a force of New Zealanders was ambushed by Boers, the advance guard was overwhelmed, and two officers and 32 men were captured (with one man killed for refusing to surrender). Nathan wrote that the Boers 'gave our men every chance to surrender when they could have shot them down', and the prisoners were repatriated to camp after being stripped or having their clothes exchanged.¹⁰⁴

In the case of Private Raynes, there was a degree of sympathy for the Boer civilians caught up in the war. While in hospital near Pretoria, and exactly a year

'shot one Hussar in cold Blood.' Gilbert, letter to Mother and All, 29 January 1902, in Field, p. 121.

¹⁰¹ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, 'Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent', p. 19, 1999.2003, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Nathan, diary, 3 January 1902. Other sources provided evidence for this considerate Boer treatment of prisoners of war, among the most interesting being: James Henry Whyte, diary (23 November 1899 to 4 February 1902), entry for 18 December 1899, 1999.478, National Army Museum, Waiouru, describing the Boers taking prisoner and dressing the wounds of Trooper Bradford while under heavy fire – Bradford later died as a prisoner, New Zealand's first casualty of the war and the first soldier from New Zealand to lose his life in an overseas conflict; Moore, p. 169; Glen Brittenden, letter to Father, 27 August 1901, Ms-Papers-2055, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington – who was captured, but assured his parents that 'the only thing I was afraid of losing was my belt which I valued at over ten pounds' but managed to distract the Boers with questions and retained his belt; Tennent, letter to Oswald, 20 June 1901.

after the taking of Pretoria by the British, Raynes was sensitive to the mood around him, and described the civilians he saw:

As one watched the women with careworn, sad faces, dressed in mourning, as they sat on their doorsteps or walked the streets, one felt sorry for them, all had lost friends, many had those dear to them, husbands, sons, brothers and lovers cut off for ever. Added to this is the cloud of defeat – the mortification of seeing at every turn the Khaki dressed form of the foe. Imagine N.Z. invaded and after a hopeless struggle for us to see a similar scene in our cities; to see, say, Russians and hear their foreign gabble in our streets, a little imagination and we can form a faint idea of the feelings of those 'Song of the disappointed, For those who lost the fight'.¹⁰⁵

Despite providing evidence for views about Boer cowardice and poor shooting, some of the personal documents suggest that several New Zealand soldiers did have positive views about their enemies, and respect for their abilities as unconventional soldiers, through descriptions of the Boer ability to escape pursuit and to surprise British troops in the field. Examples of such occurrences include Private Ross' diary entry about De Wet's commando burning British mail and his comment that pursuit was useless because 'the wily Boer is too cunning to be caught' and Trooper Perham's report of the failure of an attack on a Boer farmhouse and the resulting escape of the Boers.¹⁰⁶

Corporal Twistleton of the Second Contingent began his diary with a repetition of propaganda descriptions of a treacherous, racist, degenerate enemy, 'but later admitted, albeit unwillingly, admiration for Boer martial prowess.'¹⁰⁷ Sarah

¹⁰⁵ Raynes, diary, 5 June 1901.

¹⁰⁶ Ross, diary, 18 June 1900. Perham, 28 March 1901, p. 64. Other examples: Newall, diary, 24 October 1900. Moore, p. 147. William Anthony Nathan, diary (19 March 1901 to 15 May 1902), entry for 3 January 1902, MS-Papers-3653-3, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰⁷ Frank Twistleton, *With the New Zealanders at the Front: A Story of Twelve Months' Campaigning in South Africa* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1902), referenced in Laurie

Hawdon, who wrote *Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* anonymously under the pseudonym 'A New Zealander', said that some of the New Zealanders placed on guard over Boer prisoners at Barberton in August 1900 'recorded their opinion that the Boers were not half bad fellows, and seemed to have passed the time in endeavouring to educate their charges in their views as to politics and farming.'¹⁰⁸ In addition, Major Cradock, commanding officer of the Second Contingent, wrote, while taking part in General Mahon's movement (which involved New Zealand's first three contingents) to Rustenburg in pursuit of Boers, that 'the Boers on the trek, even with lean and exhausted animals, are as good men as we are', and was impressed by their hard and skilful fighting, and their endurance.¹⁰⁹

Despite these comments, however, it is clear that the amount of mutual respect between the New Zealand soldiers and the Boers has been over-stated by some authors, such as Richard Wolfe and D.O.W. Hall.¹¹⁰ The personal documents analysed show that New Zealand soldiers were more likely to display hostility toward the Boers, both as soldiers and as people, and to comment on their cowardice and treachery rather than their bravery and fighting abilities. As Jason Phillips wrote, in the soldier's world 'abstractions not only survived by thrived', and, despite the rare expression of respect for the enemy, '[d]enigrating the opposition was too central to the process of warfare for soldiers to give it up.'¹¹¹

Barber, "'From Veldt to Italy": Seven Talks on the History of the New Zealand Army, from 1902-1945' (Hamilton: s.n., 1983), p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Sarah E. Hawdon ['A New Zealander'], *New Zealanders and the Boer War, or, Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* (Christchurch: Gordon and Gotch, c. 1902), p. 83. Hawdon (*nee* Barker) was the wife of a Canterbury farmer, was born in 1851 and died in 1921. Ellen Ellis, 'New Zealand Women and the War', in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire and the South African War*, ed. by John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), pp. 128-150 (p. 137).

¹⁰⁹ Montagu Cradock, *Diary of the Second New Zealand Mounted Rifles on Active Service in South Africa from 24th February 1900 to 21st March 1901, also from 1st April 1901 to 8th May 1901* (Dunedin: Evening Star Co., 1915), p. 27.

¹¹⁰ Richard Wolfe, *With Honour: Our Army, Our Nation, Our History* (Auckland: Penguin Group, 2007), p. 72. Hall, p. 87. Wolfe wrote that a mutual respect developed between the opposing sides because 'like the New Zealanders, many of the Boers were farmers, displaying good horsemanship, courage and endurance under fire.' Hall also said that New Zealand soldiers 'came to hold the Boers in high regard both as soldiers and human beings.' Even Thomas Pakenham wrote, about the British Army as a whole rather than the Colonials specifically, that there had grown up 'a strange sort of mutual liking' between the soldiers in the field. Pakenham, p. 561.

¹¹¹ Phillips, 'A Brother's War?', p. 77.

Conclusions

This chapter looked at attitudes about four groups classified as 'Other' in comparison to the average European New Zealand soldier: the New Zealand Māori, the Australian Aboriginals, the South African natives, and the Boers. The evidence demonstrates the wide-spread belief in British and New Zealand racial superiority when it came to non-white peoples; however, that is not to say that the soldiers did not express a range of attitudes. The few comments made about Māori – the few Māori who managed to serve despite the idea of it being a 'white man's war' – suggested this sense of European superiority, although some soldiers did show pride in the Māori war-cry adopted by the contingents. The Aboriginals were judged more harshly in comparison to Māori, with the few remarks about them being entirely negative and derogatory. The sources show a greater range of attitudes regarding the native black people, the 'kaffirs', encountered in South Africa: some soldiers were condescending and uncompassionate, and indifferent about their fate, while others were uncomfortable with relations between white and black people in South Africa, and were sympathetic about their conditions. Views about the Boers were also primarily, but not entirely, negative. Pre-war stereotypes about cowardice, ignorance and dirtiness were continued in wartime writings, while many of the writings provided evidence against claims of New Zealand respect for Boer military abilities. However, some soldiers displayed opposing views, such as believing Boers to be courageous and superb irregular combatants; on the other hand, there is no evidence for the mutual respect between New Zealanders and Boers reported by many scholars. The next chapter will look at attitudes about themselves as European New Zealanders, British Colonials and British, and how these attitudes contribute to the construction of individual identity.

Chapter Three

Identity

Introduction

The diaries, letters and reminiscences written by soldiers not only provide evidence for their views about the Other, but about the Self – themselves as European New Zealanders, and their fellow British and Colonials – and the proto-nationalist mythology of superiority that developed around New Zealand soldiers.¹ After discussing the ideas of mythology and identity (or identification), and looking at the New Zealand soldiers' attitudes towards British Regulars, the chapter will analyse the troopers' views about themselves, using the key ideas of the New Zealand military superiority mythology – their toughness, initiative, egalitarianism, self-discipline, and superior fighting abilities – as a basis. This analysis of the primary sources is fundamentally a critical analysis of James Burns' 1996 thesis "'New Zealanders' at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902'.

Myth

The soldiers' views about themselves is an important topic of study because of the mythology which developed around New Zealand soldiers; a development

¹ While the term 'Pakeha' New Zealander has currency today, for the purposes of this thesis I will use 'European' New Zealanders because it was a much more recognisable term of self-reference for the late-nineteenth century European (and mainly British) New Zealanders who are the focus of this study.

that began during the New Zealand Wars, continued in South Africa, and was carried forward into the First World War and beyond.²

The core of this myth was New Zealand military excellence, the idea that New Zealand volunteers were superior soldiers to British regulars. While the mythology included the idea of the superiority and hardiness of colonial troops, New Zealanders gave this idea a nationalistic twist by seeing their own troops as the best of the colonial forces.³ Its elements included the belief that the New Zealanders were 'physically superior men, natural soldiers, self-disciplined, egalitarian', 'natural shots, born in the saddle and accustomed to hard outdoor life', 'ready to throw away the rule book when the rules were inadequate', with emotional toughness and initiative, and, finally, who were 'motivated to fight only by the higher, noble cause of patriotism and duty.'⁴ New Zealand historians Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips suggest that the myths and traditions originating in the South African War were consciously established, by the dominant elite and public (as informed by the elite and the media), as part of a growing historical consciousness in European New Zealanders.⁵

² See: Luke Trainor, 'Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand', in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. by David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (New York: Pelgrave, 2002), pp. 251-167; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin Group, 2003); Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials* (Wellington: Bookprint Consultants Ltd., 1990); Simon Johnson, 'Sons of the Empire: A Study of New Zealand Ideas and Public Opinions during the Boer War' (unpublished BA thesis, Massey University, 1974); James Belich, 'War', in *The Future of the Past: Themes in New Zealand History*, ed. by Colin Davis and Peter Lineham (Palmerston North: Department of History, Massey University, 1991), pp. 121-140; Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987); James Robert Burns, "'New Zealanders' at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902' (unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University, 1996). Note that there is some disagreement about whether the traditions that grew up around New Zealand fighting men originated in the New Zealand Wars (Belich, 'War', p. 131) or the South African War (King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, p. 291; Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 144; Maclean and Phillips, p. 54).

³ Johnson, p. 35.

⁴ Trainor, 'Building Nations', p. 260. King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, p. 291. Belich, 'War', p. 131. Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 146. Burns, p. 1.

⁵ Maclean and Phillips, p. 54. Not only was it consciously established, the mythology, according to Jock Phillips, 'which in its broadest principles remained unchanged for the next 50 years' in turn 'structured national self-perceptions and affected behaviour.' Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 144. Burns also agreed that the myths were imposed by New Zealand's dominant elite. Burns, pp. 205-206.

According to James Belich, a prominent New Zealand historian and academic, a myth is

an idea which persists for reasons other than its truth – because it performs an important social and cultural function. Myths provide societies with a shared conception of themselves, common values and a collective identity, and so help make them societies as against a scattering of isolated communities or individuals.⁶

James Burns wrote something similar in his thesis, 'New Zealanders' at War?', saying it 'embodied a system of ideas about the New Zealand soldier which existed for reasons others than their truth, indeed it contained and reproduced an ideology.'⁷ Samuel Hynes, writing about World War One personal narratives and remembrance, called 'myth' a term to 'identify the simplified, dramatised story that has evolved in society to contain the meanings of the war that we can tolerate, and so make sense of its incoherencies and contradictions.'⁸ In summary, a myth is an ideological construction, a simplified and ordered narrative that serves to provide society with collective values and a collective identity.

Soldier Identification

While this thesis has made distinctions between soldiers' attitudes toward the British, Colonials and themselves (New Zealanders), the self-identification of those soldiers often incorporated elements of all three groupings, and the men were not limited to identifying themselves with a New Zealand national identity.⁹

⁶ Belich, 'War', p. 129.

⁷ Burns, p. 1. In addition, William Hardy McNeill wrote that 'Myths... are based on faith more than on fact. Their truth is usually only proven by the action they provoke.' William Hardy McNeill, *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 23-24.

⁸ Samuel Hynes, 'Personal narratives and commemoration', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205-220 (p. 207).

⁹ Identity is a person's self-conception, both as an individual and as a member of a group, or a number of groups. This self-conception is constructed from a collection of many identifications

Many of the soldiers used New Zealander and Colonials interchangeably, and some even referred to themselves as Tommies as well as New Zealanders.¹⁰ At the same time, the writings – in their contemplation about differences between the soldier's unit and other units, especially foreign ones - showed that some troops were considering their identity self-reflectively. They were becoming 'aware of differences between men from Great Britain and from the several colonies', which, according to Keith Sinclair, stimulated thoughts about a specific New Zealand identity and, possibly, the beginning of thoughts about nationalism.¹¹

These findings confirm what was written by Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, scholars of the history of Australia and of Imperial and Commonwealth history, respectively, in their chapter 'Mapping the British World' in *The New Imperial Histories Reader*. They said that the 'rise of colonial national identities did not contradict or undermine imperial Britishness' and that one person 'might have a number of concurrent identities', based on city, province, country and empire.¹²

This study also seems to agree with James Burns' claim that the New Zealand soldiers in South Africa were influenced by, and constructed, a complex identity

(cultural identifiers), personally chosen and interpreted by individuals – these identifiers include place, gender, race, history, nationality, language, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs. A look at identity is relevant because identity, one's self-image, is constructed from a person's ideas and beliefs, and can be revealed by a person's attitudes and opinions. Burns, p. 5. The approach adopted here does contain some problematic assumptions, but the strong constructivist conception of identity is the most useful tool of analysis for this study. This strong understanding of identity preserves the common sense meaning of the term, 'the emphasis on sameness over time or across persons', unlike the more unstable, fragmented, multiple, and ambiguous conceptions of the weak understanding of identity. For more see: Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 67-68.

¹⁰ See, for example, Susan E. Hawdon ['A New Zealander'], *New Zealanders and the Boer War, or, Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* (Christchurch: Gordon and Gotch, c. 1902), and Henry George Gilbert, *Soldier Boy: A Young New Zealander Writes Home from the Boer War*, compiled by Kingsley Field (Auckland: New Holland Publishers, 2007). Hugh Ross began his service distinguishing himself from 'Tommy Atkins', but two months later wrote that an order taking away the soldiers' tents was 'hard luck on us Tommies.' Hugh Ross, diary (21 October 1899 to 3 December 1900), entries for 26 November 1899 and 28 January 1900, MS-Papers-1436, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹¹ Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd., 1986), p. 125.

¹² Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World', in *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, ed. by Stephen Howe (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 140-146 (p. 151).

that included three key identifications: first, with Britain and the British Empire, and the soldiers representing it in South Africa; second, with other colonial soldiers (especially from Australia and Canada); and, third, with fellow New Zealanders.¹³ The exact balance between these three elements varied among individuals and was often ambiguous. Furthermore, these identities were compatible but competing (for predominance), with only one being dominant on any particular occasion. However, based on the subjects of this study and the common maintenance of distinctions between British and New Zealand troops, this thesis does not agree with Burns' claim that, of the possible identifications available to them, 'that which they felt most strongly about was their British identity.'¹⁴

Attitudes about the British

The letters and diaries studied show an overwhelmingly positive opinion of the British Regular, referred to colloquially as "Tommy Atkins" or "Tommy", although, as has been mentioned, the distinction between British, Colonial and New Zealand troopers was fluid and interchangeable.

Trooper Kirkbride, Private Ross, and Corporal Jewell of the First Contingent all wrote in their diaries about the help given to the First Contingent by the British Tommies upon landing in South Africa. Kirkbride stated simply that the 'Dragoons helped us to picket horses, pitch tents and made tea for us.'¹⁵ Jewell provided much more detail about the event in a letter to his wife, writing:

At last the camp came into sight, and the Inniskilling
Dragoons pour out to welcome us. They seized our picketing

¹³ Burns, pp. 180-185, 194. Along the same lines, the present study does not provide evidence for Michael King's claim that New Zealand and Australian troops in the South African War recognised that 'they had more in common with one another than they did with British troops, thus laying the foundation for the ANZAC connection that was to be cemented so strongly more than a decade later at Gallipoli, and in North Africa during World War II.' King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, p. 291.

¹⁴ Burns, p. 220.

¹⁵ Matthew Bruce Kirkbride, diary (1 November 1899 to 11 December 1900), entry for 24 November 1899, 1998.2570, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

gear, our tents and lines and worked away with a will. We were unsteady on our pins and not too strong after our long voyage and our long hot dusty walk and we thought a lot of those gallant Irish boys who were our chums from that out. We had the whole camp laid down, tents up and horses watered and fed within two hours with the help of the Dragoons; and we have been able to repay their kindness since by putting down their lines in this very camp when they got here after the trying railway journey from Cape Town.¹⁶

Ross was also more heartfelt than Kirkbride:

The Regulars are very decent sorts. I have quite reformed my opinion of Tommy Atkins. They treat us right loyally. As soon as we landed here they took off all our gear, pitched our tents, cleaned our saddles, bridles etc., in fact wouldn't let us do a thing. I was never so much surprised in all my life.¹⁷

Ross' choice of words is curious, suggesting that the common perception of the British regulars was less generous. In discussing Kirkbride's, Jewell's and Ross' descriptions of Tommy assistance in setting up camp, it must be noted that another perspective comes from Private Moore. In *With the Fourth* he wrote of how the column he was in was augmented by the arrival of a regiment of Imperial Yeomanry, fresh from England and with new uniforms, weapons, saddles and horses, and of how a number of New Zealanders and Australians 'good-naturedly went across to lend a hand to pitch camp, and incidentally to pick up anything that offered in the shape of loot.'¹⁸

The unknown author of "Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent" also wrote warmly of the 'kindness of the treatment at the hands of the Imperial

¹⁶ Claude Lockhart Jewell, letter to M. Jewell, 28 December 1899, 1998.2465, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

¹⁷ Ross, diary, 26 November 1899.

¹⁸ James G. Harle Moore, *With the Fourth New Zealand Rough Riders* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers, 1906), p. 166.

men' upon arrival in South Africa at the end of 1899, which impressed on the New Zealanders 'what fine fellows they are.' According to this soldier:

The capping kindness was when they brought us twelve army dixies (an army cooking pot which holds twenty-two pints or rations) full of boiling hot tea with both milk and sugar in it. And later when we found out the price charged for all these articles, and that Tommy cannot draw more than 10/- per month of his pay in South Africa, so that these men had had to cooperate, and with their few pence given us a welcome that nothing else in my mind will ever be equal to, and one that I am sure the two hundred New Zealanders who were there that day will never forget.¹⁹

Most of the comments about the Tommies in letters and diaries related to their generosity and kindness to the New Zealand soldiers. For example, Private Gilbert, who called the Tommies 'the best chaps in the world' and 'the best natured fellows on earth', reported two examples of Tommy kindness that struck him during his service in South Africa.²⁰ The first occurred in August 1901: after coming into depot after a time spent out in the veldt, the New Zealanders talked to one and

of course told him how we had been faring on the column for rations. About an hour later over he comes to my mate and myself with a couple of pounds of bacon and two candles besides a lump of chocolate. He excused his generosity by saying that he had been on the veldt himself. What he gave us may not sound much to you but out here it is a lot and when you come to consider that he had to go without that

¹⁹ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, 'Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent', p. 6, 1999.2003, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

²⁰ Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 14 May 1901, in Field, p. 28; letter to Sister, 26 August 1901, in Field, p. 56.

much himself, for he gave us that out of his own private rations, it is that much better still.²¹

In December of that year, when both New Zealanders and Tommies were camped at Fort Botha, he wrote that the way the Tommies 'think of each other and help in anything that is going would set an example to many people who go to church', and that with 'their characteristic good nature the Tommies at the fort gave us some of their wood supply and the lend of their dixies to make tea in.'²² The writer of "Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent" also called the Tommies 'warm hearted' for the cheer those aboard a British transport gave to the New Zealanders when they steamed into Cape Town in 1899.²³ Lieutenant Bosworth told his wife about how there were 'an awful lot of English noblemen here', some serving as officers and others serving in the ranks, and that the New Zealanders were 'obliged to travel in goods trucks roofed in, and at night you spread your rugs on the floor and go to sleep, you next neighbour is probably Lord So and So and the man jammed up against your feet is the Earl of Something or Other.' He was surprised that 'all the same they were very friendly and nice to me.'²⁴

The New Zealand soldiers who wrote about the British regulars had differing views about their suitability as soldiers in South Africa. Some believed the British lacked the constitutions required for service in South Africa. In June 1900, Lieutenant Bosworth wrote to his wife that 'Up to the present 14 of the English Imperial Yeomanry volunteers have died of fever between Beira and Bamboo (?), poor boys, they were too delicate and could not stand the climate.'²⁵ Private Ross wrote in his diary that the newly arrived Imperial Yeomanry were '[g]reat big fellows, but I am afraid they are not suitable, not used to roughing it.'²⁶ He said they were 'all the sons of big bugs at home', supplied their own equipment,

²¹ Gilbert, letter to Sister, 26 August 1901, in Field, p. 56.

²² Gilbert, letter to Lottie (Sister), 3 December 1901, in Field, p. 107.

²³ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, 'Reminiscences', p. 5.

²⁴ Jack Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 12 May 1900, NZMS-914, Auckland City Libraries, Auckland.

²⁵ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 24 June 1900.

²⁶ Ross, diary, 19 March 1900.

and had brought too much gear, and that 'it is very hard to tell the difference between an officer and a man.'²⁷ However, Ross later said, observing ambulances collecting the dead and the wounded from the battlefield, that he found it 'marvellous how easy the Tommy's take their wounds they treat them as nothing and their pluck and endurance are beyond all praise.'²⁸ Private Buckland of the Fourth Contingent commented that the 'boys' who had just joined the Prince of Wales regiment were 'poor specimens' and 'very much undersized', with complexions implying they had come from office work.²⁹ This suggests that he also had doubts about the suitability of some of the British troops to the environment of South Africa, unlike the superior New Zealanders who had not suffered the same degenerative effects of urban existence.

However, other New Zealand soldiers seemed to disagree with this sentiment, many of them coming to change their views about British Regulars while in South Africa. Corporal Jewell, writing from Arundel Camp (Cape Colony) in December 1899, said that in Cape Town he met 'not the smart red-coated, tight trousered gentry you know, but the baggy, helmeted yellow, loose-looking and dirty Tommy Atkins as he works and fights on foreign service.'³⁰ This suggests that the common perception of Tommy, at least to New Zealanders, was a mythologized image of a more sophisticated and cultured soldier, perhaps a result of a general idolisation of Britain and British civilisation. On the other hand, the common view may have been intended as derogatory and pejorative, the image of a class-bound and spoiled Tommy, a pitiable soldier not up to the standard of those of the colonies. Private Gilbert also wrote to his mother that in South Africa he saw the 'real Tommy, not the Dandy Dick type like we saw in town' and that they were 'splendid fellows in a good many ways, always ready to lend a hand and as

²⁷ Ross, diary, 19 March 1900.

²⁸ Ross, diary, 26 April 1900. He had previously written almost the exact same thing, 'It is wonderful how cool Tommy takes his wounds treats them as nothing', after visiting a military hospital. Ross, diary, 7 March 1900.

²⁹ William Harold Buckland, diary (early-1900 to mid-1901), entry for 26 February 1901, MS-Copy-Micro-0503, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁰ Jewell, letter to M. Jewell, 28 December 1899.

brave as lions.³¹ This also suggests a change in perception of Tommy from being more cultured and classy than the New Zealanders, to a soldier who was just as willing to work and fight in the field. In addition, once again the British regulars encountered by New Zealanders seem to have left an impression of kindness and helpfulness.

New Zealand troops often offered admiring comments on the British and Imperial regiments encountered in South Africa. Private Ross, in various entries in his diary, called the 'Life Guards' a 'splendid Body of men... such monsters', the 'Highland Light Infantry' and the Cameroons fine bodies of men, and the 'Gordon Highlanders' a 'splendid stamp of men', 'big strapping blokes.'³² He also wrote, almost grudgingly, that 'there is no getting away from the fact the Highlanders are all right.'³³ In March 1901, comparing the colonials and British in his column, Private Raynes wrote admiringly that while almost all 'the Australians I spoke to were very tired of the campaign', Tommy was 'a different sort of fellow, fighting is his trade and many of them did not seem to care if they had to stay a while longer.'³⁴ The Tommies were respected as *soldiers* while the Colonials were merely volunteers.

Attitudes about Themselves (New Zealanders)

The New Zealand soldiers in this study wrote much about themselves as New Zealand, and Colonial, volunteers in the British Army. The purpose of this section is to investigate how consistent the soldiers' own self-image and views were with the myth of their popular image which developed in New Zealand, and to examine the extent the opinions of individual soldiers differed from widely-held generalisations and each other.

³¹ Gilbert, letter to Mother, 3 June 1901, in Field, p. 38. Also, Gilbert, letter to Everybody, 23 April 1901, in Field, p. 20: section written 9 May 1901, said that the City Imperial Volunteers London, returning home with barely a quarter of their strength, were 'brave fellows.'

³² Ross, diary, 13 January 1900, 6 April 1900.

³³ Ross, diary, 7 April 1900.

³⁴ William Frederick Raynes, diary (1 January 1901 to 26 September 1901), entry for 29 March 1901, qMS-1676, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The myth that Colonial, especially New Zealand, soldiers were superior to the British Regulars contained five key ideas: first, New Zealand soldiers were physically and emotionally tougher; second, they possessed more initiative and adaptability; third, they served under more egalitarian and classless conditions; fourth, they were self-disciplined; and, fifth, they were superior guerrilla fighters, skilled in marksmanship and horse-riding.³⁵ Like New Zealand racial superiority, New Zealand martial superiority was seen as the result of 'genetic' and 'environmental' factors, particularly the conviction about New Zealand's pioneering heritage and continuing rural character.³⁶

Toughness

The first key myth was that the New Zealand volunteers were possessed of superior 'toughness' and were well-suited to the conditions of South Africa. This aspect of the mythology included not only physical but also emotional toughness, 'especially as seen in his ability to repress pain and to remain cool and collected in the heat of battle.'³⁷

Soldiers from the Land of the Moa recorded comments by both an officer and a trooper regarding the perceived emotional toughness of the New Zealanders. First, a surgeon with the Second Contingent wrote of the troopers: 'I never met such a plucky, unselfish lot of lads. I was under fire with them – a hot fire too, and although it was their first experience I never saw a cooler lot.'³⁸ The second

³⁵ Burns' analysed six key myths about New Zealand troopers in his thesis: [1] toughness, [2] natural soldiers (including their shooting and riding abilities, and their initiative), [3] egalitarianism, [4] self-discipline, [5] gentlemanly and chivalrous conduct, and, [6] motivated by duty and patriotism. The five factors looked at in this thesis are focused more on the idea of New Zealanders' superiority as soldiers in South Africa, thus why this section does not look at their motivation (which is covered in Chapter Four) or the myth of New Zealand soldiers being 'natural gentlemen.'

³⁶ See Chapter Two. Note: approximately a quarter of the men sent to South Africa gave their occupation as farmer, farmhand, station hand, run manager, sheepfarmer, shepherd or stockman. John Crawford, 'The Best Mounted Troops in South Africa?', in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British and the South African War*, ed. by John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), pp. 73-99 (pp. 106-109).

³⁷ Burns, p. 36. Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 146.

³⁸ Hawdon, p. 54.

comment was made by Trooper C.M. Lewin, who wrote during a march to Bloemfontein, 'Under the heaviest hail of shell or rifle fire the men work on with what seems a supernatural coolness, exciting the deepest respect in both friend and foe.'³⁹

New Zealand troopers did not appear concerned about portraying themselves and their fellow soldiers as tough in their personal writing. Grumbling and discussion of the hardness of life in the field was abundant, in reminiscences, diaries and letters.⁴⁰ Conversely, though, the comments may have been intended to provide evidence of their own endurance and toughness, by showing the reader the conditions they lived under and survived.

Further evidence that physical superiority was not perceived as a quintessential feature of the New Zealand troops comes from the offhand, and regular, writings about illness. The nature and extent of these reports about illness, the lack of concern, in the sources suggests that the soldiers did not hold a belief in their superior physical toughness. Soldiers did not hesitate to report illness affecting their contingent and comrades, for example, Private Ross relating the sudden death from typhoid of 'a great big strong fellow' in his unit, Moore reporting 'a third of the men... down with malarial fever and dysentery' in a camp at Beira, Private Gilbert writing about 'big men torn to pieces with dysentery' and fever, Corporal Matthews of the Sevent Contingent saying that 'Enteric and malarial fever fights its deadly way amongst the troops, and Lieutenant Colonel Messenger of the Tenth Contingent recording that a 'kind of influenza [was] very prevalent many men being bad.'⁴¹ Likewise, they did not hesitate to report their

³⁹ Hawdon, p. 37.

⁴⁰ For example: Ross, diary, 5 December 1899, 24 February 1900. Moore, p. 81. William Robert Boyd, diary (17 November 1900 to 17 May 1901), entry for 10 February 1901, MS-Papers-3846, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Joseph Linklater, *On Active Service in South Africa with 'The Silent Sixth'* (Wellington: McKee and Co., Printers, 1904), 27 March 1901, p. 19. Frank Perham, "'C" Squadron N.Z. 5th Contingent: Condensed Account of Service in South Africa', *The Veteran*, Vol. 34, May 1959. Charles Henry Matthews, letter to Florry (Sister), 5 September 1901, MS-Papers-2317 (David Hood Papers), Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Robert Hall Bakewell, diary (1901 to 1902), entry for 19 April 1902, MS-0125, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁴¹ Ross, diary, 7 March 1900. Moore, May 1900, p. 36. Gilbert, letter to Father, 2 June 1901, in Field, p. 37; letter to Sister, 6 October 1901, in Field, p. 59. Matthews, letter to Florry (Sister), 15 February 1902. William B. Messenger, diary (14 April 1902 to 4 July 1902), entry for 3 May 1902,

own ill-health, such as Lieutenant Todd's 'touch of malarial fever', Private Boyd's malaria, dysentery and cholic, Trooper Bert Stephens' diarrhoea and scarlet fever (though his diary does not mention the enteric fever that would kill him in early 1902), Trooper York's enteric fever (to which he succumbed in late-November), Private Gilbert's 'Dutch Measles' and fever, and Sergeant Gallaher's malarial fever, among others.⁴²

The New Zealanders were perfectly aware of the prevalence of illness among troops. Private Raynes overestimated potential casualties when he wrote, on 3 April 1901, that 'as the troops have no tents, scanty food, irregular meals and broken rest, with a poor supply of clothes I think that not 10% of the deaths will be caused by shot or shell', but his comment still showed that troops were conscious that death was more likely to result from illness as from combat.⁴³ In fact, approximately twice as many New Zealand troops died from disease as were killed on the battlefield.⁴⁴ Also in April 1901, Raynes wrote that the New Zealand government should have sent older men to South Africa because the

ARC2002-482, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth. Also see: T.W. Brown, letter to Jack, 25 December 1899, MS-Papers-0522-1/1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. George Leece, letter to Ned (Brother), 20 May 1900, MS-Group-1460, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Frank Swanwick, letter to Lily (Sister), 5 June 1900, 1999.3194, National Army Museum, Waiouru. William John McFarlane, letter to Mother, 2 May 1902, in 'The Life and Times of William John McFarlane 1882-1967' by Donald John McFarlane, 1991.2451, National Army Museum, Waiouru..

⁴² Thomas John Todd, letter to Sister, 27 October 1900, MS-Papers-4598-1, Alexander Turnbull Library. Boyd, diary, 13 December 1900. Basil Edward St. John Stephens, diary (23 January 1901 to December 1901), entry for 23 March 1901, 1999.2002, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Harry York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 8 November 1900, in *Harry's Letters from the Boer War*, ed. by Frank Fyfe (Greytown: Wakelin House, 1993), p. 43. Gilbert, letter to Father, 6 October 1901, in *Field*, p. 73. David Gallaher, letter to Molly Gallaher, 18 October 1901, 2000.266, National Army Museum, Waiouru (originals: MS-3576, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington).

⁴³ Raynes, diary, 3 April 1901.

⁴⁴ Laurie Barber, 'New Zealanders and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902', in *Kiwis in Conflict: 200 Years of New Zealanders at War*, ed. by Chris Pugsley with Laurie Barber, Buddy Mikaere, Nigel Pickett and Rose Young (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2008), pp. 46-65 (p. 59). The exact statistics vary between sources, but agree that 59 men were killed in action, 11 died from wounds, between 25 or 30 were killed in accidents, and between 130 and 140 died from disease. McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, Historical Branch, GP Books, 1991), p. 122. Richard Wolfe, *With Honour: Our Army, Our Nation, Our History* (Auckland: Penguin Group, 2007), p. 71. Richard Stowers, *Rough Riders at War: History of New Zealand's Involvement in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 and Information on All Members of the Ten New Zealand Contingents* (Hamilton: Richard Stowers, 2002), p. 43. Mike Dwight, *Walter Callaway: A Māori Warrior of the Boer War* (Hamilton: Mike Dwight, 2010), p. 96. Burns, p. 20. D.O.W. Hall, *The New Zealanders in South Africa, 1899-1902* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, War History Branch, 1949), pp., 11, 97. John Crawford and Ellen Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland: Reed Books, 1999), p. 108.

‘young fellows seem to take sickness much easier than more seasoned individuals’, such as the older soldiers in the Australian forces.⁴⁵ This is a direct contradiction of the idea that the New Zealanders were physically and constitutionally tougher than other troops, though not of the idea of *Colonial* toughness. As has been mentioned, though, many of the New Zealanders did not make a significant distinction between themselves as New Zealanders and as British Colonials, holding a number of views about themselves simultaneously without reflection.

There is very little mention of emotional toughness in the personal documents studied. Only one soldier mentioned the coolness under fire and self-control in battle of some New Zealanders: Corporal Twistleton. In a diary entry for 29 November 1900 he commented on the ‘heroic fever’ that a lot of men possessed during a battle, which he described as being characterised by a lack of concern for personal safety, with combat being ‘a sort of matter of business’ gone about in a ‘quiet matter-of-fact sort of way, as though it was a thing of everyday occurrence.’⁴⁶ However, it is possible that the lack of reference is itself suggestive, that the apparent lack of concern shown by not commenting showed a soldier’s emotional toughness. On the other hand, the lack of evidence makes any claims about New Zealand emotional toughness, or the lack thereof, arbitrary.⁴⁷

Burns’ conclusion is that although toughness was an important value for many of the soldiers, the sources indicated that ‘the soldiers did not believe themselves possessed of a superior form or degree but that they believed themselves equal to their fellow Australian, Canadian and British soldiers’ and that New Zealander soldiers were no more suited to the South African environment and the conditions of the war than anyone else.⁴⁸ They were unprepared for the realities

⁴⁵ Raynes, diary, 8 April 1901.

⁴⁶ Frank Twistleton, *With the New Zealanders at the Front: A Story of Twelve Months’ Campaigning in South Africa* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1902), 29 November 1900, pp. 124-125.

⁴⁷ And does not provide any suggestion that the New Zealand soldiers believed themselves comparable to fellow colonial British and British soldiers, as suggested by Burns. Burns, p. 76.

⁴⁸ Burns, pp. 65, 67.

of 'roughing it', but became used to the life and adapted to the environment, much like colonial British and British troops did.⁴⁹ Toughness and coolness was developed over time, as indicated by Private Ross, who thought a newly-arrived contingent would be shocked having to 'lie down in the mud', but that those who had been in South Africa longer were 'getting hardened to a certain extent', and by York who wrote that the men had gotten used to living rough, and 'won't want beds, and all those little comforts' when they got home.⁵⁰

Initiative

The second key myth about the New Zealand soldier during the South African War was that his superiority as a soldier was due in part to his remarkable ingenuity, resourcefulness, adaptability and initiative, especially compared to 'the disciplined but passive' British Tommies.⁵¹

Hawdon, the author of *Soldiers from the Land of the Moa*, wrote that:

there is no doubt that even the modern average colonial lad has more power of observation than most Tommies, which enables him rapidly to pick up the way to take care of his horse, even if it be the first he has owned; and as to general initiative, of course that comes naturally to them.⁵²

Just as in the personal documents studied by Burns, Lieutenant Tuckey is the only soldier who provided evidence for a belief in the ingenuity and resourcefulness of New Zealanders. Tuckey, in a letter to his mother in May 1900, boasted that the British troops were 'pleased and amused with the ingenious make-shifts of the colonials', such as getting a de-railed truck back in order after a railway accident, when the British had tried but 'upset the whole

⁴⁹ Burns, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Ross, diary, 24 February 1900. York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 5 August 1900, in Fyfe, p. 32.

⁵¹ Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 146.

⁵² Hawdon, p. 61.

bag of tricks' and said that 'we must leave it'.⁵³ Note that he is talking about himself not only as a New Zealander, but also as a Colonial.

However, an anecdote by Bugler Brown of the First Contingent also alludes to the adaptability and initiative of New Zealand soldiers. In February 1900 his unit was ambushed by Boers and came under shellfire, and the order to extend their intervals was 'yelled out in all directions'. This noise was met by disapproval from the Colonel, who said that 'if such noise occurred again in the Brigade, he would keep the whole under shellfire for a ¼ of hour', leading Brown to remark that 'I am afraid the gallant Colonel did not think when he made that remark that there were a good few Colonials in the Brigade who are not machines like Tommy Atkins but act more on their own.'⁵⁴

There are hints in the sources that the New Zealanders enjoyed having a degree of communal independence and initiative. For example, Private Ross complained when the First Contingent was transferred to the Mounted Infantry with an Australian unit: he wrote that the New Zealanders were 'all foaming' and 'as discontented as possible', having 'pretty well lost all our individuality now being classed as the 3rd M. Infantry' and lost their previous ability to act on their own, and that 'to be tossed around by these other officers breaks our hearts.'⁵⁵

Egalitarianism

In the public image the New Zealand Contingents were presented as classless civilian bodies and as fundamentally egalitarian, and this idea has been propagated by some historians of the South African War.⁵⁶ There is evidence, in the personal documents studied, both for and against the idea of a degree of

⁵³ H.P. Tuckey, letter to Mother, 24 May 1900, Micro-MS-553, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵⁴ Brown, diary, mid-February 1900.

⁵⁵ Ross, diary, 13 April 1900.

⁵⁶ For example, John Crawford, who thought 'Interaction between officers and men within the New Zealand contingents was fairly informal' and that New Zealand officers were 'aware of the need to treat their men in a considerate manner', and Jock Phillips, who wrote about the lack of traditional discipline and the fraternisation of officers and enlisted men. John Crawford, 'The Best Mounted Troops in South Africa?', pp. 73-99 (p. 85). Phillips, *A Man's Country*, p. 147.

egalitarianism within the New Zealand forces; however, in each case the evidence is very limited. The reminiscences of Corporal Twistleton, for example, provides evidence for informal relations between men and their officers among the Colonials, saying that the officers had 'men serving under them who are socially their equals, and as they will probably go back to civil life, they have to use a little consideration.'⁵⁷ However, his explanations for this – that the men were 'socially equal' (implying that relations would not have been as open and informal if the men had come from different classes), and that 'if they [the officers] tried to bring too much military red-tapeism into the ranks, the men would not allow it, knowing that their time is short' – do not conform to the myth of a pattern of relations based on egalitarianism and classlessness.⁵⁸ Private Clarke's diary entry for 28 July 1902 also shows that soldiers were influenced by ideas about egalitarianism, although not that the reality of relations between men and officers conformed to these ideas. Clarke wrote about 'a bit of a mutiny' over the quality of the enlisted men's food aboard the troopship, especially compared to the food enjoyed by the officers; the mutiny resulted in the officers, who were 'a bit frightened', promising to see the men's 'tucker' improved.⁵⁹

The evidence looked at for this study does not dispute Burns' conclusions about the lack of egalitarianism in the Contingents. He wrote, 'New Zealand soldiers of all ranks agreed in their views of the pattern of relations in their contingents and they did not believe them to be either open or fraternal, let alone underpinned by any fundamental classlessness or egalitarianism' and that the troopers 'appear to have been neither surprised nor concerned by the subordinate

⁵⁷ Twistleton, p. 94. Note: agreement with Crawford's comment about the officers' awareness of the need to treat their men with consideration. Also providing evidence of informal relations, is Private York wrote that his Lieutenant 'is and has been a true friend to me and I can also say, to you all.' Harry York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 5 August 1900, in Fyfe, p. 33.

⁵⁸ Twistleton, p. 94.

⁵⁹ ⁵⁹ James N. Clarke, *Still Jogging Along: Being the Diary and some Letters of Private J.N. Clarke, 9th Contingent N.Z.M.R.*, ed. by Brian Connor (Dunedin: Otago Military Museum, 1989), 28 July 1902, p. 24.

position they occupied' in regards to their officers.⁶⁰ However, the evidence in the personal documents studied is inconclusive.

Discipline

There was a surprisingly good deal written in the diaries and letters about the lack of traditional military discipline among the New Zealand/Colonial troopers. This lack was seen as the result of their adaptability and egalitarianism, which led them to cultivate self-discipline, an informal and open system of discipline, in the place of the more traditional kind practiced by the British Army.⁶¹

The soldiers' awareness of this lack of discipline was made explicit in several of the sources. Private Gilbert, for example, wrote to his father about Colonel White, commander of the column that included the Seventh Contingent, and the fact that he 'had an awful "set" on the Colonials' because there was 'not discipline and red tape enough among them to please his mind and they won't obey his orders when he comes any of his games.'⁶² He later wrote that nearly all the Imperial officers were the same: 'Brave as lions but entirely eaten up with red tape and drill book nonsense which is absolutely no use out here.'⁶³ He also assured his father that, despite the Colonials' disdain for the 'air of superiority which some of these Imperial men assume', they 'never disobey an order or even question it when the bullets are flying.'⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Burns, pp. 80, 92.

⁶¹ For example, S.E. Hawdon wrote that 'The resourcefulness and self-confidence and pride in their work which made these men from the Land of Independence so valuable in guerrilla warfare had their drawbacks, as had been noted in all the colonial forces, in making them proud, lacking in deference to superiors – in a word, unwilling to submit to the necessary discipline of military life.' Hawdon, p. 132. This poor discipline shared some similarities to that of the New Zealand soldiers during World War One, which, according to Nicholas Boyack, resulted from: the egalitarian society of New Zealand, dissatisfaction with food, propaganda published in newspapers, lack of medical arrangements, low morale, and dissatisfaction with officers. Nicholas Boyack, *Behind the Lines: The Lives of New Zealand Soldiers in the First World War* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1989), pp. 156-57.

⁶² Gilbert, letter to Father, 23 September 1901, in Field, p. 64.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Gilbert, letter to Father, 23 September 1901, in Field, pp. 66-68.

Corporal Twistleton also insisted that New Zealanders were not undisciplined during battle, when it was important. For instance, he admits to defying orders in camp, and acting independently when on rearguard, 'far away from any officer', but not during combat.⁶⁵ However, he later wrote that while the Imperial officers did not consider their discipline strict enough, he defied 'any one of them to find better disciplined men than the Colonials when in the fighting line', saying that orders 'were smartly and promptly obeyed.'⁶⁶ This soldier also provided contradictory beliefs about the system of discipline that operated among the New Zealanders, at times depicting it as one of imposed formal discipline, but at others that the New Zealand system was different from the British, placing more importance on self-discipline.⁶⁷ Even the suggestion that New Zealanders were well-disciplined during battle was contradicted by some sources. Trooper Perham reported that in one engagement the troops obeyed their commanding officer's orders only until he wanted to take action they considered 'foolhardy', at which point they disobeyed his 'stupid' orders.⁶⁸

Along similar lines to Private Gilbert, but suggesting that the more informal Colonial way of doing things was not inherent but had developed over time in South Africa, Private Raynes was unimpressed by troops from New South Wales who arrived at Volkrust camp in June 1901. He wrote that

it looks quite funny to see them doing everything according to regulations, instead of common sense, but we did the same three months ago. It is no use trying to make us turn

⁶⁵ Twistleton, June 1900, p. 52.

⁶⁶ Twistleton, p. 184. Earlier he had written that 'a soldier's duty is to ask no questions but to obey orders.' Twistleton, p. 13. Another New Zealand soldier who thought that while they were lax by British standards in some areas of discipline they had good discipline in action was Buckland. Buckland, diary, 6 October 1900, 15 December 1900, 7 April 1901.

⁶⁷ Twistleton, p. 94. He also contradicted this further at times by saying that the New Zealand system should change, to give the men more responsibility, instead of leaving it all with the officers. Twistleton, December 1900, pp. 132-134.

⁶⁸ Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column: Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African War of 1899-1903* (Timaru: Printers and Publishers, 1959), January 1901, p. 46.

into machines, we colonials soon get into the way of using our heads...⁶⁹

He went on to compare the Colonials to a mounted 'Home Regiment' camped nearby, who 'never feed till told, they commence grooming at a certain time and dare not stop till the order is given' and whose troops were, in his opinion, severely punished for infractions.⁷⁰

Private Raynes' diary also reveals that New Zealanders could be genuinely undisciplined and disobedient, and were so aboard the troopship on the way to South Africa. On 7 February 1901, for example, he wrote that some 'of our men are disobedient and insolent to the Non-Coms and four are in the guard room, under arrest at the present' and that 'eight men were left behind in Sydney, they either deserted or got drunk and were left behind.'⁷¹ In addition, on 13 August 1901 he wrote in his diary that 'At present 10 of the 6th Cont. Are prisoners; chiefly for giving cheek or answering back' and that it was 'good luck' that he had 'never got into trouble in any way in Africa.'⁷² These entries suggest that, in the Sixth Contingent at least, formal military discipline (such as showing respect to superiors) was commonly forgotten by New Zealand troops, although insolence and disobedience aboard a troop ship was regarded as completely different from similar behaviour in the field and during combat.

This state of affairs continued in South Africa. The reminiscence of Trooper Perham contains several references to ill-discipline. The first reference was on 23 February 1901, when the New Zealanders did not post a guard as ordered and allowed De Wet's column to slip through the British lines.⁷³ Second, on 11 March 1901, he wrote that he was 'supposed to be out watching the horses grazing, but

⁶⁹ Raynes, diary, 10 June 1901.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* He seemed shocked that three Tommies, caught drunk on post, were punished with a year's imprisonment and pay stopped for that period.

⁷¹ Raynes, diary, 7 February 1901.

⁷² Raynes, diary, 13 August 1901. Aboard the first New Zealand troopship to South Africa, Hugh Ross wrote in his diary about being 'before the Beak' along with another trooper for not being on parade on time. They were both severely admonished and dismissed with a caution. Ross hoped this was the first and last time, and explained that it was an accident resulting from his nervousness. Ross, diary, early November 1899.

⁷³ Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, 23 February 1901, p. 58.

instead was taking things easy.’⁷⁴ Both these examples show, through the actions reported, the attitudes of many New Zealand soldiers: they did not follow orders about guard duty resulting, in one case, in a breach of the British lines which could have had serious military consequences. This kind of ill-discipline was not the same as the myth of self-discipline which supposedly made New Zealanders superior soldiers.

On 31 May 1901 Private Pearce’s diary mentioned that the ‘Fifth N.Z.’s refused duty. A mutiny in camp. On May 28th some of the 4th N. Zealanders refused to go out of some tents which they were ordered to leave.’⁷⁵ The next day’s entry said that Colonel Davies, after returning from Cape Town, ‘lined the two regiments up and gave them a lecture for disparaging their officers and refusing duty.’⁷⁶ Several days after this incident, the Fifth New Zealanders again displayed a lack of discipline, as reported in the diary of Pearce. On 2 June 1901, there was a quarrel between some British Yeomen and Malays, which resulted in violence and the intervention of a Fifth New Zealander. The New Zealander went to the aid of Yeoman in an alley and was severely injured after being hit with rocks and iron bars. Pearce’s entry for 4 June 1901 continued the story:

Hospital fatigue. A football match took place today between the fourth and fifth N.Z. They had a draw for the game. New Zealanders burnt the Malay church to the ground. They held the fire brigade back until it got a good start, and when they started (firemen) someone cut the hose and then they started the house going where the murder was committed, but it was put out.⁷⁷

Not only was there no mention of punishment or discipline of the New Zealanders who burned the church, the untroubled manner in which Pearce

⁷⁴ Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, 11 March 1901, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁵ Richard Pearce, diary (8 February 1900 to 2 July 1901), entry for 31 May 1901, MS-Papers-1657, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁷⁶ Pearce, diary, 1 June 1901. Pearce also added that Davies ‘caught our quarter guard neglecting their post and put them under arrest.’

⁷⁷ Pearce, diary, 4 June 1901.

reported the act – subsequent to writing about a football match, and without much emphasis – suggests that Private Pearce did not think the burning was unjust or regrettable, despite its almost certainly illegal nature.

Curiously only one of the twelve soldiers from the Sixth Contingent studied mentioned the strike by that contingent as written about by historian Ron Palenski. Palenski wrote that the Contingent went on strike in 1901 ‘over the poor quality of their clothing and an apparent refusal by British authorities to issue them with new gear, and that one sergeant was court-martialled and given five years’ imprisonment, although this was remitted by Lord Kitchener.’⁷⁸ Private Raynes’ diary includes a single, short entry about this event, on 26 June 1901, while camped at Utrecht. He wrote:

We were supposed to move off at 9-30 but many were of the opinion that it would be unwise to start on what we believe to be a 52 day trek with insufficient clothing. There was a strike; finally we moved at 11 A.M. on the General promising that we would get the clothing required in 5 days time.⁷⁹

As can be seen, Raynes does not comment on any repercussions from this strike, or suggest that the decision to strike displayed any ill-discipline on the part of the contingent.

One comment made by Private Gilbert suggests that New Zealand officers were not completely against the men being ‘a lack discipline lot’: he wrote to his mother about New Zealanders out hunting, finding an orange grove, and having a feed on the oranges without permission, which, according to Gilbert, upset the Imperial Colonel but not Colonel Porter (the commanding officer of the Seventh Contingent).⁸⁰ Private Clarke, got into trouble for ‘getting away with an empty

⁷⁸ Ron Palenski, *Kiwi Battlefields* (Auckland: Hachette NZ Ltd., 2011), p. 21. Interestingly, Raynes wrote in March 1901, when returning to an abandoned camp, that ‘as I walked from tent to tent it was noticeable that in every one some Govt. property had been left, harness, clothing, rifle and ammunition had fared alike, yet all the men, or nearly all were properly equipped.’ Raynes, diary, 26 March 1901.

⁷⁹ Raynes, diary, 26 June 1901.

⁸⁰ Gilbert, letter to Mother, 26 July 1901, in Field, p. 39.

barrel that officers had for seats', and was fined by his Officer Commanding, '(Old Man) Major Jackson', but told his sister Katie that he would likely let Clarke off.⁸¹

Another example of the lax discipline of the New Zealanders was the story of "Bun" Parker of the Seventh Contingent, described by an author of a reminiscence as 'somewhat famous for causing what was the nearest approach to a mutiny amongst New Zealand and Australian troops in the South African War.'⁸² Parker had lost his horse and been made to 'footslog' after the column, and upon falling out of the ranks and being approached by an Imperial officer on horseback – who instead of 'a cheery word and a bit of tact' used 'blow and bluster' – 'told off' the officer. Parker was made the subject of a field general court martial and sentenced to six weeks' first-class field punishment which 'found him under Africa's burning sun, tied to a gunwheel, to be the mock of the passing nigger.' However, the New Zealanders 'would not stand for it' and 'rushed the gun and cut the cords.' After being paraded and told that this conduct practically amounted to mutiny, the men proceeded to twice more cut down Parker when he was re-lashed to the wheel. The Contingent was then paraded, and spokesmen chosen to state the case for the men:

The spokesmen said they thought the punishment was too severe for the crime; also that the New Zealanders were brought overseas as mounted men, not as infantry; and the men were further of opinion that the officer himself was partly responsible, he having brought the whole trouble about by his bullying. Moreover, they would not stand for one of their men being exhibited to make a nigger's holiday.

Parker was not tied to the gun wheel again, but was merely detained.

As can be seen from these sources, there was a strong element of pride in diaries and letters when discussing the lax discipline of New Zealand troopers, however,

⁸¹ Clarke, diary, 14 June 1902 and 15 June 1902, and Clarke, letter to Katie, 15 June 1902, in Connor, pp. 18, 27.

⁸² D. Wilson, "'Bun" Parker', *The Veteran*, 6 (May 1931), p. 44 (p. 44).

not all of the soldiers were indifferent or approving of the lack of discipline. For example, one New Zealand soldier, Sergeant Leece, wrote to his sister in September 1900, stating that he hated the want of discipline and (perhaps connected) wanted a commission.⁸³ Private Buckland also showed opposition to poor discipline in a description of General Methuen passing through the New Zealanders' lines: the general 'reprimanded the men nearest to him, for not standing up, as he passed... said it was not for himself, but the rank that should be respected', a sentiment that Buckland responded to with a 'Quite right too!'⁸⁴ However, Buckland's diary gives evidence for a contrary view, at least when it came to his own contingent, the Fourth, which he said did things 'in a real buccaneer style' compared to the Fifth Contingent, which was 'bound hard and fast by glaring red tape.'⁸⁵ This entry suggests that he thought the Fourth Contingent operated with informal discipline and informal relations between the ranks, but that he did not think the other contingents operated in the same way.⁸⁶

Once again, the findings of this study corroborate Burns' claims in his own thesis, namely that the New Zealanders were governed by a system of imposed formal discipline rather than the informal system based on self-discipline that the mythology suggested, and were not particularly troubled that this was the case. However, the sources do provide evidence that some soldiers believed that the mythology was, or should be, true; that the New Zealanders operated under more informal discipline than the British, reliant more on self-discipline than on that imposed by higher authorities.

Shooting and Riding (Superiority as Soldiers)

Corporal Jewell of the First Contingent wrote of the qualifications necessary for enlistment: 'First class shots or marksman's badge holders', 'Good riders over

⁸³ Leece, letter to "Molite" (Sister), 24 September 1900.

⁸⁴ Buckland, diary, 6 October 1900.

⁸⁵ Buckland, diary, 15 December 1900.

⁸⁶ Discussed in Burns, pp. 115-16.

any country', and 'Physical soundness under the most trying tests.'⁸⁷ The third qualification equates roughly to the idea of 'toughness' already analysed. The former two qualifications, riding and shooting skill, are also important parts of the mythology of the New Zealand soldier during the South African War, forming an essential element in the myth of New Zealand superiority as troops: their possession of shooting and riding skills well-suited to warfare in South Africa, and elsewhere. This is illustrated by historian John Crawford who, acknowledging his views were 'rather old-fashioned', wrote of the quality of the New Zealanders, who were 'used to riding horses in rough conditions' and 'reasonable shots who were able to cope well with the conditions they encountered', and were excellent raw material for mounted rifle units (presumably in contrast to British soldiers).⁸⁸

In regards to the first qualification, the few comments made by New Zealand soldiers about shooting ability differ from the claims of the mythology. For example, Private Buckland, an enlisted man, and Lieutenant Colonel Newall, Commanding Officer of the Fifth Contingent, did not appear to have much confidence in New Zealand marksmanship. Buckland mentioned that, when encountering Boers who sought cover, the troopers resorted to blind shooting, 'firing at anything that looked like a place a Boer would seek cover', and that the 'bullets pinged harmlessly by.'⁸⁹ Newall, writing about his own shooting on a hunting expedition, said that he missed both his shots at buck, that 'we' were 'finding how difficult it is to judge distance in this rarefied atmosphere', and that he hoped the skill of the New Zealanders improved before they came into contact with the Boers.⁹⁰ New Zealand soldiers did not appear to believe they were superior marksman when compared with 'British' Tommies or other Colonial troopers. Most probably, as Burns wrote, many considered themselves equivalent to British soldiers, while a few possibly thought of themselves as

⁸⁷ Jewell, letter to M. Jewell, 28 December 1899.

⁸⁸ Crawford, 'The Best Mounted Troops in South Africa?', pp. 76, 89, 93.

⁸⁹ Buckland, diary, 23 August 1900.

⁹⁰ Stuart Newall, diary (31 March 1900 to mid-1901), entry for 7 July 1900, qMS-1577-1584, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Note: Newall placed the blame for his poor shooting on being in an unusual environment and 'atmosphere.'

inexperienced compared to the British Regulars (especially since most members of the New Zealand contingents were volunteers who had received little training before embarking for South Africa).⁹¹

The second qualification that, according to the mythology, made New Zealanders superior soldiers was horsemanship and riding ability, and, like most topics analysed in this study, attitudes and opinions differed among the New Zealand troopers about the credibility of these claims. Only one trooper in the present study thought Colonials were superior horse handlers, Private Gilbert, who wrote to his father that it 'would be hard to find a lot of men to beat them when there's a cross country gallop after Boers in the wind.'⁹² However, most soldiers agreed with the sentiment expressed by Private Ross who remarked of the Third Contingent 'I see they call themselves Rough Riders well we are all that here, very Rough Riders, no smooth going here.'⁹³ This comment suggests that the average New Zealand trooper was not a skilled horseman, as per the mythology, but was no more qualified for that part of service in South Africa than soldiers from any other country. Even Private Buckland, a run manager in civilian life, did not display this superior horsemanship: he wrote in his diary, 'I found... I had quite got out of the way of trotting we trotted... about 2 miles & then fell into a walk again, pretty well shaken up.'⁹⁴

Several New Zealand soldiers commented on the riding abilities displayed by the men in riding tests during contingent selection and while in camp in New Zealand. Private Raynes thought that the poor showing of New Zealanders in the riding tests, which led to many being 'thrown out', was due to the severity of the tests.⁹⁵ The author of *Soldiers from the Land of the Moa*, on the other hand, wrote about the 'ludicrously bad riding exhibited at all the camps of instruction'

⁹¹ Burns, p. 71.

⁹² Gilbert, letter to Father, 23 September 1901, in Field, pp. 67-68.

⁹³ Ross, diary, 27 March 1900.

⁹⁴ Buckland, diary, 25 June 1900.

⁹⁵ Raynes, diary 1 January 1901. Also, Bert Stevens, letter to Father, 15 January 1902, 1999.3239, National Army Museum, Waiouru: writing about his first mounted parade at Trentham Camp, he thought it was 'very funny to see some of the men on horseback', many had 'absolutely no control over their horses', a riding school for the worst riders had to be formed, 'one man fell off several times.'

and thought that 'New Zealand was ashamed to find how the universal use of bicycles had deteriorated the horsemanship of her sons.'⁹⁶ Private Moore, in *With the Fourth*, wrote similarly:

The men who had done a great amount of riding, and who had a good opinion of their abilities as horsemen, hailed with delight the chance that the test afforded them of showing their prowess. But they had not the same idea of their capabilities when the judges had finished with them... [many] were more proficient as cyclists than as horse-riders [and] had been looking forward with some trepidation to this hour...⁹⁷

The present study confirms Burns' comment that descriptions of experience 'far from revealing that the New Zealanders saw themselves as excellent, let alone superior "natural" horsemen, indicated many if not most in fact felt somewhat uncomfortable and certainly far from at home in the saddle.'⁹⁸ In addition, the above comment by Moore reveals the possibility that the mythology was, in part, derived from common perceptions of New Zealand men before the war, rather than developed during the war, and that the popular view of their capabilities was not altered by their experiences in South Africa.

Many scholarly works have quoted *The Times History of the War in South Africa's* comments about the New Zealand contingents: 'it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that after they had a little experience they were by general consent regarded as on the average the best mounted troops in South Africa.'⁹⁹ Various historians, including Thomas Pakenham, have written about the superiority of New Zealand, and Colonial, troops over the Imperial Yeomanry

⁹⁶ Hawdon, p. 61.

⁹⁷ Moore, pp. 18-19.

⁹⁸ Burns, p. 68.

⁹⁹ Leo S. Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, Vol. 3 (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, Ltd., 1905), pp. 37-38, quoted in Wolfe, p. 70, and Crawford, 'The Best Mounted Troops in South Africa?', p. 38.

from Britain and Ireland.¹⁰⁰ In addition, many historians have also written that the New Zealand soldiers were 'affected with this colonial braggadocio' and believed that they 'formed one of the elite elements of the British forces.'¹⁰¹ The present study provides evidence that most New Zealand soldiers agreed, to at least some extent, that they were superior in military matters.

Private Wilkins wrote to his parents about the superiority of Colonial troops over the English, saying that

the English men they are to slow for the Boers and are always losing men or else getting them killed the Boers can capture them whenever they want to, but they can't manage it so easily with us, if they do get us in a corner we either get on them and drive them back or else dash right through them and get away from them...¹⁰²

He went on to write that the South African soldiers were little better than the English, but that the New Zealanders and Australians have 'a different way of going about that saves us from losing men' and that the 'Boers say that we go about like them and it is hard for them to tell us from themselves' (resulting in several Boers being captured or shot after riding straight up to Colonials in the field).¹⁰³ Lieutenant Colonel Porter, commander of the Seventh Contingent, also wrote about the 'wholesome respect for colonials' held by the Boers, who he says 'do not care for imperials but colonials are too much like themselves.'¹⁰⁴

Other examples of New Zealand troopers promoting the view of themselves as superior soldiers include: Private Ross writing that, because they were the best mounted section, they were out scouting 'again'; Private Buckland's opinion that

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. 68. He said that this was because they were 'picked bodies of men, well adapted by their background to the kind of war they would have to fight.'

¹⁰¹ Johnson, p. 35. Crawford and Ellis, p. 93.

¹⁰² George Wilkins, letter to Father and Mother, 23 April 1901, MS-1232, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

¹⁰³ Wilkins, letter to Father and Mother, 23 April 1901.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Porter, diary (unknown date range), entry for 3 February 1902, qMS-1654-1655, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

‘we will be kept till the last, as we are the only men that are of any use’ and that New Zealanders were ‘indispensable’; Private Fraser of the Seventh Contingent saying that the men of his contingent ‘clean knock the crack English regiments of Cavalry into a cocked hat’; and, Private Gilbert reporting that Colonials were looked upon by all as ‘tough members’, and as ‘the best fighters.’¹⁰⁵

On the other hand, there is also evidence that the belief in New Zealand military superiority was not deeply held but merely circulated among troops as part of their public image. Comments made by some troopers show that this myth was not an important part of their self-image. Among these was Lieutenant Colonel Newall, and, like many soldiers, his attitudes appear contradictory. Throughout his diary Newall wrote that New Zealanders were sought after by British generals, implying that New Zealanders were seen as superior soldiers to the Imperial regulars.¹⁰⁶ However, at other times his entries provide evidence to the contrary, such as his comment, after describing an action with the Boers, that he was ‘not overly satisfied with our success’, although he does say that the New Zealanders could play the ‘same game’ – guerrilla warfare – as the Boers.¹⁰⁷ In addition, in another entry written after an engagement, the New Zealanders come across as being ineffective soldiers: ‘we resumed the advance without sustaining much loss and probably without having inflicted much.’¹⁰⁸

As has already been mentioned, Burns was correct in saying that the New Zealand identity demonstrated by soldiers during the South African War contained three major elements – related to being British, a Colonial, and a New Zealander. It is these ‘fundamental, competing beliefs about themselves’ that, according to Burns, resulted in conflicting beliefs about the core mythology of New Zealand soldiers’ military superiority, with the diaries, letters and

¹⁰⁵ Ross, diary, 15 January 1900. Buckland, diary, 6 October 1900, 12 January 1901. James A. Fraser, letter to Unknown, 2 February 1902, ARC2002-195, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth. Gilbert, letter to Mother, 26 July 1901, in Field, p. 39. Gilbert wrote: ‘The Colonials are looked upon by all as “Tough members” and one English officer who it seems would know says that the New Zealanders are the “Worst disciplined, the best fighters, and (mark this but don’t believe it) the biggest thieves” while our commander says that we ride and fight like the D---- in the day time and then sit up all night to cook and eat fowls or pigs as the case might be.’

¹⁰⁶ Newall, diary, 25 May 1900, 3 December 1900, 18 December 1900.

¹⁰⁷ Newall, diary, 5 September 1900.

¹⁰⁸ Newall, diary, 24 October 1900.

reminiscences providing evidence both for and against a belief in this superiority, often within the personal documents of a single individual.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

The soldiers studied alternatively identified themselves as New Zealanders, as Colonials, and as British, with such identifications being more or less dominant between people and over time. However, their identity as 'New Zealanders' was the very important to members of the New Zealand contingents, although the extent of this importance varied considerably among the troops. While a few soldiers referred to themselves as 'Tommies' or 'Colonials', most used these terms to refer to others not as a way of identifying themselves.

Before examining the attitudes of the troopers about themselves as New Zealand soldiers this chapter looked at their opinions about the British Regulars. Most of the men commented positively about the Tommies, especially their kindness to the New Zealanders. Concerning the suitability of British soldiers to conditions in South Africa, attitudes varied: some of the New Zealanders thought that urban culture had degenerated British men, leaving them too weak for the climate and the combat they had to endure, while other troops wrote that this image of a pitiful Tommy was replaced by one of a brave and hardy soldier not much different from the Colonials.

Attitudes and beliefs also varied considerably regarding the accuracy of the mythology about the New Zealand soldiers of the South African War. The five important features of the mythology - toughness, egalitarianism, initiative, self-discipline, and exceptional martial abilities – were not widely believed by the soldiers in this study, although some sources did provide evidence for such beliefs. Only a minority of soldiers expressed or revealed a belief in superior physical or emotional toughness; most believed that no essential differences distinguished New Zealanders from British or other Colonials, and that New

¹⁰⁹ Burns, p. 173.

Zealanders endured the conditions of the South African War just as their fellow Imperial troops did. The majority also possessed no belief about the exceptional initiative and adaptability of themselves or their fellow New Zealanders: once again the personal documents do not provide evidence that the soldiers thought themselves different to other Colonial British or British soldiers, with only one soldier, Lieutenant Tuckey, writing about New Zealand initiative, and another, Bugler Brown, declaring that *Colonials* were not machines like the Tommies. Neither officers nor men cherished a belief in classless or egalitarian New Zealand contingents, with the evidence overwhelmingly depicting relationships between the ranks being fundamentally unequal and essentially paternal. The personal documents studied do not suggest that the New Zealand contingents were governed by a system of informal discipline based upon the superior self-discipline of New Zealand soldiers, rather that they relied on the traditional and formal system practised by the British Army and that lax discipline was more common than the alleged self-discipline. However, there is evidence for contradictory and competing beliefs among some soldiers, whose writings suggest a degree of informality between the ranks. Finally, the majority of troopers did not appear to be influenced by ideas about their superiority, or even excellence, as horse riders or marksman. Soldiers also disagreed about the idea of New Zealand soldiers being superior combatants, with some expressing a belief in their superiority over the British Regulars, while others thought of themselves as on par with the British troops; and some New Zealanders expressed contradictory beliefs in the course of their writings.

Chapter Four

Duties

Introduction

This chapter will look at the attitudes of New Zealand men and officers regarding their service during the South African War. The topics covered include the soldiers' reasons for volunteering, and their motivations to fight in the field, the anticipation of combat felt by many of them, their attitudes and opinions about the duties they were told to perform, including commandeering, farm burning, and the internment of civilians in concentration camps, and their views on the progress and duration of the war, especially the belief that the conflict would be a short one.

Motivation to Volunteer

In the introduction to *Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* Sarah Hawdon wrote that, when each contingent of soldiers, 'after their year and more of marching, fighting, starving, and fever', returned home, their place was 'filled by another of young New Zealanders as eager as the last, in spite of the fuller knowledge of what they went to endure.'¹ There was ample motivation, both societal and personal, for New Zealanders to enlist, and re-enlist, for service in South Africa, as evidenced by the fact that they continued to do so even into the third year of the war.² The nature of the motivation reveals much about the mentality of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century European New Zealand males.

¹ Sarah E. Hawdon ['A New Zealander'], *New Zealanders and the Boer War, or, Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* (Christchurch: Gordon and Gotch, co. 1902), p. 6.

² The strong motivation to volunteer for service is also signalled by the number of stowaways, men who were keen to fight but could not join the already full contingents, on board the troopships. Both Hart of the Ninth Contingent and Messenger of the Tenth Contingent recorded their presence on board, and that some of them were sworn into the ranks upon discovery. Herbert Ernest Hart, diary (8 February 1902 to 5 January 1903), entry for 21 March 1902,

The sources examined for the present study show that a range of motives encouraged New Zealanders to volunteer for service during the South African War. Five in particular were mentioned: patriotism and a sense of duty to Queen and Country; a thirst for adventure; material and financial considerations; a desire for glory; and a thirst for revenge for the British defeat during the earlier conflict with the Boers. An analysis of the motivations of soldiers is important, in part, because a key idea of the New Zealand military mythology is that New Zealand troopers volunteered because of the noble motives of duty and patriotism.³

Patriotism

Evidence suggests that while patriotism, including notions of duty and affection for Queen and Country, influenced some New Zealand soldiers, only a minority of troopers reveal that such ideas were important motives for them (and the patriotic motivation was most commonly displayed by reminiscences written after the conflict). This point agrees with the findings of James Burns' thesis.⁴

All three book-length reminiscences analysed in the present study placed importance on patriotism. Private Moore, author of *With the Fourth*, called New Zealand's contribution evidence of a 'nobility of response to the call to arms for Queen and Empire' and aimed at 'helping to uphold the honour of the old flag they had been taught, since childhood, to love and respect.'⁵ However, it is interesting to note that later, discussing poor treatment of the New Zealand enlisted men by the Imperial authorities at a train station, he wrote that 12 months of active service 'had convinced us that there was no sentiment in

1990.1024, National Army Museum, Waikourou. William B. Messenger, diary (14 April 1902 to 4 July 1902), entries for 15 April 1902, 16 April 1902, and 21 April 1902, ARC2002.482, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth.

³ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 141. James Robert Burns, "'New Zealanders' at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902' (unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University, 1996), p. 37.

⁴ Burns, p. 134.

⁵ James G. Harle Moore, *With the Fourth New Zealand Rough Riders* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers, 1906), pp. 14, 26.

warfare, and that no such thing as patriotism exists.’⁶ Corporal Twistleton thought that the ‘enthusiastic patriotism’ displayed by New Zealand exceeded that of England itself.⁷ Private Linklater thought the idea of patriotism could offer consolation to the relatives of soldiers who died in South Africa, writing that ‘those brave fellows died for King and country, the noblest death a man can die.’⁸

This motive was also reported by authors during the conflict in letters and diaries. For example, Private Ross, reading in the paper about the sailing of the Fourth and Fifth Contingents, also thought that there was ‘no doubt’ that New Zealand was the ‘most patriotic colony’ England had.⁹ Further evidence from his correspondence home, however, suggests that he was under no illusions about the war because of this patriotism: almost four months earlier Ross had written critically of the Second Contingent’s departure, saying the volunteers ‘would think twice about it’ if they knew how things really were, that ‘experience teaches fools.’¹⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Newall was the most overtly motivated by patriotism in this study. His diary during the voyage to South Africa shows he believed he spoke for all in his contingent when he wrote that ‘we hope to look into the eyes of the disturber of the Empire’s peace’ and that ‘surely we are a highly privileged band to be honoured in participating in such a high enterprise on behalf of the Gracious Lady... and on behalf of that land of every land the pride which we Colonials still call “Home”.’¹¹ Almost a year later, in response to an order sent by the New Zealand Government, he refused to return home because of his duty to the Empire.¹²

⁶ Moore, p. 173.

⁷ Frank Twistleton, *With the New Zealanders at the Front: A Story of Twelve Months’ Campaigning in South Africa* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1902), p. 5.

⁸ Joseph Linklater, *On Active Service in South Africa with ‘The Silent Sixth’* (Wellington: McKee and Co., Printers, 1904), p. 102.

⁹ Hugh Ross, diary (21 October 1899 to 3 December 1900), entry for 4 April 1900, MS-Papers-1436, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁰ Ross, diary, 28 December 1899.

¹¹ Stuart Newall, diary (31 March 1900 to mid-1901), entry for 20 July 1900, qMS-1577-1584, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹² Newall, diary, 4 June 1901.

A sardonic remark by Private Gilbert in a letter to his sister reveals that he was aware that patriotism was supposed to be an important motivation for service in South Africa but that patriotism alone would not have persuaded him to volunteer. When describing the lack of money and clothing, and 'diverse other irregularities' that were the reward of those in South Africa, he put the idea of 'Fighting for the dear old colonies' in quotation marks, thus problematising it, and sarcastically wrote that because he was still being fed and earning his pay 'here's to Merry England and I don't care if the cat goes to the pound.'¹³

The findings of the present study confirm Burns' assertion that patriotism did not influence New Zealanders on a personal level but that they believed patriotism was held to be important by New Zealanders generally and, therefore, that 'patriotism was something most soldiers believed they ought to feel.'¹⁴ Thus, it is difficult to discern between a deeply held belief in patriotism and a more routine repetition of society's aspirations.

Much like the British volunteers looked at by Miller, the diaries, letters and reminiscences of New Zealand troopers revealed the soldiers' desires, perhaps even needs, to experience something new, and they found patriotic imperial service to be an acceptable outlet.¹⁵ However, Miller was also correct that the

¹³ Henry George Gilbert, letter to Lottie (Sister), 18 October 1901, in *Soldier Boy: A Young New Zealander Writes Home from the Boer War*, compiled by Kingsley Field (Auckland: New Holland Publishers, 2007), pp. 74-75. Note: while the exact origins and meaning of the phrase 'the cat does to the pound' is unknown, its sense in this context is clear enough, implying that the outcome of the conflict mattered to him less than the fact that he was getting paid and fed.

¹⁴ Burns, p. 136. This is similar to historian Stephen M. Miller's findings about Imperial Yeomanry motivation during the South African War. He wrote that recruits expressed 'the patriotism of their family, community, and nation and how they were moved and responded to it' and that few volunteers expressed their patriotism overtly in the written word. Stephen M. Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902', *The Journal of Military History*, 69, 3 (July 2005), pp. 691-711 (p. 708).

¹⁵ Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"?', p. 709. E.W. McFarland, looking at the published memoirs of those who served with the Scottish Yeomanry during the conflict, also thought 'patriotic impulses [were] fused with a youthful thirst for adventure.' E.W. McFarland, "'Empire-Enlarging Genius": Scottish Imperial Yeomanry Volunteers in the Boer War', *War in History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2006), pp. 299-328 (p. 314). Also see, 'New Zealanders in the South African War, 1899-1902', *The Veteran*, 24 (May 1949), p. 8: the author of which declares that 'our motives in volunteering were sound – we were impelled by the love of adventure, and we thought it a fine thing to be soldiers of the Queen.' Also see, Francis Jon Crisholm McIver, 'New Zealand and the South African War of 1899-1902: A Study of New Zealand's Attitudes and Motives for Involvement and the Effect of the War on New Zealand and her Relations with Britain' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Otago, 1972), pp. 51-52: 'In the light of the patriotism and

soldiers were brought up in a society in which 'tremendous value' was placed on patriotism and the empire, and that these concepts, 'real or imagined, were embraced largely by all classes.'¹⁶

Adventure

This thirst for adventure and excitement was a motive commonly supported by the letters and diaries in this study. This idea is clearly expressed by Private Perham who wrote that both he and his brother, Luke, 'like a lot of young men' became 'infected with the adventure bug and were eager to take part' in the conflict with the Boers.¹⁷

The importance of the wish for adventure in a soldier's volunteering for service was hinted at by Private Buckland, who wrote of his fellow men and himself, 'We hear next to nothing about the war here and I do not get half so excited about it as I did at home.'¹⁸ Obviously the excitement felt about war, or war as portrayed in the media, led some men to enlist in order to experience the thrill first-hand.

There are also hints in Lieutenant Bosworth's letters that the chance to travel somewhere new and experience something new was impetus for enlisting, and that he was encouraged by colleagues at the Post Office in Wellington who thought he would 'miss a great opportunity in neglecting my chance' at a 'good thing.'¹⁹ Several months later, he reemphasised the theme of adventure when he wrote about 'making such a strange journey' through Africa 'after pegging in at an office nearly all my life.'²⁰

militarism which came into fashion at this time there was every encouragement to volunteer for the young man who sought to escape from the more mundane, by contrast, existence of colonial life. The war offered a fray, adventure and possible "glory".'

¹⁶ Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"?', p. 704.

¹⁷ Frank Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column: Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African War of 1899-1902* (Timaru: Printers and Publishers, 1959), February 1900, p. 6.

¹⁸ William Harold Buckland, diary (early-1900 to mid-1901), entry for 8 May 1900, MS-Copy-Micro-0503, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁹ Jack Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 27 April 1900, NZMS-914, Auckland City Libraries, Auckland.

²⁰ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 24 June 1900.

It is easy to imagine that the excitement of adventure and the chance to see the world motivated many of the other soldiers to volunteer for war, many of whom had a mundane colonial existence as farmers, miners or civil servants, with little opportunity to experience new things. The desire for adventure often went hand-in-hand with the craving for glory.

Glory

The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century was a time when the romantic ideas of winning glory and honour in the field of battle – and the related views about qualities of masculinity, such as loyalty, hardiness, and bravery - were still accepted without the scepticism instilled by the First World War. It is obvious that, contrary to what Hall wrote, for some soldiers the motive was to ‘glorify themselves’ and their country, and was not just a matter of duty.²¹

For example, Hawdon thought that, after the Battle of Rhenoster Kop, ‘in spite of all the hardships and suffering, the troopers felt the glory was worth the pain.’²² Private Moore called the volunteers for his contingent, the Fourth, ‘aspirants for fame as soldiers of the Queen’, presumably ascribing the same motivation to troopers of the other contingents as well.²³ Lieutenant Bosworth, when telling his wife to ignore ‘those fools who come to you as Job’s-comforters’, wrote that she would ‘yet be proud of your hubby, and glad that he went away for a little time to make a name for himself – and those belonging to him.’²⁴

Glory was also an element in the thinking of Private Ross. On 15 March 1900 he remarked in his diary that he was hoping to return home soon, and that his contingent had ‘had enough Glory now to go home contented even if we never

²¹ D.O.W. Hall, *The New Zealanders in South Africa 1899-1902* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, War History Branch, 1949), p. 90.

²² Hawdon, p. 89.

²³ Moore, p. 17. Another soldier, Leece, wanted to ‘distinguish’ himself in South Africa, and complained in a letter that he was not getting the opportunity, ‘only plenty of hard work.’ George Leece, letter to Bert, 24 September 1900, MS-Group-1460, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

²⁴ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), [Date Unknown].

see another shot fired.’²⁵ The emphasis may suggest that Ross had grown disillusioned with the idea during his service, and that he was deliberately stressing the word to encourage a critique. Trooper McFarlane, on the other hand, wrote to his brother on 18 May 1902 to complain that if the peace conference achieved results they ‘may be sent ingloriously home.’²⁶ Sergeant Christie, while recognising the sadness integral to warfare, still wrote about battle in terms of a ‘glorious fight’ and something for New Zealanders ‘to be proud of’, despite one particular battle in which two officers and 21 men were killed.²⁷ Christie was serving in the Ninth Contingent when he wrote this, having already served in the Fourth and Seventh Contingents.

Some soldiers thought it was important to have evidence of the ‘glory’ they earned, usually through promotion. The eagerness of Corporal McKegg, while he was still a private on board the Troopship *Waiwera* en route to South Africa, to advance in rank is obvious when he wrote to his brother that ‘I have not got any stripes yet but hope to get them soon.’²⁸ It also suggests that recognition for service was a primary motivation in his joining the contingent. The diary of Corporal Hart also showed ambition as a good motivator, calling his promotion to lance corporal ‘a step on the ladder’ to getting further stripes.²⁹

Financial, Economic, Material Gain

There was little written in scholarly works about the motivation provided by the material and financial considerations of the New Zealand volunteers, even the simple desire to enlist in order to earn a livelihood. Surgeon-Captain Bakewell of the Ninth Contingent thought that some of the men of the Ninth Contingent had

²⁵ Ross, diary, 15 March 1900.

²⁶ William John McFarlane, letter to Frank (Brother), 18 May 1902, in ‘The Life and Times of William John McFarlane 1882-1967’ by Donald John McFarlane, 1991.2451, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

²⁷ William Ernest Christie, letter to Agg (Agnes), 12 March 1902, in ‘The Life and Times of William John McFarlane 1882-1967’ by Donald John McFarlane, 1991.2451, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

²⁸ Amos McKegg, letter to Willie (Brother), 29 October 1899, MS-934, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

²⁹ Hart, diary, 1 April 1902.

volunteered 'mainly for gain' and that New Zealanders were 'not animated by any of the higher emotions, such as patriotism and religion' but were 'essentially atheistic and material'.³⁰ Material considerations were foremost in the mind of Sergeant Christie when he wrote to his wife Agnes about not returning home with the Fourth Contingent. Realising she would be disappointed, he explained that he would not be 'any worse for another term of service out here' and 'will certainly be better off financially'.³¹ However, this focus on money may have been aimed at placating the letter's recipient, rather than Christie's actual motivation for remaining in South Africa. A previous letter to his mother had also shown his interest in financial considerations. In this letter he said he was 'getting along splendidly' and outlined the pay he was receiving as a Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, and the fact that he was sending a third of it to her.³² Lieutenant Todd also re-enlisted because of material considerations, telling his sister that South Africa offered 'plenty of opportunities of getting on', although a comment in the same letter, that it was 'only a living' in New Zealand while in South Africa 'one has a chance of doing something better', suggests that these opportunities were more than just financial.³³ As well as seeking to 'distinguish' himself, material considerations may have contributed to Sergeant Leece's decision to volunteer, as suggested by a letter he sent to his sister, in which his tone was depressed and he alluded to the fact that he was not doing well in New Zealand.³⁴ Leece had previously written home about his pay as a Sergeant, complaining that he could 'simply not save my pay as I had hoped to do'.³⁵ A concern with money, above non-material motivations, is also evidenced by the fact that the Sixth Contingent went on strike over arrears of pay.³⁶ If the men had been motivated by patriotism, the government's failure to keep up with

³⁰ Robert Hall Bakewell, diary (1901 to 1902), entries for 4 April 1902 and 12 April 1902, MS-0125, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, quoted in Burns, p. 139.

³¹ Christie, letter to Agg (Agnes), 19 August 1901.

³² Christie, letter to Mother, 3 May 1900.

³³ Thomas John Todd, letter to Sister ('Darling Sister'), 17 November 1901, MS-Papers-4598-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁴ Leece, letter to "Molite" (Sister), 24 September 1900.

³⁵ Leece, letter to Ned (Brother), 20 May 1900. Leece, letter to May, 1 June 1900.

³⁶ Linklater, December 1901, p. 75.

payments could have been forgiven, and the fact that duty was not more important than getting paid clearly shows the men's attitudes.

While it is never mentioned in the personal documents, gratuities – bonus payments offered by the government in appreciation of service – and pensions from army service may have also provided financial motivation to soldiers. One comment by Lieutenant Bosworth hinted at this: he wrote to his wife that he was convinced that they would benefit from his enlistment, 'not now perhaps, but in the future', and would 'I am certain, help the Kiddies in after years.'³⁷ However, it is not clear if this help would be a result of an officer's pension or the social standing provided by having a father who served as an officer in the military.

Revenge

In his 1974 thesis Simon Johnson wrote that it 'is difficult to say to what degree the revenge motive influenced popular support of the war' but that 'the defeat of Majuba Hill was as much in the popular mind as the image of the unwashed barbaric Boer.'³⁸ In the same way, it is difficult to say to what degree the revenge motive influenced the soldiers in the field; there are only two explicit mentions in the present study. The first was by Private Ross, who recorded in his diary the death of a trooper called Patterson, 'an old fellow with a family' who had 'shaved himself and tried to look young so as to be taken in the contingent', and who was in South Africa to avenge a brother killed at Majuba.³⁹ Private Gilbert also alluded to the First Boer War when he wrote that, despite the hunger, sleeplessness, dirt, shells and bullets, 'I am quite willing to put in my twelve months out here and take my chances with the hundreds of others who are out here "wiping something off the slate".'⁴⁰

³⁷ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), April 1900.

³⁸ Simon Johnson, 'Sons of the Empire: A Study of New Zealand Ideas and Public Opinion during the Boer War' (unpublished BA thesis, Massey University, 1974), p. 23.

³⁹ Ross, diary, 10 March 1900.

⁴⁰ Gilbert, letter to Lottie (Sister), 18 October 1901, in Field, p. 78.

Motivation to Fight and Kill

There was a substantial difference between the impetus to volunteer for the armed forces during wartime and the motivation to take part in the fighting and killing of combat.⁴¹ The fear of dying, and not just the fear of killing, could be the most debilitating emotion for soldiers. For the New Zealanders whose diaries and letters were studied two factors appeared to be important in overcoming the powerful and innate reluctance to personally attempt to take another's life and in sustaining the soldier during combat: the high of battle, the 'adrenaline rush' during the heat of battle; and, the presence of comrades around them.

Attitudes to Killing

Most soldiers did not dwell on the issue of killing in their letters and diaries. Few of them explicitly remarked on their attitudes toward the violence of war. Two soldiers, however, Privates Ross and Gilbert, commented on the perverse nature of killing in the South African War or in any war. Ross meditated on the 'awful' business of killing, writing that a civilian has no idea what it is like, and provided an anecdote to illustrate his point: 'It was a beautiful morning and a fellow alongside me said "Isn't it terrible to go killing men on a morning like this", and then a cannon roared and came over us.'⁴² Gilbert also saw war and killing as an 'unreasonable business' because

Perhaps today a man comes in under a white flag; we ride out and meet him. He may not be a bad sort of fellow, and we talk about the weather and such like things in a most friendly way. He rides away and tomorrow we are shooting at the same chap and he at us each trying to put out the other's lights. There's no sense in it when you look at it in this light and yet nothing short of war will settle some

⁴¹ Bruce Newsome, 'The Myth of Intrinsic Combat Motivation', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26 (2003), pp. 24-46, from Edgar Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41, 2 (April 2006), pp. 229-246 (p. 246).

⁴² Ross, diary, 19 December 1899.

disputes so while we have a hand in it we must do our best
and as Cromwell said "Trust in God and keep our powder
dry".⁴³

However, even if the soldiers did not dwell on the aberrant work of killing fellow human beings, most of the New Zealanders would have needed motivation to overcome reluctance to take the lives of other people.

Heat of Battle

The first factor that sustained a soldier in combat was the exhilaration (sometimes called the "high") experienced by combatants in the heat of battle, the struggle for life, which could burn away a soldier's finer feelings and reluctance to participate in violent action. This motivation to fight is given by Private Moore, who wrote that in battle '[o]ur blood was up' and that 'nothing could stop us now' once the action began.⁴⁴ Moore also cited the 'excitement' and 'confidence in yourself' that comes from the heat of battle as what impelled 'men to brilliant dash and daring' in conventional battle, but he did not think these were as effective for soldiers involved in the patrolling of guerrilla war – work that he called 'one of the most dangerous, arduous, and trying, in the service.'⁴⁵ Private McBeth reported that the troops of his contingent were 'jaded and tired' when ordered up, but during combat experienced 'splendid excitement' and a mad gallop that 'seemed to have sent the blood charging through the veins at a like speed', leaving him feeling "it was a good thing to be alive."⁴⁶ Likewise, Sergeant Vogan remarked of a mounted pursuit of Boers that it was 'madness to gallop on such ground; but one must be mad for the time to

⁴³ Gilbert, letter to Lottie (Sister), 3 December 1901, in Field, p. 110.

⁴⁴ Moore, p. 152.

⁴⁵ Moore, pp. 174-175. Previously he wrote that charging a kopje at full gallop 'when one's blood is up' negated the need for heroism. Moore, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁶ Arthur McBeth, letter to Mrs Chaytor, 17 December 1899. *New Zealand History Online*. 10 May 2011. [<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/files/documents/arthur-mcbeth-letter.pdf>]

fight or do any other than necessary work, and the New Zealanders were all ready to be as mad as the occasion required.⁴⁷

The exhilaration of battle could also be dangerous, as commented on by Ross in his diary. On 15 January 1900 he wrote that combat was 'an awful game' in which one 'clean forgets his own life he is so carried away with his own firing', and that 'it is how all the accidents occur I think as we get out of cover to have a pot at the enemy.'⁴⁸ Sergeant Carver also recognised how the heat of battle could overcome soldiers, writing that most of the men preferred to attack an enemy they could not see because 'once you can see him you begin to think that you are as good as he is or better and you don't cair how thick the bullits come.'⁴⁹

This heat of battle was a less intense form of the 'lust of killing' that Jollie reported overcame soldiers during an attack on a Boer laager near Kimberley in late-October 1899, when they 'saw redd, as the Kaffirs call it.'⁵⁰ The soldiers were in the trenches for three quarters of an hour, 'bayoneting every Boer they could see' and ignoring pleas for mercy.⁵¹

Unit Cohesion

The second factor that allowed the New Zealand soldiers to endure the stresses of action was the knowledge that they were fighting as one of a contingent, a company, a unit, all fighting side by side, each defending the other by fighting

⁴⁷ Sergeant Vogan, 'With the Contingenters in South Africa: An Incident that Occurred on 9th August, 1901', p. 26, *The Veteran*, 4 (July 1929), pp. 24-28 (p. 26).

⁴⁸ Ross, diary, 15 January 1900.

⁴⁹ Joshua Nicholas Carver, letter to Bernie (Brother), 6 October 1900, 2000.550, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁵⁰ Edward Jollie, diary (22 January 1900 to 27 May 1900), entry for 28 October 1899, MS-Papers-1446, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. None of the sources suggest that men took pleasure in killing, however, there are indications that combat could appeal to some soldiers because of the adventure and excitement of danger. The only mention of such an attitude is in the diary of Surgeon Captain Bakewell, who wrote of the men of the Ninth Contingent that they have volunteered 'chiefly for the mere love of fighting', although this is not supported by any of the other subjects of this study. Bakewell, diary, 4 April 1902.

⁵¹ Jollie, diary, 28 October 1899. Lockhead also reported instances when calls for mercy were ignored by New Zealand soldiers in the heat of battle. For example: William Stewart Lockhead, diary (5 October 1901 to 1 June 1902), entry for 5 November 1901, ARC2001-55, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth.

the common foe. Corporal Twistleton admits that, when under fire for the first time, which he called 'a droll sensation', had he been alone he would 'in all probability have cleared.'⁵² The writer of the 'Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent' also wrote that the soldier in battle can be afraid 'but he sees the man on his right and left keep their places. He knows them. He eats and drinks with them, and he knows that he is at least as safe as they are.'⁵³ It was this realisation of comradeship that allowed him to endure being in the field of battle.

Anticipation of Combat

Just as they had different motivations for coming to fight in South Africa, so New Zealand soldiers wrote differently about their anticipation of combat itself. However, in the diaries and letters studied, most were decidedly eager to engage the Boers, because of a desire to prove themselves and their courage, to earn glory, to relieve the boredom of service, or to have a part in the defeat of the enemy.

Sergeant Leece showed a preoccupation with seeing action in his letters. In June 1900 he wrote to May, possibly his sweetheart back home, that he did not want to return to New Zealand 'without being under fire' but that he had 'no special ambition to be hit', and he seemed pleased with the idea that there appeared to be 'a chance that we shall have all we want before the war is ended.'⁵⁴ Leece was excited to report to his mother on 12 August 1900 that his unit had been in action earlier in the month and that he was 'real pleased' because to have 'come back with not being in it would have been too tame.'⁵⁵ Trooper Swanwick also wrote, to his sister, that while he had not seen any fighting he hoped 'to have a shot' before returning home; likewise, Private Ross was glad, when he arrived in

⁵² Twistleton, May 1900, p. 28.

⁵³ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, 'Reminiscences of Your First Foreign Service Contingent', p. 10, 1999.2003, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁵⁴ Leece, letter to May, 1 June 1900. He expressed the same sentiment to his Mother the following month, saying it would be 'rather tame not to see any of the "fun".' Leece, letter to Mother, 15 July 1900.

⁵⁵ Leece, letter to Mother, 12 August 1900.

South Africa, to find that there was constant fighting so would get his chance to take part.⁵⁶

Lieutenant MacDonald, during a march from Bulawayo to Mafeking in 1900, hoped that, 'if we have any luck, we may get some fighting to do; but hope deferred maketh the heart sick.'⁵⁷ On 16 August 1900 he was eager to report that the Fourth Contingent finally got the opportunity to 'show what mettle it was composed', that, after five months 'of hope and despair', the 'day that they had so long waited for had come at last': their first engagement.⁵⁸ Unfortunately for MacDonald he was escorting a convoy and did not take part in the battle, and wrote of the 'bitter disappointment' this caused.⁵⁹

In a reminiscence in *The Veteran* Sergeant Vogan provided evidence for some soldiers' eagerness to take part in combat; writing about engaging a Boer commando as part of Colonel Kavanagh's Column on 9 August 1901, Vogan wrote that the men's 'heart's jumped as the distant sound of firing began', and that the 'ball had begun, and we were right glad.'⁶⁰ More generally, Corporal McKegg wrote to his brother during the journey over that he felt 'strong and well and fit for anything', and was looking forward to 'roughing it and hard times in Africa with some pleasure.'⁶¹

The impatience of many soldiers to see combat may be attributed to an eagerness to prove their courage, as well as to take part in the defeat of the enemy. The anticipation of combat could also be attributed to the dull times and boredom of service experienced by the New Zealand soldiers, when camp life involved a monotonous routine of fatigues, outposts, guards and other work, an aspect of war-time experience not often emphasised by studies (including this one). This boredom was explicitly commented on by some soldiers, such as

⁵⁶ Frank Swanwick, letter to Lily (Sister), 5 June 1900, 1999.3194, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Ross, diary, 20 November 1899. See also, William Frederick Raynes, diary (1 January 1901 to 26 September 1901), entry for 20 March 1901, qMS-1676, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵⁷ J.R. MacDonald, from account of trek from Bulawayo to Fort Tuli and back, in Moore, p. 60.

⁵⁸ MacDonald, from letter, in Moore, p. 76.

⁵⁹ MacDonald, from letter, in Moore, p. 78.

⁶⁰ Vogan, 'With the Contingenters in South Africa: An Incident that Occurred on 9th August, 1901', p. 25.

⁶¹ Adding that he was 'not afraid.' McKegg, letter to Willie (Brother), 29 October 1899.

Private Moore.⁶² This boredom was also reflected in the often repetitive entries, or less descriptive entries, of some soldiers' diaries, for example, Private Lockhead's regular repetition of 'Still at...' when writing about living in camp, often adding 'Usual camp routine.'⁶³ The boredom was also clearly displayed by the "Rum night" veldt chorus written by Trooper Madill of the Sixth Contingent:

'Grooming! grooming! grooming!!!

*Always ***** well grooming.*

From reveille to lights out

It's grooming all day long.

Trekking! trekking! trekking!!!

*Always ***** well trekking.*

From reveille to lights out

It's trekking all day long.

Biscuits! biscuits! biscuits!!!

*Always ***** well biscuits.*

From reveille to lights out.

*It's biscuits all day long.'*⁶⁴

While the nature of these entries are most likely expressing a genuine ennui with service life it should also be acknowledged that such expression of everyday routine and daily life, rather than combat, could be, as historian Christa Hämmerle writes, a narrative strategy involving a silence about certain

⁶² Moore, pp. 97, 141

⁶³ Lockhead, diary, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 May 1902.

⁶⁴ James Madill, unpublished manuscript, formerly in Defence Force Library, quoted by Laurie Barber, 'New Zealanders and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902', in *Kiwis in Conflict: 200 Years of New Zealanders at War*, ed. by Chris Pugsley with Laurie Barber, Buddy Mikaere, Nigel Prickett and Rose Young (Auckland: David Bateman Ltd., 2008), pp. 46-65 (pp. 52-53), and by Hawdon, p. 163.

experiences of war aimed at evoking a state of normalcy, rather than conveying the less palatable occurrences of war.⁶⁵

Lieutenant McKeich was one of the few soldiers to display any misgivings in their anticipation of combat. During the journey over to South Africa he wrote to his son, Walter, about the change from a life of 'Butchering to Soldiering', and the talk of some of the men who had already served in South Africa.⁶⁶ McKeich worried about how he was 'going to get on in the field', although he does tell his son, 'I can only do my best.'⁶⁷

Clearing the Countryside

Personal documents written by soldiers reveal much about attitudes towards an important part of the war's daily work: clearing hostile territory of inhabitants, and interning many of these inhabitants in concentration camps, and commandeering or destroying property, crops and stock.⁶⁸

Commandeering

Commandeering during the South African War involved the New Zealand soldiers', and British and Boer soldiers' for that matter, acquisition of food, livestock, equipment and other property from Boer civilians, sometimes through force or the threat of force. The reminiscence of Private Moore contains many discussions of this work, with the author usually approving of the actions he and his fellow soldiers took part in. Moore detailed that, when the column was engaged in clearing the country its object was to 'commandeer all stocks and

⁶⁵ Christa Hämmerle (translation by Amy Krois-Lindner), "'You let a weeping woman call you home?'" Private correspondences during the First World War in Austria and Germany', in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. by Rebecca Earle (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 152-182 (p. 166).

⁶⁶ Robert McKeich, letter to Walter (Son), 18 March 1902, 1998.773, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ The first significant use of New Zealand troops in such destruction of Boer civil infrastructure occurred on 7 November 1900 at Koperfontein, where they captured supplies, livestock and equipment and burned a Boer flour mill. John Crawford and Ellen Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland: Reed Books, 1999), p. 56.

foodstuffs found on farms belonging to the enemy, and to destroy any waggons, farming implements, and forage that could not be taken away', as well to collect women and children and take them to the nearest garrisoned town.⁶⁹ In addition to collecting food and fodder, troopers also 'indulged in a little commandeering on our own account, returning to camp... with good things.'⁷⁰ Moore wrote that the men 'keenly looked forward to participating in them' because they could secure foodstuffs to supplement their rations, 'the spice of danger attending these raids' when there was the possibility of encountering Boers at the farms, and it contributed to the war effort by burning equipment and material 'that would be of use to the Boers on commando.'⁷¹ In fact, he called a trek from Ventersdorp, unhampered by the duties attached to convoy escort and taking 'full advantage of the opportunities' afforded for raiding and commandeering, the 'most instructive and enjoyable we had indulged in since our landing in South Africa.'⁷²

Most of the commandeering reported in letters and diaries involved the confiscation of food and provisions for use by the troopers, to supplement their own, and their horses', sometimes insufficient rations. The evidence suggests that Burns was correct when he wrote that the 'harvesting' of food from orchards, crops and stock 'did not class as theft in the minds of the New Zealand soldiers, or at least it was somehow conceived of as legitimate theft.'⁷³

The practical motivation for commandeering is shown by Gunner Potter of the Firth and Seventh Contingents, who described marching into a 'Kaffir's Kaarl' and

⁶⁹ Moore, 27 November 1900, pp. 112-113. See also, Moore, 6-7 October 1900, p. 91; 27 October 1900, p. 100; early November, p. 101; 8 November 1900, pp. 103-104 (outlining regimental orders related to searching farms and commandeering); 27 November 1900, pp. 112-113; 4 April 1901, pp. 162-163.

⁷⁰ Moore, 13 September 1900, p. 84.

⁷¹ Moore, p. 93.

⁷² Moore, p. 107.

⁷³ Burns, p. 124. He called such actions 'a way of life' practised by colonial British, British and Boer soldiers during the conflict, 'necessitated by the insufficiency of rations.' For example, Buckland wrote in his diary that he hoped a commandeering party would 'pick up something in the eatable line, as we are pretty low down.' Buckland, diary, 5 November 1901, pp. 247-248. Trooper Pearce showed a similar attitude, for example, Richard Pearce, diary (8 February 1900 to 2 July 1901), entries for 2 October 1900 and 2 June 1901, MS-Papers-1657, Alexander Turnbull Library.

going 'commandeering, pigs, sheep, fowl, ducks, geese, vegetables, oranges, maize, eggs and anything we thought would be useful.'⁷⁴

The raiding of farms for food and livestock was also motivated by the war-time strategy to starve the Boers and freeze their activities. Private Perham reported that the New Zealanders commandeered livestock to deprive the Boers of their main food supplies. This idea was also indicated by Sergeant Carver when he reported that on a march to Klerksdorp the troops 'commandeered all the cattle we could get hold of that belonged to the Boers that are still fighting.'⁷⁵ However, for the troopers themselves it is likely that this motivation was secondary to a desire for fresh food to complement their army rations.

Fresh fruit was especially appreciated by soldiers out on the veldt: Trooper Tennent enthusiastically wrote to his mother about camping near 'the largest peach orchard [he had] ever seen', while Sergeant Barraclough, in the Fifth Contingent, recorded finding, while on rearguard, an orange grove with fruit 'so tempting that we immediately hitched our horses and filled our feed bags with them'.⁷⁶ Other soldiers commented on the 'good time' provided by the opportunity to live on confiscated stock and food, such as Sergeant Carver writing about living on 'Niggers fowls and eggs', which, like 'all good things in this country', did not last long enough, and Trooper Tennent writing about the 'great feed' of pigs and fowls looted from a place called Orange Grove.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ E.A.A. Potter, letter to George, 23 February 1901, MS-Papers-2317 (David Hood Papers), Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. He described how the pigs and fowls were killed outright, along with one or two sheep, but that the remainder of the sheep and cattle were – two or three hundred head – were kept in herds under guard for later culling.

⁷⁵ Perham, 28 April 1901, p. 69. Carver, letter to Mother and Father, 19 November 1900.

⁷⁶ Hobart Cother Tennent, letter to Mother, 27 January 1902, 2201.1057, National Army Museum, Waiouru. J.W. Barraclough, 'Diary Sth Africa 1900', entry for 15 October 1900, 4186/152, North Otago Museum, Oamaru. In Barraclough's case, the account provides evidence for the dangers posed by such temptations, as while engaged in commandeering oranges the New Zealanders and NSW Bushmen were ambushed by Boers, resulting in casualties (including one death). This incident was also mentioned in Carver, letter to Mother, 17 October 1900. He wrote that commandeering parties had 'great fun some times but on one or two occasions the fun has turned rather dear fun.'

⁷⁷ James Henry Whyte, diary (23 November 1899 to 4 February 1902), entry for 16 August 1900, 1999.478, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Tennent, letter to Father and Mother, 3 September 1901.

Corporal Twistleton happily looted food and considered it legitimate, feeling no qualms about stealing off of Boers. In March 1900, on separate occasions, he and his mates 'offered' to buy fruit from a Dutchman, who refused, so, Twistleton noted, 'we borrowed some', and, later, they came across a farm house and 'politely invited the Dutchman to produce some food... the sight of a loaded rifle had a very salutary effect.'⁷⁸

While they may have seen commandeering food as legitimate because of their logistical circumstances, the same could not be said for the taking of trinkets and souvenirs. Many soldiers happily undertook such looting and thought it was as legitimate as commandeering food. As suggested by Private Raynes when he regretfully wrote that his unit was entraining to rejoin the column and leaving 'a really cosy lot of bivouacks', the 'commandeered comforts' of the soldiers included both 'useful things and ornamental.'⁷⁹ Corporal McKegg plainly states in a letter that he would 'not have much scruples in commandeering' any money he found, and that it was a pity he 'could not drop on a house with a few thousand pounds in out here.'⁸⁰

Some diaries recorded the looting of seemingly inconsequential items, such as Private Whyte of the First Contingent grabbing stamps from Boer houses or Private Madill commandeering photos (which he sold for 5p).⁸¹ Private Clarke also noted in a letter to his sister that he was sending home part of a Dutch prayerbook and 'a bit of the top of a piano key that we broke in a Dutch farm house.'⁸² Also interesting was the large bundle of love letters, in addition to a silver watch and gold chain, looted from a house by Trooper William

⁷⁸ Twistleton, March 1900, pp. 15, 17-18.

⁷⁹ Raynes, diary, 13 April 1901.

⁸⁰ McKegg, letter to Willie (Brother), 3 September 1900.

⁸¹ Whyte, diary, 10 December 1899. James Madill, diary (15 January 1901 to 29 May 1905), entry for 31 March 1901, MS-1464, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁸² James N. Clarke, letter to Katie, 15 June 1902, in *Still Jogging Along: Being the Diary and some Letters of Private J.N. Clarke, 9th Contingent N.Z.M.R.*, ed. by Brian Connor (Dunedin: Otago Military Museum, 1989), p. 27. The prayerbook had been taken from the pocket of a dead Boer who had shot one of Clarke's lieutenants. Several days later Clarke stole three Basuto ponies and sold them. Clarke, diary, 22 and 23 June 1902, in Connor, p. 19.

Macpherson.⁸³ While he did not take anything, Private York, during the looting of shops and houses in Ottoshoop in August 1900, wrote that he 'could have saved many little curios but... can not carry any unnecessary things,' showing that he was not averse to the act of looting but was wary of having to then carry the looted items while on trek.⁸⁴

Private Raynes wrote about the troops commandeering 'a lot of curios' while scouting around Warmbaths on 31 March 1901, including one fellow who 'got about 300 stamps a good many being Transvaal ones', other furniture, while some got 'a few useful things', like crockery, pots, books, notebooks and writing paper.⁸⁵ It was not just the enlisted men who took part in such looting. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Newall, while stationed at Pitsani Station said that he found a 'small brass plate' which he took as a 'souvenir.'⁸⁶

Trooper Tennent was another soldier who enjoyed the opportunities offered by commandeering, especially in getting items that could be useful while out on the veldt. On 18 August 1901 he wrote to his mother that during a standing camp some of the men 'employed' their time 'in digging for treasures buried at a house close to camp.'⁸⁷ In the looting of what was once a general store, 'All kinds of things were found', including Orange Free State bank notes (to the value of over five hundred pounds), a gold and silver watch, gold scarf pins, clothing, curtains, utensils (knives, forks, and spoons), an organ, a piano, and furniture, while Tennent 'got some fine towels, 2 pound candles and plenty of calico.'⁸⁸

Most mention of commandeering in letters and diaries was matter-of-fact, showing that the act itself was seen, by many, as a routine business requiring little discussion. The soldiers often just noted the fact that they took part in

⁸³ William Macpherson, letter home, from Ron Palenski, *Kiwi Battlefields* (Auckland: Hacetate NZ Ltd., 2011), p. 22. He said the letters were interesting because the girl appeared to be engaged to three men.

⁸⁴ Harry York, letter to Father, Sister and Brothers, 27 August 1900, in *Harry's Letters from the Boer War*, ed. by Frank Fyfe (Greytown: Wakelin House, 1993), p. 34.

⁸⁵ Raynes, diary, 31 March 1901.

⁸⁶ Newall, 1 August 1900.

⁸⁷ Tennent, letter to Mother, 18 August 1901.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* A couple of months previously, Tennent had told his mother about going into the town of Ermelo, and how he 'got some loot but nothing much use to us as all the useful things had been taken before, I got some writing paper, Christmas cards, some medicine, scissors some tin bowls a billy and a few other things.' Tennent, letter to Mother, 31 June 1901.

commandeering, looting or 'prospecting' without detailing what they commandeered, or from where.⁸⁹ Other soldiers recorded the results of commandeering in the unemotional way of Corporals Coupland and Nathan of the Third Contingent, who made diary entries such as: Coupland, 7 December 1900, 'went out foraging about 200 of us and 2 big guns and a pom pom, got a lot of fowls and furniture, and burnt a lot of place'; and, Nathan, 20 October 1901, 'Captured 3 prisoners, 30 waggons, 57 cattle, 28 horses, 551 sheep. Burned clothing, stores, etc.'⁹⁰ For most New Zealand soldiers looting was not excused by recourse to the idea of ameliorated responsibility, the diminishment of an individual soldier's capacity for choice because of his very nature as a soldier and the forced disregard of personal values, but was simply considered legitimate in wartime and beneficial to the troopers.

Not all New Zealand soldiers were indifferent or dismissive towards the potential immorality or illegality of commandeering. These soldiers held a distinctly negative view of the work. Sergeant Carver, in a letter to his sister, lamented the effect of commandeering on the women and children who had been left at home while the men joined the Boer commandos in the field. Writing of a 'quiet day' in which the New Zealanders visited only three farms, he reported:

At the first one it being the property of a Boer that is out fighting we burned all his waggons and carts and then commandeered his cattle. Much to the sorrow of his wife and daughters who were left in charge of the farm. Then we went on but did not find anymore cattle. I think that the wives and children of the Boers that are out fighting are in a

⁸⁹ A few examples: Whyte, diary, 26 and 27 September 1900. Pearce, diary, 13 January 1901. Carver, letter to Mother, 17 October 1900. Buckland, diary, 9 and 13 October 1900. Charles B. Tasker, *A slice of the life of my Uncle Charlie: a diary of Trooper C.B. Tasker, Service number 3561, 6th Contingent, New Zealand Mounted Rifles, South Africa*, transcribed by P.M. Tasker (Waikanae, NZ: P.M. Tasker, 1991), 18 and 21 April, pp. 15, 16. York, letter to Father, 27 August 1900.

⁹⁰ Archibald Coupland, diary (30 May 1900 to 23 January 1901), entry for 7 December 1900, MSX-7929 and MSX-7930, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. William Anthony Nathan, diary (19 March 1901 to 15 May 1902), entry for 20 October 1901, MS-Papers-1657, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

very bad state and now that we are taking nearly all the cattle they must either give in or else starve.⁹¹

Private Buckland also displayed evidence of being uncomfortable with the looting and destruction of farm houses. At a farm in November 1900 he was struck by a Boer woman and girl who looked on as the New Zealanders, 'we wild barbarians', sacked the place, and he wrote in his diary that 'this day my conscience pricked me somewhat.'⁹² His uneasiness with taking part in such destruction was also shown in his attempts to prevent the burning of one house and to rescue property from others.⁹³ Previously he had written that he had had 'numerous chances to take odds and ends of Boer property, but it appears too much like thieving.'⁹⁴

After describing how some mates had sent home articles of value looted from farmhouses, Private Raynes declared that so far he had 'not done anything in this line', and he thought it was 'hard to make our consciences take a common sense view of our actions.'⁹⁵ Looting appears to have offended Raynes' sensibilities. However, previous comments from Raynes do not provide evidence for such disapproval. For example, he only censured a late-night looting expedition as 'foolish' because 'they all got up at 4 P.M. and got but little sleep.'⁹⁶ On another occasion, he called his officers a 'laughing stock' for punishing (with 14 days imprisonment and hard labour, and pay stopped during that period) a comrade who looted '21lbs sago' from an empty house in forbidden territory.⁹⁷

Some soldiers may have been signifying an antipathy to commandeering when they wrote in their diaries about official disapproval of the act. For example, Private Buckland, who was obviously uncomfortable with looting, wrote on 16 November 1900 that 'very stringent orders had been issued against looting' by the British authorities, remarking that 'five years is the lowest punishment for

⁹¹ Carver, letter to Annie (Sister), 13 November 1900.

⁹² Buckland, diary, 6 November 1900. Raynes also, sometimes, lamented at the 'ruthless destruction of property' undertaken. Raynes, diary, 8 April 1901.

⁹³ During a 'day of licensed looting at Waterval.' Buckland, diary, 24 October 1901.

⁹⁴ Buckland, diary, 29 August 1900.

⁹⁵ Raynes, diary, 8 August 1901.

⁹⁶ Raynes, diary, 31 March 1901. He clearly meant '4 A.M'.

⁹⁷ Raynes, diary, 9 May 1901. Note: Sago is a starch.

this offence and hanging the greatest.⁹⁸ By referencing the official punishments he may have been seeking to reinforce his own ethical objections to commandeering by recording and adhering to practical grounds for not engaging in the act. Private Pearce also recorded in his diary, a few days earlier, that they had a '[g]reat lecture given on looting, threatened five years anyone caught looting.'⁹⁹

Farm Burning

As with the commandeering of Boer property, many soldiers did not think of the burning of farms as immoral or illegitimate, performing and describing the work as a simple matter of fact, as 'a job'.¹⁰⁰ The most obvious demonstration of this point is the fact that many of the soldiers did not have concerns about discussing the work in their diaries and letters, some of which, like Private Madill's, record almost as much house destruction (and commandeering) as fighting.¹⁰¹

The casual way they wrote about the work also shows their attitudes. Private Whyte seemed almost disinterested in a diary entry for 28 July 1901: 'Moved off at 8am... Went up valley, got pigs, fowls and destroyed houses.'¹⁰² A similar tone was used by many New Zealand troopers describing the clearing of the land and the destruction of property.¹⁰³ Some soldiers seemed almost jubilant in their

⁹⁸ Buckland, diary, 16 November 1900.

⁹⁹ Pearce, diary, 13 November 1900.

¹⁰⁰ The results of this study agree with Crawford and Ellis' claim that many of 'the New Zealanders found this part of their duties in South Africa distasteful, but it was generally agreed that these measures were necessary if the conflict was to be brought to an end.' Crawford and Ellis, p. 59.

¹⁰¹ Madill, diary, 15 January 1901 to 29 May 1902. However, a few soldiers, notably Troopers Nathan and Basil Edward St. John Stephens, never mentioned clearing the country, burning farmhouses, or the transfer of civilians to refugee camps. Nathan, diary, 19 March 1901 to 15 May 1902, and Stephens, diary, 23 January 1901 to 27 December 1901.

¹⁰² Whyte, diary, 28 July 1901.

¹⁰³ For example: Matthew Bruce Kirkbride, diary (1 November 1899 to 11 December 1900), entry for 2 August 1900, 1998.2570, National Army Museum, Waiouru. Buckland, diary, 24 October (also 6 November 1900 and 13 November 1900). William Robert Boyd, diary (17 November 1900 to 17 May 1901), entry for 3 December 1900, MS-Papers-3846, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Tasker, diary, 25 May 1901 (also, 19 May 1901, 20 May 1901, 18 April 1901, 21 April 1901). Madill, diary, 22 June 1901. Harold M. Riddick, diary (1 January 1899 to 3 October 1901), entry for 26 July 1901, 1987.1216, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

reports, such as Madill when writing that they had 'destroyed most of the town last night it was all in flames, burning all kinds of furniture on our fires.'¹⁰⁴

In contrast, several of the soldiers in the present study display negative attitudes towards farm burning and house destruction, usually based on sympathy for the Boer inhabitants. In a diary entry for 8 August 1901 detailing the destruction of a farm, Private Raynes was not entirely convincing in his remorse for the action, but the fact that he did attempt to show sympathy suggests that some soldiers thought there was a measure of guilt in farm burning. He wrote that whenever they camped at a homestead, 'unless it is protected, as being the property of loyalists, we utterly destroy it' but that he had 'never seen any property destroyed without feeling great regret that war makes this course necessary.'¹⁰⁵

Private Ross had a distinct sympathy for the civilians who lost their homes because of the actions of the British Army. In his description of clearing the land in September 1900, he wrote that 'the cruellest thing of all' was turning women and children 'out of their house allowing them a few clothes and then burn the house down in front of their very eyes', something the New Zealanders had to do often.¹⁰⁶ About a month later, remarking on the anger and sadness of Boer families when they lost their homes and their males were being entrained to Pretoria, Ross wrote that 'us hard hearted brutes grinned', providing evidence that he realised that the work was something that should, indeed *did*, evoke sympathy but that, because the soldiers had no choice but to do such work, they found it easier to act remorselessly rather than a futilely sympathetic fashion.¹⁰⁷ Corporal Twistleton also stated that he was 'rather sorry for the women folk' who were given half an hour to 'get what they valued' before their house was burnt.¹⁰⁸ However, Twistleton's attitudes were not necessarily this straightforward: at times he expressed regret at and a doubt about the validity of this

¹⁰⁴ Madill, diary, 23 May 1901. A similar tone is used by Ross when he described 'going thro a country with fire and the sword... burning dozens of houses each day and fighting between times.' Ross, diary, 7 August 1900.

¹⁰⁵ Raynes, diary, 8 August 1901.

¹⁰⁶ Ross, diary, 7 September 1900. Previously, in January 1900, he had written of the ransacking of a farmhouse, and how it was 'terrible to see the havoc played.' Ross, diary, 24 January 1900.

¹⁰⁷ Ross, 1 October 1900.

¹⁰⁸ Twistleton, May 1900, p. 36.

destruction, but at others revealed no qualms about taking similar actions. Finally, Trooper Swanwick showed similar sentiments, but blamed the misery of the Boer civilians on the 'brutes' - the Boers out on commando - who were dragging the war out, in order to alleviate his own guilty feelings. He wrote that miserable scenes were to be seen on the march, 'at farm houses women and children are to be seen almost starving', and 'crying terribly when we would burn their waggons and take away anything that would be of any use to the enemy.'¹⁰⁹ He concluded by writing that 'you cannot think what a horrible thing war is unless you have seen it with you own eyes.'¹¹⁰

Burns was not completely correct when he said negative attitudes to looting and burning were indicated by concern to stress their justifications for these acts; soldiers could have been writing about these rationalisations because they genuinely thought the justifications were valid, or merely because the soldiers thought that the people at home would be interested. However, it is possible that some of the soldiers did emphasise the justifications for anti-guerrilla measures because they were uncomfortable with the methods the British authorities felt were necessary.¹¹¹

Among the New Zealand soldiers who made sure to record the reasons behind commandeering and farm burning in their diaries were Corporal Twistleton and Private Raynes. Twistleton provided two justifications for this 'unpleasant job': first, he wrote that it was 'absolutely necessary to starve the Boers'; second, for health reasons, burning Boer houses was 'a blessing in disguise, as most of them were in such an insanitary state that burning them was absolutely necessary to purify them.'¹¹² Raynes also wrote that the burning of farms and the veldt had been performed 'so as to starve the enemy's stock', and by extension the

¹⁰⁹ Swanwick, letter to Lily, 11 November.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ The views of the sources are also in accord with Hawdon's claim that farm burning was 'a job that New Zealanders very much disliked, but saw was necessary.' Hawdon, p. 77. Note: according to Bill Nasson farm destruction became increasingly indiscriminate, and that while some property was razed because the men were still fighting the British, 'both proportionately and in total number the destruction bore most heavily on non-combatant homesteads which had no direct link to operational commandos in particular districts.' Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902* (Auckland: Arnold, 1999), p. 218.

¹¹² Twistleton, November 1900 and January 1901, pp. 120, 161.

enemy.¹¹³ Later that same month, he mentioned that the town they were moving into had been burned as punishment by a General Remington because 'the wickedness of that town was very great.'¹¹⁴ The confiscation of property and the burning of homes was a common punishment for continuing resistance by Boers. In another diary entry, he thought that, often, 'houses are destroyed by the troops so as not to shelter the enemy.'¹¹⁵

In discussing the burning of houses and the taking of women and children, Trooper Tennent tried to justify his actions and temper doubts about the morality of the work by writing that most of the women were 'only too glad to get away from the men and go to Standerton to the camp for them there.'¹¹⁶ Private Ross, who said it was 'not a nice job', thought that turning civilians out of their homes before destroying them, while the husband or father was away fighting, was 'the only way to bring them to their senses.'¹¹⁷

Clearance and Concentration Camps

According to one of Britain's leading modern historians, Kenneth O. Morgan, 'one-quarter of the entire population of Boer woman and children in the two Boer republics lost their lives in the space of around fifteen months' because of the concentration camps established by the British.¹¹⁸ The camps were established in order to prevent surrendered Boers and their families from

¹¹³ Raynes, diary, 6 June 1901. Trooper James also made sure to record in his diary that the troops were 'destroying all the mealies in the country we pass through' in order to 'starve the Boers out.' Frederick William James, diary (4 January 1902 to 1 August 1902), entry for 26 April 1902, Biographical File, New Zealand Room, Tauranga City Libraries, Tauranga.

¹¹⁴ Raynes, diary, 20 June 1901.

¹¹⁵ Raynes, diary, 8 August 1901. None of the sources mention the justification put forward by scholars such as Pakenham, that the aim of farm burning was to make an example of certain families and so deter others from aiding the Boer guerrillas. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. 440.

¹¹⁶ Tennent, letter to Mother, 3 June 1901.

¹¹⁷ Ross, diary, 7 September 1900.

¹¹⁸ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Boer War and the Media (1899-1902)', *Twentieth Century British History*, 13, 1 (2002), pp. 1-16 (p. 12). He says that the reports of Emily Hobhouse, a British welfare campaigner, 'described a catastrophe of near genocidal proportions conducted by the British Army under Kitchener.' Morgan, p. 11. Nearly 28,000 women and children (and some older men and prisoners of war) died in the white concentration camps, and around 20,000 Africans died in the black camps. Nasson, p. 281. Tabitha Jackson, *The Boer War* (London: Channel 4 Books, 1999), p. 162.

returning home and breaking the oath of allegiance, to house the women and children made homeless by the clearing of the countryside, and to serve as hostage sites to pressure the enemy into giving up the fight in order to be reunited with their families.¹¹⁹

Few New Zealand soldiers in the present study wrote, either in letters home or in their private diaries, about the removal of Boer women and children from their homes and their placement in British-run concentration camps.¹²⁰ In fact, Lieutenant Colonel Messenger was the only soldier, in the sources studied, who directly referred to the concentration camps. Interestingly in these two diary entries, written on 19 and 20 May 1902, he suggested that the camps he passed at the Mooi River were healthy and comfortable places to live. This is seen through comments that the Boer women 'wear sun bonnets' while the children 'look very fat and well.'¹²¹

Much like the act of commandeering supplies and food, the vast majority of the New Zealand troopers did not find the commandeering of Boer civilians unpleasant, instead thinking of it just as 'a job.' This is obvious in their casual reference to the removal of women and children from their homes. For example, Private (Signaller) Lockhead of the Seventh Contingent wrote nonchalantly about his 21st birthday in South Africa, 'My 21st birthday today – got 2 pumkins for dinner at a farm house we destroyed on the line of march. Fetched in the women.'¹²² Trooper Perham was just as cavalier when he wrote that 'On our way back to the Column we rounded up all the livestock... and the inhabitants, both Boers and natives, were taken with us.'¹²³ The two references to clearing the population in the diary of Private Kelly of the Sixth Contingent consisted of 21

¹¹⁹ Jackson, p. 145. Pakenham, pp. 493-494. Nasson, p. 221.

¹²⁰ This lack of evidence from personal documents may be the reason that scholarly works dealing with soldiers' experiences and mentalities during the South African War do not address the issue of the removal of the populace to concentration camps.

¹²¹ Messenger, diary, 20 May 1902. Also, Messenger, diary, 19 May 1902, in which he wrote, 'Boer children fat, also women.'

¹²² Lockhead, diary, 10 April 1902.

¹²³ Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, 30 March 1901, p. 65. Also, the next day, casually reported that the New Zealanders 'visited Piet de Wet's farm, and took all the women and children away with us, including natives.' Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, 31 March 1901, p. 66.

May 1901, 'Brought in several families' and 29 July 1901, '6 prisoners, 12 women, 70 houses, 10 mules, 100 cattle, 5000 sheep, 16 carts and wagons captured.'¹²⁴

Private Pearce appears to have felt sympathy for those forced from their homes when he wrote about his first experience of commandeering women and children, remarking that the 'women were terribly broken up having to leave their homes', but he did not seem to have felt much discomfort in taking part in this action.¹²⁵ Making more generalised comments that suggest a certain uneasiness with what the New Zealanders were taking part in, Private Raynes, while going to farmhouses and bringing in refugees, wrote that he 'was weighing the question of Peace and War' and thought 'that if the public could see the heap of misery caused by every campaign that (Even as drunkenness causes temperance) War would do more towards peace making in the future than all the Peace Conferences.'¹²⁶ This uneasiness is reinforced by attempts to portray the refugees as 'glad in one way to get away, they knew they would be safe from Boer and British and that they would always be fed and clothed', even while they realised that they were 'leaving their farms comparatively ruined.'¹²⁷

Concern about the way soldiers would be viewed in regards to the evacuation of women and children from farms to concentration camps is obvious in a reminiscence written in *The Veteran* almost 50 years after the South African War, in which the author noted that 'these camps were as different from the later German and Japanese concentration camps as porridge is from poison.'¹²⁸

¹²⁴ John Neill Kelly, diary (23 March 1901 to 7 January 1902), entries for 21 May 1901 and 29 July 1901, 1999.3190, National Army Museum, Waiouru.

¹²⁵ Pearce, diary, 28 November 1900. Also see, Pearce, diary, 30 November 1900.

¹²⁶ Raynes, diary, 17 June 1901. Also: Raynes previously had written that 'war was a terrible thing', that over the years he had 'often pictured how fields would be neglected, cattle starved, families driven away from home etc' and that now he had 'seen and conversed with many prisoners, and seen many families embark in the trains for Pretoria.' Raynes, diary, 8 April 1901.

¹²⁷ Raynes, diary, 15 April 1901.

¹²⁸ 'New Zealanders in the South African War, 1899-1902', *The Veteran*, 24 (May 1949), pp. 8-15.

Continuing War

The Idea of the Short War

Like many soldiers beginning a campaign, the New Zealanders who went to South Africa in the initial contingents thought that the conflict would be a short one, and many, in fact, worried that the war would end before they had a chance to serve in the field. Even members of the First Contingent, which departed New Zealand only ten days after the outbreak of war, thought the war would be over before they arrived.¹²⁹ One soldier of the First Contingent wrote that news of continuing fighting in Natal was 'greeted with cheers' from the men on the troopship 'for we had all along been afraid that the war might be over before we got there to have a say in it.'¹³⁰

Trooper Smith also described the change of mood aboard his troopship caused by the 'news of Conges [Boer General Cronjes] surrender at Pareburg [Paardesburg] and the relief of Ladysmith' on 27 February and 1 March 1900, respectively, and that some troops 'went so far as to say that the war would be over before we reached Africa.'¹³¹

Even troops in later contingents sometimes thought the war was on the verge of ending. Private York, upon arrival at Durban, was surprised 'to find the war had not advanced very much.'¹³² Before he left New Zealand Lieutenant Bosworth wrote to his wife that he had 'only signed for a year or until the war is over, which may be in a few months', showing his belief in the possibility of the imminent conclusion of hostilities.¹³³ In addition, while on board the troopship *Maori* he reported that the 'chaps' were horribly disappointed when they received news of the death of General Joubert, Commandant-General of the South African Republic, in late-March 1900, fearing that it would 'bring the war to a close very soon'.¹³⁴ Sergeant Leece of the same contingent wrote in late-

¹²⁹ 'New Zealanders in the South African War, 1899-1902', *The Veteran*, p. 8.

¹³⁰ Unknown New Zealand Soldier, p. 3.

¹³¹ S. Hooper Smith, diary (5 February 1900 to 10 June 1900), entry for start of March 1900, 1987.2111, National Army Museum, Waikouaiti.

¹³² York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 5 May 1900, in Fyfe, p. 23.

¹³³ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 27 April 1900.

¹³⁴ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), [Date Unknown].

September 1900 that, 'things seem to be drawing to a close and we can hardly expect to see more than scraps before the end.'¹³⁵

When it became clear that the Boers were continuing to resist the might of the British Army (and the realities of war set in), soldiers continued to hope for a short war, and found reasons to believe that the war, and the dangers that accompanied it, were almost over. For example, Private Ross wrote on 21 April 1900 that it had been six months since they left New Zealand and that he did not think anyone expected to still be in South Africa, and on 1 July he again wrote that 'by jove time is going on' and that he never anticipated being away from New Zealand for so long.¹³⁶ However, despite his recognition that the war was lasting longer than anticipated and that it could last much longer, he wrote in late July that he had 'a great idea now that the war is on its last legs' because the Boers were in 'nasty positions' and had 'their hearts in their boots now whilst ours are in the usual place.'¹³⁷ Likewise, Trooper Smith wrote in June 1900 that '[e]veryone was in great spirits as they thought the war was over', although this belief was dispelled five days later when they took part in an intense engagement with the Boers.¹³⁸ No one, it appears, thought that the war would drag on for over two and a half years.

After the Fall of Pretoria

On 5 June 1900 the British captured Pretoria, the capital of the South African Republic. The author of *Soldiers from the Land of the Moa* was correct in writing that,

whatever superior knowledge the authorities may have possessed, the idea among the rank and file of the troops...

¹³⁵ Leece, letter to Bert, 24 September 1900. Swanwick, writing in November 1900, also thought that while the Boers were 'still holding out' and would 'do so for a few months yet come yet', all the heavy fighting was over, and said 'I don't suppose that us New Zealanders will not be long before we are back.' Swanwick, letter to Lily, 11 November 1900.

¹³⁶ Ross, diary, 21 April 1900, 1 July 1900. In the diary entry for 21 April Ross recognised that 'it is quite possible we may be here another six months.'

¹³⁷ Ross, diary, 31 July 1900.

¹³⁸ Smith, diary, 5 June 1900, 10 June 1900.

was that with Johannesburg and Pretoria being taken, the war was virtually at an end; and all the colonial corps looked to being shortly sent home.¹³⁹

Just before the British forces reached Pretoria Private Ross wrote that 'the report now is that soon as the flag is hoisted in Pretoria we are done (N.Z.) and we return home', which he was glad of because the war had 'lasted long enough for us.'¹⁴⁰ About a month later, Lieutenant Todd told his sister that all the men 'thought that when we got to Pretoria we would have finished but we have been going ever since and the Lord knows when we will be able to return', and that the Boers seemed 'just as stubborn as ever.'¹⁴¹ Despite his doubts about when the New Zealanders would get home, Todd still would have been astounded at how long the war eventually lasted. Around the same time, Private York wrote, 'Our officers say we will be too late for much fighting, so if so, things must be drawing to a close.'¹⁴²

On the first anniversary of the taking of Pretoria, another soldier, Private Raynes, remarked about how 'few thought then that the struggle would still be going on'.¹⁴³ In addition, he thought that the initial optimism that the Boers would 'give in when they saw they [were] beaten' was justified, if not for the 'evil counsellors' who led them and kept the country in its 'unhappy state.'¹⁴⁴ Not long before Raynes made these comments, Private Gilbert told his mother that he did not think the war could 'hang on much longer.'¹⁴⁵ However, by September 1901, Gilbert was less confident in an approaching end to the war, believing that 'most of the Boers now on the field are too pig-headed to give in but time will tell', and by November was writing to his mother that he had had 'six months of

¹³⁹ Hawdon, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴⁰ Ross, diary, 1 June 1900. After the fall of Pretoria he reiterated this: 'Another rumour is that we (N.Z.) return as soon as possible (hope it is true). Ross, diary, 6 June 1900.

¹⁴¹ Todd, letter to Sister ('Darling Sister'), 7 July 1900.

¹⁴² York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 13 July 1900, in Fyfe, p. 31.

¹⁴³ Raynes, diary, 5 June 1901.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Gilbert, letter to Mother, Undated [May 1901], in Field, p. 29.

it now and it's been scrapping nearly all the time and will be for the next six and even then we will leaving plenty of fighting behind us.'¹⁴⁶

Over the period of a few weeks Trooper Tennent wrote a letter to his mother and a letter to a friend called Ken, and each letter offers a different view about the continuance of the war. To his mother, Tennent wrote that the Boers seemed 'to be getting downhearted and perhaps the war will be finished in a few months', while to Ken he suggested that he thought 'it will be a good while yet before fighting is finished here although the Boers are getting very much diminished.'¹⁴⁷ This suggests that, in some cases, soldiers may have been writing home about their belief in the impending end of the war not because they believed it to be true, but to comfort loved ones at home.

Eagerness to Return Home

The diaries and letters of the soldiers reveal that many of the men, no matter their motivation for volunteering or their eagerness for action, were soon keen to return home.

Even soldiers like Private Ross and Sergeant Leece, who were enthusiastic about engaging in combat and roughing it, soon decided that they would prefer being at home than remaining in South Africa. By March 1900 Ross' diary already contained comments such as this: 'The Boers are generally getting a bad time of it just now, only hope our success will continue, and get this terrible business over. We are tired of it and so is everybody else.'¹⁴⁸ A little over a month after telling his mother he was glad to finally be under fire from the Boers, Leece told a friend, Bert, that he looked 'forward to the home coming with keen

¹⁴⁶ Gilbert, letter to Sister, 8 September 1901, in Field, p. 58. Gilbert, letter to Mother, 18 November 1901, in Field, p. 90.

¹⁴⁷ Tennent, letter to Mother, 18 August 1901. Tennent, letter to Ken, 3 September 1901.

¹⁴⁸ Ross, diary, 2 March 1900. This attitude was repeated in June when he wrote that he hoped the First Contingent would return to New Zealand soon, that the contingent was 'full up of this business' (unlike the Second and Third Contingents which had just started), and that he fantasised about returning to a normal life; and repeated again in September when he found out some Canadians were returning home in a few weeks and hoped they would be too. Ross, diary, 6 June 1900, 3 September 1900.

eagerness.¹⁴⁹ In July 1900, after being in South Africa for eight months, Corporal McKegg considered the possibility that his contingent may not see any more combat, and told a friend that he 'for one will not be sorry' as he had 'had quite enough.'¹⁵⁰

Other New Zealand soldiers also revealed an eagerness to return home in their letters and, less often, diaries, especially when they had been in South Africa for an extended period of time. While Lieutenant Bosworth had been in South Africa barely a month when he wrote to his wife saying he would 'not be sorry when this business is over', most soldiers did not demonstrate similar attitudes until they were nearing the ends of their 12-month enlistments.¹⁵¹ For example, Corporal Matthews and Private Boyd were nine and ten months into their respective services before expressing similar thoughts. Matthews wrote to his sister that the 'reigning topic of conversation amongst the men now is returning home' and that they all looked forward to 'the comforts of civilised life, with all the longing of a schoolboy about to return after his first term away from home.'¹⁵² Boyd wrote in his diary that he was getting 'very sick of this life.'¹⁵³ Barely seven months into his service, Private York wrote that 'all hands' were 'waiting for the cry of "going back", war finished.'¹⁵⁴ In addition, Lieutenant Todd instructed his sister in January 1901, after being in South Africa almost a year, to tell 'dear old mother that I shall come home as I get a chance which I sincerely hope will be very shortly.'¹⁵⁵ That such a sentiment was most commonly expressed in letters to family, rather than merely privately in diaries, suggests that it may have been intended to comfort family members as well as, or instead of, expressing the soldiers' own thoughts about the matter.

¹⁴⁹ Leece, letter to Bert, 24 September 1900.

¹⁵⁰ McKegg, letter to Willie, 14 July 1900. Note: McKegg remained in South Africa for another four months, and almost certainly saw more action in that time.

¹⁵¹ Bosworth, letter to Maudie (Wife), 14 May 1900.

¹⁵² Charles Henry Matthews, to Florry (Sister), 15 February 1902, MS-Papers-2317 (David Hood Papers), Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

¹⁵³ Boyd, diary, 6 December 1900. See also, Tennent, letter to Father, 1 March 1901; and, Pearce, diary, 2 May 1901. Ten and eleven months service, respectively.

¹⁵⁴ York, letter to Father, Sisters and Brothers, 19 September 1900, in Fyfe, pp. 38-39.

¹⁵⁵ Todd, letter to Sister ('Darling Sister'), 13 January 1901. Curiously, Todd re-enlisted for the Eighth Contingent.

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the soldiers had much to write about the circumstances they found themselves in, and the nature of the war and their duties was an important topic in letters and diaries while hostilities were ongoing and in reminiscences afterwards. The personal documents reveal that the opportunity for travel and excitement beyond New Zealand's shores offered by the war was a very important motivation for volunteering; more important, in fact, than traditionally reported stimuli such as patriotism and the search for glory. However, a few soldiers did express such motivations – although comments about patriotism and seeking glory could also have been efforts to legitimate the desire for adventure through to duty to New Zealand, Britain and the Empire – as well as seeing a term of service in financial terms, simply as a prospect to earn a living. The little evidence available also shows that two motivations were important for soldiers' overcoming their reluctance to kill the enemy: the exhilaration that overcame many soldiers during combat and the inspiration provided by fighting as part of a unit, with comrades at their side.

Among the duties that New Zealanders were required to perform during the South African War were the commandeering of food and property off the Boers, the burning of Boer farms and homes, and the clearance of the Boer civilian population into concentration camps. As with most of the topics analysed in this thesis soldiers' personal documents provide evidence for a range of attitudes about these morally-ambiguous actions, but the majority express no reservations about taking part. Commandeering was routinely thought of as legitimate theft or not classed as theft at all, and was enjoyed by many of the men, with only a few troopers being uncomfortable with the task. Likewise, farm burning was seen by the majority as 'a job' and only a few troopers, again, expressed sympathy for the Boer civilians who suffered. Men were more ambivalent about the removal of civilians to British-run concentration camps, with few writing explicitly about their role in this: those that did write about it, though, did not find it unpleasant, thinking of it just as 'a job', with only one soldier expressing a general sympathy for the civilians. Despite being, on the whole, comfortable with

their duties, the letters and diaries express a strong desire to return home by many soldiers, who quickly grew tired of conditions in South Africa. The men cannot be generalised as eager and obedient servants of the Queen who followed orders but regretted taking part in farm burning and commandeering; while some were, the lives and thoughts of any group of individuals cannot be reduced in that way.

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis analysed the opinions and attitudes of New Zealand soldiers who fought during the South African War of 1899 to 1902, with a focus on their views about the act of writing, people, identity and duty. Its findings are that the views and experiences of the troopers cannot be generalised as suggested by the mythology that developed around them, and it critiqued widely-held social and national memories. This was achieved through close and critical reading of the personal documents - letters, diaries and reminiscences - written by 67 soldiers during and after the conflict.

Conclusions Drawn from this Thesis

This thesis is an effective demonstration of the use of a microhistorical study of personal documents in order to reveal the mentality of people in the past. The most obvious conclusion made by this study is that much can be learned from the study of individual experiences and attitudes rather than thinking in terms of generalisations about groups and superficial national histories. The diaries, letters and reminiscences of New Zealand soldiers show a range of views – both agreement and disagreement – about the myths and popular opinions that developed around New Zealand participation in South Africa, most notably the myth of New Zealand military superiority and martial ability. The evidence suggests that while trends can be discerned in the attitudes of soldiers, there were always men with contrary and differing beliefs, making declarations about ‘New Zealand beliefs’ unproductive and showing the value of critiquing social memory and collective memory through the analysis of individual memories.

The first chapter analysed the possible reasons why many soldiers wrote letters and diaries during wartime, and why some chose later to write reminiscences of their experiences. The motivations for diary- and letter-writing were similar,

including: the entertainment provided; as an outlet for unburdening feelings; to escape (however temporarily) from the war; the opportunity to leave something behind for friends and family in case of death; to establish some life-meaning; and to shape personal identity through self-expression and self-reflection. The writing of letters could also help maintain relationships with those people left at home, share experiences, and relieve homesickness and loneliness, while diary-writing could aid in remembrance (in terms of leaving a record to remember experiences, and leaving something to be remembered by). Reminiscences share some of the same reasons for their production – such as self-expression and self-creation, ensuring remembrance of events and thoughts, and a search for meaning in life – but could also be written in order to ‘compose’ memories (a process of memory-making) that allow the writer to make sense of important experiences, justify actions, come to terms with events and issues, and produce a monument from a life.

Chapter Two was focused on the attitude of New Zealand soldiers toward non-Europeans, including the Māori, the Aboriginals encountered in Australia, the native blacks of South Africa, and the Boers they were fighting against. Views about Māori were overwhelmingly shaped by ideas of European racial superiority, especially ‘scientific racism’ which saw them as naturally inferior beings, but there was also an element of pride in Māori culture, especially evidence in remarks about the ‘war-cry’ adopted by the New Zealand Contingents. The soldiers were more negative in their comments about Aboriginals, who they compared unfavourably to Māori, once again reflecting contemporary British attitudes about the relative attractions of Australia and New Zealand’s indigenous inhabitants. Attitudes varied more widely in regard to South African blacks, but were still influenced by views about race: some soldiers embraced the idea of white superiority and displayed a condescending attitude to the native people, others were indifferent about black people and their fates or concerned with them only because of their perceived amusement value, while some New Zealanders were uncomfortable with the pattern of relations between white and black and had sympathy for the treatment of black people in

South Africa. Discussion of the Boers in letters, diaries and reminiscences also suggests varying attitudes, positive and (more commonly) negative, but provides evidence that the 'mutual respect' written about by many scholars has been exaggerated. While some soldiers respected the Boers for their abilities as unconventional soldiers, others were not impressed by their martial abilities. Likewise, while some wrote about Boer bravery, most believed that Boer cowardice and treachery were standard.

Chapter Three took the investigation of attitudes about people further by looking at how the soldiers viewed *themselves* and their identity, and the myths that developed around this identity. The New Zealand soldiers held concurrent identifications during the South African War: simultaneously thinking of themselves as New Zealanders, Colonials, and British, without much tension among these ideas. The primary purpose of this chapter was to test the mythology that came to surround the New Zealand volunteer soldier during the South African War and later conflicts, by comparing aspects of the mythology to what the soldiers wrote about themselves. The personal documents, overall, do not suggest that the New Zealand soldiers' beliefs about themselves were influenced by or were consistent with their portrayal in the myths. There was no distinction between the physical and emotional toughness of New Zealand and British troopers. Likewise, there was little evidence for any exceptional initiative on the part of the New Zealanders. Egalitarianism was perceived as something important to the New Zealand Contingents by some soldiers, while the writings of other men provide evidence against this idea. There was also evidence for and against the myth that the New Zealanders operated under a system of informal self-discipline rather than traditional imposed discipline; however, although there was plenty written about lax discipline and strikes, overall evidence shows that formal discipline was dominant. Finally, most soldiers disagreed with the idea of New Zealand martial superiority, seeing their shooting abilities and horsemanship as comparable to those of the British Regulars, not superior to them.

The final chapter considered the soldiers' views on the war itself, including motivation to volunteer and the duties they were given. While the mythology surrounding the New Zealanders, and extant scholarship on the South African War, suggest the soldiers were greatly influenced to volunteer by patriotism, the personal documents show that only a minority were motivated – at least explicitly – by patriotism, and that they were mainly driven by community patriotism. Instead, a desire for adventure was a leading incentive for New Zealanders to join the fight in South Africa, as were financial considerations. The most important aspects of this chapter are analyses of attitudes about the more controversial duties New Zealanders were involved in: looting and commandeering, burning Boer civilian farms and homes, and clearing the population and sending them to concentration camps. Commandeering was written about in a matter-of-fact or approving manner by many men, and most soldiers happily undertook looting of both food and other items, while a minority exhibited a negative or uncomfortable view of the act. Most soldiers were also comfortable with farm burning, and did not consider it immoral or illegitimate, although some showed sympathy for the civilians who lost property. Finally, attitudes regarding the clearance of the Boer population to concentration camps were harder to discern because little was written by the soldiers about this task, but those who did write about the camps did not do so in a disapproving tone, considering it 'a job' just like the commandeering and farm-burning.

Prospects of Future Research

Due to the limitations inherent in this thesis – the limited number of sources surviving, the representativeness of the sources, the unavoidable limitations of reading and interpretation, the restricted scope possible within the available word count - many fascinating and suggestive ideas could not be explored, and future research could remedy these shortcomings. The study of New Zealanders in the South African War would benefit from the examination of additional themes, including: attitudes to camp life and living conditions in the field and during garrison duty, attitudes about the more mundane daily routines and

duties, views about entertainment and recreation, opinions about food and cooking, attitudes to place (such as home, Albany in Australia, and the places visited in South Africa), religious beliefs, changing views about combat, and attitudes about officers (British and New Zealanders). More in-depth analysis of views about the Boers – for example, whether, and how, imagined enemy characteristics changed – and about race – for example, involving a postcolonial analysis of representation and New Zealand views about ethnicity, and an investigation of blacks in the British Army – would be interesting contributions to the topic. There are also interesting prospects for a psychological/emotional study of the soldiers, with a focus on their views about, and how they dealt with, the excitement of battle, fear during combat, the loss of comrades, and the violence and death of war.

This kind of study – an investigation of the attitudes and beliefs of soldiers in wartime as revealed in their personal documents – offers much scope for comparative scholarship, in both a New Zealand and an international context. This comparative history could have one of three approaches. The first approach is undertaking a wider study of the people involved in the South African War by analysing the letters and diaries of British, Canadian, Australian, South African, and Boer troops in addition to those from New Zealand. The second approach is a more detailed synthesis in historical writing between studies of individual memory of soldiers during war and national memory about the conflict, looking at the intersection between public and private memory more exhaustively. The third approach is looking at similar topics and themes in the personal writings of New Zealand soldiers in other conflicts, such as the New Zealand Wars, World War One, World War Two, the Korean War, and, possibly, the War in Afghanistan. Such projects may help to focus attention on the lived experiences of participants and away from the often dubious and biased generalisations constructed by later communities and dominant elites. In its own way I hope this thesis served this end.

Appendix

Biographical Information of Soldiers who wrote Diaries, Letters and Reminiscences¹

Arthur, [Unknown]

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: [Unknown]

Contingent: [Unknown]

Profession: [Unknown]

Home Town: [Unknown]

Bakewell, Robert Hall

Rank: Surgeon-Captain

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Ninth (North Island Regiment)

Profession: Surgeon

Home Town: Auckland

¹ From: Stowers, Richard, *Rough Riders at War: History of New Zealand's Involvement in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 and Information on All Members of the Ten New Zealand Contingents* (Hamilton: Richard Stowers, 2002). Nominal Rolls to the New Zealand Contingents to the South African War, 1899-1902, in *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1900, 1901, 1902. James Robert Burns, "'New Zealanders' at War? The Mythology of the New Zealand Soldier and the Beliefs of the New Zealand Soldiers of the South African War, 1899-1902' (unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University, 1996), pp. 221-228.

Barraclough, John William

Rank: Sergeant (Saddler)

Regiment Number: 1612

Contingent: Fifth (15 Company)

Profession: Saddler

Home Town: Oamaru, North Otago

Bosworth, Jack (John Thomas)

Rank: Lieutenant

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Fifth (11 Company)

Profession: Clerk/Civil Servant

Home Town: Auckland

Boyd, William Robert

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 450

Contingent: Second (3 Company)

Profession: Grocer

Home Town: Hastings

Brittenden, Glen

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3706

Contingent: Sixth (20 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Otago

Brown, T.W. (Thomas Watson)

Rank: Bugler

Regiment Number: 15

Contingent: First (1 Company)

Profession: Clerk/Civil Servant

Home Town: Wellington

Buckland, William Harold

Rank: Private (later Corporal, then Acting Sergeant)

Regiment Number: 1060

Contingent: Fourth (9 Company)

Profession: Run Manager

Home Town: Outram, Otago

Carver, Joshua Nicholas

Rank: Sergeant

Regiment Number: 1262

Contingent: Fourth (7 Company)²

Profession: Labourer

Home Town: Rangitikei

Christie, William Ernest

Rank: Sergeant (later Lieutenant)

Regiment Number: 1151

Contingent: Fourth (9 Company), later Seventh and Ninth

Profession: Storeman

Home Town: Caversham, Otago

Clarke, James N.

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 7869

Contingent: Ninth (A Squadron)

Profession: Engineer's Cadet (Ironmoulder)

Home Town: Dunedin

² Fifth Contingent, according to archive notes. Fourth Contingent according to Stower, p. 115.

Coupland, Archibald

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 633

Contingent: Third (5 Company)

Profession: Shepherd

Home Town: Beaconsfield

Cradock, Montagu

Rank: Captain (later Major)

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Second (3 Company)

Profession: Soldier

Home Town: Richmond, Yorkshire

Foster, Trevor

Rank: Sergeant (later Lieutenant)

Regiment Number: 109

Contingent: First (2 Company), later Eighth (C Squadron)

Profession: Clerk

Home Town: Wellington

Fraser, James A.

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 4164

Contingent: Seventh (22 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Komako, Palmerston North

G.C.B. ("Bert")

Rank: [Unknown]

Regiment Number: [Unknown]

Contingent: [Unknown]

Profession: [Unknown]

Home Town: [Unknown]

Gallaher, David

Rank: Sergeant

Regiment Number: 3229

Contingent: Sixth (16 Company)

Profession: Labourer

Home Town: Auckland

Gilbert, Henry George

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 4407

Contingent: Seventh (24 Company)

Profession: Labourer (became Presbyterian Minister after war)

Home Town: Cust, Canterbury

Hart, Herbert Ernest

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 7449

Contingent: Ninth (H Squadron)

Profession: Accountant

Home Town: Carterton, Wellington

James, Frederick William

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 5927

Contingent: Eighth (G Squadron)

Profession: Blacksmith Striker

Home Town: Dunedin

Jewell, Claude Lockhart

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 149

Contingent: First (2 Company)

Profession: Law Clerk

Home Town: Cheltenham, England

Jollie, Edward

Rank: Sergeant Major

Regiment Number:

Contingent: B.S.A.P.

Profession: [Unknown]

Home Town: Christchurch

Kelly, John Neill

Rank: Private (later Farrier-Sergeant)

Regiment Number: 3623

Contingent: Sixth (19 Company)

Profession: Farrier

Home Town: Christchurch

Kirkbride, Matthew Bruce

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 49

Contingent: First (1 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: [Unknown]

Leece, George

Rank: Sergeant (later Lieutenant)

Regiment Number: 2331

Contingent: Fifth (11 Company), later Seventh (24 Company)

Profession: Surveyor

Home Town: Auckland

Linklater, Joseph

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3511

Contingent: Sixth (18 Company)

Profession: Miner

Home Town: Stafford, Westland

Lockhead, William Stewart

Rank: Private (Signaller)

Regiment Number: 4542

Contingent: Seventh (24 Company)

Profession: Engineer

Home Town: Dunedin

Madill, James

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3263

Contingent: Sixth (16 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: South Auckland

Malcolm, Kenneth Gordon

Rank: Sergeant

Regiment Number: 4369

Contingent: Seventh (24 Company)

Profession: Carpenter

Home Town: Auckland

Matthews, Charles Henry

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 4130

Contingent: Seventh (22 Company)

Profession: Station Owner

Home Town: Wellington

McBeth, Arthur

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 157

Contingent: First (2 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Marlborough

McFarlane, William John

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 7932

Contingent: Ninth (A Squadron)

Profession: Machinist

Home Town: Tapanui, Otago

McKegg, Amos

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 161

Contingent: First (2 Company)

Profession: Engineer

Home Town: Henley, Otago

McKeich, Robert

Rank: Lieutenant

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Ninth (A Squadron)

Profession: Butcher

Home Town: Lawrence, Otago

Messenger, William B.

Rank: Lieutenant-Colonel

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Tenth

Profession: Soldier

Home Town: Essex

Moore, James G. Harle

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 1052

Contingent: Fourth (9 Company)

Profession: Woolclasser

Home Town: Dunedin

Morton, Alfred Bishop

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 3258

Contingent: Sixth (16 Company)

Profession: Clerk

Home Town: Auckland

Nathan, William Anthony

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 3333

Contingent: Sixth (17 Company)

Profession: Labourer

Home Town: Wanganui

Newall, Stuart

Rank: Lieutenant-Colonel

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Fifth (12 Company)

Profession: Soldier

Home Town: Dumfriesshire, Scotland

Pearce, Richard

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 1457

Contingent: Fourth (8 Company)³

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Auckland

Perham, Frank

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 2634

Contingent: Fifth (14 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Akaroa, Canterbury

³ Fifth Contingent according to archive notes. Fourth Contingent according to Stower, p. 228.

Porter, Thomas

Rank: Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brevet-Colonel)

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Seventh (21 Company), later Ninth (A Squadron)

Profession: Soldier

Home Town: Wellington

Potter, Eric A. A. (Arthur Augustus)

Rank: Sergeant (Gunner)

Regiment Number: 2400

Contingent: Fifth (11 Company), later Seventh

Profession: Butcher

Home Town: Auckland

Raynes, William Frederick

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3277

Contingent: Sixth (16 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Tamahere, Waikato

Riddick, Harold (Harry Milifront)

Rank: Sergeant (later Lieutenant)

Regiment Number: 1283

Contingent: Fourth (7 Company), later Seventh and Ninth

Profession: Labourer

Home Town: Wellington

Ross, Hugh

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 202

Contingent: First (2 Company)

Profession: Letter-Carrier

Home Town: Wanganui

Simpson, Robert

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 755

Contingent: Third (6 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Rangitikei

Smith, Samuel Hooper

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 855

Contingent: Sixth (17 Company)⁴

Profession: Shepherd

Home Town: Tomoana, Hawke's Bay

Stephens, Basil Edward St. John

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 3665

Contingent: Sixth (19 Company)

Profession: Bank Clerk

Home Town: Christchurch

Stevens, Bert

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 5118

Contingent: Eighth (A Squadron)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Hawera, Taranaki

⁴ Second Contingent according to archive notes. Sixth Contingent according to Stower, p. 253.

Strange, John Francis

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 174

Contingent: First (1 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Thames

Strange-Mure, Horace

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3422

Contingent: Sixth (17 Company)

Profession: Draper

Home Town: Wellington

Swanwick, Frank (Francis)

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 1011

Contingent: Fourth (9 Company)

Profession: Carter

Home Town: Wetherstones

Tasker, C.B. (Charles Borland)

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 3561

Contingent: Sixth (18 Company)

Profession: Letter-Carrier

Home Town: Wellington

Tennent, Hobart Cother

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 4452

Contingent: Seventh (24 Company)

Profession: Clerk

Home Town: Timaru, Canterbury

Todd, Thomas John

Rank: Lieutenant (later Captain)

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Second (3 Company), later Eighth

Profession: Public Accountant

Home Town: Christchurch

Tuckey. Henry Phelps

Rank: Lieutenant (later Captain)

Regiment Number:

Contingent: Fifth (12 Company), later Seventh

Profession: Civil Servant

Home Town: Wellington

Twistleton, Frank (Francis M.)

Rank: Corporal

Regiment Number: 318

Contingent: Second (3 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Wellington

Vogan

Rank: Sergeant

Regiment Number: [Unknown]

Contingent: [Unknown]

Profession: [Unknown]

Home Town: [Unknown]

Whyte, James Henry

Rank: Private (later Sergeant and Lieutenant)

Regiment Number: 95

Contingent: First (1 Company), later Seventh (21 Company) and Tenth

Profession: Clerk/Civil Servant

Home Town: Kohinui, Tararua

Wilkie, Alex (Alexander H.)

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 186

Contingent: Third

Profession: Clerk

Home Town: Invercargill, Southland

Wilkins, George

Rank: Private

Regiment Number: 1476

Contingent: Fourth (8 Company)

Profession: Carter

Home Town: Auckland

Wilson, David

Rank: Sergeant

Regiment Number: 4486

Contingent: Seventh (25 Company)

Profession: Book-keeper

Home Town: Dunedin

York, Henry M.

Rank: Trooper

Regiment Number: 1501

Contingent: Fourth (7 Company)

Profession: Farmer

Home Town: Greytown, Wellington

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Abbreviations

ACL Auckland City Libraries, Auckland

ATL Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

AWM Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland

HCL Hamilton City Libraries, Hamilton

HL Hocken Library, Dunedin

NAM National Army Museum, Waikouru

NOM North Otago Museum, Oamaru

PA Puke Ariki, New Plymouth

TCL Tauranga City Libraries, Tauranga

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