

19 July 2007

Remembering Passchendaele

Copies of the Casualty Forms of New Zealand servicemen killed in the Battle of Passchendaele were presented to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs Rick Barker by Archives New Zealand in a ceremony held at the National War Memorial today.

Now digitised the records have been sent to the Tyne Cot Museum, in Belgium; immortalising the New Zealanders who lost their lives in what Rick Barker described as, "one of the fiercest battles of World War One and one of the most tragic for New Zealand forces".

The digitised Casualty Forms are to be a part of the *Passchendaele Archives' Project*; a commemoration project dedicated to the 845 New Zealand soldiers who lost their lives on 12 October

1917 at the Battle of Passchendaele. With another 2000 New Zealand servicemen injured the casualty number is equal to the whole of the Gallipoli campaign.

At the presentation Rick Barker spoke of his visit to Passchendaele and his discovery that there were no records of the New Zealand servicemen who died there, inspiring him to make the digitisation of all the records happen.

"Through the records that remain we remember their sacrifice," Rick Barker said.

Archives New Zealand is guardian of these records, the majority being Casualty Forms and personnel records which give details of service, next of kin, and place of burial.

Rick Barker commented on how it is fitting that this year 2007, the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele, for Archives New Zealand to present digitalised copies of these historic records to the Tyne Cot Museum, Belgium.

"Records like these and the World War One personnel records held at Archives New Zealand are of great importance to their descendents," said Chief Executive of Archives New Zealand Dianne Macaskill.

"The records include those of David Gallaher who led the 1905 All Blacks on their highly successful tour of Britain and France. His record tell us that he left Wellington in



Minister of Veterans' Affairs Rick Barker, and Archives New Zealand Chief Executive Dianne Macaskill at the presentation of the digitised Casualty Forms of New Zealand servicemen from the Battle of Passchendaele.

February 1917, was wounded on 4th October and died later than day at No 3 Australian casualty clearing station. His record also shows he was buried at Nine Elms Cemetery in France.

“The records also tell the stories of other men whose names are not as well known, but who also died at Passchendaele.

“Many people come into institutions like ours to research their forebears to gain a greater understanding of their own history.”

The Minister responsible for Archives New Zealand Hon Judith Tizard expressed her thanks to Archives New Zealand staff and the collaboration with Veterans' Affairs in making these records available so they can be shared and made known to all visitors to the museum.

To view the Minister of Veterans' Affairs speech:

<http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=30091>