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MA (History) Thesis

Title: **GANGIN UNDERGROUND**

Scottish Born Soldiers in the New Zealand Tunnelling Company 1916/19

Supervisor: Professor Glyn Harper



The night shift of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company in their bunks below ground (PH-ALB-419-H355)¹.

¹ Unknown, *The night shift of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company in their bunks below ground.*, (Auckland: Auckland War Memorial Museum, 1916).

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Abstract

In early 1915, the call went out to the British Empire for groups of experienced miners, tunnellers and other associated skilled manual workers to form up into tunnelling companies to assist Allied forces to combat German tunnellers primarily on the Western Front in France and Belgium. By the end of the First World War, the New Zealand Tunnelling Company numbered 500 individuals and their efforts in the tunnels and caverns around Arras entered the common history of both the French and New Zealand Great War experience.

Some 62 of these individuals who chose to serve in the New Zealand Tunnelling Company were born in Scotland². The vast majority of this focus group were career coalminers who are clearly shown to have left Scotland for better lives in New Zealand, or at least finding themselves in New Zealand for financial benefit. This thesis looks at a snapshot of some of the lives in Scotland to help identify some of the reasons for making the long journey to New Zealand. It also tries to investigate the reasons for enlisting and their experiences during war. Finally it tries to answer the question what happened next, looking at the psychological impact of war and also why did these men choose to return to, or remain in New Zealand long-term as the majority did.

² Christine Clements, "MEMBERS OF THE NZEF 1914 - 1918 WITH A NEXT-OF-KIN ADDRESS IN SCOTLAND A-L," (2015).

The research for this thesis incorporated an expanded focus on the role of the New Zealand Tunneling Company in the Battle of Arras, the relationships with the Scots in the British Army and also their work with the Maori Pioneer Battalion during their time at the front. This thesis has identified that there is scope for additional research in this area by future researchers and hopefully it will be useful starting point for others.