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**‘So the end has come...
I shall see you all again’:**

**DEMOBILISING THE
New Zealand Expeditionary Force
NOVEMBER 1918 – SEPTEMBER 1919**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

History

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New Zealand.

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Abstract

Demobilisation as an aspect of Military History is not often mentioned. This thesis is a study of the demobilisation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force from November 1918 until September 1919. At the time of the Armistice with Germany and the Ottoman Empire, there were over 50,000 men and a few women who needed to be repatriated to New Zealand. There was the New Zealand Division on the Western Front which was selected to form part of the occupying force in the Rhine bridgeheads until March 1919 when the final drafts were sent to Britain. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade in Palestine would remain there until the last drafts boarded a vessel in August 1919. The base camps in Britain are a study of administrative history as the military infrastructure that supported the NZ Division in the field had to be closed down, the equipment returned to New Zealand or disposed of and the personnel demobilised and repatriated. This study also considers the place of the Maori Pioneer Battalion; along with the NZ Tunnelling Company were the only units of the NZEF to be repatriated as a complete unit. As well as front line units, the sick, wounded, and convalescent men needed to be returned safely to New Zealand along with a selection of war trophies, POWs and non-combatants. The vast network of camps in Britain had to be closed and evacuated. The equipment from the camps needed to be sorted and disposed of or returned to New Zealand and the Imperial Ordnance. Between November 1918 and September 1919 over 50,000 men and women were repatriated to New Zealand from Britain and Egypt. This was a massive task to co-ordinate the vessels with the drafts of men waiting anxiously to go home. The fact it was completed successfully is a testament to the planning undertaken prior to the Armistices by the Empire Military Demobilisation Committee. To keep the men occupied and prepare them for life after the war, the NZEF attempted to implement an education scheme wherever New Zealand troops were camped. Despite the best of intentions, it was singularly unsuccessful; the one real disappointment of the Demobilisation Scheme. The thesis will also comprehensively discuss the presence of ill-discipline during the demobilisation period. In Britain, France, and Egypt New Zealand troops rioted, looted and engaged in murder. This was not a unique phenomenon to the NZEF. All other Dominion and British forces had major incidents of ill-discipline.

Acknowledgements

The historian's rightful task is to distil experience for future generations, not to distil it like a drug. Having fulfilled his task to the best of his ability, and honesty, he has fulfilled his purpose. He would be a rash optimist if he believed that the next generations would trouble to absorb the warning. History at least teaches the historian a lesson.

First World War historian B. H. Liddell Hart, 1930

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This thesis is dedicated to my great-uncle Trooper Alfred Smith of the 1st Machine Gun Squadron, New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and in memory of Trooper Fraser Campbell who sadly died on the voyage home from Egypt in 1919.

Contents

ABSTRACT.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
CONTENTS.....	IV
GLOSSARY.....	V
ORDER OF BATTLE.....	VII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: PLANNING DEMOBILISATION	10
CHAPTER TWO: THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION AT THE ARMISTICE.....	19
CHAPTER THREE: THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION - PEACE AND THE OCCUPATION OF GERMANY.....	30
CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION RETURNS TO BRITAIN	46
CHAPTER FIVE: THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED RIFLE BRIGADE AT THE ARMISTICE.....	55
CHAPTER SIX: THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED RIFLE BRIGADE REFITS	60
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED RIFLE BRIGADE AND THE EGYPTIAN UPRISING	69
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE MAORI PIONEER BATTALION	75
CHAPTER NINE: REPATRIATING NON-COMBATANTS, POWS, WAR TROPHIES AND THE EFFECT OF INFLUENZA AND VD.....	81
CHAPTER TEN: THE NEW ZEALAND MEDICAL CORPS, HOSPITALS & HOSPITAL SHIPS, REPATRIATION OF THE WOUNDED & SICK, AND THE VETERINARY CORPS.....	92
CHAPTER ELEVEN: DEMOBILISING THE CAMPS IN BRITAIN	104
CHAPTER TWELVE: ILL DISCIPLINE IN THE NZEF	115
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: EMBARKATION FOR HOME	152
CONCLUSION.....	168
APPENDIX ONE: TABLES.....	175
BIBLIOGRAPHY:.....	180

Glossary

AIF	Australian Imperial Force (equivalent of the NZEF)
ALH	Australian Light Horse (equivalent of the Mounted Rifles)
ALHR	Australian Light Horse Regiment(s)
AMR	Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment
AMDiv	ANZAC Mounted Division (NZMRB parent unit)
AMDivHQ	ANZAC Mounted Division Headquarters
Bttn	Battalion
CMR	Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment
Coy	Company
CO	Commanding Officer
DivHQ	New Zealand Division Headquarters France
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
EEFHQ	Egyptian Expeditionary Force Headquarters
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HMNZT	Her Majesty's New Zealand Troopship
LOC	Line of Communications
MGBttn	Machine Gun Battalion – unit of the NZ Division
MPs	Military Police (Provost Marshals)
NCOs	Non-Commissioned Officers
NZDivTr	New Zealand Divisional Train
NZASC	New Zealand Army Service Corps
NZCH	New Zealand Convalescent Hospital (Hornchurch)
NZDA	New Zealand Divisional Artillery
NZDiv	New Zealand Division
NZDUS	New Zealand Depot Unit of Supply - France
NZE	New Zealand Engineers
NZEFHQ	New Zealand Expeditionary Force Headquarters – London
NZEFEHQ	New Zealand Expeditionary Force Headquarters – Egypt
NZFA	New Zealand Field Artillery
No. 1 NZGH	New Zealand General Hospital – No. 1 (Brockenhurst)
No. 2 NZGH	New Zealand General Hospital – No. 2 (Walton-on-Thames)
No. 3 NZGH	New Zealand General Hospital – No. 3 (Codford)
NZGRU	New Zealand Graves Registration Unit
NZHS	New Zealand Hospital Ship

NZMFA	New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance (NZMRB)
NZMC	New Zealand Medical Corps
NZMCHQ	New Zealand Medical Corps Headquarters
NZMRB	New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade
NZMRBHQ	New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade Headquarters
NZRB	New Zealand Rifle Brigade – 3 rd Brigade of the NZ Div
NZTC	New Zealand Tunnelling Company – unit of the NZ Div
NZTUD	New Zealand Training Unit and Depot – Egypt
NZVC	New Zealand Veterinary Corps
OC	Officer Commanding
Other Ranks	Non-commissioned officers and privates
QMG	Quartermaster General
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
Sling	Main NZEF camp at Larkhill, Bulford Village, Salisbury Plain
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
WMR	Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment

NZEF Category of Fitness for Service

- A1** Fit for Active Service
- B1** Able to be made fit by medical treatment
- C1** Likely to become fit for service overseas after special training
- C2** Permanently unfit for Active Service but fit for service in New Zealand
- D** Permanently Unfit

Order of Battle in November 1918

New Zealand Division

Units	Sub Units			Weapons	Strength	Vehicles	Animals
Divisional Field Artillery	1 st 2 nd (Army) 3 rd NZFA Brigades [1]	3 Trench Mortar Batteries X,Y,Z	Divisional Ammunition Column	54 x 18-pdr guns 18 x 4.5" Howitzers 12 x 6" mortars	2880	280	2000
Divisional Engineers	No. 1,2,3, Field Companies	No. 1 & 2 Signal Companies	Divisional Salvage Company		577	80	190
1st NZ Infantry Brigade	1 st & 2 nd Bttns Auckland Regiment [2]	1 st & 2 nd Bttns Wellington Regiment		170 x Machineguns [3]	4020	25	200
2nd NZ Infantry Brigade	1 st & 2 nd Bttns Canterbury Regiment	1 st & 2 nd Bttns Otago Regiment		170 x Machineguns	4020	25	200
NZ Rifle Brigade	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th Bttns			170 x Machineguns	4020	25	200
NZ Maori Pioneer Battalion	A,B,D Companies [4]			12 x Machineguns	660		
NZ Machine Gun Battalion	A,B,C,D Companies			16 x Machineguns	206		
NZ Army Supply Corps	Divisional Train 3 Supply Companies	Motor Transport Company [5]			780	260	400 horses
NZ Medical Corps	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd Field Ambulance	Sanitary Company			288	20	60
NZ Veterinary Corps	No. 1 Mobile Veterinary Section				150	20	140
Provost Marshals	Provosts	Traffic Control			71		

Notes:

[1] The 2nd (Army) Brigade NZFA was under the control of the 3rd Army commander. The other two brigades remained under Divisional Control. A NZFA Brigade consisted of three 6-gun 18-pounder batteries and one 6-gun howitzer battery. For example, 1st Brigade NZFA consisted of 1st, 3rd, 7th, 8th batteries.

[2] A Battalion was divided into four companies of approximately 220 men. Each company consisted of four platoons of 54 men, who were divided into four sections of ten to twelve men.

For example, the 1st Battalion of the Auckland Regiment (1st Brigade NZDiv) consisted of the 3rd Auckland Company, 6th Hauraki Company, 15th Waikato Company, and the 16th North Auckland Company.

[3] This quantity consisted of 144 Lewis (light) and sixteen Vickers (heavy) machineguns.

[4] Less the Rarotongan (Pioneer) Company retained by the NZMRB.

[5] The Motor Transport Company was equipped with 80 3-ton trucks divided into five sections.

[6] The NZ Tunnelling Company was employed at a GHQ unit. The Cyclist Battalion and the Otago Mounted Rifles employed as XXII Corps mounted troops along with the NZASC 2nd (Area) Employment Company and operated independently of the New Zealand Division therefore are not included in the order of battle. The NZ Light Railway Operating Company was under the command of the 2nd Army.

New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade

Units	Officers	Other Ranks	Horses[1]
Headquarters	6	43	55
Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment[2]	24	499	616
Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment	24	499	616
Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment	24	499	616
1 st Machine Gun Squadron	8	222	321
2 nd Machine Gun Squadron[3]	8	221	321
NZ Engineers Signal Troop	1	36	36
NZ Engineers Field Troop	2	50	67
NZVC No. 2 Mobile Veterinary Section	1	29	28
NZMC Mounted Field Ambulance	6	133	127
Auckland Mounted Rifles Band	1	36	-
NZASC No. 4 Company	5	119	156
RHA Battery (Somerset Territorial Battery)[4]	5	149	246
NZ Rarotongan (Pioneer) Company [5]	6	240	-
Totals	121	2775	3205

Notes:

[1] Along with the horses there were vast numbers of mules and donkeys plus a number of camels in use by the units of the NZMRB.

[2] A Mounted Rifle Regiment consisted of three squadrons made up of four troops. Each troop had four 4-man sections. For example, the Auckland Mounted Rifles regiment consisted of the 3rd Auckland, 4th Waikato, and 11th North Auckland Squadrons.

[3] Formed in 1918 from the two Camel Companies attached to the Imperial Camel Corps. The Squadron was attached to the 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade until the Armistice.

[4] Attached for mobile field artillery support until the Armistice.

[5] The Company was detached from the NZ Maori (Pioneer) Battalion when the NZ Division was formed and sent to France.

[6] The non-combat units supporting the NZMRB in the field were:

Administrative Headquarters (NZEFEHQ): Cairo – three officers, 30 other ranks

New Zealand Training Unit & Depot (NZTUD): Ismailia – 19 Officers, 79 other ranks

Sources:

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