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Duty to serve?

The role of Secondary Schools in preparing New Zealand Soldiers for enlistment in the First World War

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ABSTRACT

It is over a century since World War One impacted on the lives of those who taught at or attended both Otago High School and Waitaki Boys' High School. The war lasted from 1914-1918, yet for many of those who participated their schooling occurred before the declaration of hostilities. It is mainly this pre-war period that this thesis will concentrate on.

This thesis examines how Otago High School and Waitaki Boys' High School encouraged their students to lead lives that were based in duty and service. It focuses on the period 1890 through until the early 1920s and looks at how both schools approached the issue of student development for life beyond the classroom.

They did this by using local and international events, especially those that were Empire and nationally focused, to encourage their students to lead dutiful lives. Students were taken on excursions to visit public shows of loyalty or, in some cases, teacher-led discussions guided students towards adopting values that fitted into societal expectations. The promotion of sport was another method used to encourage students to lead a dutiful life and, along with military training, it gave a practical application to the concepts of duty and service.

As World War One unfolded both schools used this event to encourage their current and former students to 'do their bit'. It is at this point that the thesis examines five former students of Otago High School and Waitaki Boys' High School and determines that there was some influence from their former school on the decision to enlist. In the main this was as a result of the schooling these Old Boys had received.

The study of how schools influenced their students over the period of this thesis is an area seldom trod by historians. This thesis highlights the need to explore this area further, because war is not just about generals and army's, it is also about communities, values and beliefs.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CO	Commanding Officer
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
OC	Officer's Commanding
OHS	Otago High School
OMR	Otago Mounted Rifles
OTC	Officer Training Corps
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
VC	Victoria Cross
WBHS	Waitaki Boys High School