

and Rogers outlines the way in which women who had made careers out of active war service found themselves transported back to a society which still assumed women's primary concerns were with home-making, child-rearing and the care of elderly family members. The book's 'Epilogue', dealing with the post-war experiences of the World War II cohort of army nurses is the weakest section of the work, reflecting perhaps the daunting task of following the subsequent histories of 600 individuals. The Returned Army Sisters' Association was a lifeline for some; others, Rogers suggests, stoically accepted the separation between their war service and their peacetime lives, 'you couldn't talk to [other women at Plunket] about the war . . . nobody was interested' (p.320).

For all its sensitivity to issues of status and discrimination, this is primarily a narrative history aimed at a general audience more interested in 'who, where and when' than 'why and so what?' It is attentive to interpretive issues relating to the professionalization of nursing and the gendering of war service, but the primary focus is on documenting the contribution of these women to successive war efforts. Some veteran nurses published memoirs and autobiographies, and the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* has given due attention to detailing the life histories of military nurses. But, there was still a considerable gap in the literature which *While You're Away* fills with aplomb. As Rogers argues, 'it was time to tell the story of the New Zealand women who nursed overseas and to hear more of their experiences in their own words, both spoken and written' (p.2). And Rogers does just that with a wealth of period detail, sympathetically rendering both the trials and the joys of military nursing. The greatest strength of the book is its depiction of individual women's responses to war. The desperate anger of Bessie Teape, marooned in an overcrowded South African tent hospital watching man after man die of typhoid, sepsis and dysentery, who sent back home for her savings to buy medical supplies and warm clothing for her patients; Hester Maclean, the formidable Matron-in-Chief, kicking up her heels playing deck games on board ship with the first contingent of World War I nurses; Jeannie Sinclair on the upper deck of the ill-fated hospital ship, the *Marquette*, watching a green line coming through the water and wondering if it was a torpedo; Gay Trevithick assisting Alexander Fleming testing his new 'wonder drug', penicillin, on World War II shrapnel wounds; Nora Fleming, also nursing in the Second World War, cutting the plaster from a maggot-infested leg and being admonished by the surgeon in charge for not chasing the maggots fast enough; all now have their place in the historical record.

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ANZAC: A Retrospect. By Cecil Malthus. Reed Books, Wellington, 2002. 165 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-79000-850-5; *Armentières and the Somme*. By Cecil Malthus. Reed Books, Wellington, 2002. 147 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-79000-851-3.

WHEN *ANZAC: A RETROSPECT* was first published in 1965, 50 years after the Gallipoli Campaign which it describes, Cecil Malthus self-mockingly called it a 'museum piece'. The reality is that this book and its previously unpublished companion, *Armentières and the Somme*, describing Malthus's subsequent experience on the Western Front, are national treasures providing classic accounts of a New Zealander's experience in the World War I.

Malthus, a teacher at Nelson College, began his war service as a private in the 1st Canterbury Battalion. He went through the whole Gallipoli campaign and as a member of a patrol of scouts was often at the forefront, including a stint at Quinn's Post, the attack over the 'Daisy Patch' at Cape Helles, and the assault on Chunuk Bair in August 1915. In *Armentières and the Somme*, Malthus, now promoted sergeant, relates the experience

of the Western Front until September 1916 when he was injured by a bomb, having survived the Allied offensive on the Somme in July. He describes his recuperation in England before his repatriation back to New Zealand in early 1917.

Written in a straightforward but intelligent style, and drawing on his recollections, letters home and diaries, Malthus' stated objective was to write about the war 'as it really was'. He succeeds in providing an honest and compelling account. One example will suffice, on reaching the shore of Gallipoli on 25 April 1915: 'we heard for the first time that sickening soft thud of shell fragments or bullets meeting human flesh'.

ANZAC: A Retrospect is the more complete story of the two, which has as much to do with the characteristics of that particular short campaign compared with the drawn-out affair of the Western Front as the fact that Malthus was wounded within six months of reaching France. In *Armentières and the Somme*, apart from the compelling descriptions of conditions and fighting on the Somme, the fluent French-speaking Malthus is a good interpreter of the behind the lines relationships between New Zealand soldiers and the French population. His discussion of recuperating in England similarly provides an insightful account of a colonial visiting 'Home' during the war years. He concludes with a discussion of fear and courage in the life of the soldier.

Both books have forwards by military historian Christopher Pugsley, placing Malthus' service and testimony in its historical as well as historiographical context. It is noteworthy that Pugsley acknowledges that when he first visited Gallipoli it was with Malthus' *ANZAC* in hand that he clambered over the ground and, specifically, that it alerted him to 'the New Zealand epic that was Chunuk Bair'. The book similarly inspired Maurice Shadbolt's play *Once on Chunuk Bair*. Pugsley is no blind fan, however, and he provides a much-needed corrective for when Malthus breaks his own self-imposed rule and wanders into the areas of higher command and military strategy and, in some cases, gets it wrong. Malthus' tangents also break the momentum and integrity of his eye-witness testimony. It serves as a reminder that while based on diaries and letters, these works are essentially memoirs written 50 years after the event and need to be read with this in mind.

Like most diaries and memoirs, Malthus' account ends on his return to New Zealand and there is no discussion of his rehabilitation from soldier to civilian. Like the majority of veterans, Malthus did successfully rehabilitate, marrying his pre-war sweetheart, raising five children and enjoying an accomplished academic career as Professor of Modern Languages at Canterbury University College. However, Malthus also reminds us that for veterans their war experience stayed with them 'for the rest of their lives' (to borrow the title of a classic of the next war). This is evident in his concluding tribute to school and university friends as well as fellow comrades who were never to return.

Reed is to be congratulated for posthumously publishing Malthus' personal roll of honour and his account of the Western Front. The names may no longer be familiar but the deeds described by Malthus are certainly those that New Zealanders need to know to understand the New Zealand experience of the First World War. Alongside Alexander Aitken's classic account *From Gallipoli to the Somme*, Malthus is an eloquent voice for his generation.

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