

New Zealand Battlefields and Memorials of the Western Front. By Ian McGibbon. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 2001. 96 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-19-558444-9.

NEW ZEALAND suffered 59,483 casualties in the First World War; 18,166 of these were fatal, the second highest loss per capita of any country, and a remarkable and terrible sacrifice made by a generation of New Zealanders. *New Zealand Battlefields and Memorials of the Western Front* is a travel companion, purpose-written by one of New Zealand's leading military historians, to the battlefields of the First World War's Western Front. It briefly details the nature of New Zealand's involvement in the First World War, gives advice on how to get around, and usefully deals with each of the battlefields and memorials on a geographical basis from Passchendale to Le Quesnoy.

Each battle is detailed, and memorials associated with it described — including opening hours where applicable (of museums and the like), entry fees, their addresses and phone numbers. McGibbon is not unmindful of other sites of interest outside the First World War, noting the location of such sites as the famous battlefield of Waterloo. Other points add to the book: side-pieces of information such as the location of the one-time lions of the Menin Gate, now at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra; the reason why New Zealanders missing in action are not on the Menin memorial, and why the last post is played there each night at 8pm. The tragedy of the conflict is highlighted in numerous ways, but particularly poignant is the Tyne-Cot cemetery, the largest maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Contained within it are 520 New Zealand graves, 322 of them for soldiers with names unknown. A further 1179 names are listed on a New Zealand memorial to the missing — men whose bodies were never found.

This book responds to the need for a guide for New Zealanders wanting to visit the Western Front battlefields. It is light and compact, fits easily into the suitcase, and is very, very readable. The best advice would be 'Don't leave home without it, and don't leave home without reading it.' McGibbon has himself recently visited the sites he describes, and gives current information about their location (including maps). For a New Zealand traveller, I do not think there would be a more useful book.

A particular strength of the work is the rich illustration. Photographs McGibbon has taken (and some taken by Jock Phillips), many in colour, are of the cemeteries, memorials and battlefields. He also uses archived images and has photographed examples of individual soldiers' headstones, and placed them next to archival photographs of these men — with descriptions of their service. All Black captain David Gallaher, killed on the Western Front, is one example. The headstones of Henry Hauiti from Te Araroa and Ponu Marunui from Galatea emphasize just how far the tragedy of the war reached into the remote parts of New Zealand. Excerpts from soldiers' letters and diaries assist in the description of the various battles.

Appendices give a list of cemeteries containing New Zealand graves, and companies that run tours of the Western Front battlefields. Hopefully there are plans for a companion of similar quality for the Second World War.

JOHN BATTERSBY

Massey University