



## EXHIBITION OBJECT LABEL TEXT

### *Recovery: Women's Overseas Service In World War One*

Tairāwhiti Museum, 2017

Written by Eloise Wallace Tairāwhiti Museum Director and Kay Morris Matthews (EIT) Curator  
For enquiries about the objects included in this exhibition please contact Tairāwhiti Museum

---

#### CASE 1

##### **Public Health Nurses Bag** used by nurses in Tairāwhiti

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Health Care Ltd, 1994.198.3.u

**Jean Cormack**, one of the first four nurses to go with the NZANS was the first District Health Nurse appointed to work with Māori communities on the East Coast. She was based in Te Karaka before and after the war. Nurse Cormack travelled large distances on horseback across tricky terrain in all weathers to reach her patients.

The Cook Hospital Board were early to acknowledge the stamina and hard work of Nurse Jean Cormack, recording in 1914 that she was “working like a tiger”, up and down the Coast. Her war service mirrored her capacity for coping with tough working conditions. She nursed soldiers wounded at Gallipoli taking them from Malta to Egypt on ships; she was lent to the British Command to run an enteric ward in Alexandria followed by numerous trips across twelve months taking wounded soldiers between Salonika and England; from France back to England and from India to England. She was acting Matron at Lindi in south-eastern Tanzania for 10 months from August 1917 and completed her war service as ward sister of the 27<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Cairo. She had few breaks during her five years away and had no medical record as part of her army file. Sister Jean Cormack was as tough as they got.

Ceremonial silver **trowel** used by Mayoress Mrs W D Lysnar at the laying of the foundation stone of Townley Maternity Home Gisborne 9 November, 1909.

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gift of the Lysnar Family, via the Cook Country Women's Guild, 1955.1157

##### **The opening of Townley Hospital, 1910**

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, 262-11

Townley Hospital was built by the Cook County Women's Guild in 1910 on a two-acre site provided by the State. It was named after Elizabeth Townley (1837-1930) the first Mayoress of Gisborne. In November 1915, the hospital and contents were given to the Government so it could be run as a St Helen's maternity hospital. Two nurses joined the NZANS from Townley St Helen's.

**The Queen's South Africa Medal** awarded to **Nursing Sister L Godfray RAMC** (Royal Army Medical Corps) for her service in the South African (Boer) War (1899-1902) and NZRN (New Zealand Registered Nurse) **badge**

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Health Care Ltd, 1994.198.2.l

Cook Hospital Matron Eva Godfray (1909 – 1915) served overseas in the South African War from 1900 – 1901. Matron Godfray was responsible for nursing training and she supported her experienced staff as they left for war service but had to keep the hospital running in Gisborne. During the war Eva Godfray was involved in raising war funds in Gisborne, including as a member of the Ladies' Defence Committee, and the Poverty Bay Women's Patriotic Fund.

**Souvenir programmes** for events held by the Poverty Bay Women's Patriotic Fund to raise funds for the war effort and a souvenir **teacup** (Grimwades Ltd) decorated with a transfer print of the second Cook Hospital (opened December 1914)

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, 1997.47.10, 1999.8.5, 1994.198.3.t

**Letters relating to Ethel Taylor**, including a 1915 letter of recommendation from W Carlyle Wilson, Superintendent at Cook Hospital recommending her for the New Zealand Army Nursing Service.

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Health Care Ltd, 1994.198.3

## WALL 1

**Framed photographs of Ethel Taylor** [right]

On loan from Hauora Tairāwhiti

These framed portraits of Ethel Taylor, later Pritchard, was found in the Gisborne District Nurses office by Kath Crawshaw, a member of NAMOT (Nurses' and Midwives of Tairāwhiti). The photographs had hung on the wall for some years. Kath noted Ethel's uniform when NAMOT first mooted making and wearing New Zealand Army Nursing Service uniforms to wear to the opening of this exhibition. When Jane Wilkie, also of NAMOT, saw the photographs and the name 'Ethel Taylor', she recalled of one of the stories that was presented by Kay Morris Matthews at the 2016 ANZAC day public lecture. That is, the World War One nurse who was the district nurse at Matawai for twenty years and who drove a large red Chevrolet car in order to transport her patients to hospital in Gisborne. Jane subsequently delivered the framed portraits to the museum.

## CASE 2

**Wounded soldier doll** wearing 'hospital blues' and the cap badge of the Royal Fusiliers [City of London Regiment]

Dean's Rag Book Co. Ltd originally made for Boots the Chemist

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, 1983.62

When a wounded soldier was sent to a hospital he was issued with a special hospital uniform consisting of a blue single-breasted jacket with a white lining - worn open at the neck, blue trousers, a white shirt and a red tie. To complete the outfit he wore his own khaki service cap with its regimental badge. The suit was also known as the 'blue invalid uniform' or 'hospital suit'.

**Postcard portrait of Sybil Mary Lee**, unknown photographer, c 1917, United Kingdom [reproduction]

Sybil Lee was well known to East Coast soldiers having worked at the Tokomaru Bay Mission Station prior to the war. Because she could speak te reo Māori, Sybil Lee was appointed by the New Zealand War Contingent Association to visit wounded Maori soldiers in English hospitals.

Sybil Lee would have commissioned this postcard to send home to New Zealand. Having a portrait photograph taken to send home was a common practice for men and women serving overseas. On the back of the postcard she has written: *'Yours sincerely, Sybil M. Lee, April. 1917'*.

**Embroidered postcard 'New Zealand'** sent from France by a soldier of the New Zealand (Maori) Pioneer Battalion to Sybil Mary Lee, 1916 – 1918

Embroidered postcards reached their height of popularity during the First World War. A unique war-time industry, the cards were created by French and Belgian women to sell as souvenirs to soldiers posted on the Western Front. It is estimated some 10 million silk embroidered postcards were made, and they were a popular memento for New Zealand soldiers to send home to their loved ones, carefully sent in their own envelopes, or safely tucked into letters. These beautiful cards gave little indication of the true horror of warfare on the Western Front.

**Card, 'Happy Birthday Greetings'** sent by Private Karaitiana Te Ohaere of the New Zealand (Maori) Pioneer Battalion to Sybil Lee from France, 1916-1918. The message on the back reads:

*'16/1482 Pte K. Te Ohaere, C Coy NZ Pioneers, NZ Division, France. Love from all the Tokomaru Bay boys.'*

**Postcard, 'Souvenir from France'** [reproduction], sent by a soldier of the New Zealand (Māori) Pioneer Battalion to Sybil Mary Lee from France 1916 – 1917. The writer may be Private Karaitiana Te Ohaere from Tokomaru Bay. The message on the back reads:

*'Kia Ora Miss Lee, A souviner [sic] from some one in France. We are all well and still enjoying ourselves immensely in a far away strange country. Every body are all well especially myself. They all remembered a kind New Year and best wishes. Scarce of news at present. Later. Kia Ora Koe Na Tou Hoa, Kara'*

All postcards from the collection of National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, a gift of the Butcher and Lee families, 2012

### CASE 3

**Shell dressing** TJ Smith & Newpew Ltd, Hull, October 1918

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Shirley Nalder, 1988.2.2

The shell dressing, introduced in 1916, was designed to be used immediately after injury. It consisted of a gauze pad attached to a bandage for wrapping around a wound, and a safety pin to secure it once used and was more suitable for the larger injuries caused by modern munitions than the 'First Field Dressing'. The pad is wrapped in a waterproof cover and sealed inside a loosely sewn cotton cover with cotton tapes to allow it to be tied to a soldier's equipment and to aid opening it in a hurry. They were often carried by individual troops, or by medics and stretcher bearers in a shell dressing bag. From May 1917, an Iodine ampoule in a cardboard tube was included in the shell dressing.

**Photograph** *The Staff, No 1 New Zealand General Hospital Brockenhurst, March 1917.*

On loan from Jan Walker

Irene Ancell was posted to the 1NZGH at Brockenhurst in March 1917, when this photograph was taken, and is possibly the eighth nurse from the left.

1NZGH opened in June 1916 after moving from Abasseyh in Egypt. By 1919 21,000 patients had been treated in the hospital. Several hundred New Zealand nurses worked at the hospital.

Ivy Smale also served at 1NZGH in 1916, and it was while stationed there that she received the news that her husband Sgt David Smale had been killed at the Battle of the Somme.

**Nurses' armband**, embroidered 'Gisborne NZ Hospital'. Irene Ancell trained and nursed at Cook Hospital, Gisborne prior to World War One. In the photograph of Irene Ancell she is shown wearing an armband of this design.

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Healthcare Ltd, 1994.198.1.a

Irene Ancell, **Certificate of Discharge** [reproduction] and photographs taken while serving with the NZANS.

From the collection of Jan Walker (cousin of Irene Ancell)

*Photograph above left: Irene Ancell in travelling uniform* with hat and veil, likely taken during a port stop location in the tropics. Irene Ancell was on duty aboard the troopship RMS *Athenic* taking the 20<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the NZEF from New Zealand to England in December 1916.

*Photograph above right: Sister Irene Ancell, now Irene Ellis, and husband Major Philip Ellis aboard the Tainui.* The couple had met in 1917 when Major Ellis was a patient and Irene Ancell a Ward Sister at the New Zealand General Hospital at Brockenhurst. They married at Brighton on 26 October 1918 and arrived back in New Zealand in April 1919.

Egyptian **water bottle**, likely to have been used by Ivy Smale while serving at the New Zealand Government Hospital (Infectious Diseases) in Suez. It is likely she brought it back to New Zealand when she temporarily returned on special leave in January 1917 after the death of her husband.

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Ivy Smale 1957.1706

**British War Medal** and **Victory Medal** awarded to Sister Ivy Smale, **sweetheart brooch** (containing a photograph of David Smale), **New Zealand Registered Nurse badge**, **NZANS Cap Badge**, **Returned Services Association Badge** and **epaulette** with two pips

On loan from Ian Barron

New Zealand nurses were given officer status and ranked directly below Medical Officers. This caused some disbelief within traditional military circles, who struggled to believe that nurses were to be treated as officers.

Ivy Smale's **Certificate of Service** [reproduction]

From the collection of Ian Barron

#### CASE 4

**Framed print Matron Frances Price**, Cook Hospital

From the collection of Hauora Tairāwhiti

Fanny Price was Matron of Cook Hospital 1918-1920. The Cook Hospital Board were no doubt impressed that during World War One Fanny Price had been Matron of the New Zealand Stationary Hospital in Cairo as well as the first Matron of the New Zealand Stationary Hospital in France (1NZSH). Awards: RRC; MiD (2); Medals: 1914-1915 Star; Victory Medal; British War Medal.

**1NZSH at Hazebrouck, France**

Collection of National Army Museum Te Mata Toa, Waiouru 1990.223.1

**Souvenir of Tokomaru Bay's Peace Demonstration**, July 1919

Published by East Coast Watch

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Julia Knight, 2006.15.12

**Peace Celebrations Booklet**, July 1919

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Julia Knight, 2006.15.11

***The Soldier's Guide* booklet**

Published by the Ministry of Defence

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Mr B Denham, 2005.58.12

**'Medical Staff Room' sign** from Cook Hospital

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Healthcare Ltd, 1994.198.3.t

**Cook Hospital operations book** for 1912 - 1923

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Healthcare Ltd, 1994.198.3.t

**Cartoon** by Eric Gully (New Zealand, b 1900, d.1953) 'if you knows of a better 'orspital go to it'

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairāwhiti Healthcare Ltd, 1994.198.3t.6

This cartoon, by Gisborne artist Eric Gully is a play on the well-known First World War cartoon series by Bruce Bairnsfather and his best-known character Old Bill, a curmudgeonly soldier with a moustache and balaclava. Bill featured in the weekly 'Fragments from France' cartoons published in the Bystander Magazine during the war. The best remembered of these shows Bill with another trooper in a muddy shell hole with shells whizzing all around. The other trooper is grumbling and Bill advises 'Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it.'

**Benjamin House Nurses' Home**, Cook Hospital by Clive Kelly, 1984

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairawhiti Healthcare Ltd 1994.270.2

Benjamin House Nurses' Home was named after Matron Kate Benjamin (1925-1932). During World War One Kate Benjamin served with the QAIMNSR (37/2532) in Egypt and England from 1915-1919.

**By-laws and Regulations of the Cook Hospital Board**, 1923

From the collection of Hauora Tairāwhiti

**Cook Hospital notice** regarding nurses belongings

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, gifted by Tairawhiti Healthcare Ltd

#### PHOTOGRAPH LABELS

**The first New Zealand Army Nursing Service (NZANS) nurses to leave New Zealand, on the deck of the SS Rotorua, 8 April 1915**

Collection of Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, PA Coll-0321-001

*Back row (left to right): Annie Buckley, Kate Wright, Emma Harris, Elizabeth Nixon, Janet Moore, Christina Lowe, Florence Siddells, Christina Gibbon, Alice Searell, Daphne Commons, Jean Ingram.*

*Next row: Isabella Scott, **Maud Mitchell**, Matilda Fricker, Fanny Wilson, Emily Curties, Kathleen Davies, Mary Sutherland, Margaret Samson, May Chalmers, **Jean Cormack**, Fanny Speedy, Jean Dodds.*

*Third row (standing): Ina Bennett, Vida Maclean, Carrie Young, Marie Wilkie. Fourth row: May Foote, Mabel Crook, Eva Livesey, Fanny Price, Edith Harris, Lily Burke, Matron-in-Chief Hester Maclean, Sarah Clark, Emily Nutsey, Captain Sutcliffe, Bertha Nurse, Theresa Butler, Louisa Bird, Edna Pengelly, Isla Stewart. Front: Alicia Inglis, Jane Miller, Mary McBeth, Elizabeth Smailes, **Ethel Taylor**, Grace Calder, Kate Barnett. Missing: Cora Anderson and **Agnes Williams**.*

**Soldier cooks working in the Military Kitchen at Alexandria, Egypt 1917**

Imperial War Museum, Q108150

These men had recently recovered from battle injuries and were deployed having been declared unfit for fighting. Marion Higgens, a teacher from Gisborne Technical School, can be seen supervising (back left) her trainees. Her military cook programme was highly sought after by wounded soldiers because they realised that such training would stand them in good stead for employment after the war.

### **World War One Surgical Team, New Zealand General Hospital, (1NZGH), Brockenhurst, England**

National Army Museum Te Mata Toa, Waiouru, 1992.750

This 'behind the scenes' image provides a sense of the New Zealand surgical team, including nurses, and the basic equipment used in thousands of operations. Wounded New Zealand soldiers were initially treated close to the battle lines and then transported by ship to England. Shrapnel wounds, head injuries and amputations were the focus of many surgical procedures.

### **Sister Dora Gill, standing left, nurses accommodation in bell tent, Salonika**

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum

### **The Volunteer Sisterhood First Contingent prior to departure 21 October 1915**

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, Earle Andrew Collection G-14727-1/1

Front row: Matron, **Marion Higgens**, Gisborne teacher, (third from left); sponsored by the Poverty Bay Teachers' Institute; In- Charge, Sister Agnes Kerr, Ward Sister Cook Hospital, (fifth from left) sponsored by the Gisborne Patriotic Committee. Founder Leader of the Volunteer Sisterhood, Ettie Rout, stands between them.

### **Tent Wards, New Zealand General Hospital No.1, Brockenhurst, England**

National Army Museum Te Mata Toa, Waiouru, 1992/750

After the major battles in France, for example at Messines and the Somme, up to 350 wounded soldiers could arrive in one day at the New Zealand hospitals in England. At Brockenhurst, there were simply not enough buildings to use as hospital wards so fields of tent wards with inter-connecting duck boards were used. These were primitive conditions for patients and medical teams alike – tent wards were cold, damp, unlit and unheated. Often the duck-boards were inundated in wet weather leading to nurses working with wet feet up to twelve hours a day. Many suffered from 'trench feet' and had issues with their feet for the remainder of their lives.

### **Nurses and patients, Ward 4, New Zealand General Hospital No.2 at Walton-on-Thames, England**

National Army Museum Te Mata Toa, Waiouru, 1992/750

Note the lack of space between the beds of the wounded soldiers.

### **Women's Royal Air Force Recruitment Poster, World War One**

Imperial War Museum, PST 13170

Harriet Simeon's initial work for the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) in England and Scotland included receiving the women recruits and training them for service on British and French airfield stations. But in the first instance she had to recruit them. Harriet said her job "was to raise the women's branch of the force, and I used to go out in cars of an evening haranguing the young women to come along and do their bit". Posters such as this one were used as part of the recruitment process.

## EXTERNAL OBJECTS

**Tents** such as this were used throughout World War One. There were insufficient buildings to serve as hospital wards and hundreds of these tents housed wounded New Zealand soldiers in hospital grounds in Alexandria in Egypt. Bell tents also served as accommodation for New Zealand nurses serving in Egypt, Serbia, Salonika and South East Africa. On loan from Shaun Moloney. *This tent dates from after World War Two, but is of a similar design to those used during World War One.*

This type of **stretcher** was used to evacuate wounded soldiers from battle zones. They were carried by stretcher-bearers over rough and risky terrain to the safety of casualty clearing stations behind the lines.

On loan from the collection of the East Coast Museum of Transport and Technology

### **Ashford Litter**

From the collection of the East Coast Museum of Transport and Technology

Patient transport has always been a core service provided by the St John Ambulance Association. The first ambulance vehicle in New Zealand was 'the Ashford litter' – a simple, two-wheeled cart with canvas hood and apron that was pushed along the road by between two and four men. It was designed in 1875 by Sir John Furley, one of the founders of St John's.

On 18 May 1905, the Gisborne-based Secretary of St John reported in a letter of the Editor of the *Poverty Bay Herald*, that local citizens had donated enough money to purchase one litter and that there was still five pounds to put towards another. The Ashford Litter featured here is likely to be one of those purchased from England in 1905 and used until motorised ambulances were introduced.

During World War One the Order of St John maintained and equipped the St John Ambulance Brigade Hospital in Étaples, France the largest voluntary hospital serving the British Expeditionary Force during the First World War. The hospital had a staff of 241 and cared for over 35,000 patients throughout the war. As a Base Hospital, patients came from the Casualty Clearing Stations, which were situated a few miles behind the front line. It provided treatment, surgical support and some degree of convalescence to patients before they were evacuated to hospitals in the UK or returned to their units.

**Wheel chairs** such as this one made from wicker and wood were used in hospitals during World War One. In particular, soldiers who were amputees could be taken outside to enjoy walks and fresh air.

From the collection of the East Coast Museum of Transport and Technology



Wooden non-adjustable **crutches** such as this set were commonly allocated to soldiers recovering from surgery. For those who had leg amputations crutches became the primary mode of support until prostheses were fitted.

From the collection of the East Coast Museum of Transport and Technology

**George Edmund Butler** (b. 1872, d.1936)

**Flanders** Mount Kemmel (Daylight Corner), Belgium, November 1918.

Watercolour

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, 1980.34.15

Between April and July 1914 the German Army launched offensives in Flanders to push the British out of Passchendaele and Messines, territory won at such cost the previous year. New Zealand units helped stop the German advance in the Battle of the Lus.

Mounted, cyclist and entrenching troops from Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Godley's XXII Corps filled crucial gaps in the line south-east of Ypres, fighting as de facto infantrymen at 'Shrewsbury Forest' (near Hill 60), Mount Kemmel, the Vierstraat Road and Hill 44 before being withdrawn.

**Butler** (b. 1872, d.1936)

**The Road too Far...** New Zealand troops marching on The Bapaume-Arras Road, France 1918

Watercolour

Collection of Tairāwhiti Museum, 1980.34.16

In contrast to the relatively static trench-based stalemate that characterised the Western Front for most of the war, by mid-1918 open warfare ensued over swathes of the French countryside. By August the tide had turned in favour of the Allied armies. In August-September the New Zealand Division took part in one of their final offensives of the war, the Battle of Bapaume.

On 24 August New Zealanders captured the town of Gréville, Loupart Wood and the village of Biefvillers. In the following days they surrounded and entered Bapaume, and continued to push the front line further east. By early September the Allies had pushed the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line east of Bapaume, the area from which they had launched their Spring Offensive in March.

**George Edmund Butler** (1872-1936) was a landscape and portrait painter and an Official War Artist for New Zealand during the First World War.

He became New Zealand's second official war artist in August 1918 just three months before the end of the war. Although he is now virtually unknown, at the time of his recruitment George Butler was recognised as a critically acclaimed artist in New Zealand and England.

Butler joining the New Zealand Division in France in September 1918. He carried a sketchbook in which he made pencil drawings of actual operations and war scenes, often under fire.

The softness and restrained colours of Butler's official war paintings follow traditions of British landscape painting, though the devastated landscapes of the Western Front are almost apocalyptic visions, and were intended to show the New Zealand people the true nature of the environment in which their soldiers had fought and died. It has been said that his paintings capture the realities of war as the New Zealand civilian soldier saw it.

Despite this, Butler also strived to portray to find the essential beauty in the landscapes he saw before him in spite of the fact that the lush woodlands, clear blue waterways, and quaint farm villages of Flanders had been almost obliterated by four years of fierce fighting and constant artillery bombardment. He managed to find elements of beauty in the decimated forests, crater lakes and turbulent skies of the landscape.

### **Sister Irene Ancell, 1NZSH at Wisques in France**

On loan from Jan Walker

The war photographer did not identify any of the nurses in this photograph and others in a series taken at Wisques and it has been often reproduced across the years. We now know it is Sister Irene Ancell. This print was discovered among family papers by Grant Ancell in early 2017.

### **Sister Ivy Smale with her husband Sgt David Smale, 1916**

From the collection of Ian Barron

This studio portrait was likely taken in Wellington ahead of Ivy and David Smale leaving New Zealand with the 11<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements aboard the New Zealand Transport Ship *Maunganui* on 2 April 1916. Ivy had been raised at Whatatutu and her cousin, farmer David Smale from Motu. Both had been based at the Trentham Military Base, Ivy on duty at the Military Hospital and David preparing for military service in France. For Ivy, this photograph remained a poignant reminder of their short marriage (8 January 1915- 27 September 1916).