

The Arras Tunnels

While researching the 'WW1 Silks' I came across this interesting story about New Zealand soldiers.

During the First World War, the underground tunnels of Arras, France were extended by tunnellers from New Zealand, to create a tactical advantage for Allied Forces. These tunnels were intended to house Allied troops massing for the 1917 Arras Offensive in complete safety and unknown to the Germans.

Two large quarry and tunnel networks could accommodate up to 25,000 men and were fitted with running water, electric lights, kitchens, toilets, a light rail system and a fully equipped hospital.

Initially the company was involved in successful counter-mining efforts just to the north-east of Arras, which involved tunnelling to identify and destroy the tunnels the Germans were mining towards the Allied front line.

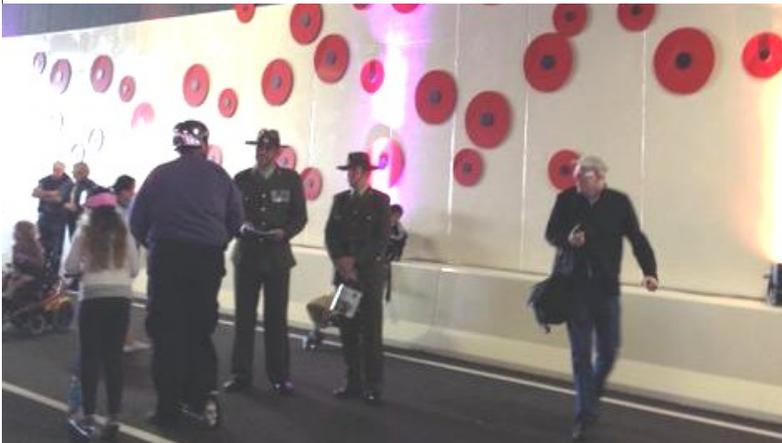
The tunnellers dug 4,300 metres of tunnels. The New Zealand Tunnelling Company was a unit made up of quarrymen,

British and Canadian soldiers helped complete the secret system. To help them find their way, the New Zealand soldiers named the caverns within the system after places at home: ie. Russell, Auckland, New Plymouth Dunedin and Bluff, to name a few. The work was carried out 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with individual tunnellers doing eight-hour shifts, followed by 24 hours rest.

On the 9th of April 1917, at 5.30 am the British soldiers came out from their hiding place and charged the German trenches. The surprise effect was total. At a few kilometres from Arras, the Allies ambushed German officers and troops having breakfast. This surprise attack was a success since the Germans were forced to withdraw by 10 kilometres. The Battle of Arras was the only victory of the year 1917.

The network of tunnels were used again in WW2 as air raid shelters before they were sealed up for over 50 years.

The remarkable efforts of the men who built the system was commemorated with the opening of the Arras Tunnel, on the 29th of September 2015, beneath the National War Memorial Park in Wellington.



gold miners from Waihi and Karangahake, labourers from the railways and Public Works departments and some were coal miners from the West Coast.

About 300 New Zealand tunnellers with

Scattered along both walls of the tunnel are 273 decorative red poppies, a symbol of remembrance. The poppies become more densely

packed as you go under the National War Memorial, reminding people that they are passing through a significant commemorative space.

Maybe someone locally, had a soldier who was part of this was effort. R H

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Immigration to New Zealand

As facts about immigration and immigrants are very much to the fore at the moment, I thought I would research the history of immigration to New Zealand. Moving to another country is a big decision especially when it means a long and dangerous journey. New Zealand's immigrant stories tell of people escaping a

difficult past, or being lured by promises of a better future.

Until 1839 there were only about 2,000 immigrants in New Zealand: by 1852 there were about 28,000.

Up until 1950 most people who immigrated to New Zealand were from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The journey by sea took around 100 days,



A post office was an important institution in the rural areas of colonial New Zealand. Settlers would get letters from overseas friends and relatives, pick up newspapers, and often share the news with their mates. In the early years of settlement at Apiti, the post office was just a simple wooden shack.

and voyagers endured rough seas, cramped living conditions and illness.

Some people came because they had already reached Australia as convicts or settlers. Those who came the extra distance across the Tasman Sea included whalers and sealers, gold miners and labourers who arrived in the late 19th century.

Others came because they received assisted or free travel on ships from Britain and Ireland. These included those who were brought out by the New Zealand Company or similar groups and were mainly from England and Scotland in the 1840s who settled in Wellington, Nelson, Wanganui, Taranaki, Canterbury and Otago. Some people were given cheap tickets and offered free land by New Zealand provinces in the 1850s and 1860s. Some were recruited and given cheap fares by the New Zealand government in the 1870s, early 1880s and before and after the First World War. Soldiers were brought out to fight in the New Zealand wars of the 1860s, or war brides came with New Zealand soldiers who had fought overseas.

There were also non-British settlers: a few

French people came to Akaroa in 1840; Germans came to Nelson in the 1840s; Scandinavians settled in Manawatu and Hawke's Bay in the 1870s; Chinese were attracted by the gold rushes and Dalmatians worked in the northern gumfields.

After the Second World War, in the 1950s and 60s, more people were helped to immigrate. These included many Dutch and a larger number of English and Scots.

From the mid-1960s people began to come to New Zealand from Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands and other Pacific Islands, attracted by work opportunities.

In 1975 and again in 1987, New Zealand changed its immigration policies to admit people on the basis of their qualifications and not their race. Since then there has been a large flow of immigrants from Asia and some from Africa.

New Zealand has become much more multicultural. In 2006 about 67 out of a 100 New Zealanders had an exclusively European background. The others had Maori, Pacific Island or Asian ancestors.

R H

Immigration 2:

In 1859 there were fewer than 2,000 travellers who had ended up settling in New Zealand. In contrast there were 100,000 Maori.

Many of our early immigrants had spent time in Australia as convicts and they became temporary visitors in search of items to trade. Sealers were attracted by the promise of high-quality oil and some married Maori women. They later supplemented their living by trading flax, timber,

pigs and potatoes. Whalers came and settled at Kororareka/Russell in the north, in the Marlborough Sounds, the Otago Peninsula and Fiordland. Whales provided oil, bone for corsets and ambergris.

Missionaries arrived and settled in the Bay

of Islands. Samuel Marsden set up a mission station at Rangihoua, Bay of Islands and by 1823 there were three stations in the area. Other missionaries bought flax for trading, and by the 1840s there were 10 Church Missionary Society stations in the North Island and 11 Wesleyan missions.

The export of timber to Australia for houses and ships was centred on the Hokianga and Firth of Thames; there were over 90 European men involved in the timber trade in that area.

In 1854 the provincial governments were given responsibility for immigration. Hawke's Bay, Southland, Nelson and Taranaki had small schemes, as did Wellington. Otago was more active and focused on recruiting in Scotland. Two thirds of Canterbury's immigrants were assisted.



Generally the provinces paid half and the immigrant or sponsor paid the rest. The provincial agents were instructed to attract agricultural labourers, builders, bricklayers or masons. Single women were the most preferred and were given free passages; many became wives, teachers or domestic servants.

At this stage it was recorded: **Not exactly paradise.** Charles Terry wrote in 1842: *The islands of New Zealand are uncultivated wastes either of mountains covered with dense forest, of plains and lowlands covered with high ferns or of*

swamps and marshes covered with rush and flax without any open spots of pasture, or of verdant downs and hills for sheep.

So when and where did your ancestors come from? Mine escaped the hard life of the Yorkshire mills; being driven off their lands as Scottish Highland crofters; as a convict to Tasmania, then to New Zealand and a blacksmith from Aberdeen, Scotland. R H

R H

Excerpts from: Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

A question from our May Chronicle So, how much would you have paid to have your horse shod, if you paid 1 cent for the first nail, 2 cents for the second nail and 4 cents for the third nail, etc..

This question was posed by Gray Healey of Wanganui, on our Skills Day. Well it would cost \$671,088.64c. Well done to those who tried a little maths!