

NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL

Le Quesnoy | France

JUNE 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL MUSEUM TRUST - LE QUESNOY



Poppies at the walls of Le Quesnoy in summer

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Since our last communication, much has happened globally. Who would have ever thought in the middle of our long summer that the whole world could be brought to a halt by one hitherto unknown virus. Let's hope it is a once in a 100 year event, but I would never say never. The world has changed, we are not out of it globally and everything is now going to be different.

Without a doubt the world of philanthropy and fundraising is in a different environment and we, those at the core of the museum/visitor centre in Le Quesnoy in France also have to re-configure our efforts. Yes, it will all take a bit longer, but our project is still doing in the second 100 years after the WW1 Armistice what we did not do in the first 100 years.

The aim is the same, to acknowledge the 12,500 NZ soldiers buried in Europe, in the town of their last success and leave a presence there that will motivate generations of young kiwis to stop and think about the awful cost of war and the price paid by our antecedents so that we could have a better life today. That will never change.



*Sir Don McKinnon - Chair
New Zealand Memorial Museum Trust*

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT



The Le Quesnoy building that will house part of the future New Zealand museum and visitor centre

Right now, of course, it feels like travel between countries is a long way off. However, the world will move again one day, and having a place in Europe that tells New Zealand's stories, remains important.

With every other Commonwealth country, except New Zealand, having a visitor centre where they recall their country's war time contributions in Europe, we need to set that right. But we need to get it right too.

A dusty museum filled with wartime artefacts is certainly not the plan. We want an engaging experience that speaks to what it is to be a New Zealander and shows the extraordinary depth of the friendship we share with the people of France.

To do this we've engaged with experts in this field - both here and in France - to help inform the overall concept. We think we might even have a name as well...but more on that soon.

Where we are at now, with an interpretive plan, strategic plan, feasibility study and Māori workshop completed, is ready to pull the various threads all together into an experience design brief to go forward with. Once we have that, we can tell you more. It's very exciting to see the concept take shape.

On the feasibility side of things, we have worked with French museum experts and architects to check the operational side is viable (from their experience of how

museums work in France) and explore the best use of spaces in the main building once renovated and the additional spaces built.

We are also checking the feasibility of income and expenses from renting out the maisonettes on site (freestanding housing units) which can provide accommodation and contribute to the museum revenue.

Once this proper professional basis has been established, we will be ready to press go and proceed with confidence to the implementation phase, to build a facility which we know will work and be something New Zealanders will be immensely proud of.

ANZAC DAY



The Mayor of Le Quesnoy and officials at the New Zealand Memorial on ANZAC Day 2020

ANZAC Day, albeit it was under lock down this year, is always a time of great reflection for New Zealanders.

Every April 25th we recall the service and sacrifice of our people in times of conflict (whenever or wherever they occurred, since the start of WW1).



NZ and French flags fly from the windows of a Le Quesnoy home

Le Quesnoy, Northern France, usually holds an ANZAC dawn ceremony as well to honour the New Zealanders who died liberating their town in 1918 after four years of German occupation. The day continues with a march to the wall that the Kiwis climbed over to get into this fortified town, and a civil reception.

Often the local French children perform a haka after they sing the New Zealand National anthem. It is an emotional event that many New Zealanders also attend.

But this year France, like New Zealand, was in lock down and public gatherings were not permitted. Mayor of Le Quesnoy, Marie-Sophie Lesne, did however read a beautiful speech at the walls to mark the occasion, and New Zealand flags were seen flying from the windows of the town's homes and businesses.

In New Zealand, the campaign to stand at dawn at the end of your driveway meant we could still remember together, yet apart, as a nation. In many ways hearing the one service on the radio, rather than many individual ones, was galvanising. Many people got to meet new neighbours, in their shared, 'distanced' experience, as dawn broke.

The effects of the Covid 19 pandemic perhaps heightened the connection with war time this year. While a direct comparison can't be made, and shouldn't, the parallels are there to muse on.

Communities and countries all battling a shared enemy with a shared goal, while dealing with huge loss of life, and the reality that life has changed - both in the heart of the 'conflict' and whenever it is that 'peace' in its new form, eventually returns.

LOVE IN A WAR ZONE: THE STORY OF SERGEANT REGINALD HIRD

Even in the midst of difficult and challenging times like war, there are lovely stories to find. Sergeant Reginald Hird, a farmer from the Karamea on the West Coast of the South Island is one such story.

His communication throughout World War I with Nellie Dean, a schoolteacher from Collingwood, sustained him through the hard times.

Their fondness for one another grew as the months and years passed.

He'd write about his war-torn days, often about losing men he knew, and she'd write back to him about the somewhat pedestrian nature of her days. Be it relating news of the everyday, the turn of the season, or the local news.

Between writing to Nellie, he also wrote letters to relatives of men he knew who'd died. And that's a love letter too – telling the relatives how much he missed their beloved boy, and what a great mate he was.

The first thing he did when he got back in 1919 was to turn up on Nellie's doorstep with a ring and ask her to marry him. And yes, they did live happily ever after!

If you have ten minutes to spare, have a look at this short video story about Reg and the power of the written word in war time. You'll find the link [here](#).



Sergeant Reginald Hird



One of Reg's many post cards



Reg and Nellie Hird

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Fundraising has been progressing well with businesses and individuals financially committing to the project to ensure the bravery, dedication and ingenuity of our soldiers will be remembered.

Over the past two months we put a hold on our fundraising approaches as New Zealanders dealt with the realities of Covid 19. Now, as we move into the recovery and

rebuild space we are able to recommence our fundraising efforts, and are actively doing so. We know this will be more challenging, however we also know the significance of this project for future generations.

We seek to celebrate the freedom which inspired our people to go to war, the friendship and unique bonds which developed between the people of Le Quesnoy and New Zealand which are still strong

100 years on, and the opportunities to create a better future with a focus on how to avoid war. We are confident that donors will again come on board to further these aims, so together we can create something that all New Zealanders can be proud of.

If you are able to make a donation (whatever size that may be) we are most grateful for your support. The various ways to do so are listed below.

THE NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL MUSEUM TRUST - LE QUESNOY

TO MAKE A DONATION:

Go to our website www.nzwmm.org.nz/donate
click **DONATE** and follow the instructions

OR

Write a cheque made payable to
**THE NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL MUSEUM
TRUST - LE QUESNOY**

and send to
**PO Box 90345
Auckland 1143**

OR

Donate via **DIRECT BANK TRANSFER** using the following details:

Account name: New Zealand Memorial Museum Trust – Le Quesnoy

Account number: 03-1509-0097188-000

Reference: Your first and last name

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**NEW ZEALAND
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— A PLACE TO REMEMBER —

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