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ANZAC DAY 2010

Waihi Heritage Vision has been working with Maori Television to produce a short programme on the New Zealand Tunnelling Company story that will be shown at some time on Anzac Day.



above: Marj Tyson beside the grave of Sapper William Mannix at Waihi Cemetery with a camera operator from Maori Television.

The crew filmed in Waihi at the Cornish Pumphouse, in a small tunnel under Union Hill, at the cemetery, and at Newmont Waihi Gold's Mines Rescue base. Special thanks to

Noel Walker for his skills in getting us safely underground in an old mine tunnel and to Marj Tyson for her assistance with the cemetery segment. Huge thanks to Waihi Gold's Mines Rescue Team members who accompanied us underground and also did a mock up of a rescue to match a photograph of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company Mines Rescue Team.



Other material and video footage has also been provided to Maori Television, and it is possible some of this may be used.

We also put Maori Television in touch with Eileen Tiller from Paraparaumu. She reports a crew visited to do a story on her Uncle Fred Hansen, his war service, and the embroidery he did, especially the beautiful black satin apron, which is now in Te Papa. The story passed down through the family is that, while he was recovering from tuberculosis, Queen Mary visited the hospital Fred was in and wanted to buy the apron, but Fred said he had already promised it to his mother. This programme is also scheduled for Anzac Day.

NEWS FROM ARRAS

On April 9, The Wellington Quarry is commemorating the 93rd Anniversary of the Battle of Arras. An annual event, the ceremony in front of the Memorial Wall of the Wellington Quarry is a tribute to the British soldiers who took part in the battle. On 9 April 1917 24,000 soldiers emerged from the Wellington Quarry to begin the Battle of Arras. In the weeks preceding the attack they lived in the underground tunnels worked on by the New Zealand Tunnelling Company.

During the ceremony the story of a New Zealand tunneller, a Canadian soldier and a British soldier will be told. Waihi Heritage Vision has supplied the New Zealand story of Sapper William Mannix who was sent home to New Zealand towards the end of 1916, having been gassed underground. He died in Waihi in 1919. His Waihi grave is one of the few New Zealand World War One graves that mention the Tunnelling Company.

New Zealand sculptor Helen Pollock is also in Arras in April. The Battle of Arras tribute will be followed by the inauguration of Helen's installation 'Falls the Shadow'. Featured in the exhibition is a forest of bisque-fired clay arms reaching up, from a pool of water symbolising the men and mud of the battlefields. Sounds and text are also used to showcase a moving reminder of why we cannot and should not forget the men who served. In 2008 this installation was displayed at the Auckland War Memorial Museum and in 2009 featured at the Passchendaele Memorial Museum.

The clay used in Helen Pollock's exhibition was taken from the Coromandel region and incorporated with clay specifically uplifted for the installation from the battlefield of Passchendaele.

Waihi Heritage Vision has been collaborating with Helen Pollock with her Arras exhibition. The NZ Tunnelling Company and Sapper William Mannix will form a part of the Arras exhibition of 'Falls the Shadow'.

4/1362 SAPPER WILLIAM MANNIX



Sapper William Mannix worked in the Grand Junction Mine in Waihi. In 1915 he enlisted in the New Zealand Tunnelling Company. Having been turned down for service prior to enlistment in the Tunnelling Company due to medical reasons, Mannix was anxious to serve as a miner overseas. Along with the 400-strong company, Mannix exchanged the warmth of a New Zealand summer for a European winter.

A New Zealand newspaper reported:

'Sometimes working waist deep in water and mud, chilled to the marrow when they had their first taste of snow and frost, the tunnellers have been amongst the real hard grafters on the Western front.'

In a 1917 newspaper interview Mannix said:

'I can't name the places the tunnellers have been, but they have been pretty well all over the Western front and have had great experiences. We spent some three months at Arras, and some of the 'big fellows' told us we had been doing very good work.'

'The exploding of a mine is a great experience. For a mile behind everything rocks and shakes and, when she is let go at night it is a spectacle never to be forgotten. At Arras we left behind us one of the biggest craters on the front.'

Cylinders of gas were left in the tunnels and released by the Germans, so that when Allied engineers mined in the vicinity they would become victims to the poison in the galleries. Sapper Mannix caught some of the German gas and came up to the daylight to collapse. The poisoning acted on his stomach. For five months he was in bed, his burly form weakened and emaciated by an inability to take solid food.

Sapper Mannix was invalided back to New Zealand for an operation. He said he was looking forward to a well-stacked plate of roast beef and kumara. *'When once I get my legs under the table I shall take some shifting, I can tell you.'*

William Mannix married in 1918. In February 1919, he died from a pre-enlistment disability aggravated by gas. Mannix was aged 26. A week after his death, his only son William was born. Mannix's wife died 18 months later. Sapper Mannix's medals were sent to his young son. Billy Mannix altered his age to be eligible to enlist and serve in World War Two. He died in the Western Desert in 1941.

'Bless you, it was a great life. I wouldn't have missed it in spite of my little lot'.

4/1362 Sapper William Matthew Mannix

Tunnelling Company Lieutenant Henry Langdon, was last employed as mine manager at the Waihi Extended mine, Descendants have recently forwarded a contribution towards the proposed Tunnelling Company Memorial. Many thanks. We have been in discussion with Eddie Morrow, CEO of Vision Waihi Trust, regarding the possible placement of the memorial in the proposed Gold Discovery Centre in Waihi.

TUNNELLING COMPANY GRAVES

We are always interested in learning about Tunnelling Company men from other areas, not just from the Hauraki Goldfields.

Part of the work we do is record family graves that remember sons lost overseas. On a recent visit to Otorohanga we came across the grave of a New Zealand Tunnelling Company man who had tragically died shortly after returning home in 1920.

The lettering on the grave is barely discernible but clearly states his Tunnelling Company affiliations. Otorohanga District Council has undertaken to investigate the possibility of work to restore the legibility of the lettering. We commend their action to maintain and keep local community stories relating to the unique history of these men.



Frank Dunkley, a supervisor with the Public Works Department, drowned after slipping from a horse while inspecting road slips during a flood. His grave in the Otorohanga Cemetery records his service with the New Zealand Tunnelling Company in World War One.

Thanks to descendants, NZDF, RNZRSA, Hauraki District Council, Newmont Waihi Gold, Arras Tourism Office, Howard Chamberlain and Robert Pike for their continued assistance.



TUNNELLERS' MEMORIAL AT GIVENCHY

There is no permanent memorial on the Western Front to the extraordinary work of the Royal Engineers tunnellers. The erection of a permanent memorial to R.E. tunneller William Hackett VC and the Tunnelling Companies of the First World War is underway. For his act of selfless valour William Hackett was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross - the only such decoration ever to be bestowed upon a Tunneller. The memorial will be unveiled at Givenchy on Saturday 19 June 2010.

'With William Hackett's courage exemplifying the Tunnellers' work, the memorial will stand in celebration not only of him, but all his military mining comrades from around the world, men whose critical but hidden role has been long overlooked. Although heroes of obscurity, and with their names featuring only marginally on the great lists of dead, wounded and missing, their contribution to the surface war was vital. Few have spoken or written of their ways in the last nine decades, no monuments have been erected to their memory, and yet fewer poets have immortalised their hidden and selfless endeavours in the most secret, personal and savage battlefield of the war – the battlefield beneath No Man's Land.'

From <http://www.tunnellersmemorial.com>

A member of the group organising the Givenchy Tunnellers Memorial is British Tunnelling Company researcher & ex British military man Iain McHenry. Iain is based in Belgium, where he operates as a battlefields tour guide. Iain and his wife Donna visited New Zealand at the end of November 2008 and we met up with him. Iain has been a great contact and help. In a recent email he writes;

The planning of the memorial day is coming along well. It will be a big day, but we want to avoid too much pomp, ceremony and speeches and keep it as simple as possible.

The main aim of course, is to commemorate all those men of the T Coys, but we also feel it is vital to be able to tell the villagers what is under their feet. There is already a good link between the village and the Great War. In 1918 the village was in ruins and defended by the men of the 55th West Lancashire Division, who hail from the Liverpool area, in the face of the second phase of the German final offensive of the war. The memorial to the 55th Div is in the village and the Tunnellers memorial will be co-located with it. The village hall was rebuilt in 1924, the cost borne by the people of Liverpool. Having met the mayor a few times now it is apparent that the village does not forget that link, so by unveiling the Tunnellers memorial they will be aware of the link that exists beneath their feet, if you get what I mean. We want as many of the villagers to turn out as possible, so at 1330 hrs on the day the full 29 piece band of the Royal Engineers is going to spend about 25 minutes marching around the village playing music! That should get them out of their houses!

Following the unveiling of the memorial there will be a reception at the village hall. Peter Barton has commissioned a "Sapper Hackett Ale" being made at a brewery in the UK, the sale of which is helping raise money for the memorial. There will be a few barrels of the stuff at the reception along with wine and nibbles.

We are hoping to have as many relatives of tunnellers present as possible. We have to date received notice that folk will be coming from as far afield as Australia, USA and Canada. It will be interesting to see on the day who turns up. I also think, its not that worrying if not too many relatives turn up on the unveiling day. The memorial will be there for a long time after the ceremony so as long as people continue to visit it, then that makes us happy. If you happen to hear of anyone coming from New Zealand for the unveiling, please do let us know.