

Brig H.S. Kennick.

Anzac NZ (Recd) / Kennick / 1

Passchendaele 3rd to 7th Oct, 1917 No. 1, 37 Victoria Avenue,
Remuera,

Auckland 5.

1 NZ Brigade and 4 NZ Brigade took part in a major attack at Passchendaele on 4 October 1917. Together with two other officers and a sergeant I spent most of the night of 3/4 October laying assembly tapes to ensure correct unit boundaries and proper line of advance. The ground was a quagmire and the shell holes lip to lip, many being filled with gas infected water and possibly containing a dead Hun under the screen. In some places the attacking troops sank almost to their thighs in slime and filth. The enemy defence was provided by strong holds - concrete pill boxes surrounded by barbed wire largely intact due partly to our inadequate supply of wire cutters and partly due to the barrage having a limited effect through shells burying themselves deep in the mud before bursting.

Zero was 0600 hours and the objective for my company the battered ruins of Graunstapel Village.

2

Rain fell overnight, and there was still an
early morning drizzle.

My heavy observations, we suffered
the kind services - could not cope.

When a man was wounded his nearest
companion if possible placed him on a stretcher
or placed him first between shield knees, and
struck his invertebrate right and lay on
to the ground beside him as an
indication to stretcher bearers that there
was a wounded man there.

My memory is of a sea of
inverted rifles as far as one could see.
Some wounded were not carried out
by stretcher bearers - it took a
minimum of four men to a stretcher,
for two and even three men
naturally a number died of
wounds - wounds, a roll of
an adjoining shell hole and were
abandoned.

My prayer and that of some others
was 'Please God when the shell with my
number on it comes may I find it
a 'bleep', and be able to walk out
or be taken out right - but not

wounded and left to die in the mud.

Not a very cheerful sentiment for a boy who had just turned 19 years of age.

In 1928 accompanied by my wife I visited Ypres, took a taxi and went to Gramontafel. To my surprise I found there a memorial to New Zealanders killed in battle.

In the intervening 26 or 27 years the countryside had again found its natural beauty.

As I stood sadly looking at the memorial the taxi driver said in good English "There must have been very big fighting here."

I replied "Yes; I think so."
(cannot find my photograph of the Gramontafel memorial or I would have sent it to you.)

P.O. In a personal footnote I may say that after the War I studied medicine, maintained an interest in territorial soldiering, and enlisted in 1939.

In the first half of W.W.II I was A.D.M.S. 2 N.Z. Div. in Greece, Crete and the Western Desert, and for the second half D.M.S. 2 N.Z. E.F. in Tunisia and

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throughout the Italian Campaign
 In Greece General Freyberg V.C. took me
 with him to Force HQ, so I became
 D.D.M.S. Crete, responsible for the
 Medical arrangements before and during
 the battle (20 May 1941 to 31 May 41)
 and for the wounded of the British,
 Marine, New Zealand, Australian, Greek
 and Cypriot Forces.

In my medical report to Major-General
 General Sir Percy Tomlinson, D.M.S. Middle
 East on returning to Cairo I stated
 "It can truly be said that the wounded
 - at Gallipoli and in the mud of
 Passchendaele, suffered no greater horrors
 than did those of the Imperial Forces in
 Crete."

In retrospect I am of the opinion that
 this report was misleading, if not actually
 untrue, but it was written when I was
 mentally and physically exhausted.
 Conditions were not comparable and
 in Crete our main difficulties were lack
 of transport, lack of medical supplies, and
 the impossibility of getting wounded men who
 had walked over hills a distance of 40 miles
 to the coast at Sphakia - on to Warshifas
 anchored out at sea between midnight and 3 am.