

## **Freemasonry in War and Peace**

### **Richard H Williams – Top of the South Lodge of Research**

#### **Introduction**

I am a fourth generation New Zealander (Kiwi), an amateur military historian and retired soldier of 23 years' service long ago. How and where to start? Did the Nubians practice any of the Crata Rapoa precepts before the 'Black Pharaohs' of the Kush arose against the Egyptians and were in turn sacked by the Pharaohs'? That seemed an eminently speculative start-point, but such an immense time-frame forced me to contract my research.

Initially, I set a datum point of 1717, the formation of the United Grand Lodge in England. Then I sharpened my focus further, towards Australia and New Zealand(NZ). Many British Regimental Lodges, some with peripatetic Irish or Scottish Constitution warrants were the early forerunners of Freemasonry in both colonies. When those Regiments returned home, some civilian off-shoots remained, and the growth of colonial lodges began.

My soldier's story lay in NZ. I turned to our colonisation and the introduction of Freemasonry into our fledgeling society in 1842, just two years after the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi. That excluded the British (and colonial) derring-do of the American War of Independence 1760-91. It left shut tight the Pandora's Box of the growth of European masonry alongside the conflicts of warring Royal families. There would be no room for the Jacobites, Blenheim nor Dettingen. No examination either of two British Freemasons; The Iron Duke of Wellington's Iberian Peninsula and Napoleonic campaigns, nor General Sir John Moore of Corunna.

#### **America in brief**

The American founding fathers' unmistakeable inclusion of moral tenets of Freemasonry into their Constitution, its symbols into Currency and its architecture into Washington DC; and constitutional amendments subsequent upon the success of the Union warrants a huge a paper in itself. Indeed, the American Constitution is arguably the most influential example of Freemasonry in a society.

The American Civil War offers many a tale of Freemasonry influencing compassionate actions between the Union and Confederate forces.

American Military Sea & Field lodges were specially created by The Grand Lodge of New York for their 1917-18 'dough-boys'. Some States' temporary visitation rights to French Grand Orient lodges were revoked post-war. Confusion reigned between States' Grand Lodges' recognition of French Grand Lodges.<sup>1</sup> The later influences of Generals and Freemasons Omar Bradley, Mark Clark, George Marshall and Douglas McArthur await another inspection. Thus I have avoided discussing American Freemasonry, with due respect to half of today's world-wide Freemasons.

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<sup>1</sup> John Belton, *A Questioning Eye Upon Freemasonry*, ANZMRC, 2017, pp 132-3

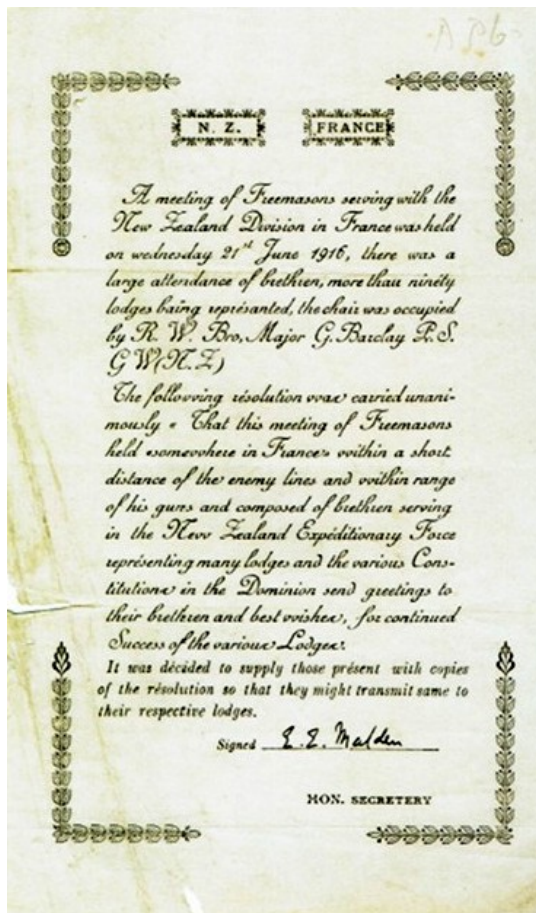
I once inspected a deceased Freemason's Crimea (Inkerman-Sevastopol) campaign medal. That 1853-6 War became infamous for the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' with Freemasons Lords Raglan and Cardigan prominent in the debacle.

### An NZ Masonic Association (MA)

When I joined the Craft fifty years ago, many older brethren wore NZMA jewels which indicated they had served overseas in the armed forces, and probably attended Masonic gatherings in their operational area during either or both World Wars One and Two (WW1/2).

### WW1

Jewels created for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force MA(1NZE FMA) of the Great War are quite rare. (Photograph on right) The 1 NZEFMA first met in March 1916 with members of 72 separate lodges



This Original document is held in the archives of United Forces Lodge No. 245

Breast Jewel of the First New Zealand Expeditionary Force Masonic Association  
The ribbon adopted is that of the French Medaille Militaire  
Approved by the Board of General Purposes of the Grand Lodge of NZ for wear by Members  
Photograph courtesy of Lodge United Masters No 167 [Research Lodge, Auckland]  
from their Museum Jewel Collection



present.

This is a copy of a greetings resolution from a meeting held 21 June 1916 (Photo on left) – also refer to the photograph of a June 1918 Lodge of Instruction (Appendix Photos)

Rarer still, but with excellent provenance, is a Masonic jewel in mother of pearl that was carved in Palestine, undated. (Appendix Photos) Some have the owner's initials in interwoven gold on the ribbon. About 50 such-jewels were struck by NZ Mounted Rifle Brigade (NZMRB) Freemasons, being the peripatetic 1NZE F ('In Palestine and Egypt') MA

without Charter. NZMRB Commander Brigadier William Meldrum was instrumental in its formation. He served as Master when it met near the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem on 6 April 1918. (Appendix Photos) About 108 of NZMRB were or later became Freemasons. The NZEFMA later became known as 1NZEFMA (my choice here, for clarity) upon the raising of WW2 Forces.

### **In WW2.**

Examples of a similar 2nd NZ Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) MA jewel can be viewed in many lodges' memorabilia cabinets. The WW2 Jewel was struck in 1940 by the 2NZEFMA. (Appendix Photos)

2NZEFMA disbanded post-WW2 and integrated with 1NZEFMA, which was then still quite strong in number. They conjoined as the NZEFMA.

A recent laudable initiative in Wellington saw a revival of the NZEFMA as a concomitant of increased national awareness during nation-wide centennial commemorations of WW1 events. The names of WW1 NZ servicemen who were, or later became Freemasons were concurrently researched nationwide. Local craft lodges used such residual records as were available. The inconclusive collated total was approximately 1550 brethren.

### **The NZ military abroad.**

The South African or Boer War was the first time NZ committed troops to overseas service. Then followed WW1/2, Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam. Subsequently, NZ joined several British Commonwealth or multi-national western alliances. Most deployments of NZ servicemen and women and NZ Police have been to United Nations (UN) Peace Making, Peace Keeping and Policing operations worldwide.

Some, or their spouses, serve in seven countries: viz: Iraq, Israel, Egypt(Sinai), Lebanon, Republic of Korea, South Sudan and Timor-Leste today (January 2018). Since our involvement in the Vietnam War ended 46 years ago there have been over 50 operational or campaign medals or bars awarded to NZ servicemen and women (28 NZ and at least 25 UN or multi-national awards).

A chronological retrospect of NZ involvement and sociological after- effects follows.

### **In South Africa**

The 1st Contingent left NZ for South Africa in 1899 (from which my paternal grandfather Trooper Thomas Henry(Joe)Williams returned thankfully unharmed. The eminent South African Masonic lecturer and author Rodney Grosskopff offered many examples of tragicomic Masonic compromise amongst the Anglo-Boer fraternity in his enlightening booklet 'Bushveldt Brethren'.<sup>2</sup>

### **Freemasonry and Generalship-WW1**

The self-explanatory title 'British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One' produced horrific detail. Author, much-published military historian Dr John Laffin no doubt chose his title to shock interest: his depth of research is compelling.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rodney Grosskopff, *Bushveldt Brethren*, ANZMRC,2011, pp18,32,56,62,66

<sup>3</sup> Dr John Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, MacMillan Australia,1988, Ch 1-14

The names of Roberts, Kitchener, French and Haig leapt to mind. All were or became British Field Marshals (FMs), and all were Freemasons. The last two certainly had their contretemps which would have stretched their brotherly love to the breaking point. The Masonic art of rhetoric was well practised when expounding the relative merits of their strategic concepts. Tragically, both justification and rebuttal became mired in the Western Front mud.

Poor Roberts (Bobs) was prevailed upon and had 'arranged' for the commissioning of Brother Rudyard Kipling's sight-impaired son Jack. How then to reconcile that action with his dear friend's grief at 'My Boy Jack's' demise in France? Francophobe French jealously husbanded his 'Old Contemptible' British Expeditionary Force (a derogatory German description adopted by that force with typical British self-deprecatory humour).

Kitchener's imperious finger demanding YOU volunteer would receive a prompt reverse salute from today's youth, I suggest. (Appendix Photos)

Haig's star rose when he was on Kitchener's staff in South Africa. How long would Haig persist with frontal assaults upon text-book enemy defence works, laced with mutually supporting machine guns? Was he oblivious to the hideous new vulgarity 'cannon-fodder'? He sacked his rival Allenby from Command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Army after Arras and the Somme stalemate in 1917. One month later non-mason FM Lord Allenby commanded the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Largely mounted cavalry, this included the Australian Light Horse and the NZMR which advanced through the Sinai to capture Palestine and beyond.

“Good Morning, good morning!” The General said  
when we met him last week on our way to the line,  
Now the soldiers smiled at are most of ‘em dead,  
And we’re cursing his staff for incompetent swine.  
“He’s a cheery old card”, grunted Harry to Jack,  
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.  
But he did for them both with his plan of attack’.<sup>4</sup>

Now, who were Harry and Jack? They were part of Kitchener's 'New Army' (which was actually six Armies each of six various Infantry Divisions) raised in 1914-5 to bolster the British Regular Army.

Bewildered, barely-trained, young and predominately single men, they were volunteers on three-year enlistments, from all callings of British society. They faced a baptism of hell-fire.

I recall the football Christmas on the Western Front when opposing front line troops invaded no-man's land to fraternise, however briefly. When military order prevailed and the soldiers returned to their trenches, nightly singing of Christmas Carols was still common. That surely

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<sup>4</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *The General*, 1917

evidenced true brotherly love, Christian if not Masonic. Or was it just a cry from humanity for common sense?

### **NZ Dead in the Great War**

On the Somme during September-October 1916, over 23 days 7000 men of the NZ Division had become casualties.

The following year, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the 3rd Ypres campaign on 12 Oct 1917, more than 1500 men of the 2nd Brigade and about 1200 of 3rd Brigade had become casualties. About 45 officers and 800 men lay dead or dying. In terms of lives lost on a single day (including my maternal great-uncle *Corporal Joseph Warring*). This remains the greatest disaster in NZ history'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Family Ties**

Like thousands of families in our two countries, my own was deeply affected by the events of 1914-18. I have mentioned *Joe Warring*.

On ANZAC Day we remember and pay homage to all ex-servicemen and servicewomen. We especially remember family or friends who paid the supreme sacrifice. Kiwis are buried overseas in 28,419 graves in 1,190 cemeteries throughout 68 countries tended by the British Commonwealth War Graves Commission (BCWG). We also remember the thousands who have no known graves.

In 2005 my wife Margaret and I attended the 90th commemorative ANZAC Day services at Gallipoli and visited several of the BCWG cemeteries there. We knew her maternal great-uncle *Alfred John Sherman's* name was recorded on the NZ Memorial Wall at Chunuk Bair as he has no known grave. Ably assisted by our tour-guide the pre-eminent NZ military historian Dr Ian McGibbon, we carefully navigated uphill towards Chunuk Bair from the Maori contingent outpost. Margaret sprinkled sand from the Riwaka family homestead at the site where the Nelson Company of the Canterbury Battalion was near-annihilated on Rhododendron Ridge on 7 August 1915.<sup>6</sup> *Uncle Alf* had just turned 21 years old. I tossed a handful of poppies to the winds and recited Binyon's Ode to the Fallen.

Thankfully, Alf's brother *Corporal William Sherman* survived Gallipoli and France also in that Canterbury Battalion, as did my paternal great-uncles *Edward* (a gunner, God bless him) and *Alfred (Battler) Williams* in the Canterbury Regiment in France, and another maternal great Uncle *Whit Western* in the NZMRB in Palestine.

The missing New Zealanders are recorded on the memorial at Tyne Cot Cemetery (where *Uncle Joe Warring* lies) and all other nationalities on the Menin Gate at Ypres. Two of Margaret's paternal great-uncles, *Harry Ward* of the Otago Battalion and his brother James, *who enlisted in Australia*, were separated in death by just 48 hours and are buried nearby. I fondly remembered maternal great-uncle and Freemason bachelor *John William Simms* returned from service in France, which included two years post-war as a Warrant Officer volunteer with the NZ Graves Registration Unit, inter-alia searching for his kinsman *Joe*

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<sup>5</sup> McGibbon Ian, *The Oxford Companion to NZ Military History*, Oxford, 2000, pp602-5

<sup>6</sup> Malthus Prof Cecil, *ANZAC A Retrospect*, Reed, 2002, pp117-8

*Warring*. A further maternal great-uncle *James Alexander (Alec) Jermyn* served as a Chaplain in France and was later by far the youngest Anglican Archdeacon in NZ.

I hasten to add that the personal perspective of eleven family forebears which I have interwoven in this paper relates to the almost 60% NZ casualty rate in WW1. There is nothing special about me. Everyone in our small country of barely one million people at that time had a familial or social link with the loss. Society was devastated.

### **An unsung Masonic hero**

The well-known kiwi author, Freemason and RAAF Methodist Chaplain Dr Frank Glen, wrote a fine book, 'Bowler of Gallipoli'. A Territorial Force Lieutenant Colonel, lawyer, military historian and man of religious principle, Bowler was a hard task-master. At age 52 he was considered too old to command an infantry unit. Accordingly, he secured one of the four positions as a Beach Landing Officer for the Gallipoli landing. As such, he was with absolute certainty amongst the very few first ashore to control the NZ ANZAC Day landings.

Bowler later commanded the ANZAC Cove depot. His exacting staff standards were revealed in a subordinate's notebook which led to a revision of the numbers of NZ servicemen on Gallipoli. This finally resolved the apparently wildly-skewed erstwhile NZ casualty rate, that being pro-rata double those of the British and Australians.

Sadly, Bowler entered a period of military and social ostracism post-war for his act of high moral courage when denigrating his British superiors for their disengaged ineptitude during the ANZAC campaign. Bowed in body, whilst recuperating in England he had deliberately broken the command code of loyalty by criticizing his superiors. His moral standards and spirit remained unbroken. History has endorsed his actions. Bowler was a Freemason and proud of it.

### **Between the Wars**

The Spanish Influenza viral pandemic of 1918-19 resulted in 20-50 million deaths of mostly young, otherwise healthy adults. These were more than the combined total deaths attributable to WW1. That 'generation lost' broke the yoke of privilege in UK society, the aristocracy declined, and social order became more equable. The flapper craze arose as younger folk sought a mad release in fun, fun, fun! That ended with the Wall St crash of 1929 and the advent of social disorder throughout the resultant world depression. Despite Edwardian art nouveau, there was to be no relief for this, my parents' generation. The spectre of European fascism manifested itself in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39. Anti-Semitism excesses defied belief by appeasers, and the world plunged into war again.

The Freemasons' code was tested. At this time British Freemasons were aware of the beautiful wee blue lapel badge, the Forget-me-not. German Freemasons used this to recognise one another in response to their repression by the Nazi regime. Perhaps there was a natural reluctance to avoid the Masonic fratricide which, however unwittingly, must have occurred in WW1.

### **Freemasonry and Generalship-WW2**

How fondly did WW2 Freemasons and eventual FMs Alanbrooke, Alexander and Auchinleck regard Brother Winston Churchill?

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Alexander, the Commander and last man to leave Dunkirk, had a stellar fighting career. He was much admired by Churchill and eventually became Minister of Defence in the post-war cabinet. But Churchill personally removed Auchinleck as Allied Commander North Africa and left him unassigned for nearly a year.

Two of their non-mason FM contemporaries, the deeply religious Wavell and the ascetic Montgomery were apparently not on Winston's most favoured list either. Churchill's non-attendance at Wavell's funeral was considered inexcusable, yet Wavell had extolled Churchill in his anthology 'Other Men's Flowers'<sup>7</sup>. FM (Bill) Slim of 'The Forgotten' XIVth Army in Burma was not a Freemason, but he placed **primacy in morale** to be a firm belief in a '**great and noble spiritual object**'.

*'we fought for the clean, the decent, the free things of life, for the right to live our lives in our own way...to worship God in whatever faith we chose...to be free in body and mind...We fought only because the powers of evil had attacked these things.....his soldier must **feel** this, feel that indeed he had a worthy cause...and that if he did not defend it life would not be worth living for him or for his children...'*<sup>8</sup>

Alexander, Auchinleck, Montgomery, Slim, and Wavell who became Viceroy of India, had careers as Higher Commanders which were entwined as their fortunes rose .... or fell.

Broadly, Churchill the politician directed their movements, as is normal in democracies. Yet he made no mention of Freemasonry in his six-volume history 'The Second World War'. He had implored FM Lord Alanbrooke to head the British army in 1941 and they formed a formidably influential duo in the British War cabinet forming Allied Grand Strategy.<sup>9</sup>

## **Prisoners of War**

Whenever we honour those who paid the supreme sacrifice we must remember those who were maimed from the conditions endured during their service. I particularly noted the beautiful preface to the war diaries of Australia's 'Christ of Chung Kai' Prisoner of War (POW) camp, the revered surgeon and Freemason Colonel Sir 'Weary' Dunlop. In his foreword, a fellow surgeon and former POW Sir Laurens van der Post wrote...'utterly disarmed, a greater kind of courage was to be expected of them ...It would be a war for physical and moral survival, a war against disease and malnutrition and most probably a protracted process of starvation, as well as degradation from within by the apparent helplessness and futility of life in the prisons... a war for sanity of mind and body "...<sup>10</sup>

Dunlop's compassion towards Japan and Japanese post-war personified Masonic brotherly love. His generosity of spirit was initially unfathomable to many former POWs. Over time, his standing as a man of huge substance was recognised within Australia.

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<sup>7</sup> AP Wavell, *Other men's Flowers*, Alden Press, Oxford ,1952 p 26

<sup>8</sup> FM Lord Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, Cassell, London,1956, pp182-4

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, Penguin,2010, p105

<sup>10</sup> Dunlop EE, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*, Nelson, 1986, foreword p x.

Many NZ POWs have described to me the black hole in their lives that represented their period of incarceration. Poor treatment of POWs was common in rudimentary Italian camps. However German Stalags' administration was supervised by the Swiss Protecting Power and Swedish Red Cross emissaries. The Geneva Conventions for POWs were observed. Rationed food, Red Cross parcels and mail did arrive, eventually. POWs could study for formally recognised educational qualifications. Freemasonry was able to be practised. NZ Dr John Borrie's arduous four-year life as a POW Medical Officer confirmed vastly more civilised conditions than those in Japanese camps.<sup>11</sup>

### **So what can we conclude?**

In a few short paragraphs, I summed up nine FMs and a Warlord over a period of nine years, encompassing both World Wars. Ridiculous! Tomes have extolled the professional excellence of them all, their prodigious memories, and glittering recognition. The soldiers were at the top of their profession, prosecuting death upon their enemies with their utmost skill and assiduity. The destruction of WW2 Axis powers was their Aim, the unconditional Axis surrender the allied Mission. There was not a huge amount of international brotherly love in all that! That, Brethren, is the reality of War.

I think we can conclude that the Masonic thread is interesting but not critical. I contend the tenet of a strong moral compass in these randomly selected leaders is what set them apart, inspired their soldiers and overcame their despised enemy. A moral compass is, of course, Freemasonry's defining goal.

### **Freemasonry and NZ military men**

NZ Freemasons have been involved in conflicts dating from our formative Land Wars of 1845-47 and 1860-66. 35 former NZ servicemen have been awarded the Victoria Cross (VC), 12 were killed in action. Of the remaining 23, eleven (48%) were or later became Freemasons. I thought that a very high percentage and pondered the correlation with the bravest of the brave.

What drove these men to perform their heroic deeds?

In 1985, I had discussed this question at length with Kenneth Sandford, the lawyer, author of "Mark of the Lion", the biography of Charles Upham VC and Bar. We had an instant rapport as I had been the ex-officio Secretary of Upham's Scholarship Fund Trustees committee when serving in Christchurch. I was directed to administer the transition of the Trust from assistance to study at Canterbury or Lincoln University, to a bravery award by Vice Regal appointment, being the Nation's highest non-Royal Award.

Charles was naturally very shy and retiring, almost taciturn, but with a compensatory turn of Anglo-Saxon phrase to delight the roughest soldier. Nonetheless, Charles was a much-admired, albeit reluctant, an attendee at formal occasions.

Ken Sandford was intrigued. He was the Judge Advocate at a Court Marshal I presided over in Singapore, and we had ample spare time. Forty years on, I recall his adamant view. Years since he had written his book, the time had not tempered his earlier view. Charles loved his

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<sup>11</sup> John Borrie, *Despite Captivity*, Whitcoulls, NZ, 1975, pp 142,152,155,178,196



fellow kiwi-serviceman. There was no false modesty in the man, simply brotherly love.<sup>12</sup> Importantly though, Upham was not a freemason.

The eleven NZ Freemason VC recipients are listed chronologically in snap pen-portraits (Appendix I) and shown in this montage (Appendix Photos). Unsurprisingly they represent an egalitarian lot, ranging from the highest spoke on fortune's wheel to those at the lowest depths, for whom alcohol did no favours. More interestingly several were quite small physically, hardly befitting the popular big tough ANZAC hero-image.

In peace, they just got on with life. Like Bassett, Upham and Elliot, most loathed the limelight.

My close involvement in the selection and training of Territorial Force (Reserve) Army Officers over nine years left me very well equipped to comment on the key attributes NZ soldiers seek in their leaders. Repeatedly, qualities such as bravery, courage, intellect, integrity, professionalism and honesty were superseded by Compassion. I know this to be true, having read and discussed dozens of their essays on the subject.

Thus, I find a Freemasons' **Brotherly Love** tenet completely compatible with a hero's **Fellowship** and the paramount trait of **Compassion** in the NZ soldiers' psyche.

### Since WW2

The Nuclear Age hastened wars' end. Of course, the buck stopped with Missouri Grand Master Harry Truman. His alone was the decision to change the world forever.

Victory to the Allies brought peace but with it the unenviable price-tag of two chilling new terms, 'The Cold War' and 'The Iron Curtain'. In NZ the term 'Baby Boomers' gained popularity to describe my generation of frenetic post-war repopulation 1946-56. The actuarial fiscal after-effects loom as we enter pensionable retirement. We were a disputatious lot through the bomb-banning, *peace-nicking* 1960-80s.

Our offended parent generation of the time included a correlated 'bulge' in the membership of Freemasonry. Veterans sought a further solid base for their fraternal links forged in the crucible of life and death at war; something even deeper than the camaraderie of the Returned Services Association of which their beloved 'Kip', (Maj Gen Sir Howard Kippenberger) was then the National President. Many non-servicemen, including my father and maternal grandfather, also joined the fellowship of the craft in 1945-6. Those who were 'on the square' or 'taught to be cautious' formed a bulwark of comfort to society during the geopolitical unease of Korea, Hungary, Cuba and Czechoslovakia in the 1950-60s.

A quantum changes then eroded this male-dominated society. The contraceptive pill became freely available to women. Given this freedom of choice the strident female emancipation movement, 'Women's Liberation' contemporaneously swept the western world. I contend that this rapid emergence had a powerful beneficial effect on family life. Women gained social equality outside the home. They now chose both family size and timing. Career opportunities opened with involvement in public administration, politics, commerce and industry hitherto denied them.

Family life became far more inclusive, largely abetted by the closeting effects of Television. Conversely, global macroeconomics adversely affected successive helpless NZ governments.

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Sandford, *Mark of the Lion*, Hutchinson, London, 1962, p279

More recently the imposition of 24/7 retailing on families further reduced male involvement in voluntary service organisations such as Rotary and Lions. And Freemasonry, which I am sure needs no elucidation! In 2017 the three highest public offices in NZ, being Governor General, Chief Justice and Prime Minister were again held by ladies.

### **A personal journey-Freemasonry's influence upon me**

Personally, Christmas Eve 1970 marked a memorable occasion. I was in an infantry company-sized jungle ambush, serving as their artillery forward observer. An Australian light-aircraft circled above playing Christmas carols, and many quietly wept. I remembered the stories of the WW1 trenches. Not an epiphany, for my faith, was strong, it was for me a reaffirmation of the hallmarks of Freemasonry: -that which was worth fighting for.

John Masters was then my Battery Commander (Appendix 2). He later related to me a conversation he had with his second-in-command, who was an older highly respected, commissioned Warrant Officer. When pressed jokingly by John regarding his Lodge Summons' arriving from NZ, he commented:" I won't tell you who are the several Masons in this Battery except, for one thing, they will never let you down". I don't think I did. I treasure their memory.

I remember too my days as an un-armed UN military observer (UNMO) in 1978-9 to which I briefly alluded earlier. Four NZ army officers were annually seconded from Defence to Foreign Affairs. They served among an international cohort from 23 contributory nations in the UN Truce Supervision Organisation in Palestine (UNTSO(P)). I served for nine months on the Golan Heights, based in the old Roman spa resort town of Tiberias near Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee), Israel, then six months patrolling the Sinai Desert based from Cairo, Egypt. That is a story in itself for the UNMOs truly epitomised 'The Universal Soldier' of folk-pop singer Donovan's hit song.

I had many an occasion to reflect on the lot our hosts, the civilians in the Middle East. Not all UN forces were welcomed, especially in Israel where Jewish refugees reversed the diaspora and found among their polyglot a huge frustration: creating a new Israeli society between the native-born Sabra, the sophisticated European Ashkenazim and the agrarian African Sephardim migrant sects; combined with a bitterness and truculence towards outsiders. Israeli despair with continued provocation by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) led by Yasser Arafat resulted in the first Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon in 1978.

Most of my UNMO cohort shared my repugnance at the PLO ambush and slaughter of children in a primary school bus, which tested Israeli patience once too far. The Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Six-Day War hero was prominent, and this just six weeks after my arrival, (there being no correlation, despite some jibes from NZ!). The protagonists Arafat and Rabin were freemasons but failed to resolve much at that juncture. However, history notes their conjoint Nobel Peace Prizes with Israeli Prime minister Shimon Peres in 1994 for brokering the recognition of a Palestinian State.

My family travelled extensively within the bounds of UN safety restrictions. Beirut, Amman, Damascus and Jerusalem were each only a two-hour vehicle trip distant, with Jerusalem being our frequent destination. A fondness for Syria and Syrians arose as we traversed their beautiful countryside.

Within westernised Israel, we sought out biblical sites and marvelled as James Michener's evocative historical novel 'The Source' materialised before our eyes. For my family, Gaza represented the UN Mediterranean Beach Club.

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Late in my tour, a genial Austrian Captain Werner Holli joined an informal group of UNMOs in Cairo discussing common matters. My input described my feelings of trepidation when as an unsophisticated teenager, I mounted the steps of the grand entrance to RMA Sandhurst in January 1966. Werner bridled and proceeded to berate 'us' for the difficulties of his youth in an occupied country post- WW2. He likened the Arab populace to his own subjugation. An American marine wryly enquired "Surely the Marshall Plan (Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff and later Secretary of State Freemason General George Marshall) may have helped a little?" Werner was unmoved. He became quite agitated as his depths of anti-allied feeling surfaced 25 years later. We mollified him eventually, but I was disturbed.

From that day forward, I became a firm advocate of the role of the UN Organisation in pursuit of world peace. My constant reminder is embossed on the reverse of my UNTSO(P) medal, "In the service of Peace". I can think of no better reason to don a uniform.

Our children played in the quiet of the rare grassed area at the BCWG Cemetery in Heliopolis, Cairo, just a short distance from the old 2NZEF Maadi Base Camp. I felt that the souls of the Kiwis there buried would have approved. Peace is a relative thing, as a cynical UN colleague once remarked to me in Israel, for their tenuous Peace was a 'piece' of Palestine, a 'piece' Lebanon, a 'piece' of Syria, a 'piece' of Jordan and a very big 'piece' of Egypt.

When I left UNTSO(P) in 1979, Begin and Sadat had just signed the end to a 30-year state of war, and The Jerusalem Post of Tuesday, March 27, 1979, screamed PEACE! (I still have my stamped 'Free Copy')

### **Where are we today?**

Nearly forty years of 'Peace' later, I weep for the people of Syria. Israeli bellicosity and brutality towards Palestinian civilians in Gaza remain largely unchallenged by the west. Begin and Sadat were dead within a year.

Glasnost and perestroika became new terms to the West. The Berlin Wall fell, the 'Iron Curtain' was lifted and the USSR dissembled. China embraced 'capitalism' and a new World order promised.

BUT:-!!

Afghanistan was invaded, first by USSR then by a US-led coalition; an internecine civil war still rages there. The US-led Persian Gulf Wars 1 and 2 ignited Iraq. The Balkans exploded again and the horrific term 'ethnic cleansing' surfaced. The continent of Africa can seem one continuous battlefield. Islamic State (ISIS) has yet to be neutralised. Islamic fanatics wage indiscriminate attacks on both Western cities' civilians and rival Islamic sects with apparent ease. Iconoclasms are now international. North Korea's hegemony is unresolved. US retaliation for the '9-11 Crime against Humanity' attack on the New York Twin Towers seems interminable.

The pandemic pox of drug and substance abuse continues to blight mankind.

The critically acclaimed author of 'The Great War for Civilisation' Robert Fisk continues to rattle Western cages as the Middle East Correspondent for the British 'Independent'

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newspaper. His objectivity is profound, as is his belief in the worth of the UN. He brings a very necessary balance of the 'alternative' Islamist view to the western press<sup>13</sup>

Is there to be no Peace for the widows' sons?

I firmly believe that VWBro Rabbi Alexander Astor OBE Grand Chaplain 1939-40, in his stirring paper dismissing 'Hitlerism' provided an answer as valid today as then. He concluded...let us Brethren of the Masonic fraternity unite...and help usher in the great dawn, when all will come to order their lives in accordance with the sacred injunction: - "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" ...then shall freedom and justice, brotherhood and goodwill, bring lasting security and peace to all men<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

In 2004 when the NZ Unknown Warrior was finally returned home, I had the honour to represent the Nelson/Marlborough/Westland District of The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RNZRSA) at the National War Memorial in Wellington. It was indeed a humbling experience to be one of the eight District Presidents, who in the final act before the sealing of the tomb sprinkled mineral taonga collected from their districts around his casket, to fully embrace him in his homeland. The Masonic posture of reverence was adopted by myself and two Freemason friends. My Auckland counterpart and the Chairman of the Memorial Committee joined me in placing an authentic sprig of acacia on the casket, at the conclusion of our individual duties. The initiative for this simple act of Masonic remembrance came from the late VWBro John Masters PGLec, United Forces Lodge 245. (Appendix 2)

In 2006 I represented RNZRSA National Executive at the unveiling of the New Zealand Memorial in London. I have been a very privileged man.

My race is nearly run. In my teenage years, I remember pitying the wicker bath-chair bound WW1 veteran amputees selling newspapers in Cathedral Square, Christchurch. Extrapolate the years forward and I probably 'equate' to those WW1 veterans, in my grandchildren's eyes. To me, there is no comparison.

In my mind Pericles, no mean warrior himself, had it about right:

**'Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to fight for it'**

I conclude with Psalm 139, v8-10. This is the superscription above the Hall of Memories behind The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at the National War Memorial Carillon, Wellington.

*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there  
If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there  
If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea  
Even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me*

Lest we forget So Mote it be.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Fisk, *The Age of the Warrior*, Harper perenniel, 2009, pp276-9

<sup>14</sup> A Astor, Paper "Freemasonry and the War against Hitlerism", United Masters Lodge No 167, Auckland, 1940, pp1-7

## **Appendix I**

### **1.New Zealand Servicemen Awarded the Victoria Cross, who were or later became Freemasons.**

**Sergeant Major Charles Pye** 1858.replenished ammunition, inter-alia when under heavy fire in Lucknow, India 17 Nov 1857 and invested 1859. Several VCs awarded in this action. Later Capt. Adjutant 53<sup>rd</sup> Regt. Emigrated to NZ 1862.Commissioned as Captain in NZ Colonial Defence Force Cavalry 1862.  
Lodge of Charity 823 EC Dugshai Bengal 1855.

**Captain of the Foretop Samuel Mitchell** 1864. RN sailor rescued his mortally wounded Captain of HMS Harrier at Gate Pa. Returned to NZ once paid-off and farmed on West Coast at Mihikonui. Raised eleven children and was drowned at age 52 in 1894. Often wore cardboard facsimile of his VC stolen in Australia, later recovered and now in Hokitika Museum.  
Totara Lodge 1241EC and Pacific Lodge 1229 EC

**Captain Charles Heaphy** 1867 saved soldier's life in 1864, Militia officer who became a first irregular soldier, and colonial freemason, eventually awarded VC. Noted RA trained artist, explorer of Nelson hinterland, draughtsman/surveyor, Member of Parliament, Commissioner of Goldfields. Immortalised in the natural beauty of the Heaphy Track, one of eight NZ 'Great Walks'.  
Lodge ARA 348 IC

**Corporal Cyril Bassett**,1915, physically small, he maintained telephone communication links under heavy fire for five days during Chunuk Bair assaults. Only NZ VC awarded on Gallipoli Later wounded at Passchendaele and again at Somme. Immortalised by saying" all my mates got was wooden crosses".  
The Ara Lodge No 1

**Captain (Later Lieutenant General) Lord Bernard Freyberg VC DSO and three Bars**, 1916, outstanding gallantry when as a Captain Commanded Hood Battalion, four severe wounds. Commander 2<sup>nd</sup> NZ Division WW2. Revered for compassion towards his men's welfare. NZ Governor General 1946-52. Lieutenant Governor Windsor Castle.  
Household Brigade Lodge 2614 EC, NZ Lodge 5175 EC,  
Westminster Lodge 308, WM 1948-9.

**Lance Corporal Samuel Frickleton** 1916, outstanding Bravery assaulting machine gun posts at Messines, severely wounded and gassed with resultant permanent ill health, continued to volunteer for service but finally was refused in 1939. Four brothers: one died of wounds and two wounded in France and discharged, one wounded Gallipoli and discharged.  
Lodge Kawatiri-Westport 152, United Forces Lodge 245, Scinde Lodge 5, Lodge Taia 229,

**Corporal (later Brigadier) Leslie Andrew. VC DSO.** 1917. He commanded a platoon of 15 men, suffered 11 casualties when he reorganised, outflanked and assaulted two machine posts enabling recapture of an earlier captured village. Commissioned into the post –WW1 army. WW2 Commanded 22 Battalion and absolved by Freyberg for loss of Maleme airfield, Crete. Awarded DSO for command of 5 Brigade in Libya.  
Lodge St Andrew Kilwinning 79.

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**Sergeant John Grant** 1918, assaulted machine gun nests when attempting to recapture Bancourt Ridge. Commissioned and discharged 1918. Post-war personal life was distressing he was located in a Relief camp in Paeroa Racecourse during the depression, unable to hold work due to irregular habits.

Lodge Hawera 34, Lodge Taranaki 240. Died in Mt Roskill Masonic Village 1970.

**Sergeant Henry Laurent** 1918, when commanding 12-man fighting patrol on Trescault ridge where the allied advance was stalled, he unknowingly had penetrated the German artillery gun-lines and immediately attacked, killing 20 and capturing 112. Displaying great leadership Laurent extricated his seven survivors and his prisoners.

Lodge Taranaki 240 in 1942, WM 1950. Heretaunga Lodge 73.

**Sergeant John Hinton** 1941, ran off to sea at age 12. At withdrawal from Greece defied threat of Court Martial for refusing to surrender beach-head. Attacked several machine gun posts, severely wounded, made POW, twice escaped briefly. Awarded VC and marched back to solitary confinement in Stalag 9c.

Lodge Mawhera 61

**Sergeant (Later Chaplain Class 4) Keith Elliott** 1943, like Bassett and Grant, physically small. Calm aggression noted in 22 Battalion on Greece and Maleme airfield Crete. Captured and freed at Bardia Egypt. Acting platoon commander at Ruweisat Ridge withdrew avoiding capture. When searching for a wounded officer assaulted five successive Italian machine guns, killed 30 and captured 142. Commissioned and ordered home. Became Army chaplain. Colourful career as a clergyman.

Lodge Renown 218

Through the offices of VWBro Colin Heyward, I had the very good fortune to discuss this list with the visiting 2006 Prestonian Lecturer W Bro Granville S Angell in November 2017. His recently published 'Volume of Valour' sub-titled Victoria Cross Freemasons 'Band of Brothers' is a defining work of a lifetime. The iterative nature of his painstaking research has to date resulted in at least 18 further names for consideration in addenda. I acknowledge my debt of gratitude to WBro Angell.

**Appendix 2.** The NZ Prime Minister Rt Hon John Key announced 6 April 2010 that retired Lt Col JM Masters ONZM MC JP would be the inaugural recipient of the award "ANZAC of the Year". VW Bro John Masters PGLec, who was the writer's life-long role- model, mentor and close friend, died 28 October 2010. In 1965 John was recommended for a VC by his British superior saving the life of a Ghurka sergeant major but was awarded an immediate Military Cross presented by HM Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace in 1966.

John's widow Alisoun's funeral was held 28 October 2017. Her ashes were interred with John on 1 November 2017, their 59<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

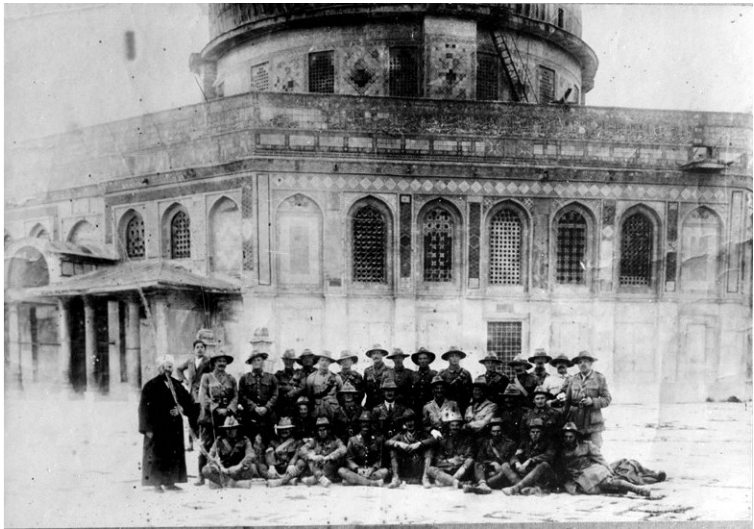
Thus, ended a signal period of my Freemasonry in War and Peace.

### **Appendix 3 Photographs.**

1. 1NZEFGMA Jewel
  2. 1 NZEFMA 1916 greeting
  3. 1 NZEFMA 1918 Lodge of Instruction
  4. 1NZMRB Jewel
  5. 1 NZMRB Jerusalem meeting 1917
  6. 2NZEFGMA jewel
-

- 7. Kitchener
- 8. NZ

P3



VC Recipients' Montage



P4

P5

Badge made in mother of pearl and struck by NZEFMA Freemasons serving with the NZ Mounted Rifles Brigade

This "branch" had 117 members serving in Egypt and Palestine.

Photographs courtesy of Lodge United Masters No 167 [Research Lodge, Auckland] from their Museum Jewel Collection



7987

Obverse



7987

Reverse [the number is simply from UML inventory]

6<sup>th</sup>. April 1918 was the date when 31 members under the chairmanship of W Bro, Brigadier General William Meldrum, Commander of the NZ Mounted Rifles Brigade, held a meeting under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem



P6



P7

Recruiting Poster, First World War  
RW Bro the Right Honourable Herbert Horatio, Earl Kitchener of Khartoum  
KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE, PC  
1850 - 1916







Charles Pye VC



Bro Sam Mitchell



Bro Charles Heaphy



Bro Cyril Bassett



Bro Brig Les Andrew



WBro Lt Gen Lord Bernard Freyberg



Bro Sam Frickleton



Bro Jack Grant



WBro Harry Laurent



Bro Jack Hinton



Bro Rev Keith Elliott

