

25 YEARS OF ONLINE CENOTAPH

LOVE HONOUR

Contents

- 07 Foreword
- 08 Timeline
- 10 The social historian: Gabrielle Fortune
- 14 The military historian: Chris Pugsley
- 16 The descendant: Willie Cuthers
- 22 The contributor: John Forrest
- 24 The collection manager: Victoria Passau
- 28 The volunteer: Stoney Burke
- 32 Closing thoughts: David Reeves
- 36 Acknowledgements

Cover: World War II Hall of Memories.

Left: Stained glass facing the World War II Hall of Memories.

He toa taumata rau
Courage has many resting places



Foreword



Cenotaph Database on a computer in the Armoury Information Centre c.1998. PH-CNEG-M1455-32

“Online Cenotaph is gold, absolute gold. It’s such a great source not only for what is there now, but what should and could be there in years to come. It’s a marvellous, living repository that continues to grow.”

– DR CHRIS PUGSLEY

Online Cenotaph has been commemorating the experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand’s military service for more than 25 years.

Online Cenotaph is a collection of data relating to Aotearoa New Zealand’s operational military service including personal, biographical, demographic and military information. But it is much more than a collection of datapoints. As social historian and former Online Cenotaph staff member Gabrielle Fortune remembers, “When we originally started the database, we wanted it to be not just a military record, but a social history record, too.” This inclusive vision sets Online Cenotaph apart from other more didactic military databases that often exclude unverifiable but important personal information. Online Cenotaph’s nuanced and personal lens, provided by the public’s contributions, remind us of the humanity of those who served.

The Online Cenotaph team is proud to collaborate with research communities and the public throughout the world to create and collate data and share personal memories.

As of April 2023 the database includes the records of nearly 265,000 individual service personnel across 40 conflicts. It is a well-accessed resource: every month an average of 1,600 images, notes and pieces of data are added by the public and 80,000 web pages are viewed.

This publication reflects the range of individuals who have contributed to this collective resource: a social historian, volunteer, descendent, military historian, museum worker, and a contributor. In interviews with freelance writer Sarah Ell, each person shared their relationship with Online Cenotaph, what the database means to them, and how they believe its impact ripples out into the wider world.

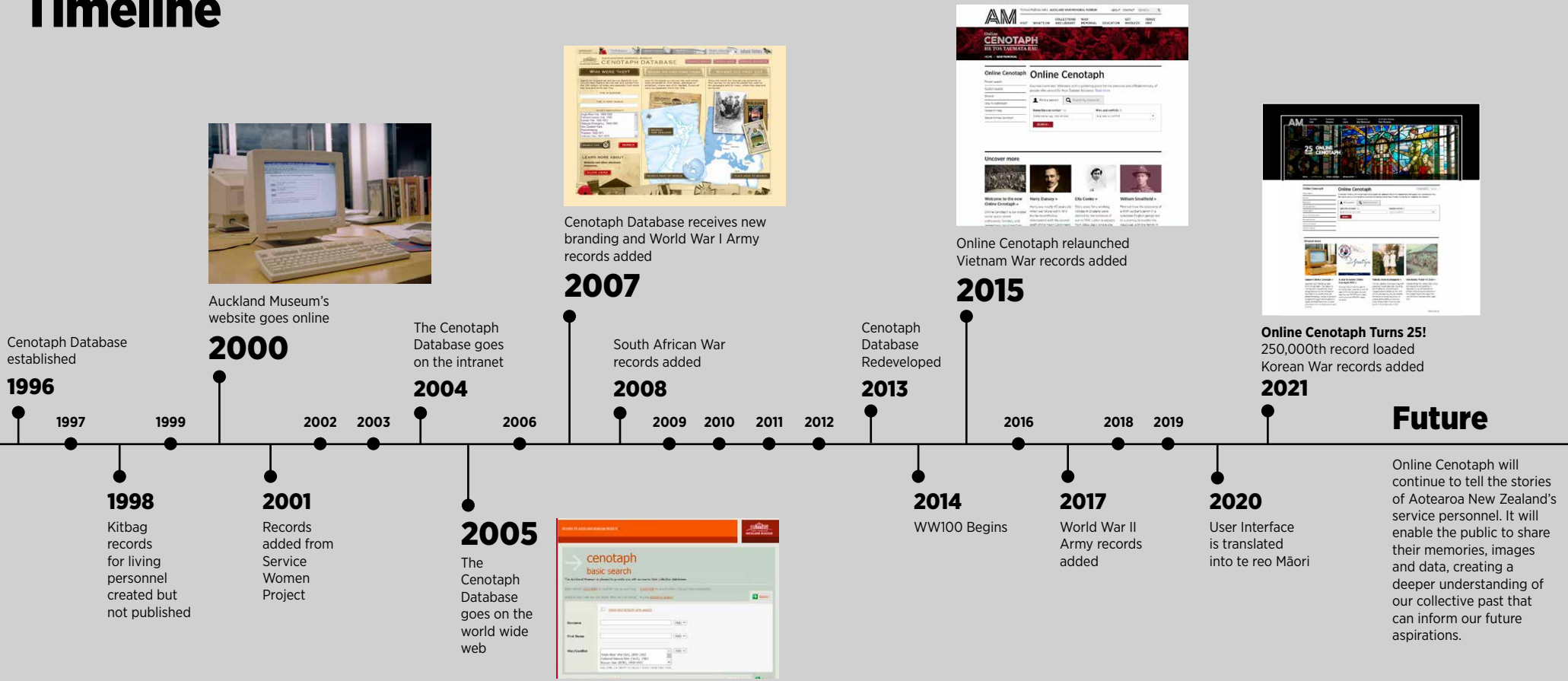
Always a work in progress, Online Cenotaph has the potential to provide a well-rounded view of every New Zealand service person before, during and after their service. It is this potential that drives Auckland War Memorial Museum’s continued investment in this legacy resource.

Our sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to Online Cenotaph over the past quarter-century.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi,
engari he toa takitini
Success is not the work of one,
but the work of many

Victoria Passau
Online Cenotaph and Enquiry Services Manager

Timeline



USER CONTRIBUTIONS SINCE 2015



29,200

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTORS



18,382

NOTES AND MESSAGES ADDED



15,982

ENQUIRIES



85,113

DATA ITEMS ADDED



69,591

DOCUMENTS & IMAGES ADDED



838,856

POPPIES LAID

263,924

TOTAL RECORDS PUBLISHED

THE SOCIAL HISTORIAN

Gabrielle Fortune

Historian Dr Gabrielle Fortune was part of the team that set up the original Cenotaph Database as part of the establishment of the Armoury Information Centre in the mid-1990s. Today she still uses it regularly in her social history research work.

When I started working at the Museum, the Library team and curators had already started dreaming up this idea of a military biographical information database, and were in the process of searching for a computer package that would work.

The main aim was for it to be innovative, and accessible to the public. You have to remember that although now this kind of thing is commonplace, it was something of a trailblazer at the time. We had archival photographs and documents, but back then we couldn't really understand how we could add images to the database. When we finally got a huge scanner it was very exciting and we all went to look at it. The first scan that we did, we all stood around the guy who was shifting the image up onto a serviceman's record – an image of a World War I wooden grave marker in the field. We stood there with our eyes popping out of our heads. Today people would just take that for granted, but it was really innovative and exciting then. We were all holding our breath to see if it would actually work.

Once we did the scanning of [the World War I Army] Embarkation Rolls, that gave the whole thing a big boost. It took time – it's a slow process. But then people started asking for information, once they learned what they might be able to access, and the pace picked up.

Over time it has changed a lot and became more in-depth, more informative – a much bigger and broader database. With the advent of the internet it became widely available – originally it was only accessible in-house. One of the projects we started was adding images of headstones, which people sent in to us from all over the world and I suggested adding war memorials. That's really useful for students who don't have a person in their families to research for projects – they can find a name on a war memorial in their town or suburb, and research that person's history.

When I worked at the Museum, students would come into the Armoury and ask about one of the generals or Churchill or someone like that. They were researching "big" people, about

"Online Cenotaph is important because it brings together the information both about the service and the social history of these people."

whom volumes had already been written. I used to encourage them to pick a soldier who either came from their suburb or went to their school, or someone who had the same surname as them – something that's related to them. It used to spark them up then they discovered details of war service or a social context. I remember with one boy, we found a man who had gone to war who had lived two doors down from where he lived. He discovered the man had been not much older than he was when he went to war. It's a way of making a personal connection and



Gabrielle Fortune in Pou Maumahara, 2020.



“The main aim was for it to be innovative and accessible to the public. You have to remember that although now this kind of thing is commonplace it was something of a trailblazer at the time.”



Left: Allied Flags within the World War I Hall of Memories Sanctuary.
Above: Auckland Museum Library Staff receiving 3M Innovation Award, 1998.

identifying with who these people were, and what actually happened to them.

When we originally started the database, we wanted it to be not just a military record, but a social history record, too. Entries often say who the soldier was married to or their parents' names, their addresses, and may have children's names too. You can get insights into where they lived, where they worked, who they worked for. All this can be really useful information if you're seeking someone out. Today I do work for academics, businesses or for individuals, researching for people who are either writing a history of their family or looking for something specific. In doing any of these things I can end up back at the Online Cenotaph, looking for names or details. It's my go-to place - I know what to expect and what's in there. It's a very rich source.

I always gravitate towards the social history. The impacts of war in terms of social history are enormous, especially in a small country like New Zealand, when you think of the scale of

the losses and casualties. There were all sorts of social spinoffs from it which have not been fully explored - bad things, such as difficulties in resettling, and wounds and injuries that never really left them, and good things, too. The famous number-eight-wire mentality that men coming back from World War I and II acquired helped them to set up businesses and do all sorts of amazing things, based on skills they learned during the war.

Online Cenotaph is important because it brings together the information both about the service and the social history of these people. In New Zealand, our overseas contingents were drawn from civilians - it was a civilian army - so it makes sense to me that it brings together those two aspects. It shows us about their lives and how their service impacted on their communities.

As a social historian, I always swing towards the person and the school and the community that they came out of. That sense of wider communities and groups is worth capturing.

THE MILITARY HISTORIAN

Chris Pugsley

Dr Chris Pugsley is one of New Zealand's foremost military historians. He is a regular user of Online Cenotaph in the course of his research and writing work.

I was involved when the Armoury [now the Pou Maumahara Memorial Discovery Centre] was first set up, as curator for the World War I stages of Scars on the Heart in the 1990s, then as creative director for Stage Two, so I was always very aware of the richness of the Auckland Museum collections. We are about to put out the third edition of the book *Kiwis in Conflict* [originally also called *Scars on the Heart*], which is basically an overview of New Zealanders at war, based on those collections.

I would say that there are very few days that I don't go onto the Online Cenotaph, usually because of the access to personnel files. Information which other people have been researching is also listed there, as well as the marvellous setup whereby family can add material, particularly in terms of letters and images. Another of its great strengths is it's not just those who died but everyone who served, so it's a valuable way of checking people who served in the Home Guard in World War II, for example.

If I'm writing particularly about World War I and II, I want to know the background of the individual who was fighting, as a way of establishing the connections and relationships they had. Richard Stowers, in his book *Bloody Gallipoli*, put in personal histories of every New Zealander who was killed in the Gallipoli campaign – 2,779 individuals. In my last book, *Le Quesnoy 1918*, I did the same thing for that engagement – a lot smaller in scale but it



Dr Chris Pugsley at Anzac Cove, 2015 © Chris Pugsley

meant working through the Online Cenotaph. There were originally 189 names and now there are 196, because I made the point of saying if you know of someone else, contact me or the publisher. We have put together two further reprints including additional names that I was able to cross-check through the Online Cenotaph.

It's not a static database, not locked in time and place or going backwards. There are always little snippets of new information. The fact that it includes the nominal roll means that by looking at an individual you might see that they served with one or two of their brothers, then you've instantly got a potential story there – what happened to these people, too. It's like being offered part of a spider's web and you can then start following the threads back to the centre.

I'm always surprised by what I find. Recently I was looking at a photo of members of a Mounted Rifle regiment, which listed four names. I went into Online Cenotaph and for each of the names a researcher had done their homework and added extra information,



Dr Chris Pugsley at the opening of *Scars on the Heart*, 1996.

about who had been wounded and who killed. Suddenly I had this image that told four personal stories.

Online Cenotaph is important because even with a population of five million people today, the village pattern of relationships that Monty Holcroft [former editor of *The New Zealand Listener*] talked about still exists in New Zealand. And we are not just interested in generals or commanders or the battle itself – we sent citizen armies to war. These men went to war with a background mostly in small-town New Zealand, and many of them came back. It's only by measuring the impact of that that you have great stories that mean something to us as a country. Online Cenotaph is a means of exploring that. It enables me to say, have I really got this person, have I identified what makes this person tick? What was the impact his death or his return had on his family and community?

Through looking at individuals, people can access what happened a long ago. If a hundred or two hundred people are involved in a conflict, how do you absorb that? There were fifteen to

"It's not a static database, not locked in time and place or going backwards. There are always little snippets of new information."

twenty thousand men in a New Zealand division – it's the personalities that reveal the reality. For the exhibition *Gallipoli: The Scale of Our War* at Te Papa Tongarewa, we picked eight people and made them giants. It's a way through these eight people to tell sixteen to seventeen thousand stories, and the ripple effects of their service at Gallipoli, back in New Zealand and in their families. If you identify with that one person, then you can learn a much wider story.

Online Cenotaph is gold, absolute gold. It's such a great source not only for what is there now, but what should and could be there in years to come. It's a marvellous, living repository that continues to grow.

THE DESCENDANT

Willie Cuthers

Tua'ipulotu William Kainana Cuthers is of Cook Islands descent but was raised in New Zealand. He works for the New Zealand Police, but his research into indigenous identity has led him to the stories of Pacific people who served in World War II, including members of his own family, and to make a documentary on their service (see www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/coastwatchers-operation-pacific).

My first contact with Auckland Museum and Online Cenotaph came while I was doing my Master's in indigenous identity. When I was looking into the stories of my ancestors I discovered that my maternal grandfather William Cuthers had served as a Coastwatcher in the Cook Islands during World War II. He wasn't on the Online Cenotaph, but I found out more about his service and what he had done, and then that turned into writing letters to the Prime Minister about recognising their service, and before I knew it I had made a documentary about it! It just blew up like that.

I made contact with the Museum and put it to them about recognising the Pacific Islanders who had served as Radio Operators and Coastwatchers during World War II on Online Cenotaph. I was able to collaborate with them and share the names that I was finding with them, so they could be added to the database.

With many of the Coastwatchers and Radio Operators, I found that even the descendants of these men didn't know what they had done. There had been no acknowledgement or recognition. For them, it was like something that didn't happen. Even now, if I communicate to them that we have these names on Online

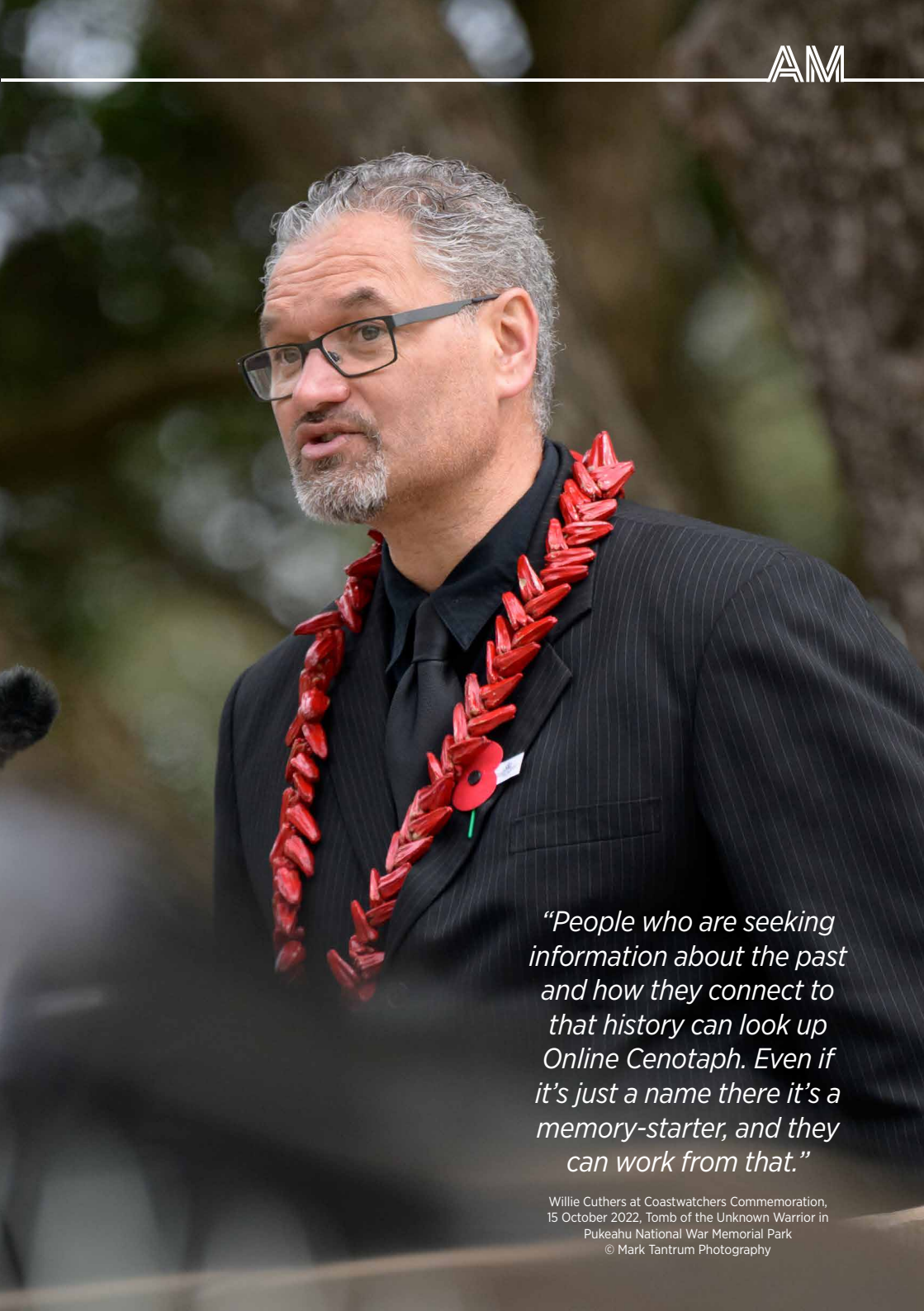
Cenotaph, so they can use that as a means to remember or commemorate them during times like Anzac Day, it's still very hard for them.

I have spoken to lots of people in the Cook Islands, but it's very difficult to change the narrative. When you tell some people that their great-grandfather did this, they can feel hurt that they didn't know before. All I'm doing is trying to shed some light on what happened and unlock their own history. It helped when I made that documentary, to understand that it was kept secret from even the men's families.

Part of the problem is that these men weren't attested [officially part of the New Zealand Defence Force]. When some of the New Zealand Coastwatchers were taken prisoner and killed in the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), at that point there was a decision made that all men carrying out these duties would be attested, but this only applied to Europeans.

On the Cook Islands there was also a local defence force, which my paternal great-grandfather Tuainekore Enoke was a member of. I was able to get those names and put them up on Online Cenotaph. These men were attested, but many people in the Cook Islands don't know about their service. They say 'Did he actually go to war?', but the Pacific region was a theatre of war, and these men were attested in the New Zealand Army during that war. Just because war didn't hit their shores doesn't mean they didn't serve.

When I was making the documentary I gathered a lot of names and was able to pass on a lot of information. I put the word out about what I was doing – most Pacific communities have Facebook pages, so I could get the message out that if you do have relatives who you believe were involved, please forward them to me. After the documentary I had a lot more come through, and a lot of people contacting me.



“People who are seeking information about the past and how they connect to that history can look up Online Cenotaph. Even if it's just a name there it's a memory-starter, and they can work from that.”

Willie Cuthers at Coastwatchers Commemoration, 15 October 2022, Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Pukeahu National War Memorial Park
© Mark Tantrum Photography



Left: Heritage Stonemason Marcus Wainwright at work in the World War II Hall of Memories, 2021. Above: Minister of Defence Peeni Henare and Willie Cuthers at Coastwatchers Commemoration, 15 October 2022, Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Pukeahu National War Memorial Park © Mark Tantrum Photography

I would tell them their ancestor was on Online Cenotaph, and that they could post a poppy there in remembrance. I was asked to speak at the Anzac service in the Cook Islands in 2021, and afterwards a lot of people contacted me and I was able to put their ancestors onto Online Cenotaph.

For me, Online Cenotaph is a way of sharing information. When you actually go to the Museum, you can see the names on the walls. Like these walls, Online Cenotaph creates an online memorial. People who are seeking information about the past and how they connect to that history can look up Online Cenotaph. Even if it's just a name there it's a memory-starter, and they can work from that.

When these names weren't on there, it was like these men didn't exist. Now there's a memorial. Although these names are not physically on the walls, these names are now there in Online Cenotaph, and they are part of New Zealand's history.

A national commemoration in honour of all Coastwatchers who served in the Pacific during World War II was held on 15 October 2022, at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Pukeahu National War Memorial Park. In recognition of their significant contribution, a certificate of service will be issued to Pasifika Coastwatchers or their families, and an online historical record of their service during World War II will be published.

Eligibility note: Online Cenotaph has made specific exceptions to its inclusion criteria to include New Zealanders, or individuals living in territories governed directly or indirectly by New Zealand, who undertook officially organised coast watching activities during wars in which New Zealand had official involvement. This includes employees of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department.

Please note these individuals did not attest as part of the New Zealand Defence Force, and are not eligible for medallic recognition. However, Online Cenotaph has chosen to acknowledge this wartime service.



THE CONTRIBUTOR

John Forrest

John Forrest served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force for nearly 20 years, then worked in human resources for the New Zealand Defence Force for another quarter of a century. Now retired, he has become a 'super-user' of the Online Cenotaph, frequently contributing names, dates and other information to build the database.

I joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1972, enlisting as an aircraft technician then remustering to work in administration, working in housing and welfare, operations centres, general administration and civilian payroll. In 1991 I accepted a civilian position with the New Zealand Defence Force, based at RNZAF Base Woodbourne near Blenheim.

Around 1992 or '93 a group of us in Blenheim started building an email database of people interested in being notified when their comrades had passed away, and funerals were turning into mini-reunions. Many people around the country and overseas had no idea that their comrades had passed away. We built up a database of around 3,000 people and started a roll of honour to record their deaths and where their graves were.

About 2005 we started recording the full service histories of people who had died in service or been with the RNZAF, going back to World War I. I found some marvellous books written by Errol Martyn [the three-volume *For your Tomorrow: A record of New Zealanders who have died while serving with the RNZAF and Allied Air Services since 1915*] and Colin Hanson [By Such Deeds] which had lots of names and details, and found out I could get more information through the Auckland Museum.



John Forrest in RNZAF uniform. Image supplied.

I went and had a look, but a lot of these people were missing from the Museum records. I'd estimate that only about 40 per cent of people who should be on the Online Cenotaph database were there. There weren't many names [of Air Force personnel] from Vietnam or Malaya, or 41 Squadron [a transport unit stationed in Singapore from 1955 to the mid-1970s]. I've worked to identify these particular airmen in South East Asia during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, and in Vietnam. I began contacting them too, to make sure they got their medals and entitlements. If you are recognised for operational services, you can access very good support if you need it later on.

When I was working, I used to do an hour or two of research a day. I've recently retired, so lately I've been doing five or six hours a day, sometimes more. There's always stuff to do. I also contribute to several Facebook pages: RNZAF sick and deceased, Past and Present, South East Asian Veterans and Wings over New Zealand. I post information and enquiries on there and send whatever information I gather off to the Museum.

I've recently finished doing a full database of all RNZAF airmen who served in the Armament trade in World War II. I've got 803 I'm working on at the moment, with another 1,298 post-WW2 which I will pass on to the Museum. It includes each person's date of birth and service record: rank, dates of service, trade, date of death, where they died, where they're interred, whether they were with a squadron or in conflict.

There are other people who I collaborate with, too. Les Olsen has collated the database of armourers from World War I to the present day – although that trade is now obsolete and has been absorbed into another trade. He's in his 80s now and that's been his thing for years. He's adding another dimension to the Online Cenotaph by collating that information at home and sharing it on the database. Others, such as Lance Reid, research electoral rolls and foreign records for us, and a team of photographers around New Zealand, like Gavin and Shelly Gault, Andrew and Bernadine Rooney and others, take photos of graves and brass plaques for us, which contain lots of information. Besides the regulars, lots of people take photos of graves on my request and send them to us.

"It's quite satisfying when family come to you with some records, and I say give me time and I will put it in. Then you send them the link [to the Online Cenotaph entry] and they're so happy."

We get information from birth and death notices, electoral rolls, gazette notices and cemetery records. We try to encourage family to add information and photographs if they can. I also look for a statement of service – a lot of people don't know they exist but that gives us the full information about when the person



John Forrest at the Marlborough Returned and Services' Association © Stuff

enlisted and where they served. I'm strongly of the opinion that when a person retires from the military they should have a paper to sign to say "I wish my service record to go to the Museum", so their details can be correctly recorded. I'm working on that!

Sometimes we find things just by Googling. The Billion Graves and Find A Grave websites are also useful – they have close to 50,000 photos of grave plaques, which usually give the rank and where the person served.

It's quite satisfying when family come to you with some records, and I say give me time and I will put it in. Then you send them the link [to the Online Cenotaph entry] and they're so happy.

This work is important, because I think people who have served should be remembered. My uncles served in World War I in Egypt and Gallipoli; one came back with one arm, and the other came back with lead still in him. In World War II, my father did two tours in the Pacific as a medic – he went to Guadalcanal with the Americans. He suffered from PTSD and died early. My stepfather served four years in the desert with the Eighth Army. I believe all people who have served and done their time should be in the Cenotaph database, so their families and friends can find them. It's a way to honour these people.

THE COLLECTION MANAGER

Victoria Passau

Victoria Passau started working at Auckland Museum in 2014, and currently holds the role of Online Cenotaph and Enquiry Services Manager. In this position she is responsible for leading and developing the Museum's enquiry systems and Online Cenotaph, Auckland Museum's flagship digital collection.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of Online Cenotaph is a significant opportunity to acknowledge not only the Museum's own work, and the people who had the forethought to establish the database, but also the work of volunteers and the tens of thousands of people who have contributed to it.

Online Cenotaph is important because it's a space that enables quiet commemoration. The role of the Museum is as a living memorial, and this is a way people can acknowledge their loved ones or give back to their community. From a Museum standpoint, it's a military database that focuses on service, and everything else is a bonus. It starts with the basics of name, rank and number, but additional personal information can be added by the public, which reveals so many more stories.

The relationship that people have with Online Cenotaph has changed over that time. It's gone from people having to come into the Museum space and the Armoury Information Centre to access it, to the Pou Maumahara Memorial Discovery Centre and the database online, but that conceptual commemorative space has endured throughout the 25 years. Over that time we have built on existing relationships and developed new ones. We help our community piece together their stories, and they are helping us. It is such a reciprocal process.

Online Cenotaph is unique in that people can share with us what they know, compared to other opportunities where public contributions have to be verified or be within a particular format or referencing style. We decided not to do that – people's knowledge is not necessarily in a book, it's within family stories or memories. We wouldn't have wanted to limit that; we're not telling people how to remember or how to experience, how to feel, or what is valued.

It is a unique part of the Museum. Museums can be seen to be exclusionary or elitist spaces of academic research, but Online Cenotaph has always been more open: a space where people can interact with us and provide us with information. It's hard to reflect in a statistic or to explain to auditors or management, but we believe that commemoration can be enacted just by a person searching Online Cenotaph or laying a digital poppy.

“Online Cenotaph is important because it's a space that enables quiet commemoration. The role of the Museum is as a living memorial, and this is a way people can acknowledge their loved ones or give back to their community.”

Some people who are researching a specific conflict, such as World War I, think that's the only one the database covers. In fact, it now covers 40 conflicts – but we never pretend that it's complete. It's been 25 years of building a data set. We have added on average 10,000 records a year

Victoria Passau in Pou Maumahara, 2019.



Left: Patron and staff using Online Cenotaph in Pou Maumahara
Above: Victoria Passau, Peter Gallacher and Madison Pine during an interview in 2021

in that time, so now there are more than 260,000 individual records online. We are now able to focus on adding big data sets, as well as creating individual records and answering enquiries.

In early 2020, Dan Millar, a former Online Cenotaph staff member, moved down to Wellington to source relevant records for Online Cenotaph from Archives New Zealand. He took nearly 20,000 images of openly accessible records across more than a hundred files, on his cell phone. At the time, we didn't really comprehend how valuable this project would be for us!

Once the Covid lockdowns started, we were able to support 13 visitor hosts, as well as some of our volunteers, by providing these files for remote transcription. Through this process we have added 14,000 new records – the equivalent of someone typing forty hours a week for two and a half years. While obviously being an incredibly challenging time, the past few years has provided us with the opportunity to undertake a significant number of data projects we wouldn't have been able to previously.

I don't think the potential of Online Cenotaph has been reached by half. There is so much more that we could do with the data and images collected over the years. In terms of research, you could use the content in there in so many different ways. While the dataset is skewed by being mostly male, it still gives 130 years of information about average New Zealanders

and their lives and achievements that goes far beyond their military service.

Although we are locally funded, we undertake nationally and internationally significant work. I don't think there are any other examples of commemorative projects that cover so many conflicts. It's a unique position that I don't believe our Museum colleagues would have considered 25 years ago – that we would develop into something that would be so comprehensive that enables so many people to share their knowledge.

The military focus and commemorative role are important, but it's also a place people feel they can engage with the Museum and contribute to the wider understanding of New Zealand's society over time. Opening up the space and the dialogue doesn't take anything away from the Museum's research function or its mana – it still holds that knowledge and experience, a heritage of 170 years of research and academic rigour. I believe it actually enriches it; it shows in its imperfect way that all knowledge is valued, and that gatekeeping is not necessary.

Yes, it's a memorial and we do this work because we want to acknowledge people who served. But also the way we enable the public to add information means we get a deeper understanding of who these individuals were and what it meant to be a service person. We have created something that's a legacy, and it's everyone's legacy.

THE VOLUNTEER

Stoney Burke

Morris 'Stoney' Burke served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force for more than 25 years, including three tours of duty with 3 Squadron and one with 41 Squadron, flying regularly in Vietnam. Due to his family history he has retained an interest in New Zealand's military history and contribution, and now volunteers regularly with Online Cenotaph.

I first learned about the Cenotaph Database before it was online, when it was just at the Museum. I started off looking at my own family's history and I'm now fascinated by it all, and getting worse and worse!

I have come to really enjoy helping other people. Especially around Anzac Day and Armistice Day, we get a big increase in people who come in and say here is this person, what's their connection? Before Covid, I really enjoyed the interactions with visitors and helping to educate them.

Over the last couple of years, we have had access to a lot of material from Archives New Zealand, which included a huge number of candidates for inclusion on Online Cenotaph. I've been working on parts of that from home, particularly on prisoners of war and New Zealand Air Force personnel – areas that we were quite short of information on previously. I got heavily into that during Covid, transcribing some of the information from Archives NZ listings onto spreadsheets for inclusion into the database. I quite enjoyed it, but it took me five times longer than everybody else because I would see names and go off to research individuals because it was so interesting!

The amount of time I spend working on it varies. I used to like to spend a whole day a week volunteering at the Museum, but when I moved away to South Auckland seven or eight years ago it became a bit more time-consuming to come in. Also, because of Covid restrictions, I haven't been able to go in to the Museum for the last two and a half years. When I get into working on spreadsheets at home, I might do one or two or three hours a day, then have a break for a bit.

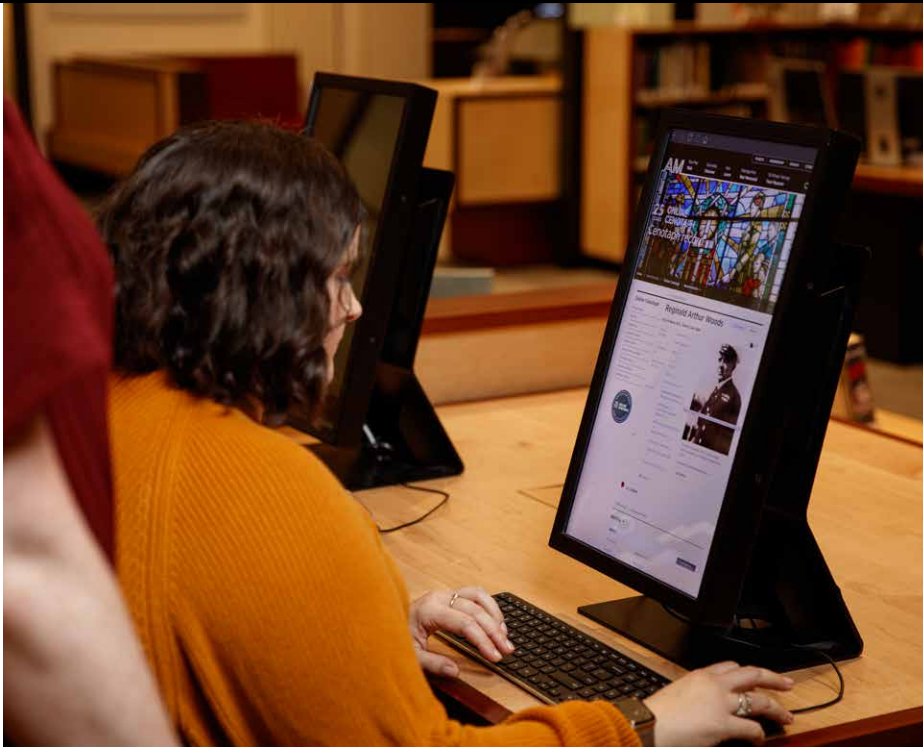
I see my role as educating and supporting people to use Online Cenotaph, telling them how they can use it but also add to it by uploading information and photographs. I've also spoken to local historical societies and run programmes on how to use it. I can give a few pointers and get the interest going. Once a person starts and finds a bit of information, they're away. I know people who have found family names going right back to the South African War, and most conflicts since. There's a growing increase in remembrance, now we're a couple of generations separated from it.

I had at least one very good result. The Pukekohe RSA was given a set of medals someone had found, and I could see a name around the edge. I discovered the name in Online Cenotaph – it was a nurse who served in Egypt in World War I. I contacted a family member who had uploaded some information, as they had left their email address, and she put me in touch with someone else in the family, and I was able to return the medals to her. It was a great satisfaction to be able to do that for the family, from being able to track them down through the Online Cenotaph.

My years of service in the military probably helped me to appreciate the significance of preserving this history. Also, my father [Martin



Stoney Burke Anzac Day 2020 © Stoney Burke



Above: Patron using Online Cenotaph in Pou Maumahara.
Right: Flying Officer NR McKenzie, Flying Officer GL Claxton and Sergeant MD Burke, looking at a map, in front of No. 3 Squadron Iroquois NZ3804. Crown Copyright 1974. Air Force Museum of New Zealand CC-BY-NC 3.0.

John Morris Burke, known as Jack] served four years overseas in the army as an engineer, and I inherited his diaries, one for each year from 1941-44. To my eternal embarrassment I had never read them until quite some years later, after I had been on service overseas myself. I transcribed his diaries and had them published [as *A Sapper's Diary: 1941-1944*], and it was only then that I realised what a hell of a time he had. Like the majority of servicemen, my father had never talked about the war.

If I had a dollar for every time I've said to people subsequently that we just don't know we're alive, compared to those guys... just the deprivation they suffered over those years, if nothing else. I also had a couple of relatives who served in [Royal Air Force] Bomber Command and it's just beyond belief, the history

"I see my role as educating and supporting people to use Online Cenotaph, telling them how they can use it but also add to it by uploading information and photographs."

of what happened and the losses of nineteen- and twenty-year-olds in their hundreds and thousands. Too many people today just don't appreciate how lucky we are. That's what keeps me going. I will stick with it as long as I can read the screen and press the buttons.



Closing thoughts

A century ago, plans and fundraising were well underway towards the construction of the new Auckland War Memorial Museum, providing a home both for the Auckland Institute's museum and for the war memorial to the thousands from the Auckland provincial district who had perished in the First World War.

The award-winning design included a Cenotaph on the forecourt, modelled closely on the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The cenotaph form, a symbolic empty coffin raised on a stone pylon, had become a poignant way to honour those lost in the Great War who remained buried in foreign lands, a great distance from relatives who mourned.

The Cenotaph and its symbolism is also an apt concept for New Zealand's Online Cenotaph – a vessel with links to many distant places, a gathering point to remember service and lives lost. Over the last 25 years, the database and its access platform have become a vital part of our memorial landscape, a node with links to many related sources of information.

Auckland War Memorial Museum is a prominent physical site of commemorative activities and increasingly across many of the Museum's fields of interest; digital activities are enhancing the organisation's work. Online Cenotaph is a prime example where digital applications are not only augmenting physical activities, they are far surpassing what is possible in the analogue world. Writers elsewhere in this publication have noted Online Cenotaph's wide-ranging utility to research, to personal story gathering and to enabling connections. These connections take many forms – within and between families,

across distant geographies, and perhaps less obviously, in forming a social science dataset for analysis and interrogation.

Increasingly, Auckland Museum is concerned with the care and curation of information and data, alongside its more widely known role looking after physical collections – taonga, documents, specimens and artefacts. The teams who have nurtured and developed Online Cenotaph over the last quarter-century have been among the leaders in the Museum's work in information policy, crowd-sourcing, data management and community connection.

“Auckland Museum is concerned with the care and curation of information and data, alongside its more widely known role looking after physical collections – taonga, documents, specimens and artefacts.”

I would like to record my thanks to the many staff and volunteers, past and present, who have applied their expertise and passion to this extraordinary project. It has become a much-treasured cornerstone of New Zealand's biographical, historical and military research ecosystem. And it is not finished. We look forward to working with current and new partners over the next 25 years to keep Online Cenotaph growing and developing, probably in ways that we can't yet imagine.

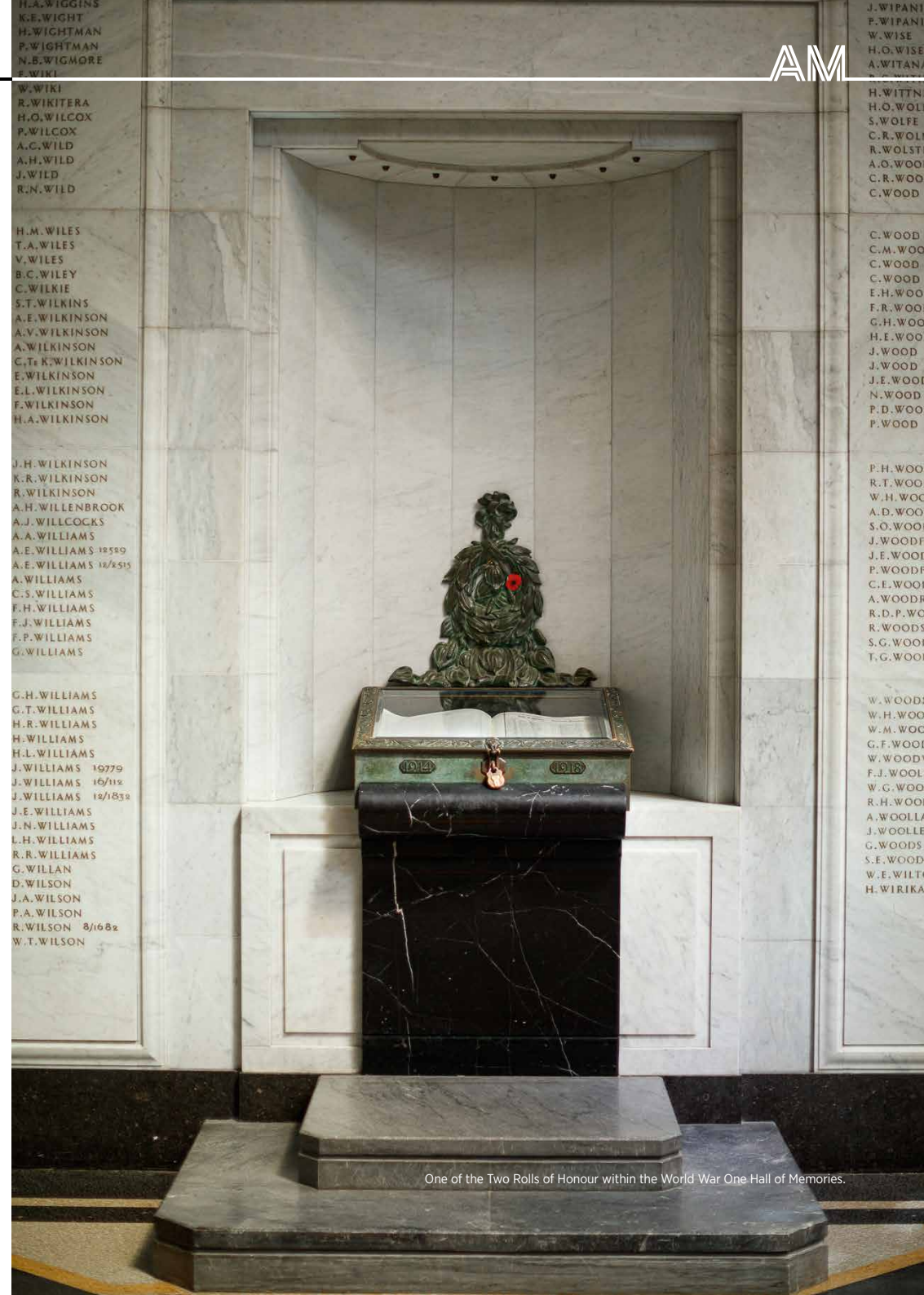
David Reeves
Director, Collections and Research

H.A. WIGGINS
K.E. WIGHT
H. WIGHTMAN
P. WIGHTMAN
N.B. WIGMORE
F. WIKI
W. WIKI
R. WIKITERA
H.O. WILCOX
P. WILCOX
A.C. WILD
A.H. WILD
J. WILD
R.N. WILD

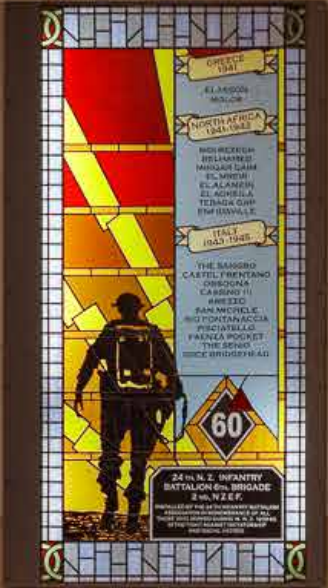
H.M. WILES
T.A. WILES
V. WILES
B.C. WILEY
C. WILKIE
S.T. WILKINS
A.E. WILKINSON
A.V. WILKINSON
A. WILKINSON
G.T. WILKINSON
E. WILKINSON
E.L. WILKINSON
F. WILKINSON
H.A. WILKINSON

J.H. WILKINSON
K.R. WILKINSON
R. WILKINSON
A.H. WILLENBROOK
A.J. WILLCOCKS
A.A. WILLIAMS
A.E. WILLIAMS 19599
A.E. WILLIAMS 12/8515
A. WILLIAMS
C.S. WILLIAMS
F.H. WILLIAMS
F.J. WILLIAMS
F.P. WILLIAMS
G. WILLIAMS

G.H. WILLIAMS
G.T. WILLIAMS
H.R. WILLIAMS
H. WILLIAMS
H.L. WILLIAMS
J. WILLIAMS 19779
J. WILLIAMS 16/112
J. WILLIAMS 12/1839
J.E. WILLIAMS
J.N. WILLIAMS
L.H. WILLIAMS
R.R. WILLIAMS
G. WILLAN
D. WILSON
J.A. WILSON
P.A. WILSON
R. WILSON 8/1682
W.T. WILSON



One of the Two Rolls of Honour within the World War One Hall of Memories.



NGĀ MIHI MAIOHA TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ONLINE CENOTAPH

We would like to acknowledge the time, energy, aroha and knowledge of all the countless veterans, staff, volunteers, researchers and members of the public who have contributed to making Online Cenotaph the rich and dynamic collection it is today.

We couldn't have done it without you.

FUNDERS AND KEY ORGANISATIONS PAST AND PRESENT

New Zealand Lottery Grants Board
- Te Puna Tahua

Ministry for Culture and Heritage
- Manutū Taonga

Archives New Zealand
- Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

C&L Gregory Trust

Sheldon Werner Charitable Fund

Copyright Licensing New Zealand
InternetNZ

Vernon Systems

James Searle Say Foundation

Royal New Zealand Returned
and Services' Association

Ngā Pātaka Kōrero
- Auckland Libraries

New Zealand Electronic Text Collection

New Zealand Micrographic Services

New Zealand War Graves Trust

NZ Society of Genealogists

Veterans' Affairs
- Te Tira Ahu Ika A Whiro

New Zealand Defence Force
- Personnel Archives and Medals

New Zealand Defence Force
- Heritage, Commemorations and Protocol Group

National Army Museum
- Te Mata Toa

Torpedo Bay Navy Museum

Air Force Museum of New Zealand



Museum staff members Jacqueline Sneeh and Leone Samu Tui in the World War I Hall of Memories.

First published in April 2023 by
Auckland War Memorial Museum
Tāmaki Paenga Hira
The Domain, Parnell
Auckland 1052

PDF ISBN: 978-0-473-67633-9
Paperback ISBN: 978-0-473-67632-2

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Contributors:

Sarah Ell, Victoria Passau, David Reeves

Graphic Design:

Sita Narsai

Photography:

Auckland War Memorial Museum
(unless otherwise noted)

Acknowledgments:

In the production of this publication, we give special acknowledgment to Sarah Ell, Adam Moriarty, Richard Ng, Sita Narsai, David Reeves, Zoë Richardson and Amy Stewart.

