Introduction: Howard Kippenberger and the Qualities of Command

A biography, at best, is a series of photographs, taken from a limited number of positions, on a selectively sensitive plate, by a photographer whose presence affects the expression of the sitter in a characteristic way.[1]

C.D. Broad

Who is this man with the curious name?[2]

Die Burger, 1949

In September 1943 Driver A. O. Eyles presented to 5 New Zealand Infantry Brigade a military march he had composed while stationed in Burnham military camp near Christchurch, New Zealand.[3] The title of the march was "Kippenberger", in honour of 5 Brigade's popular commander, Brigadier Howard Kippenberger, then on furlough leave in New Zealand. Eyles had served under Kippenberger in the pre-war Territorial Force (TF), but had not done so during the war years. Yet Eyles was so affected by Kippenberger's personality and leadership that he composed the only military march named after a New Zealand commander.

Forty years later, on Anzac Day in Christchurch Cathedral, New Zealand, complete with the playing of two national anthems and a reading of the Oration of Pericles, a brass plaque in honour of Howard Kippenberger was unveiled and dedicated by returned servicemen and women of Canterbury province. The plaque contained the details of Kippenberger's military service, dates of birth and death, and the words "A Revered Commanding Officer". Kippenberger's

1. C. D. Broad, Quoted by J. Wintle and R. Kenin, *The Penguin Concise Dictionary of Biographical Quotation*, Harmondsworth, 1981, p.17.
2. *Die Burger*, South Africa's principal Nationalist newspaper during the dispute over the 1949 New Zealand Rugby tour to South Africa, quoted in Brent Mallory's series on Major General Sir Howard Kippenberger, *The Evening Post*, 18 April 1953, Biography Brigadier H. K. Kippenberger prepared by US Authorities, WA II Series 1, DA 406/82, New Zealand National Archives (NZNA).
3. A. M. Eyles to author, letter, February 1992. A copy of the Kippenberger March was enclosed with the letter.

favourite passage from the Bible, the single verse of Micah 6: 8 which had become his creed of life,[4] also featured on the plaque.[5]

Some twenty years earlier a New Zealand journalist had stated that Howard Kippenberger:

> was the most respected man in the New Zealand Army. ... 'Kip' was what almost every New Zealander would have liked his son to grow up to resemble. He had a phenomenal memory for names and faces, he was no man to insist on rank, and his very manner of speech seemed to the Kiwis to be absolutely right.[6]

A recent work on the New Zealand Divisional commander of the Second World War, Lieutenant General Sir Bernard Freyberg, described Kippenberger as "the most talented senior New Zealand brigadier in the Mediterranean theatre" and "the emerging talent of the Division".[7]

In 1992, nearly fifty years since the end of the Second World War and some thirty-five years since Kippenberger's death, a New Zealand returned serviceman wrote to me:

> As I type this note I am looking at a framed photo of Kip and it may surprise you to know he still has a great control of my daily life. ... I have no hesitation in saying Kip was the greatest and most respected man I ever knew.[8]

These are but five examples from the hundreds I could have chosen to illustrate the primary significance of Howard Kippenberger to New Zealand's military and post-war history.

4 Brigadier J. T. Burrows, Address Delivered at Anzac Day Service, Christchurch Cathedral, 25 April 1983, copy in author's possession.

5 Order of Service, Anzac Day Service, Christchurch Cathedral, 25 April 1983, copy in author's possession.

6 L. Hobbs, *Kiwi Down the Strada*, Christchurch, 1963, p.49.

7 L. Barber and J. Tonkin-Covell, *Freyberg: Churchill's Salamander*, Auckland, 1989, pp. 26, 29.

8 E. J. Townley to author, letter, 14 March 1992.

This study of Kippenberger as a commander is the first analysis of a New Zealand Army commander other than Freyberg. Freyberg has five biographies, a television series on his life ran to five episodes, a recent postage stamp carried his stern profile, and numerous New Zealand Army trophies, buildings, competitions and streets are named in his honour. Until very recently Kippenberger had only a street in a small North Canterbury town named after him, but now has the Kippenberger Pavilion of the Queen Elizabeth II War Memorial in Waiouru dedicated to his memory. Other New Zealand Army commanders such as Andrew Russell, James Hargest, George Clifton, "Steve" Weir and H. E. Barrowclough have also been largely ignored by military historians and the New Zealand public.

Freyberg had a record of service in the First World War that was a "long succession of glorious deeds of valour"[9] for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross, the Distinguished Service Order with two Bars and command of a brigade in the Royal Naval Division. Freyberg's glowing reputation was only enhanced by his service in the Second World War. Winston Churchill, impressed by Freyberg's thirty odd battle scars acquired in the two great conflicts, nicknamed Freyberg the "Salamander"[10] and Montgomery claimed he was "the best fighting Divisional Commander I have ever known".[11]

This larger-than-life figure has cast such a giant shadow that it has blotted out the reputation and achievements of all his subordinate commanders and predecessors. The name of Freyberg is synonymous with the reputation and fame of the New Zealand Division but very few New Zealanders other than ex-servicemen and women could name five, or maybe even one, of the brigade or battalion commanders who served with him.

[9] W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War Volume III: The Grand Alliance*, London, 1950, p.242.

[10] *ibid.*

[11] Field Marshal B. L. Montgomery to Brooke, letter before Operation SUPERCHARGE, quoted in N. Hamilton, *Monty: the Making of a General 1887-1942*, London, 1981, p.836. Montgomery also added, somewhat unkindly, that Freyberg "has no great brain and could never command a Corps". Many people, including Churchill and the New Zealand Government, did not agree with the last part of Montgomery's assessment. My Chapter 3 on the Left Hooks in part confirms Montgomery's viewpoint.

That Freyberg's reputation and fame have overshadowed the contribution of the other commanders within the 2nd New Zealand Division is a tragedy for New Zealand's military history. It must be kept in mind that although Freyberg spent much of his childhood and youth in New Zealand and had New Zealand family connections, he was not, despite this, a New Zealander. This was made clear by the Australian journalist, Alan Moorehead, when he stated that the New Zealand Division drew a lot of its courage from "its *English* General, Freyberg, the V.C.".[12] The "English" from this sentence has often been dropped when quoted in New Zealand sources.[13] It should not be forgotten that during the Great War and until 1939 Freyberg served in the Royal Naval Division and the British Army and had been virtually "put out to pasture" by his forced early retirement. His appointment as the New Zealand Divisional Commander in 1939 was made because he was available and had offered his services; and more importantly, because the New Zealand Government of the day felt that it did not have an officer of sufficient experience and maturity to command a military force the size of a division. The appointment of an outsider greatly upset some serving New Zealand officers at the time.[14]

This situation did not last and many times during the war 2nd New Zealand Division was commanded with competence by "home grown" New Zealand commanders including Kippenberger. A New Zealander also commanded New Zealand's two brigade division in the Pacific and another New Zealand commander was given command of a British Division in the closing months of the war, the only dominion commander to receive such a command. The achievements of all the commanders within the division should not be overshadowed by Freyberg's.

It is of significance that those close to Freyberg during the war years initially found Freyberg to be "foreign and very formal" until a process of "rediscovery as a New Zealander" began during the campaigns in Greece and Crete.[15] For Kippenberger, immersed in the culture of New Zealand and with a

[12] A Moorehead, *The End in Africa*, London, 1973, p.154.

[13] See, for example, P. McIntyre, *Peter McIntyre: War Artist*, Wellington, 1981, p.187.

[14] W. G. Stevens, *Freyberg V.C.: The Man 1939-1945*, Wellington, 1965, pp.14-17.

[15] *ibid*, p.34. Sir Leonard Thornton, at a conference in Wellington in May 1995, described Freyberg's transformation from referring to "them" to referring to "us" when describing the New Zealanders.

deep understanding of New Zealand's military traditions, no such "rediscovery" was necessary.

There is another deep-rooted cause for this serious omission from New Zealand's military history. New Zealanders have tended to regard military tradition and ceremony with great suspicion and hostility and this has also applied to any study of New Zealand's military efforts. Many New Zealanders appear to regard the study of military history as "politically incorrect" and seem to believe that the serious study of this type of history equates with a love of killing. New Zealanders have tended quickly to forget the numerous campaigns in which their armed forces have been involved and strangely, the campaigns that have attracted most public attention are military defeats. As Michael King has commented, "the actions on which they have dwelt most considerably in retrospect — Gallipoli, Crete, Cassino — were not even victories".[16] Military defeats, especially when they demonstrate the futility of war, are viewed as safe and "politically correct". It is almost as if New Zealanders are embarrassed or uncomfortable with the subject matter to acknowledge their country's military victories. In fact, one of the most remarkable New Zealand victories of the Second World War, Takrouna, "the most gallant feat of arms I witnessed in the course of the war" according to Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Horrocks, the British Corps Commander of the battle,[17] is virtually unknown in New Zealand. Takrouna is especially significant to this study as it was also the scene of Kippenberger's greatest tactical blunder. After the war the French built a monument to the soldiers who had fought so gallantly and shown "sheer military impudence, a classic example of initiative and leadership".[18] The New Zealand people did nothing about the Takrouna battle — except quickly to forget it.

What makes a person successful at the art of command? A survey of military literature reveals considerable agreement on the essential qualities a commander

[16] M. King, *New Zealanders at War*, Auckland, 1981, p.1.

[17] Sir Brian Horrocks, *A Full Life*, London, 1960, p.163.

[18] J. Laffin, *Anzacs at War: The Story of Australian and New Zealand Battles*, London, 1965, p.153.

must possess although there are differences in emphasis.

The doyen of modern military thinkers, Carl von Clausewitz, in his seminal work *On War*, identified several essential qualities for a great commander but believed two to be of primary importance. These were courage and intelligence.

According to Clausewitz, "War is the province of danger, and therefore courage above all things is the first quality of a warrior". [19] Clausewitz writes of two kinds of courage: physical courage, or indifference to danger; and moral courage — the courage to accept responsibility and make decisions. A successful commander had to combine both as they are of equal importance and together form the "most perfect kind of courage". [20]

Lord Moran, Churchill's doctor and a Medical Officer in the Great War, wrote a small but very influential treatise on courage. His main point, spelt out on the first page of the work, was that courage "is will-power, whereof no man has an unlimited stock; and when it is used up, he is finished". [21] Certainly a soldier or commander is finished in that capacity when courage has been exhausted. Courage, according to Moran, is: "a moral quality; it is not just a gift of nature like an aptitude for games. It is a cold choice between two alternatives". [22]

Most other writers on military leadership have singled out courage as an essential quality. J.F.C. Fuller in his work on the diseases of generalship has written that without courage "there can be no true generalship". [23] While General Wavell regarded the quality of "robustness" as the the first essential of a general, he also believed that courage "physical and moral, a general undoubtedly must have".[24] In his series of lectures on generalship Wavell quoted Voltaire's comment about Marlborough's "calm courage in the midst of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of nature for command". [25]

[19] C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, (ed. A. Rapoport) London, 1968, p.139. [First published 1832]

[20] *ibid*, p.140.

[21] Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, London, 1945, p.x.

[22] *ibid*, p.67.

[23] J.F.C. Fuller, *Generalship. Its Diseases and their Cure*, Harrisburg, PA, 1936, p.8.

[24] General Sir Archibald Wavell, *Generals and Generalship*, London, 1941, pp.2,5.

[25] *ibid*, p.5, also quoted in N. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, London, 1994, p.338.

While courage is seen as a first essential of true military leadership, clearly it is not enough. According to Clausewitz, intelligence is also a prerequisite for a successful commander. A "fine and penetrating mind"[26]is needed to cut through the fog of war. Clausewitz identified four elements of war — danger, physical effort, uncertainty and chance — and believed that "a great force of mind and understanding is requisite to be able to make way with safety and success amongst such opposing elements".[27] All the other essential qualities of a great commander identified by Clausewitz — resolution, energy, firmness, staunchness, strength of mind (that is the mind "does not lose its balance even under the most violent excitement"), strength of character and a sense of locality — all were linked to the commander's intellect. Indeed, Clausewitz went so far as to proclaim that war "can never be conducted with success by people without distinguished powers of understanding".[28]

There is a third quality. In his work on the diseases of generalship, Fuller included a quote by Marshal Saxe that "the first quality a general should possess is courage, without which all others are of little value; the second is brains and the third is good health".[29] For Fuller, courage, creative intelligence and physical fitness were the "three pillars of generalship".[30] Good health was part of what Wavell meant by "robustness".

Wavell, Norman Dixon and others identify a fourth important quality of a good military commander — that of fighting spirit. This includes a willingness to take risks and be decisive in command rather than waiting for things to happen. Wavell stated that an essential quality was character; that a commander must know: "What he wants and has the courage and determination to get it and most vital of all, he must possess what we call the fighting spirit, the will to win".[31] Matthew Cooper, in his mammoth study of the German Army of the Second World War, believed that Rommel's greatness as a commander was due not only to an "unusual tactical brilliance" but to "a superabundance of that energy, aggression, and robustness without which no commander can withstand

[26] Clausewitz, *op. cit*, p.140.
[27] *ibid*, p.144.
[28] *ibid*, p.155.
[29] *Mes Reveries*, *Marshal Saxe* (1757), quoted in Fuller, *op. cit*, p.31.
[30] *ibid*, p.35.
[31] Wavell, *op. cit*, p.6.

the rigours of war".[32] Yet General von Senger und Etterlin, a commander whom the New Zealanders faced in one of their toughest battles of the war at Cassino, identified a "common type of officer defect" in Rommel: "during any run of victories he [Rommel] was a real source of inspiration to his men; but he was all too rapidly discouraged by defeats". [33] Great commanders face their true test during a crisis and it is in defeat that the quality of robustness really comes to the fore. The ability to inspire troops in defeat, to "keep the faith" in the most hopeless of circumstances, was a vital quality for New Zealand commanders as in the early years of the war, and in 1944, the New Zealand Division participated in some of the worst military disasters of the war.

Dixon, in his search for the "common denominators of military incompetence",[34] stressed that most military incompetence has occurred because of the military commander's acute fear of failure, his paralysis in decision making and an overcautious approach to war.[35] Dixon went on to identify an "ideal military leader" as:

> One who manages to combine excellence as a task-specialist with an equal flair for the social or heroic aspects of leadership. ... Such leaders ... combine extreme professionalism in the realizing of military goals with a warm humanity which earned them the lasting affection and loyalty of their men.[36]

The ability to command affection and loyalty is, then, a fifth quality. As the "best examples" of the "ideal military leader" Dixon cited Wellington, Nelson, Lawrence and Slim.[37] Thus courage, intelligence, health, fighting spirit, and the ability to command affection and loyalty are essential qualities for a great commander. This study will determine Kippenberger's essential command qualities.

[32] M. Cooper, *The German Army 1933 - 1945* Lanham, 1990, p.352.

[33] General von Senger und Etterlin, quoted in D. Irving, *The Trail of the Fox. The Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel*, London, 1985 p,409.

[34] Dixon, *op. cit*, p.144.

[35] *ibid*, p.221.

[36] *ibid*, p.219.

[37] *ibid*.

There are some significant, indeed crucial questions, relating to New Zealand's participation in the the Second World War which, while not forming the central focus of this work, nevertheless, need to be addressed in this study of Kippenberger. These questions relate to the New Zealand Army's experience of war from 1939 to 1944. Kippenberger's command can only be evaluated as a part of that broader framework.

One such issue of immense historical concern is the protracted run of military disasters experienced by the New Zealand Division in North Africa in 1941 and 1942. The losses associated with these disasters were simply staggering. At Belhamed, Libya, in November 1941, for example, Kippenberger's 20 Battalion was overwhelmed and most of the battalion was lost. There were 561 casualties including 371 men marched into captivity. Only 120 men and two officers returned unaffected from this action and they were all from the company allocated to Battalion Headquarters.[38] Kippenberger's battalion was not the only one to suffer such heavy losses in its first desert battle.

At Ruweisat Ridge — a place name synonymous with disaster in New Zealand's military history — in July 1942 a whole brigade was overrun and lost while another suffered heavy losses. Total casualties for the New Zealand Division at Ruweisat Ridge numbered 1400. And a similar military disaster occurred a week later. To highlight the significant losses of the New Zealand Division during the war years one only needs to look at the history of the 20th Battalion, Kippenberger's first command of the war. Before the battalion's first action in Greece, Kippenberger, in his autobiographical volume covering the war years, provided a detailed list of the officers serving in the battalion and details what subsequently became of them "as an example of the fortunes that awaited soldiers of that time". Of the forty officers who were part of the 20th Battalion serving in Greece in March 1941, eleven were killed before 1945, ten were seriously wounded and another eleven became prisoners of war.[39] It is evident from these figures that the fortunes of an officer serving in the 20th Battalion

[38] Major-General Sir Howard Kippenberger, *Infantry Brigadier*, London, 1949, pp.107,111.

[39] *ibid*, pp.16-17.

during the war years were very poor indeed!

Other military formations of the Desert Army also suffered heavy losses and experienced the same military disasters as the New Zealand Division, but two factors make the New Zealand experience unique. The first is that New Zealand was (and still is) a very small nation with extremely limited manpower resources. A military force the size of a division represented an enormous commitment to the war effort by the New Zealand Government and people. When the New Zealand Government attempted to increase this commitment by maintaining two separate land forces in two different theatres of war they found it impossible to do so and had to make the hard decision to abandon one force in order to support and maintain the other. Heavy losses suffered by New Zealand's overseas forces during the war years were always keenly felt by the New Zealand Government and people on the home front; not the least because they were painfully aware of the limited nature of their precious manpower resources being sacrificed, and possibly wasted, overseas. The second factor is that, despite this severe manpower and resource limitation, 194 000 men, two out of three of all those eligible, served in the armed forces in the course of the war and the New Zealand casualty figure on a per capita basis was surpassed only by that of the Soviet Union.[40] New Zealand's total casualties as a percentage of its population was 1.9 per cent. This compares with 1.21 per cent for the UK, 0.89 for Australia, and 0.71 per cent for the USA.[41]

Why were there so many of these costly military disasters and who was to blame? What role did Kippenberger play? Military disasters are never inevitable and can nearly always be attributed to one or more of five basic factors: poor planning, poor military leadership, faulty military doctrine, numbers and technology.

Planning encompasses the use of resources on hand and how they will be used: where, when and in what quantities. Military doctrine provides "the fundamental philosophy for the employment of a force based on the broad lessons of military history and human experience".[42] Doctrine provides "a

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40 King, *op. cit.*, p.265.

41 J. Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II*, London, 1993, p.397.

42 *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare,* Manual of Land Warfare Part 1 Volume 1, Number 1, Doctrine Branch, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, 1993, p.6.

framework that guides the application of power in combat and reduces the effects of confusion" arising from the fog of war.[43] It also encompasses the use of strategy and battlefield tactics. Military leadership is the particular way in which soldiers are led into battle by their officers and how well they have been trained for the tasks ahead of them. As Dixon has stated, "the simple truth [is] that leadership is no more than exercising such an influence upon others that they tend to act in concert towards achieving a goal which they might not have achieved so readily had they been left to their own devices".[44] All officers are meant to be leaders of their troops and the more senior the officer is, the more people she or he is expected to provide leadership for. Bad planning and/or faulty doctrine will always lead to disaster no matter how well men are trained and led in battle. Thorough planning and sound doctrine cannot win a battle without good military leadership on the battlefield. Poor planning, faulty doctrine and poor military leadership combined will compound the military disaster and exacerbate the seriousness of the defeat. This will become evident in the campaign chapters which follow.

Inadequate technology cannot be seen as a cause of military disaster in the campaigns in North Africa and Italy, as both sides' technologies during the war years were roughly comparable. Numbers of men and quantities of materiel were not critically significant in these campaigns either as, on most occasions, the Afrika Korps inflicted serious defeat on the Desert Army despite its inferiority in numbers of infantry, tanks and artillery.

That poor planning, outmoded doctrine and/or poor military leadership were the causes of the serious military disasters that the New Zealand Division suffered until the last quarter of 1942 and again suffered in the Italian campaign in 1943-4, is suggested below. It is made clear in these chapters who or what was responsible for the military disaster — whether it was the fault of the New Zealand commanders, Kippenberger included, or the fault of the higher Army commanders. What also emerges is what, if anything, was learned from these very costly mistakes by those who made them.

In looking at this issue of historical significance, Kippenberger's role in each military campaign, whether it was a success or failure, is carefully examined. The question is raised as to whether Kippenberger made any decisive

43 *ibid.*

44 Dixon, *op. cit.*, p.214.

contribution to the success or failure of the campaigns in which he was involved. The contention is that Kippenberger was an outstanding military commander who did make vital contributions to these many campaigns. However, Kippenberger's campaigning was not mistake free and his inexperience of wartime command also contributed to, but was not a main cause of, the military disasters of 1941 and 1942. This was readily acknowledged by Kippenberger himself.[45] However, while Kippenberger did make costly mistakes in battle he learned from his experiences and did not repeat them.

Another important issue examined here is Kippenberger 's relationship with his senior officers, especially his relationship with Freyberg, the divisional commander. It is argued that Kippenberger's relationship with Freyberg, which began with an almost bizarre encounter at Burnham Military Camp in New Zealand in 1939, was an ambivalent one. While Kippenberger always maintained a great deal of personal respect and goodwill towards Freyberg and wrote in 1949 that he had "the pleasure of serving under General Freyberg as a battalion or Brigade commander until March 1944 and could have had no greater privilege", [46] during the course of the war Kippenberger seriously questioned Freyberg's tactical ability on many occasions. This aspect of the relationship with Freyberg is discussed fully.

Another relationship examined is how Kippenberger treated the men, those officers and other ranks serving under him, and his expectations of them. This, after all, is a crucial function of command.

My purpose, then, is to investigate the life of one of New Zealand's most influential military commanders — Major General Sir Howard Kippenberger KBE ,CB , DSO and Bar, ED. The research concentrates on Kippenberger's military

[45] *Infantry Brigadier*, p.96, provides only one such example. It deals with Kippenberger's mistakes during the night attack on Belhamed and is covered in the chapter on Operation CRUSADER.

[46] H. K. Kippenberger to General Beauvoir de Lisle, letter, 14 March 1949, Kippenberger Papers (Hereafter KP) IA 77/12, NZNA.

career, especially his involvement in and contribution to the main military campaigns of North Africa and Italy in the Second World War. It answers three key questions:

Was Kippenberger a successful military commander?
If so, what were the elements of his success?
What was Kippenberger's command style?

These three central questions are specifically addressed in each of the campaign chapters and throughout this study.

One of the key questions of the research concerns Kippenberger's style of command. I have tried to determine just what style of command Kippenberger adopted and how successful it was. Was the style of command Kippenberger adopted conscious, deliberate and methodical, or was it simply innate or *ad hoc*? Was Kippenberger "a born soldier", as Freyberg once stated, [47] or did he have to work at his soldiering?

John Keegan, a very influential military historian and theorist, has written on various command styles which he calls "masks" of command. According to Keegan:

> The leader of men in warfare can show himself to his followers only through a mask, a mask that he must make for himself, but a mask made in such a form as will mark him to men of his time and place as the leader they want and need".[48]

While the campaign chapters reveal Kippenberger's deliberate adoption of a "mask" of command, well suited to the time, place and men he commanded, this study attempts not merely to describe that mask, but to penetrate beyond it by a careful and detailed analysis of Kippenberger's battle performance.

Australian military historians have recently asserted that there is such a thing as an "Australian" style of command.[49] Exactly what this style of command

[47] Lieutenant General Sir Bernard Freyberg, Address at Memorial Service to General Kippenberger, 21 May 1957, copy in author's possession.
[48] J. Keegan, *The Mask of Command*, Harmondsworth, 1987, p.11.
[49] D. M. Horner (ed), *The Commanders*, Sydney, 1984, p.1.

is and how it differs from other styles has yet to be fully articulated and the attempt to pin down the Australian style of command has proved an elusive task to date. Nevertheless, it will become apparent that there was something quintessentially New Zealand about Kippenberger 's style of command and that this was one of his deep strengths.

This work is a study of Kippenberger as a military commander. It aims to answer the crucial questions as to why Kippenberger proved to be such a successful commander. A study of Kippenberger as a military commander is long overdue as New Zealand's military history is seriously incomplete without a study of its most successful Army commander of the Second W orld War. This thesis is an attempt to redress that deficiency.

Chapter 1: Boy Soldier

A word about our future major-general. Howard Kippenberger was a man of high intelligence and courage, who, if only the authorities had known it, would have made a wonderful officer in those days, but he did not seem to have the slightest ambition even to accept stripes.[1]

H. S. Baverstock

He must have been about nineteen then but he looked no more than a boy.[2]

K.D. Henderson, referring to Kippenberger's arrival at the Western Front

In 1915 a slight, well-read and very serious youth of eighteen years volunteered to join the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The youth was five feet ten inches (178 centimetres) tall, weighed one hundred and forty pounds (sixty-four kilograms) and had advanced his age by two years to ensure that he saw active service.[3] His name was Howard Karl Kippenberger and he came to the army from a small farming village in North Canterbury. There was nothing at all unusual about the appearance or manner of the youth that set him apart from his fellow volunteers. In fact, a close friend wrote that "If you had met him in the street you would not have looked back".[4]

Howard Kippenberger's decision to volunteer for active service was a watershed in his life. He would never return to farming, an occupation he hated, nor would he reside permanently with his parents again. Enlistment gave Kippenberger an opportunity to experience the military environment that had captivated his attention from a very early age and he was elated at the prospect

1. H. S. Baverstock, " A Private of the Lost 12th", unpublished manuscript, p.6.
2. K.D. Henderson to W.A. Glue, letter, 7 July 1957, the private collection of W.A. Glue, Stoke, Nelson, (hereafter the Glue Papers).
3. Medical History, Personal File Howard Karl Kippenberger, D2/10021, New Zealand Defence Force, Base Records, Wellington.
4. Oliver Duff, *New Zealand Now*, Wellington, 1941, p.107.

of overseas military service.[5]

Howard Kippenberger's great grandfather, George Peter Kippenberger, had left his home town of Kindenheim in the Pfalz district, then part of Rhenish Bavaria, in 1862 with his wife Barbara, five daughters and three sons. The family crossed from Kindenheim to London where they took passage on board the *Sebastapol* bound for the distant British crown colony of New Zealand.[6] Peter was forty-two years of age in 1862, Barbara was forty. Why the family chose to leave the Rhineland for New Zealand is something of an enigma.[7] There is a "persistent family legend" that the family left the German states to escape the domination of Prussianism that was soon to unite some of the German states under its yoke.[8] However, it would have required perception at an advanced stage of clairvoyance for any person to foresee that the temporary appointment of Otto von Bismarck as Prime Minister of Prussia in 1862 to resolve a constitutional crisis, the "last despairing card"[9] of the Junkers and King of Prussia, could within nine years lead to the conquest of the German states by Prussia. The success of Prussia in the unification of Germany was as much surprising as it was swift. This notion of the flight from rampant militarism, however, came to have a very powerful influence on the attitudes of many members of the Kippenberger family and their relatives.

There were some significant "pull" factors to draw the family to the most distant region of the New World. The family was fluent in English as a result of the banking and merchant circles in which the family had moved and would, therefore, adjust more readily to an English speaking colony. There were also several other Germans on board the *Sebastapol* heading for New Zealand — two other families, six single men and seven single women.[10] The lure of an assisted

[5] Howard Kippenberger's World War I Diary, handwritten version, n.d., p.165, collection of Chris Pugsley, copy in author's possession.

[6] Eric Low, "Charles Howard and Charlotte Thompson. A Colonial Saga", unpublished typescript for the Howard Family Celebration, 1989, p.64.

[7] R. Little, *The Kippenbergers of New Zealand*, draft manuscript, p.13, copy in author's possession.

[8] E. Low, *op. cit*, p.65, Brian Low, Notes on draft of "Charles Howard and Charlotte Thompson. A Colonial Saga", p. 1, Little, *op. cit*, pp.13-14.

[9] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History*, London, 1945, p.106.

[10] E. Low, *op. cit*, p. 65.

passage must have proved a powerful incentive for the family to choose New Zealand too, as just over half of the family's fare, some £78, was paid by the Canterbury Provincial Government.[11]

In 1871 the eldest son of George Peter and Barbara Kippenberger, Karl, a printer in Timaru, married a Miss Anna Krieten, a German immigrant from Hanover. Karl was aged 21 years when he married. The young couple had two young boys, Karl in 1872 and Peter John in 1873, when one of the terrible family tragedies that appear to plague the Kippenberger family occurred. In 1875 Karl Senior was killed after being thrown from a horse. The young father was only twenty-five years of age.[12] His own father, Peter, was killed in 1881 in a similar accident.[13]

The eldest child of the marriage, Karl, was raised by his aunt's family, the Dohrmanns, on their farm at Carlton near Bennetts in North Canterbury. The young Karl matured into a young man of exceptional promise. By 1888, aged only sixteen years, Karl was a probationer teacher at Rangiora Borough School earning £40 per annum. Rapid progress soon followed and the next year found Karl teaching at the Christchurch Normal School where he gained his Teacher's Certificate and probably met Annie Howard, also a promising teacher and Karl's future wife. In 1891, not yet twenty, Karl was made headmaster (with an assistant) at Ladbrooks School some twelve miles south of Christchurch.[14]

Probably owing to the influence of Annie Howard, Karl became actively involved in the Methodist Church and moved away from the sedate Anglicanism of the Dohrmann family. By 1893 Karl was already an established lay preacher and appeared on the preaching plan of four different autonomous Methodist groups in Christchurch.[15] While at the Normal School in Christchurch Karl also began university studies but never went on to complete his bachelor's degree. Karl Kippenberger had many and varied interests. He was a teacher, choirmaster, musician — having taught himself to play the violin and organ — baritone singer, pioneer photographer and push-bike rider, and was for

[11] *ibid.*
[12] *ibid.*
[13] Little, *op. cit*, pp.1,14.
[14] E. Low, *op. cit*, p.66.
[15] *ibid.*

more than fifty years an accomplished lay preacher.[16]

On 30 April 1896 Karl Kippenberger married Annie Howard, eldest daughter of Charles Howard, headmaster of Richmond School, Christchurch, and a prominent Methodist lay preacher. The young couple remained in Ladbrooks for the next twelve years and in 1897 their eldest child, Howard Karl Kippenberger, was born. Four other children were born at the Ladbrooks schoolhouse, but the youngest child, Philip, died at three months.[17] With accommodation provided, a salary of £140 per annum and their own gig, the family was considered to be very well off.[18]

In 1908 the family moved closer to Christchurch when Karl Kippenberger took up a teaching position at the Prebbleton school. There in 191 1 Karl received some medical advice that was to change the course of his life and the fortunes of his family forever. Karl was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis, a virtual death sentence at this time, and was advised to leave teaching; advice he followed without question. Karl took up farming and moved his family to his stepfather's farm at Coopers Creek, near Oxford in North Canterbury. The family remained on this farm for the next ten years. A very promising career in education had been abandoned for the dubious prospects of small scale dairy farming. Ultimately the venture into farming would prove to be a tragic experience and a financial disaster for the Kippenbergers.

Karl Kippenberger, as head of the family, was a very complex character. Immensely talented as mentioned, he was also authoritarian and dictatorial but was not a hard or harsh parent. One of Howard Kippenberger 's sisters has remarked that she had "never known Dad to smack, let alone thrash people", yet at the same time, because in his own childhood Karl had missed out completely on parental affection, there was "no public showing of affection. He was not the kind to throw his arms around you".[19]

Mrs Denham has related how, when aged three, Howard, feeling that his father was too hard on his younger brother Jack, stole a pot of raspberry jam

[16] Jean Geddes (nee Kippenberger), interview, Christchurch, 29 November 1993.

[17] E. Low, *op. cit*, p.66.

[18] note on Early Days, Father, Glue Papers.

[19] Margaret Denham (nee Kippenberger), interview, Ashburton, 27 November 1993.

Howard Kippenberger, aged 3 with brother Jack, about the time Howard decided to run away with the pot of raspberry jam.
(Margaret Denham)

Young Kippenbergers. Howard, 6, Jack 4, Kathleen, 2. Note Howard's formal, almost military stance.
(Margaret Denham)

from the pantry and ran away from home to Luna Park, the local fair ground.[20] With such strong-willed, and talented people in the family, it was inevitable that some clashes of interest and personality occurred.

Howard attended his father's schools at Ladbrooks and Prebbleton. When the family moved to Oxford, Howard had to board in Christchurch with his cousins, the Thompson family, in order to attend Christchurch Boys' High School. Howard was very fortunate in that he was one of the thirty per cent minority of New Zealand school children to attend a post-primary school in those years.[21] His secondary schooling was, however, not a great success. It is somewhat ironic that the "school's most distinguished soldier"[22] and New Zealand's foremost military historian of the inter-war years should have been invited to leave Christchurch Boys' High School for lack of attendance and general poor performance. Kippenberger once confided to a friend that every time his name was mentioned at High School it was, "Bend down Kippenberger and I'd get another six". He also admitted to his friend that in the end "I suppose I was asked to leave".[23] Henceforth Howard's education would be in his own hands, apart from his later legal studies, and it would be an entirely different type of education to that envisaged by his parents. Mrs Denham writes of her brother's school years:

> Howard was a gifted child, well taught and with the added bonus of a photographic memory. He was ready, from a scholastic point of view, for secondary school a year before he was old enough to be accepted. ... He needed mental challenges and stimulus which possibly he did not get. He complained of knowing more than some of his teachers! He was bored and became a difficult pupil. He dilly dallied through B.H.S. in fact. This must have been a great disappointment to his parents. Both teachers, they knew his capability and probably had expected a successful professional

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20 *ibid.*

21 J. H. Murdoch, *The High Schools of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1943, quoted in J. Phillips, N. Boyack and E. P. Malone, *The Great Adventure*, Wellington, 1988, p.8.

22 *The Christchurch High School Old Boys' War Memorial Magazine 1939-1945*, p. 1., Ian Wards, interview, Wellington, New Zealand, 18 December 1991.

23 Martin Donnelly, interview, Sydney, 15 August 1992.

career for him.[24]

Howard Kippenberger left Christchurch Boys' High School to spend three years working on the family farm at Oxford. While at Oxford he joined the senior cadets whose Officer Commanding, K.D. Henderson, later became a close friend. Henderson recalled that Kippenberger was in the parade in the Oxford Drill Hall when it was inspected by General Alexander Godley on a visit and was also in the the big Christchurch parade for General Sir Ian Hamilton held at Hagley Park.[25]

Farming was an occupation the young Howard came to loathe and he very quickly realised that it was not the career he would follow.[26] In fact, Howard Kippenberger "made it clear that he wanted to be a soldier but his father didn't agree to this". As he explained, "I'm pretty determined but so was my father".[27] His decision to enlist in 1915 provided an escape from a hated occupation to one in which he had manifested a strong interest since the time he could read.[28] It was also an opportunity to demonstrate his independence and determination. Little wonder his enlistment was a cause for elation or that he marked his escape by kicking each cow in the tail with the defiant statement: "That's for you Daisy. [Kick] That's for Blossom. [Kick]. You're the last bloody cows ever I'll milk".[29]

Formal religion Howard Kippenberger rejected at this time. He spoke so seldom about religion that a friend in his later life suspected that he might be a confirmed agnostic.[30] Although he loosened the bonds of religious orthodoxy from an early age, there is strong evidence to suggest that Kippenberger retained a strong personal faith in God all his life. While still at Christchurch Boys' High School Howard had confessed earnestly to Frank Thompson, his uncle, that "I want to be a Christian". The slightly abashed Thompson had felt "inadequate to meet the boy's need and had almost let him down".[31] Jim Burrows, while second

[24] Margaret Denham, notes on first draft of Chapter 1, n.d., copy in author's possession.
[25] Henderson to Glue, letter, 7 July 1957, Glue Papers.
[26] Ian Wards, interview, Wellington, 18 December 1991.
[27] Donnelly interview, *op. cit.*
[28] Geddes interview, *op. cit.*
[29] Henderson to Glue, letter, 7 July 1957, Glue Papers.
[30] Wards interview, *op. cit.*
[31] Eric Low, interview, Sumner, Christchurch, 2 January 1992.

in command of 20 Battalion, later recalled that his Colonel had made church parades on Sundays compulsory in the battalion but that atheists and agnostics could do kitchen fatigues instead and remarked that it was "surprising how many" of this group suddenly saw the light and "came in a very short time to profess good, solid Christian beliefs".[32] This would be somewhat unusual behaviour for an agnostic commander.

The most convincing piece of evidence, however, is a letter written by Howard Kippenberger to the dying Frank Thompson. Describing his uncle as his "best and kindest friend" and the person who had "a greater influence on me than any other man", Howard related how one "of my closest friends" battalion commander Reg Romans, had been mortally wounded and that:

> I knelt by my friend in his last conscious moments and held his hands and said with a full heart 'Reg, my dear friend, may God be with you and help you'. Something like that I would say to you, my dear friend, over these many thousands of miles.[33]

Unfortunately Frank Thompson did not receive this most revealing letter as he had died on 18 December 1943 well before Kippenberger had managed to find time on active service to write it. While shunning the formal religion of his parents, Kippenberger had obviously developed a deep, sincere and personal faith that was to last a lifetime and serve him well in his later years. The old cliche that no agnostics or atheists are found in foxholes is a truism and Kippenberger's early wartime experiences may have influenced and reinforced his faith.

One interest Kippenberger developed early in his youth was a deep and ever developing interest in military affairs and military history. Jean Geddes has stated that Howard was interested in military matters from the time he could read while Margaret Denham, another sister, has recalled how her brother's interest in military matters began at a very early age when Howard spent all his pocket money, and later his money designated for the church collection plate, building up an army of toy soldiers. Karl Kippenberger, the Sunday School

[32] Burrows, eulogy delivered at an Anzac Day Ceremony, 25 April 1983, *op. cit.*, p.3.

[33] Kippenberger to Frank Thompson, letter, 4 January 1944, quoted in E. Low, *op. cit.*, pp.83-4.

Superintendent, on learning what was happening to the collection money, soon put a stop to this practice.[34]

One of the oldest publications in the Kippenberger Collection, now housed at the Queen Elizabeth II War Memorial in Waiouru, is A. T. Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, published in 1890. The book was presented to Kippenberger in October, 1910 as first prize in an essay competition conducted by the Canterbury Branch of the Navy League. The essay topic was: "Supposing that the Imperial Fleet were annihilated by a hostile power, how would New Zealand be affected thereby?" This interest in military affairs would become an obsession during the interwar period but there is evidence to suggest that even prior to the First World War, Kippenberger was already widely read in military affairs. Harry Baverstock, an old school friend and fellow enlistee in the 12th Reinforcement, recalled that Howard Kippenberger in 1915 was "a walking encyclopaedia of naval and military knowledge" and that while at High School Kippenberger knew the full details of every battleship, battle cruiser and cruiser in the Royal Navy and could recite *Jane's Fighting Ships* from cover to cover.[35]

From his parents the young Kippenberger had inherited many qualities — integrity, humility, self discipline, respect for others and the capacity for sheer dogged perseverance in the face of great difficulty. Margaret Denham has reflected that "in many ways Howard was like his father, with a quiet voice and manner which gave no hint of the iron will both possessed".[36] Kippenberger remained close to his parents for the rest of his life, visiting their farm whenever he could and writing to them every week after he left home.

Just why Howard Karl Kippenberger volunteered for active service at the end of 1915 and lied about his age to ensure that this would happen we cannot know. Alarmed about the falling rates of enlistment, the New Zealand authorities had required all eligible males between the ages of 19 and 45 to register with the government authorities between 26 October and 7 November 1915 and to indicate whether they were willing to serve with the NZEF. Howard was too young to be compelled to register. Canterbury was subjected to an intense

[34] Geddes interview, *op. cit.*, Margaret Denham, interview in the *Ashburton Guardian*, 9 June 1984.

[35] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.6.

[36] Margaret Denham, notes on draft of Chapter 1, n.d.

recruiting campaign in 1915 and the Commanding Officer of the Canterbury Military District could report to his superior in Wellington that he had:

> the whole of my District well organised for recruiting, having got Patriotic associations and kindred bodies to take it up in every centre with central committees in Nelson, Greymouth, Timaru, Ashburton, and Christchurch and sub centres in smaller towns. These have been working well right through.[37]

Recruiting lecture tours were organised and a barrage of appeals appeared in all of the Canterbury newspapers. Jock Phillips has stated that the single men who volunteered from mid 1915 onward did so mainly as a result of the considerable social pressure rather than from any enthusiasm for the war and that they volunteered "in the knowledge that they had a good chance of being killed and a 50% likelihood of becoming a casualty".[38] In the final outcome social pressure would not be enough to sustain the demands of the Western Front and conscription was introduced for this purpose in August 1916.

This social pressure cannot be said to have influenced Kippenberger in his decision to join up as he enlisted long before his time was due and advanced his age to ensure that he would see active service. Denis McLean has written of Howard Kippenberger's motives for joining up that:

> The urge to adventure and break out of a humdrum and tedious provincial society and see the world must almost universally have been a part of it for New Zealanders.[39]

Certainly the belief that the war was "the great adventure" was very prevalent amongst young New Zealanders at this time.[40] Harry Baverstock, who marched

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[37] R. A. Chaffey, CO Canterbury Military District, to Brigadier-General A. W. Robin, HQ NZMF, Wellington, letter, 1 December 1915, in AD 1 9/169/3 Recruiting Canterbury District, NZNA.

[38] J. Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, Auckland, 1987, p.162.

[39] D. McLean, "Kippenberger: Citizen Soldier", New Zealanders at War, Victoria University Wellington, n.d., unpublished conference paper, p.2.

[40] A recent addition to the scant field of New Zealand's experience in World War I takes this notion as its main title. It is Phillips et al., *The Great Adventure, op.cit.*

out of King Edward Barracks in Christchurch with Howard Kippenberger, had no doubt that they were marching "to start the great adventure".[41]

Denis McLean has suggested another motive for the young Kippenberger to join up ahead of his time: "the heavy burden of a German name may have provided an added incentive to join up simply to show that he knew which side he was on".[42] The Kippenberger family, however, can recall no such pressure or persecution owing to their German antecedents, although their cousins at Waimate in South Canterbury, the Meyer family, did suffer from persecution and suspicion mainly as a result of a recent visit to Germany. The social pressure in Waimate became so strong that many families of German origin changed their surnames to English sounding names, but the Kippenberger family seem to have been immune from such suspicion and persecution.[43]

Kippenberger's motives for joining up in 1915 must have been mixed. Certainly, like most of those who volunteered early for service, he was off for the great adventure and enlistment offered an escape from an occupation he found tedious and soul destroying. However, Kippenberger's early interest in military history and military affairs made it almost inevitable that he would seek to enlist and take any measures he deemed necessary to see active service in a war that appeared as if it could decide the fate of the civilised world.

The Canterbury district quota, of which Kippenberger was a part, was dispatched to Trentham Military Camp on 12 January 1916 where it joined with the other volunteers from all over New Zealand to become the 12th Reinforcement of the NZEF. Before leaving Christchurch Kippenberger and other Christchurch Boys' High School Old Boys departing for the front were called in to the school for a personal farewell from the Headmaster. "It was immensely cheering to us", recalled Harry Baverstock, amongst the small group, "to know that our Headmaster noticed our departure and really cared".[44]

The 12th Reinforcement totalled 2245 men of which the bulk, 1458, were infantry.[45] Unlike the echelons that were to sail from New Zealand in 1940, most

[41] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.1.
[42] McLean, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[43] Margaret Denham, in Eric Low's Notes, 2 January 1992, p.2.
[44] Baverstock, "The Old Brigade of Masters", *Christchurch Boys' High School Magazine*, Vol 136, 1968, p.47, Glue Papers.
[45] Concentrated Expeditionary Force — 12th Reinforcement, AD 1 9/189/12, NZNA.

Howard Kippenberger, the boy soldier, with his mother prior to leaving for the Somme

(Margaret [illegible])

of the men in the 12th Reinforcement had by compulsion since 1911 some experience of military training which made "much of the training at Trentham and Featherstone seem rather superfluous". [46] Equipped for war, the recruits felt very awkward carrying sixty to eighty pounds (twenty-seven to thirty-six kilograms) of equipment and tramping about in their uncomfortable "Bill Massey" boots.[47]

Trentham Camp followed a strict routine with Reveille at 0545 hours, Physical Training at 0615 and the day's activity finishing at 2215. Training was superfluous with much emphasis placed on drill and learning the very difficult slow march used at funerals. Very little target shooting seems to have occurred. The officers and N.C.O.s did not exercise their authority needlessly and were "a pretty good lot"[48] so that the recruits of the 12th Reinforcement did not experience the ranting and raving of excessive military discipline until they reached Sling Camp in the United Kingdom.

On 1 May 1916, the 12th Reinforcement sailed from Wellington on board the *Ulimaroa* and after an uneventful voyage marred only by "the dreadful monotony"[49] and insufficient rations which nearly caused riots on board, the reinforcement disembarked, not at Marseilles destined to join the New Zealand Division at Armentieres as they expected and as had the previous four reinforcements, but at Port Tewfik, Egypt, destined for Tel-el-Kebir forty miles north of Cairo.

The 12th Reinforcement spent two months at Tel-el-Kebir marking time, a delay not at all welcomed by the men. Similar to the soldiers of the AIF, the 12th Reinforcement came to despise Egypt and the Egyptians, a place dubbed by the Australians "the land of sin, sand, shit and syphilis". [50] At Tel-el-Kebir the reinforcement "sweltered for about two months doing nothing" in the 120

[46] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[47] "Bill Massey" boots were the hobbed-nailed, very heavy and uncomfortable boots issued to the members of NZEF. As Baverstock recalled of the boots in his account of the war they were, "the most cursed item of our equipment – the Bill Massey boots which did their best to anchor us to the ground", *ibid.*, p.5.

[48] *ibid.*, pp.7,15.

[49] *ibid.*, p.26.

[50] B. Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Canberra, 1974, p.36.

degree heat in that "horrid place".[51] Sapper Adrian Hart wrote back to New Zealand of Tel-el-Kebir:

> It is impossible to write properly with the cursed flies about you all the time, they are an unmitigated curse, and when you are free from them at night the mosquitoes will start. The heat is also very trying this time of the year and there have been several cases of sunstroke.[52]

Kippenberger also found Egypt "very trying" and recorded:

> This Egypt doesn't suit me at all, yet at any rate. I have in turn had dysentery, lumbago, constipation and a cold. The lumbago is worst and has not been thrown off yet.[53]

The men of the reinforcement had very little to do as the daily program allocated much free time. Reveille was at 0400 and was followed by an hour of drill at 0530 hours. Breakfast went from 0730 to 0900 hours after which the men had the the rest of the day free. Following the evening meal there was a one-and-a-half hour period of military instruction. The main pastimes of the men of the reinforcement were twofold. There were the inevitable tourist trips to Cairo and the other type of inevitable trips to the Wasser red light district. Kippenberger and friends made one such trip and were "thoroughly disgusted" by what they saw and caught an early train back to camp.[54]

The other main activity was gambling and many members of the 12th Reinforcement were parted from their earnings by "two hard-bitten Aussies"[55] running a crown and anchor school. Kippenberger recorded in his diary:

> A little while ago an Australian, after pay day, won £600 running a gambling school. (The A. are terrors at this, I have often watched them).

51 Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.1.
52 Adrian Hart to Mother and Father, letter, 18 June 1916, Adrian Mitchell Hart Letters 1915-19, MS Papers 2157-2, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
53 Kippenberger Diary, 18 June 1916, p.23.
54 *ibid.*
55 Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.27.

> One of his victims shot him and was himself executed at dawn last Sunday morning. There are wild rumours of other executions, but I believe this to be genuine enough.[56]

While at Tel-el-Kebir Kippenberger was awarded three days Confined to Barracks for insolence to an NCO.[57] The 12th Reinforcement left Tel-el-Kebir on 25 July 1916 bound for Sling Camp near Bulford in Wiltshire and "not a tear was shed when the day of our departure came".[58] Kippenberger passed through Tel-el-Kebir again in 1940 and recalled how twenty-four years earlier he had been delighted to leave "that dismal spot".[59]

Sling Camp was the largest New Zealand training camp in England during the war and a huge Kiwi carved into the limestone hill there can still be seen nearly eighty years later. The 12th Reinforcement arrived there on 12 August, the same day as the 13th Reinforcement, and for ten days both were subjected to intense military training and discipline of the worst kind. They were shifted from hut to hut almost every day, undertook crippling route marches in the rain with full packs and greatcoats, and were subjected to the ranting and ravings of British Army drill instructors, "big bodied autocrats who simply must boss others in a thoroughly unpleasant way".[60] Referring to an incident in France wherein he received two contradictory sets of orders and landed in trouble for trying to accomplish both tasks, Kippenberger wrote in his diary that this was:

> Known in the army as _ _ _ _ about. No hardships or tribulations are so disheartening as this. Sling Camp is the happy hunting ground of its greatest exponents.[61]

Another soldier wrote of Sling Camp that "wounded men rejoiced to be

[56] Kippenberger Diary, 16 June 1916, p.21.
[57] note on WWI, in Glue Papers.
[58] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.30.
[59] *Infantry Brigadier*, p.9.
[60] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.42.
[61] Kippenberger Diary, 25 October 2 November 1916.

redrafted after a spell in Sling, and camp life had to be hell to have that effect".[62]

Those members of the reinforcements deemed ready for active service, among them Kippenberger, left Sling Camp for France on 20 August 1916, and headed for the notorious Bull Ring at Etaples, the largest British training and reinforcement camp in France. Up to 40 000 troops could be stationed at Etaples at any one time. Left behind at Sling Camp were their kitbags, all of their officers and about half of the infantry. If life had been unpleasant at Sling Camp it was not about to improve at Etaples.

Training at Etaples was initially quite reasonable, although the constant rumbling of the guns sounded an ominous warning, reminding the troops that "we were going to be plunged into that blood-bath quite soon". The training was tough but not sadistic and the worst thing that the "tame and well- behaved" members of the reinforcements had to suffer was a " fatherly talk" by an English Sergeant-Major "on the use of bad language" in the army. This pleasant situation changed irrevocably when the New Zealand reinforcements attracted the attention of the Scottish Major in charge of the Bull Ring. After being stood at attention for over twenty minutes "The Bull" harangued the recruits for a considerable time making it clear in the process that he did not like them. These were, in fact, his opening words to the terrified recruits. On the previous day, an Australian battalion had upset "The Bull" somewhat by sitting on their packs and booing him, and now "The Bull" was determined to avenge this slight. The tame New Zealanders were obvious victims coming from a place near enough to Australia, so it was "a case of vicarious suffering for us". When the tirade had finished and the shell-shocked recruits marched off, "The Bull" lined their route with all the available Sergeant-Majors who barked and yelled commands at the unfortunate soldiers for over a quarter of a mile.[63]

The suffering continued the following day when "The Bull" made the New Zealand recruits, in full pack and greatcoats, fix bayonets and double across the wet sand of the Bull Ring for a considerable length of time, all the while sloping arms and fixing bayonets at the double. When the "purgatory" ended the recruits could at least be grateful that there were "no yapping Sergeant-Majors lining the road that time".[64] It must have come as a considerable relief when the

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[62] John A. Lee, *Civilian Into Soldier*, London, 1963, p.11.

[63] Baverstock, *op., cit..*, pp.51,53.

[64] *ibid.*, p.53.

reinforcement troops departed from Etaples to link up with the division for its march to the Somme.

Both Kippenberger and Baverstock had been detailed with eighteen other recruits to join the 1st Canterbury Infantry Battalion and had an exceptionally long march that day to link up with the parent unit. Only one man of the twenty did not complain of the hard going and "kept his mouth shut and had done no grumbling": Howard Kippenberger.[65] Both Kippenberger and Baverstock were allocated to 13 Company, the North Canterbury and West Coast Company of the battalion. Kippenberger was lucky to have joined the New Zealand Division when he did as he escaped an intense, cruel and mishandled purge of those with German names from the division.[66] The botched witchhunt of July and August 1916 left a legacy of bitterness and might well have ended an illustrious military career in its infancy had Kippenberger joined the New Zealand Division any earlier.

On 2 September 1916 at 1100 hours "the great trek" to the Somme began.[67] The march was not an easy one for those who took part and for Kippenberger it was made even more unbearable by his ill-fitting boots. On one day of the march, "a terribly hard march" of twenty-four kilometres, Baverstock was in great distress and feeling ill and Kippenberger, "ever ready to help anyone", offered to carry Baverstock's pack as well as his own, even though he was "about done myself when we finished".[68] On 11 September the battalion reached Fricourt in the rear of the battle area and were about to be plunged into the slaughter that was the Somme.

The Official History of the New Zealand Division in France, very much a product of its time, opens the account of the Somme by stating that this stage of the battle called for "the employment of rested Divisions with their morale at its bloom. Among these it was the privilege of the New Zealand Division to be included".[69] It went on to say that at "no time perhaps were more energy and keenness thrown into the training" with new techniques mastered that would enable the infantry to advance behind a creeping artillery barrage safely but that

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65 *ibid.*, p.57.

66 C. Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell*, Auckland, 1991, pp.77-78.

67 Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.58.

68 *ibid.*, p. 63, Kippenberger Diary, 9 September 1916.

69 H. Stewart, *The New Zealand Division 1916-1919*, Wellington, 1921, p.63.

"the risks of casualties caused by an occasional short burst must be faced".[70]

The history of the Canterbury Regiment gives a more accurate account of the energetic and keen training, especially as it related to an advance under a creeping barrage:

> Advancing under a barrage was continually practised, the limit of the ground on which our shells were imagined to be falling being represented by lines of men waving flags, and running forward by stages of a hundred yards every three or four minutes.[71]

With training as "realistic" as this, it is little wonder that many of the casualties the New Zealand Division suffered on the Somme were caused by the infantry advancing into their own artillery barrage.[72] By 10 September 1916 the New Zealand Division was poised to enter the battle.

The Somme *departement* is some eighty miles (130 kilometres) long at its widest point and some thirty miles (forty-eight kilometres) wide on average. In this small portion of France more than 200 000 British Empire soldiers, thirty per cent of the total Empire figure on the Western Front, would be killed.[73] The Somme sector was considered a quiet part of the front until General Douglas Haig decided to launch the main British offensive for 1916 from there. Haig's choice of the Somme sector for the main decisive battle of 1916 was an unusual one, as the terrain of the region favoured the German forces. The German lines of communications were much shorter than those of the British Armies and the soil type of the region, soft chalky- soil, had enabled the Germans to build their trenches to depths of up to forty feet (twelve metres) in many parts of the line thus making them virtually shell proof. A crucial factor too, was that the Germans occupied all of the vital high ground, making their front line positions

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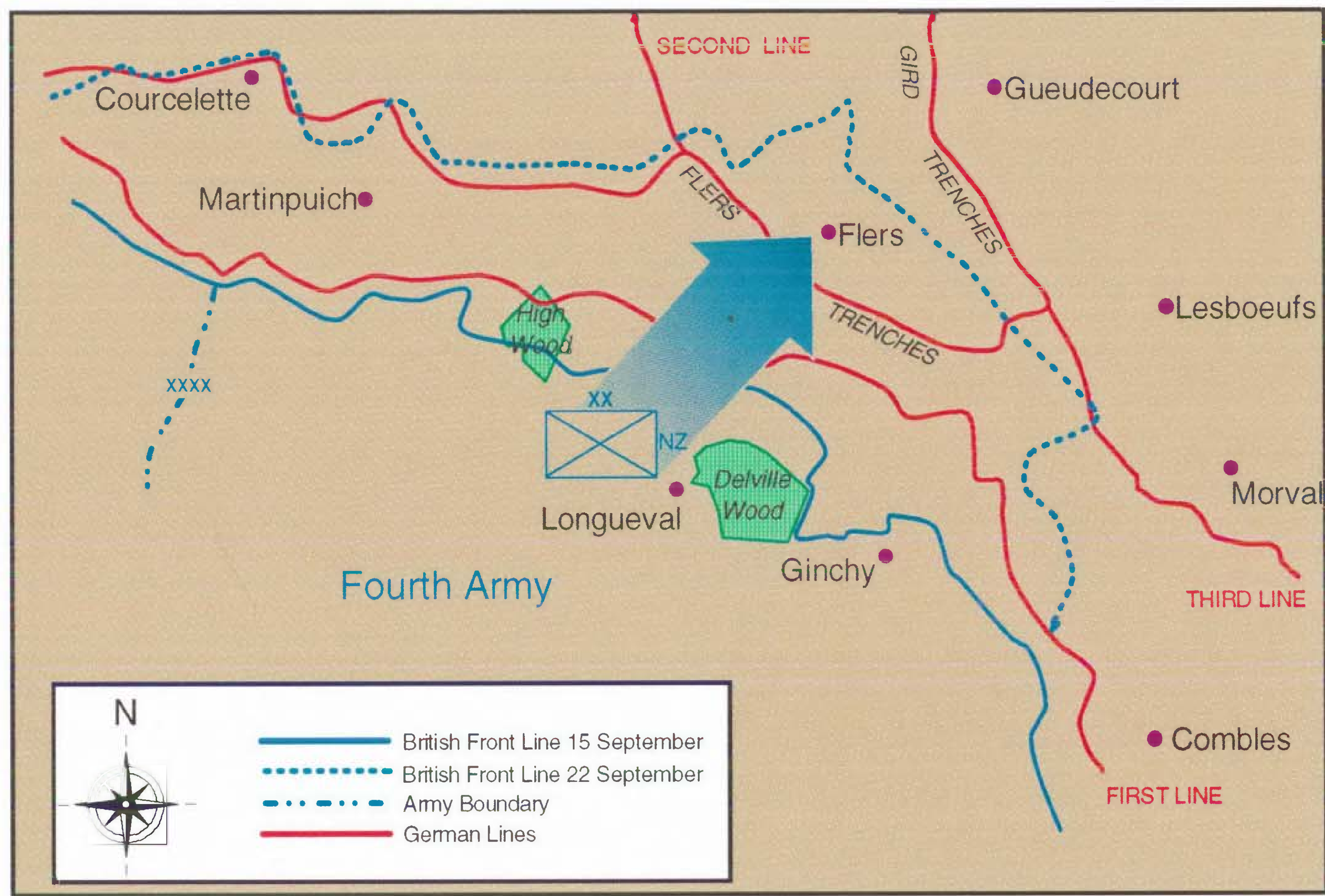
[70] *ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

[71] D. Ferguson, *The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F. 1914-1919*, Wellington, 1921, p.102.

[72] For example, Randolph Norman Gray's journal, 25 September 1915, describes how some 30% of casualties suffered by 1 Brigade on German trenches outside of Flers "were due to the impetuosity of the men" advancing into their own artillery barrage, quoted in Phillips *et al., op. cit.*, p.95.

[73] M. and M. Middlebrook, *The Battlefields of the Somme,* London, 1991, pp.5,7.



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extremely well located for fields of fire, but also well concealed from enemy observation. The Somme sector offered no great strategic prizes either . But the Somme region did possess some positive qualities: it was relatively flat with gentle slopes, was free of any built up areas or dominating features and the soft soil made it easy for soldiers to dig in rapidly on any ground that may have been taken. Trevor Wilson believes that it was "good campaigning territory as long as the weather held fine", yet Wilson acknowledges that these positives did not outweigh the negative terrain factors:

> Hence if an absolute judgement was to be made, it might be concluded that the demerits of the Somme as a region for an offensive outweighed its advantages. But the men who had to plan the offensive were not in a position to make absolute judgements. An attack must take place somewhere. The Somme appeared better than anywhere else. [74]

The New Zealand Division was committed to the third phase of the Somme Battle with the initial assault on the 15 September 1916. The Division was to assault three formidable trench systems in the Flers region on the right flank. The New Zealanders were one of nine infantry divisions used in the attack and formed the centre of XV Corps. They were to attack the village of Flers between High and Delville Woods. Flers was "a key point of the whole plan, for if Flers fell it was thought that the German second position could be rolled up from the south-east".[75] The New Zealanders were to remain in the front trenches of the Somme until the night of 3/4 October, a total of twenty-three days during which time the division took part in every major offensive mounted by the Allied armies and took all their objectives. The cost was massive, a fact even acknowledged by the Official Historian who dismissed the losses with the throw away line that "if our losses had been grievous, the Germans had been reduced by this succession of deadly blows well nigh to despair".[76]

Into this cauldron of hate was thrown the nineteen-year-old Kippenberger who survived three assaults from the Somme trenches. He later recorded of his

[74] T. Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War*, Cambridge, 1986, p.313.

[75] R. Prior and T. Wilson, *Command on the Western Front. The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson 1914-18* Oxford, 1992, p.229.

[76] Stewart, *op. cit.*, p.107.

first military action:

> My first experience in battle was in facing a counter-attack on the Somme in 1916. I opened fire at 800 yds and when the enemy were stopped, 80 yds away, discovered that I had not brought my sights down. As soon as the enemy started to fire back I became afraid of being hit in the face so stood as high as I could with the idea that a hit in the chest or shoulders would be nicer. A good N.C.O. would have got better work out of me.[77]

Kippenberger admitted to being very nervous before this first attack, "though not as bad as going to the dentist, and really enjoyed the actual charge and close fighting".[78] Like many survivors of the Somme, Kippenberger survived many close calls with death and experienced the dreadful reality of total war in a modern industrial age. The experience changed his life forever.

Kippenberger experienced a deep personal loss as many of his close friends died on the Somme. On the morning roll call of 5 October his diary stated: "Of 13 Company, 1st Canterbury (mine), 38 left out of 230, of 16 Platoon (mine) 5 out of 47".[79] The Canterbury Regiment had suffered a casualty rate of more than eighty per cent!

The death of Victor Hearn, a very close friend of Kippenberger 's, deeply affected him. Hearn had been shot through the head and killed instantly at Kippenberger's side. The day of Hearn's death, 27 September 1916, is described as "the hardest in my experience" and many times in his diary Kippenberger expresses himself as being being "sick at heart and brooding about V ic". His first meal after Hearn's death eaten on the 29 September was "a very lonely Breakfast".[80]

The experience of the death of his close friend was made even more traumatic for Kippenberger when he left the safety of the trenches and searched the battlefield for Hearn's body. Kippenberger found Hearn with "his head ...

[77] Kippenberger, Covering Letter with the Marshal Survey results, 11 June 1949, KP IA 77/35, NZNA.

[78] *Kippenberger — Letters from a Soldier*, T 214, Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, recorded 1959.

[79] Kippenberger Diary, 11 September 1916. (The entry was written after the New Zealand Division had been withdrawn from the Somme.)

[80] *ibid.*, 27, 28 and 29 September 1916.

terribly smashed and he was quite unrecognisable".[81] Hearn's water bottles and knapsack had been "ratted" by those alive and in need of sustenance. Kippenberger straightened out Hearn's body and placed his handkerchief over the dead man's face. Then, in order to keep a promise he made to Hearn before the battle, Kippenberger tried to remove Hearn's ring to send it back to his mother in New Zealand, but the body was so swollen in death that he had to cut off Hearn's finger in order to retrieve the ring. He carried out the grisly task, "tears streaming down his face, as he fulfilled this promise".[82] Kippenberger then recovered Hearn's paybook from the body, was nearly "bagged by a sniper" returning to the trenches, and gave Hearn's paybook to his platoon sergeant and was thus inadvertently responsible for Hearn's body not being identified when it was retrieved for burial.[83]

This incident had a lasting impact on Kippenberger. Thirty years later, while recovering from horrific injuries in London, Kippenberger inquired of the War Graves Commission where his friend was buried and learned that Vic had no known grave. Vic Hearn was one of the 4 227 New Zealand soldiers who have no known grave in France [84]

In fact, all Kippenberger's close friends from the Trentham days were casualties in this battle and Vic Hearn was not his only friend killed. In the Kippenberger Collection is a copy of David Ferguson's *The History of the Canterbury Regiment N.Z.E.F. 1914-1919* and Kippenberger has gone through Appendix H, those killed in action in France, and marked with a cross all those killed who were personally known to him. There are sixty-six names so marked and some of the names have comments written after them. Private D. L. Shand, a cousin of Kippenberger's whom he had seen killed during an advance, has written after his name, for example, "Poor Davy, very good to me", and there are

[81] *ibid.*, 28 September 1916.

[82] *ibid.*, 28 September 1916, Eric McCormack, Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, Timaru New Zealand, T 2760, 23 January 1981.

[83] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 28 September 1916. Vic Hearn's name, along with those of another 1204 New Zealanders, appears on the New Zealand memorial to the Somme missing in the Caterpillar Valley Military Cemetery at Thiepval.

[84] J Henderson, *Soldier Country*, Wellington, 1990, p.149.

many similar such comments.[85]

On the Somme, not only were close friends maimed and killed, but Kippenberger had endured some grisly and horrific experiences of war. He saw men wounded and in agony and witnessed mass slaughter first hand. Corpses of dead men — Allies and Germans alike — became a very common sight as from early on in the battle "the dead lay everywhere". One such experience encapsulates the horror of war and how it changed Kippenberger. Moving down a crowded trench he could only reach his destination by stepping on the dead bodies of his comrades. If they had been German dead he would not have worried so much "but they were our dear boys and I hesitated". A New Zealand Corporal, Corporal McLeod, coming from the other direction had the same problem as Kippenberger but overcame his hesitation sooner and jumped up on the parapet to avoid desecrating the dead. The corporal was immediately shot through the head and died instantly, toppling into the trench and joining the dead. Kippenberger instantly became less sensitive and crossed over the bodies to reach his destination safely.[86]

Kippenberger also became more hard-hearted in his attitude to the enemy despite helping enemy wounded whenever he could. During one attack on the German trenches, from a reserve trench he noted "with the deepest satisfaction" German soldiers being shot in the back as they fled from their overrun trenches "only cursing that we weren't able to help".[87] The Somme experience had changed Kippenberger in many ways.

After the first assault on the German trenches about Flers Kippenberger had written somewhat tersely "We have done our work and left the home folks to count the costs".[88] The cost for the New Zealand Division was to be extremely high as it was for the British Army as a whole. In twenty-three days of fighting total New Zealand casualties numbered 6 728 men of which 1 087 had been killed.[89] As severe as these casualty figures were, the morale and spirit of the

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[85] Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp.328-61, in the Kippenberger Book Collection, Archives of the Queen Elizabeth II War Memorial and Military Museum, Waiouru, New Zealand;
Kippenberger Diary, *op., cit.*, 27 September 1916.

[86] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 16, 28 September 1916.

[87] *ibid.*, 28 September 1916.

[88] *ibid.*, 11 September 1916.

[89] Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p.126. Stewart, however, gives the New Zealand figures as 7 000 casualties with 60 Officers and 1 500 men killed, *op. cit.*, p.119.

division remained unaffected. The New Zealand Division would reach the nadir of its fortunes a year later in the mud and agony of Third Ypres and Passchendaele.

The British Army as a whole fared a great deal worse, however, on the Somme as the campaign dragged on until 19 November 1916 in appalling weather. During this phase of the offensive no great gains were made despite the suffering involved and the continuation of the campaign beyond 2 October 1916, when the weather broke, was "plainly ... an exercise in futility".[90] The massive casualties of that Army on the Somme, over 420 000, seriously affected the morale of the Army so much so that one historian has remarked "Idealism perished on the Somme" and that hereafter "the war ceased to have a purpose" for the average British soldier but "went on for its own sake, as a contest in endurance".[91]

Kippenberger summed up his Somme experience:

> I think I saw as much of the Somme as any New Zealand private. During three weeks and a few days I lived through 9 strafes, passed through two barrages, was over the parapet and attacked twice, dug in goodness knows how often and did the hardest work of my life in fatigues. During that period I had one shave in a cup full of water and was pretty rough on coming out. Ten days' beard and a months dirt, clothes encrusted with mud, one puttee, a German overcoat, an oilskin coat drawn open from arm pit to waist, pants as bad or worse, pocket ruined carrying bombs etc and worst of all without my mates.
>
> It was raining hard when we got out about 3 in the morning, after a long tramp in the mud and I was tired enough to lie down on a wet tarpaulin in the mud and sleep till midday.
>
> Next day we got a wash, walking 14 miles for it, and now are billeted far from those infernal guns. In our attack on the 27th I fired about 80 rounds, some at very short range, and they weren't all wide. Many of my

[90] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.347.

[91] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History* Harmondsworth, 1966, pp.140.

> mates got knocked out by shellfire the next day and its pretty hard making up new friendships.[92]

As short as the experience was, Kippenberger had not had an easy war.

After the New Zealand Division left the Somme battlefields the troops rested at Estaires and once again started to do squad and rifle drill and practised saluting; "all the old rubbish" as Kippenberger expressed it. [93] The division then moved to take over the Fromelles sector from the 5th Australian Division. Fromelles was a very quiet part of the front line and it was here that Kippenberger requested that he become a battalion sniper, a request granted on 13 October 1916.

Battalion snipers lived a reasonably comfortable existence and were virtually left to their own devices. They worked in two-man teams of an observer and the main sniper and worked regular shifts walking to and from their sniper posts. It was a regular routine that reminded Kippenberger "continually of school days in Christchurch". [94] Ironically, Kippenberger was made a sniper as at practice he could hit a condensed milk can at eighty yards only three times out of ten and by his own admission "was very far from a brilliant shot" He enjoyed the life of a sniper and regarded it as "the ideal life for soldiers - regular food, work, exercise, a dry bed and good company". [95] As he wrote to his father at this time:

> I've had this sniper's job now for three weeks and it will do me for the duration. I'm afraid I can't report any horrible execution among the German masses by my unnerving rifle, as the said masses are very careful about showing themselves ... A periscope or two and a few scratched shields are my total claims. .... Still an opportunity might occur sometime of doing a little more in this great work of attrition or diminution of German man-power that the papers talk about, as long as one doesn't get

[92] *Kippenberger — Letters from a Soldier*, T 214 , Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, recorded 1959.

[93] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 11 October 1916.

[94] *ibid.*, 14 - 25 October 1916.

[95] *ibid.*

attrited first.[96]

Two events soon occurred to upset this pleasant routine — The Massey/Ward parade and Kippenberger's wounding. He was "attrited" on 10 November.

Harry Baverstock, whose military career "had come to an abrupt and painful end" when he was seriously wounded in the leg on his first day of action, recalled the visit of New Zealand Prime Minister Bill Massey and his deputy Joseph Ward to the military hospital and felt "deeply honoured" at their visit. Baverstock felt their visit to the frontline troops was "thoughtful and courageous" and is correct in saying that "Not all politicians would have troubled nor have had as much courage as those two".[97] Kippenberger was, however, "disgusted" to be amongst the guard of honour of thirty men chosen from each battalion and regarded it "as a special punishment" for surviving the Somme.[98]

For Kippenberger the parade was a disaster with the heavy rain and mud ruining the many days of spit and polish preparation. The eulogy given by General Plumer "made us blush very uncomfortably" and the one hundred and twenty decorations presented, made the parade drag. The highlight of the parade for Kippenberger and the other infantry soldiers occurred when a mounted military policeman was thrown from his horse and landed in a very muddy ditch.[99]

For men serving in the dreadful conditions on the Western Front, a wound that was not serious or life threatening — a "blighty" or "buckshee" as they were known — became treasured as "an honourable escape from battle, a chance to rest, an offer of life and a blessing most ardently desired".[100] Men actually prayed to receive such wounds. Martin Brown, writing to his brother Bernie back in New Zealand, lamented how he had "come to the wrong end of my leave" but that "I hope to get a good Blighty something that will put me out

[96] Kippenberger to Karl Kippenberger, letter, 6 November 1916, collection of Chris Pugsley, copy in author's possession.

[97] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, pp.74,84.

[98] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 25 October - 2 November 1916.

[99] *ibid.*

[100] Gammage, *op. cit.*, p.170.

of the mud and slush for the winter"[101] Lieutenant Randolph Norman Gray, wounded at Passchendaele and writing to reassure relatives back in New Zealand, commented that "Many men would have given five years of their life to have got my 'buckshee' ".[102] Harry Baverstock, left with a shattered thigh after being hit by a sniper 's hollow point bullet, was very surprised when the military surgeon examining him stated "he would give £10 for my wound".[103] One wonders if the surgeon, who may have only been trying to cheer his patient, would still have felt the same way had he known that Baverstock's wound would never heal, would require numerous operations and a new dressing every day for the rest of Baverstock's life.

Kippenberger was not immune from wishing for such a wound. Suffering from lumbago, the result of endless hours in wet trenches, he "thought to myself that what I wanted was a 'buckshee' and the lumbago would get better in hospital".[104] Kippenberger got his wish. On 10 November 1916, while reading *The Times* newspaper in his sniper's post, he was wounded in the arm by shrapnel from a New Zealand artillery shell that had dropped short of its mark.[105] His diary records:

> Frank [his sniping partner] was almost speechless with admiration of my lovely buckshee but he bound it up, collected the gear and we went down the sap. Frank led the way "clearing the course for a wounded soldier" and explaining to all and sundry "Old Kip's got a buckshee". I came next wearing the pleased and happy expression expected of so fortunate a person, receiving many envious congratulations.[106]

The wound, however, was more severe than a "buckshee"; the musclo spiral was damaged, the muscles supplied by it extremely weakened and the arm

[101] Martin Brown to Bernie, letter, n.d.,Canterbury Regimental Association, Canterbury Museum Christchurch New Zealand, Series 3/2, Box F5, Item 99, pp.4-5.

[102] Randolph Norman Gray to family, letter, 7 December 1917, quoted in Phillips *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p.109.

[103] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.75.

[104] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 10 November 1916.

[105] D. McLean, "Kip: Citizen Soldier", Outline of a biography, unpublished typescript, p.5.

[106] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 10 November 1916.

temporarily paralysed and there was some doubt as to whether Kippenberger would ever regain full use of it.[107]

Just four days later, twenty-seven-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Cyril Freyberg, a man who was to have a huge influence on Kippenberger 's military career, was also seriously wounded while commanding a battalion of the Royal Naval Division in the attack on Beaucourt. Freyberg received four battle wounds and won the Victoria Cross.[108] Despite the proximity of location and fate in this battle, the two men's paths were not destined to cross for another twenty-three years.

Kippenberger was pleased to be hit and wrote from the 2nd General Hospital at Chelsea, "Things bloody awful out there for wet and mud — thankful to be hit".[109] Kippenberger's active service in World War I was ended by this "buckshee" and had lasted only ten weeks. There now only remained for him the return voyage to New Zealand and discharge from the army on medical grounds. The brief ten weeks of active service deeply affected Kippenberger for the rest of his life.

How then had the experience of war changed Kippenberger and how would it affect the future New Zealand commander? Probably most important of all was the fact that the experience on the Somme had brought Kippenberger face to face with the dreadful realities of total war and the massive cost it entailed made worse by incompetent military leadership. Most of his close friends had been killed or seriously wounded on the Somme and he had had some horrific experiences. Kippenberger had also killed German soldiers and nearly been killed himself on a number of occasions. One of his closest calls had come when he was knocked over by the concussion of an exploding artillery shell that lifted him high in the air so that even the old hands had muttered "he's done". Another had occurred when Kippenberger had fallen into a deep shell hole filled with water and had only just managed to pull himself out fearing at the time that he might drown in this deathtrap. Yet another occurred when an exploding shell narrowly missed him: "My haversack and mess tin were smashed on my back, and my oil sheet ripped to pieces by shrapnel". The

[107] Medical records, Personal File of Howard Karl Kippenberger, D2/10021.

[108] P. Freyberg, *Bernard Freyberg, VC: Soldier of Two Nations*, London, 1991, p.81.

[109] *Kippenberger — Letters from a Soldier*, T 214, Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, recorded 1959.

constant exposure to death and danger made Howard Kippenberger, and no doubt many other soldiers of the time, very fatalistic and philosophical about the possibility of death. After going through an intense artillery barrage Kippenberger wrote: "During these you sit still, and if there is one marked for you, well, it'll come all right. Its no use dodging or being scared". [110]

Little wonder that Kippenberger came to admire coolness under fire and would later regard it as an essential quality for an infantry officer. Both his diary and a letter home to his parents express admiration for Bill Wright, "a rather notorious character" and "lazy beggar" from Oxford who was exceedingly "cool and plucky" during an intense artillery barrage.[111] As Denis McLean has written, "Undemonstrative calm and determination to persist in the teeth of the whirlwind became for him the highest of personal qualities". [112] These were qualities Kippenberger strove to achieve when a commander in the next great conflict.

As well as experiencing the reality of total war Kippenberger experienced the terrible burdens, the drudgery and the relative powerlessness of the private infantry soldier: shortages of food, dysentery, being "_ _ _ _ about" by unsympathetic military authorities, and being expected to fight well after struggling with crushing loads over long distances. Kippenberger came to appreciate early on how such exertion sapped the fighting ability of the private infantry soldier. On average an infantry soldier in the frontline was expected to carry a rifle and bayonet, full water bottles, 120 rounds of ammunition, an entrenching tool, an overcoat, spare clothes, haversack, rations, tin hat, oil sheet, two blankets, a pair of gum boats, a leather waistcoat, a mess tin usually full of extra rations and cooking utensils. As Kippenberger remarked: "It was all I could do to get this load on my back".[113] Kippenberger experienced other unpleasant elements of a soldier's life. He shared billets with an infestation of rats which "scared me terribly" and also an infestation of "a terrible lot of boarders" — body

[110] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 15, 28 September, 2 October 1916.

[111] *ibid.*, 28 September 1916, Kippenberger to Karl Kippenberger, letter, 6 November 1916.

[112] McLean, *op. cit.*, p.4.

[113] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 2 November 1916.

lice.[114] As the saying went at the time, "You never were a soldier unless you were lousy".[115] He was continually plagued during his active service with sore feet, the result of the ill-fitting "Bill Massey" boots and long hours of marching. As his diary mentions of this suffering, "my feet were in a terrible state, quite sodden and numb, though bleeding a good deal".[116]

It is little wonder that when a battalion and brigade commander in the next war, Kippenberger showed great concern for the comfort and well-being of the ordinary private soldier under his command and would go to great pains to see that they were well cared for by their commanders and the military authorities. He endeavoured to have the fighting men carried in motor transport as close to the fighting as was possible. Having been through the mill himself, and having an exceptional memory — he could still recall his World War I rifle number until his death[117] — Kippenberger did all he could as a commander to ease the lot of the ordinary soldier and earned as a result the enduring affection of all the other ranks serving under his command. A commander's duty, Kippenberger came to appreciate, was to alleviate the burdens placed on the ordinary soldier as much as was possible.

One feature of Kippenberger's behaviour that emerged from this wartime experience which seems a little out of character was a strong anti-authoritarian element — a larrikin streak more at home with the "hard-bitten" Australian diggers than with a future New Zealand Major-General. Evidence of this is readily apparent in Howard Kippenberger's attitudes to saluting and drill, "the old rubbish" as he termed it. Then there is his attitude to the Massey/Ward parade and the amusement provided by the M.P. being thrown from his horse. There are, however, even further pieces of evidence that attest to Kippenberger's larrikin spirit. Firstly, Kippenberger detested being promoted above the rank of private and was determined "to get rid of my stripe at the first opportunity".[118] Officers receive scant praise in Kippenberger's wartime diary and Kippenberger did not hesitate to use the confusion of a machine gun barrage to steal officers' rations when such an opportunity presented itself.[119] While on parade for the

[114] *ibid.*, 3 October and 2 November 1916.

[115] Pugsley, *op. cit.*, p.152.

[116] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit*, 3 October, 1916.

[117] Eric Townley, interview, Melbourne, 6 June 1995.

[118] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit*, 9 October 1916.

[119] *ibid.*, 5 November 1916.

Massey/Ward ceremony Kippenberger was unimpressed by the "galaxy of brass hats" and found General Plumer, whose Colonel Blimp appearance — Plumer had actually been the inspiration for the David Low caricature[120] — belied an astute military brain, "of such a comical appearance that I had much ado not to burst out laughing when he passed in front of my glassy stare".[121]

At an opposite extreme is the sense of guilt and responsibility Howard Kippenberger came to experience as a result of his war experiences. Kippenberger undoubtedly felt some guilt for not having been a better soldier during World War I and at surviving where most of his friends had had been either killed or dreadfully wounded.[122] Some evidence of this is seen when Kippenberger visited the families of all those of his platoon who were never to return to New Zealand. This was a task usually performed by someone of much higher rank than Kippenberger and must have been an extremely unpleasant task requiring a good deal of sensitivity.[123]

The war had left Kippenberger with a driving ambition to learn more about the nature and subject of warfare in an attempt to define its terrible logic. When he had qualified for a new career, Kippenberger devoted most of his spare time to the study and practice of modern warfare. It was a study that ultimately paid off as Kippenberger carried the lessons so painstakingly learned from his intense study of the subject onto the battlefields of World War II and attempted to apply them in that context. The experience of the Great War, although short and very painful for the boy soldier, was never forgotten. The war was a watershed in his life, as his career over the next three decades reveals.

[120] P. J. Haythornthwaite, *The World War I Source Book*, London, 1992, p.343.

[121] Kippenberger Diary, *op. cit.*, 25 October - 2 November 1916.

[122] D. McLean, "Infantry Brigadier", draft chapter for C. Pugsley (ed), *New Zealand Commanders* (unpublished).

[123] Baverstock, *op. cit.*, p.7.