

*Timaru Herald*. 25 September 1916 (Papers Past) [16 July 2021]

## A WILLOWBRIDGE OFFICER

LIEUT. H. E. MCGOWAN.

Mr J. Anstey, M.P., has received the following letter from Lieutenant H. E. McGowan of the 2nd New Zealand Infantry Battalion at present in France.

“We had a very fine trip across to Suez, but a truly hot time in Egypt for three weeks, when the thermometer ranged from 112 deg. to 121 deg. in the shade, and in the sun, up. to 128. A good few of the boys went down with the terrific heat. You can have no idea what it is like. Try your elbow in water at 128 deg. We were all very glad to receive word that we had to go to France. In Egypt we were camped on the old battle ground Tel-il-kebir, and it was rather interesting.

As to Cairo I will have to leave an account for another letter, but I can tell you it is no better than it is painted, and I am satisfied that it is a pity the Australians were not left to burn it out as they tried to do some eighteen months ago.

We had an exciting run across the Mediterranean, dodging submarines. A French boat was torpedoed about eight hours ahead of us, and our skipper zig-zagged and steamed at full speed the whole of the last day. We had a submarine guard of 350 men with loaded rifles all round the decks. I happened to be O.C. of this. We got two shocks, once when a whale rose about two hundred yards from the boat and spouted, and again when a half-submerged barrel floated towards us. However, we reached Marseilles without mishap. The fifty-three hours' train journey from Marseilles to our base camp was really splendid. We received a royal reception from the French women, and were showered with flowers and kisses all the way. France is a beautiful country; in fact it is a garden all over. Every inch of land is growing something, and the whole of the labour is now done by the very old men, young boys, and women. Some of the 11th men were only in the base camp a week, and then were sent up to the Front. I was appointed 2nd Brigade Commander (temporarily), and did not get away until three days ago. I am now right up at the firing line. As I write the big guns are barking away by the hundreds, and shells are whistling over my head. It is astonishing how quickly one gets used to it. I reported to Brigadier-General Braithwaite this morning, and will probably get a platoon.

I think we are giving Fritz rather a bad time just now. I will be surprised if the war lasts much longer. I have only given you a skimming of things. There is a lot more that one would like to say, but we are not allowed to say too much, and I really think it is a good thing as there are German spies everywhere. Those who have their boys here can rest assured that they will be looked after. They have good billets, and good food in plenty, good hospitals if they are wounded, and our nursing sisters out here are angels.

*Waimate Daily Advertiser*. 16 February 1918 (Papers Past) [16 July 2021]

Captain H. E. McGowan has forwarded from the front to His Worship the Mayor of Waimate, the accompanying letter which shows a creditable interest in affairs of his home town. The letter is from the High Commissioner of New Zealand, and is addressed to Captain McGowan at the front. It reads as follows: Referring to your letter asking me to secure two German guns for Waimate and my reply of 19th July, 1916, I have now to inform you that a National War Museum having been decided upon and a committee having been formed upon which New Zealand is to be represented to deal with the whole question of war trophies, I would suggest that you now make your request direct to the New Zealand Government, who will doubtless wish to deal with the distribution in the Dominion of those trophies which are eventually allocated to New Zealand.

*Waimate Daily Advertiser*. 6 June 1919 (Papers Past) [16 July 2021]

According to a list issued from the War Office, London, on March 27th, Captain H. E. McGowan, 2nd Battalion Canterbury Regiment is one of those brought to the notice of the Secretary for War for Valuable services rendered in connection with the war.