

NEW ZEALANDERS HONOURED

THEIR ACTS OF GALLANTRY.

(Received July 5, 8.35 a.m.)

LONDON, 4th July.

The following are the acts of gallantry for which military honours were awarded to New Zealanders on 2nd June:—

Corporal Wimos—Gallantly distributing ammunition and water in the firing line under heavy fire.

NEW ZEALAND DECORATIONS

ACTS OF GALLANTRY.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, July 9.

The Gazette gives the following particulars of the acts which won the decorations awarded to New Zealanders.

DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

Lance-corporal J. Wimms (New Zealand Divisional Train).—“On April 25 and 26 during operations near Gaba Tepe, for setting an example of gallantry and devotion to duty in distributing ammunition and water to the firing line under heavy fire.”

CORPORAL WIMMS, D.C.M.

AN UNOBSTRUSIVE HERO.

ARRIVAL IN AUCKLAND.

HOW THE MEDAL WAS WON.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

AUCKLAND, November 5.

It will come as a surprise to most people to know that one of the first New Zealand soldiers to be decorated for distinguished conduct at Gallipoli has returned to New Zealand, and has been in Auckland for several days. He arrived at Dunedin on the hospital ship *Tofua* 10 days ago, and came north with the Auckland party, but he is of a quiet, retiring disposition, and contrived to escape notice. He is Lance-corporal Joseph Wimms, and he left Auckland with the Main Body as a member of the Army Service Corps. His name was included in the list of birthday honours in June, when along with several other New Zealanders he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His name was then erroneously given as "Imos."

Lance-corporal Wimms is about 23 years of age, and his relatives reside in England, but he had been working in Auckland for some time prior to enlisting. He won his decoration immediately after the famous landing at Anzac on April 25. He was sent ashore about 2 p.m. that day, and put in charge of an Indian mule train, and instructed to convey ammunition from the beach to the Fourth Australian Brigade, then entrenched in Shrapnel Valley, to which point it had advanced that morning. For some four or five days this work was carried on. Lance-corporal Wimms was the only white man with these Indians, but they never failed him. He had to lead them everywhere however. He walked in front of them going out, and behind them when returning. The train was the constant target of artillery and snipers.

"We got shrapnel up the first half of the valley, and bullets up the other half," said the Lance-corporal. "Indians and mules were being killed or wounded almost all the time, but they never flinched so long as there was a white man leading them — of course, a white man who did not show fear. They were well trained men, who had been in the fight along the Suez Canal a few weeks earlier. There were 15 Indians and about 30 mules."

UNDER SHRAPNEL FIRE AT NIGHT.

These carriers of ammunition for a time worked practically day and night, but it was found that the losses suffered by those working in the daytime were too heavy, and night transport only was ordered. Before the Turks ceased using their big guns after dark, the night transport was curiously exciting. "You would hear the scream of shell," said the young soldier, "and then see the flash of its bursting. You could hear shrapnel go whop on the ground or bushes all round, and you would go on again, wondering how it had missed you, and what would happen next. I never got a scratch, but bullets went through my clothes several times."

AN UNEXPECTED HONOUR.

Lance-corporal Wimms was put on to other duty later on, but he was still engaged in the dangerous work of conveying supplies to depots just behind the firing line. He was 17 weeks on Gallipoli, and had been all through the famous four days' battle in early August. On August 18 he was attacked by fever, sent to Egypt, and then invalided home. The voyage greatly improved his health, and he hopes to return to the front as soon as his two months' leave has expired.

"Were you much surprised to get the D.C.M.?" the soldier was asked.

"I never expected anything of the sort," he said. "I had only done my little bit like hundreds of others, and I was lucky, and escaped. When they told me I was wanted in the orderly room, I got a scare, and went in fully expecting a stretch of 'C.B.,'mor something. Instead it was this medal business."

THE GOAT AND THE DUG-OUT.

Lance-corporal Wimms was greatly interested in his Indians. They were Mahommedans, of course, and strictly observed the rules of their faith. They killed their own sheep, and kept their own goats, which they milked. They were most particular in using only their own eating utensils. If they could not get their own cups they would wash their hands and drink out of them. "One of their goats was really funny," he went on. "It used to feed on a hill at the back of Walker's Ridge. Whenever it heard a shell coming it would race down and dash into a dugout, and wait there till the trouble was over. To see it carefully putting its head out to learn if all was safe again, always set the men laughing."

UNFORTIFIED ACHI BABA.

A party of marines — members of the crew of the Irresistible, and then serving a large howitzer on Gallipoli — gave Lance-corporal Wimms some interesting information. They said that two or three days before the Irresistible was sunk in the Dardanelles in February, they were ashore in Gallipoli taking observations. They landed at Cape Helles, and climbed over the slopes of Achi Baba. They said that they were only shot at by snipers occasionally, meeting practically no opposition, and that there were no fortifications then. They declared that if it had been possible to land troops at that time the Peninsula might have been occupied without much difficulty.

Just before he was seized by fever, Lance-corporal Wimms was at work again with his Indians, running munitions up New Zealand Gully to a new position on Rhododendron Ridge.

NZ Herald. 9 November 1915 (Papers Past) [07/03/2023]

One of the most interesting functions in the brief history of the Soldiers' Club [Auckland] took place last night, when a social was held in honour of Lance-Corporal Joseph Wimms, D.C.M. The object of the gathering was to introduce soldiers who are leaving to the lance-corporal, and to afford returned soldiers an opportunity of meeting their comrade once more. Mr. W. Lane, editor of the New Zealand Herald, presided, and under his chairmanship a musical programme was presented. Those taking part were Messrs. W. Manning, Pinnard, C. Crowther, Private Cartwright and Private Berwick. Mr. Wynne Grav contributed an exhibition of sleight-of-hand work. Refreshments were served by members of the Ladies' Committee and the evening was greatly enjoyed. Lance-Corporal Wimms was one of the first New Zealand soldiers to be decorated for distinguished conduct at Gallipoli, when he was engaged in the dangerous work of conveying supplies to depots just behind the firing line. On August 18 he was attacked by fever, and finally was invalided home.

Press. 25 November 1919 (Papers Past) [08/03/2023]

HONOURING THE BRAVE.

PRESENTATION OF MEDALS.

PARADE AT KING EDWARD BARRACKS.

Yesterday evening Colonel R. Young, C.B., C.M.G., Officer Commanding the Canterbury Military District, presented medals to over thirty returned soldiers and their next-of-kin, in the King Edward Barracks.

There was a good muster of Territorials and Cadets, representing all branches of the service, and also a fairly good attendance of the public, to witness the ceremony. The troops were drawn up in hollow square in the drill hall, and at the eastern end a table was placed, covered with the Union Jack, upon which were stacked the little boxes which held the decorations. The band of the 1st (Canterbury) Regiment, under Lieut. V.Siddall, played on the entrance of the Colonel and his staff, and also for the march past at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Colonel Young, after expressing his great pleasure at having the honour of presenting the medals, said the last function of the kind at which he officiated was at a parade of his own battalion in France, just on the eve of marching into Germany. No doubt a good many of the men present remembered that particular time with a great deal of pleasure. No one knew better than he did how well earned the medals were, and it was always a most difficult job for a Brigade or Battalion Commander to know how to allot the honours. There were so few to give and so many deserved. The King had approved of a returned soldier wearing his medal ribbons while in mufti, and before he (the speaker) left England he noticed a large number of men doing so. In New Zealand, on the contrary, he had seen practically no one doing so. He had noticed one man in a tram with his ribbon on his mufti coat, and he was very pleased to see this. He did not believe in "swank," but to wear medal ribbons was not swank. As the soldier had a right to wear them he should do so out of pride, and however proud he felt of his medals he could be sure his relatives and friends felt prouder. "There is some talk of the Department getting some miniature medals struck," said Colonel Young. I know the real things are a bit big to wear about, but the miniature will not be, and I hope that non-coms. and men with medals will wear them when they put on their 'glad rags' for special occasions." Colonel Young concluded by saying that he noticed a good many next-of-kin there that evening, and their presence would remind them of many good pals who had passed away during the war.

The ceremony was then proceeded with, each soldier or next-of-kin being heartily applauded by the public present as they came forward to receive the medals.

The following presentations were made: -

MILITARY MEDAL.

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DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL

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L.-Cpl. J. Wimms, N.Z. Division.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDALS.

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D.C.M. AND M.M.

Distinguished Conduct Medals and Military Medals were presented to the next-of-kin of the following soldiers who had fallen in action or died of wounds:—

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