

Mackay

ON MONEY

BY FINANCIAL ADVISER CHRIS MACKAY

The Kapiti Coast over January enjoyed pretty good weather generally. On one of the few days we did not want to venture outside, I tidied up a book case full of inherited tomes. The trouble with a book spring clean is you keep finding interesting titles you could or should be biffing out or gifting to a church book fair.

“Britain” (Edition for the Dominions) B.C. 55 to A.D. 1924 by R.B. Mowat piqued my interest. My new found curiosity with the Anzacs at Gallipoli led me in search of the relevant section. And this is how Mr Mowat MA, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, sucked up to the Kiwi colonials from one of the Dominions. (The underlining is mine.)

“The Dardanelles Campaign.

There was one magnificent, long sustained effort made chiefly by British troops, but with a considerable French contingent, to force the citadel of South Western Europe, the area from Gallipoli to Constantinople ...”

There you have it. A defining moment in New Zealand’s and Australia’s nationhood and the bugger cannot even give us a mention in our specially adapted publication! He goes on to quote an excerpt from Churchill’s *The World Crisis* but nowhere in the Dardanelles notations are our lads even acknowledged. He does cite the fact Samoa was occupied by New Zealand forces and that we, Canada, Australia and New Foundland were equipping large forces for Europe early on in the war.

Elsewhere in the book, New Zealand gets just under three pages and in particular the following:

“The New Zealand of to-day.

New Zealand is not a member of the Australian Commonwealth, but stands alone, proud of its history, of its undeniable efficiency, and of its place in the Empire. For the last twenty years the Liberal Party has chiefly been in power. The State engages with great activity in railway work, in mining, and in carefully regulating the payment and hours of labour.

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The Government owns the bulk of the land, which is granted on long leases – up to 999 years – at moderate rentals. Every man serves in the forces, and for the European War of 1914 – 1918 drafts by conscription were regularly sent to maintain the New Zealand contingent.

In this distant Dominion the ordinary features of English life are reproduced more closely than in any other colony, except that there are no beggars, and there is still unoccupied land to be leased. The price of horses has risen, but those who will, can still ride, and in that large air the youth of old England is perpetually renewed.”

How bizarre! Hey but that was 1924 and the bit about horses leads me nicely back into how come I personally made it into the lucky sperm club. You may remember if you have read the past two *Vibrant Hutt* articles, my grandfather

Archie Williamson (Pa) avoided Gallipoli by catching the measles and having to stay behind at Trentham Camp. Eventually however he was off to Egypt en route to France. Now on one of the troop ships Pa was on, probably the one that started out from New Zealand, the men were asked if anybody had had anything to do with horses back home. Archie, a Central Otago lad with an equine bent put up his hand and with that happenstance, became an artilleryman looking after horses who would pull the big guns into battle position. So why was this fortuitous for Archie and all his descendants?

Pa had a brother-in-law (my Uncle Wilfred) who would tease him after the war by singing loudly and often in my grandfather’s hearing “The artillery have a jolly good time, parlez vous, the artillery have a jolly good time, parlez vous, the artillery have a jolly good time, 20 miles behind the line, inky pinky parlez vous.” Pa was not amused.

It’s true to say that if you were in the artillery as opposed to the infantry, your chances of survival were greatly enhanced.

Mowat talks about the British forces at the Somme “gaining ground by inches, losing men by tens of thousands ... The Somme cost the Allies about 400,000 men.” The famous Captain Blackadder once questioned when they had been told a new push was on “Oh is General Haig about to make another gargantuan effort to move his liquor cabinet six inches closer to Berlin?”

You didn’t want to be in the infantry under the command of “The Butcher of the Somme/Butcher Haig” in WWI. History

may be treating him a little unfairly. He only presided over about two million British (and commonwealth) casualties.

Notwithstanding the risks of a vocation in the infantry, life in the artillery was not without danger either. One night in France, Pa and his horses had holed up in a barn and all night long he and his mates could hear a drip, drip, drip sound which they thought was a water tank. In the morning, they realised one of their horses had taken a bullet in its side and had bled to death during the night.

Another time, he was coming out of a farm building. Pa had forgotten something and went back inside and the soldier who had been immediately behind him was shot and killed by a German bullet. Later he got shrapnel wounds and was sent to a hospital in England to recover. He died an old man with a tiny bit of shrapnel still lodged in his ear!

It's about time for a lesson on money. And the principle is: be very wary of gamblers.

The wedding ring I wear was originally Archie's brother's. He had no kids and so I somehow inherited the band of gold. I hope I have inherited some of his wisdom too. Great Uncle Cecil and Archie met up somewhere in France during the war. Pa told Cecil that apart from keeping a few pence for a packet of fags, he had told the wages people at the war office to send all his service pay to my great grandfather back in Cromwell to put in a savings account for a house deposit if he made it home again. "You bloody fool" Cecil fired back. "You know dad is a gambler. You'll never see it again." Archie was a more trusting fellow than his cynical sibling. "He's also paying my insurance premiums out of the allotment." "Yeah right" Uncle Cecil may well have opined.

Well, you guessed it. Pa got back to New Zealand after spending time with the occupation forces in Germany, made a beeline to Nelson to see his fiancé Jeanette Christensen my grandmother, and eventually got down to Central to pick up his loot, paid for in blood spilt in France. (If he were a US soldier, he would have been awarded the Purple Heart. Cecil meantime got gassed during the war, stuffed his lungs and never worked again back home in New Zealand.)

After the handshakes from Alex Williamson and probably a curt nod from his stepmother, my great grandfather told his 24-year-old son that when he had left New Zealand Alex thought he would never see Archie again and "I'm sorry to tell you son, the money has all gone. And by the way,

you know I don't believe in insurance so I burned the policies."

Pa turned his back on his old man and crossed him off his Christmas card list. Alex, years later sent Pa 60 quid. Great! Entrusting your dough to a gambler is not a cool idea.

My sixth form rugby coach at Hutt High was a really good bloke called Peter Guiney. He was Mark's, one of my team mates, dad. I think Peter probably enjoyed a bit of a flutter and one afternoon took a bunch of his finely tuned rugby athletes to the Trentham races. I recall taking \$20 of my hard earned cash from my cleaning job (earning \$8 per week in those days). When I got home, my father asked where I had been. I told him I had had my first

experience at the races. "How much did you bet?" he asked. "Twenty dollars." "How much did you win?" "Nothing. I lost the lot." "Good" dad said. He wasn't a gambler and did not want me to be one. And I'm not!

Disclaimer: I did come third in this year's office sweepstake for the Melbourne Cup. I have taken the odd rugby punt at the TAB and should have done so for the RWC final knowing that a prop would surely score the first try.

A Trust I am associated with also buys a Lotto ticket and scratchie now and then.

These are generalised comments only and should not be taken as personalised advice. A disclosure Statement is available on request and free of charge.



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A disclosure statement is available on request and free of charge.