

ALL BLACKS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

- In total **13 former All Blacks** lost their lives during World War I. Albert Downing was the first All Black killed, at **Gallipoli** on 8 August 1915, followed the next day by Henry Dewar. Five were killed in **France** (Frank Wilson 19 September 1916, buried near Albert; Bobby Black, 21 September 1916, near Longueval, no known grave; Ernie Dodd 11 September 1918, Metz-en-Couture; Alexander Ridland, 5 November 1918, Cambrai; and Hubert Turtill 9 April 1918 Festubert, near Bethune). Eric Harper died in **Palestine** on 30 April 1918 and has no known grave.
- Five All Blacks were killed in **Flanders**, or were wounded there and subsequently died in France. They were Jim Baird, wounded at **Messines** who died in France on 7 June 1917; George Sellars, died 7 June 1917, **Messines**, no known grave; Reg Taylor, died **Messines** 20 June 1917, buried Underhill farm; James McNeece 21 June 1917, wounded at **Messines**, buried Rouen; David Gallaher, fatally wounded at **'s Graventafel**, died that day 4 October 1917. Thus the final resting place of three — Sellars, Taylor and Gallaher — is Flanders.
- **David Gallaher** was five years old when his family moved from Belfast to the Bay of Plenty. He always claimed to be three years younger than he really was and when he enlisted to fight in the Boer war in 1901 he gave his age as 24 instead of 27. His gravestone at Nine Elms British Cemetery gives his age as 41 whereas he was actually nearly 44. (Just as there were very young victims of the war, a surprising number of New Zealand soldiers were in their thirties or forties and one, buried at Messines, was in his fifties.)
- Captain of the highly successful 1905 All Blacks (the “originals”), Gallaher married in 1906 and had a daughter (Nora) in 1908. After his younger brother, Douglas, was killed in France in June 1916 he decided to enlist again. He became a sergeant with the 2nd Auckland Regiment on 1 June 1917 and was wounded in the face on **4 October**. He died the same day at a field hospital in Poperinghe. In addition to Douglas, another brother of Gallaher's, Henry, was killed on 24 April 1918. Both brothers were serving with Australian forces. Five Gallaher brothers served in the army: only two survived.
- A number of **Maori All Blacks** also served overseas. Amongst them was Charles Rangiwahia Sciascia the “Maori/Italian” who was killed on 1 August 1917 and whose memorial in the Belgian town of Comines-Warneton was dedicated this year.

New Zealand Embassy, Brussels

September 2007