

# **Malcolm Ross: From the peaks to the trenches**

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A thesis submitted to AUT University  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2008

School of Communication Studies

Primary supervisor: Dr Alan Cocker

Dedicated to the memories of  
relatives who fought and were killed  
in the Great War

**Alfred Harpham Corlett & Franklin Corlett**

1890-1915

1893-1915

(Brothers killed together at Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli, August 8, 1915)

**Robert Henry Lambie**

1888 – 1916

(Killed at Bir el Abd, Egypt, August 9, 1916)

**Samuel James Beart Foss**

1882- 1916

(Died of wounds, the Somme, France, September 24, 1916)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Dedication</b>	i
<b>Table of contents</b>	ii-iv
<b>List of illustrations</b>	v-viii
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ix
<b>Abstract</b>	x
<b>Introduction</b>	1-12
1. The thesis as biography	
2. History as narrative	
3. The journalist as historian	
4. The duties of the historian	
5. Methodology	
6. New Zealand and general war scholarship	
7. Chapter contents	
<b>Chapter 1 Early days of Malcolm Ross 1862-1914</b>	13-46
1:1 Introduction	
1:2 Early years in Otago	
1:3 Becoming a journalist	
1:4 Moving on up	
1:5 Peak experiences	
1:6 Artistic pursuits – photography	
1:7 The lure of Wellington	
1:8 London calling?	
1:9 Authorship and other writing	
1:10 Overseas travel	
1:11 Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 2 Early New Zealand journalism</b>	47-81
2:1 Introduction	
2:2 Pre-war newspapers	
2:3 New Zealand at the turn of the century	
2:4 The Australian influence on journalism	
2:5 The New Zealand journalist	
2:6 The literary journalist	
2:7 Australia – the land of opportunity	
2:8 Duties of a pre-war journalist	
2:9 Libel	
2:10 Conditions of work	
2:11 Co-operation among journalists	

2:12 The ideal journalist

2:13 Conclusion

**Chapter 3 Ross's journalism prior to World War I** 82-104

3:1 Introduction

3:2 The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century "newshole"

3:3 Pre-war journalistic style

3:4 The interview

3:5 Point of view

3:6 Ross's journalism

3:6:1 The missing university professor

3:6:2 The interviews

3:6:3 Mountaineering

3:6:4 A news story – the wreck of the *Penguin*

3:7 Conclusion

**Chapter 4 New Zealand war correspondence and the appointment of the country's first official war correspondent** 105-146

4:1 Introduction

4:2 Inspiring war correspondents prior to 1899

4:3 New Zealand war correspondence before 1915

4:3:1 The New Zealand wars 1840s-1880s

4:3:2 The Samoan "troubles" of 1899

4:3:3 The South African War 1899-1902

4:3:4 The Boxer rebellion 1900

4:3:5 War correspondence and the Russo-Japanese War 1904

4:3:6 Last foray of an independent war correspondent – Samoa 1914

4:4 The selection of New Zealand's first official war correspondent.

4:5 Conclusion

**Chapter 5 War correspondence at Gallipoli** 147-176

5:1 Introduction

5:2 New Zealand and the Gallipoli campaign

5:3 The journalist corps

5:4 Sir Ian Hamilton and the correspondents

5:5 Banishment to Imbros

5:6 Second influx of correspondents

5:7 Collaboration or competition?

5:8 Censorship

5:9 Photography

5:10 Other difficulties faced by journalists at Gallipoli

5:11 Conclusion

**Chapter 6 The Gallipoli campaign and the readers back home** 177-05

6:1 Introduction

6:2 Press coverage of the Gallipoli campaign up to June 1915

6:3 Malcolm Ross departs for Egypt

6:4 Malcolm Ross's arrival in Egypt

6:5 The reaction in New Zealand to Ross's early reports

6:6 Malcolm Ross finally gains permission to go to Gallipoli

- 6:7 Malcolm Ross at the front
- 6:8 The reaction to Malcolm Ross's despatches in New Zealand
- 6:9 A brief survey of Malcolm Ross's published stories
- 6:10 Conclusion

## **Chapter 7 Malcolm Ross on the Western Front** 206-235

- 7:1 Introduction
- 7:2 Arrival in France - 1916
- 7:3 Despatch despair
- 7:4 Transport woes
- 7:5 The British journalist corps
- 7:6 Family time and other diversions
- 7:7 Old friends and colleagues in London
- 7:8 Impressions of the New Zealand soldier
- 7:9 Battles– the New Zealand effort
  - 7:9:1 The affairs and affrays of 1918
  - 7:9:2 The relief of Le Quesnoy
- 7:10 The war histories
- 7:11 Conclusion

## **Chapter 8 Ross's correspondence at the Front** 236-270

- 8:1 Introduction
- 8:2 Malcolm Ross on the Western Front – 1916
- 8:3 General criticism of news from the front
- 8:4 The battle of the Somme 1916
- 8:5 Criticism continues unabated in 1917
- 8:6 The Battle of Third Ypres – Passchendaele 1917
- 8:7 The relief of Le Quesnoy - 1918
- 8:8 Conclusion

## **Epilogue Malcolm Ross's final years** 271-273

## **Conclusion** 274-287

## **References** 288-317

## **Appendices & Tables** 318-334

- Appendix A Conditions of employment of the official war correspondent published in *The New Zealand Times*, March 2, 1915.
- Appendix B *Me!* Published in *The Observer*, April 10, 1915, p. 4
- Appendix C *The Battle of Sari Bair*, by Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett
- Appendix D *War news – The fight for Chunuk Bair*, by Malcolm Ross
- Appendix E *On Gallipoli - the attack in August - what the New Zealanders did*, by Malcolm Ross
- Table 1 War correspondents at Gallipoli in 1915
- Table 2 Reportage at Gallipoli

## **Attestation of authorship**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

## List of Illustrations

**NB: Most of these illustrations have not been included in this digital copy for copyright reasons.**

**Figure 1:** Portrait of Malcolm Ross, photographed by Stanley P. Andrew in 1910. National Library reference no: 1/1-014723-G.

**Figure 2:** Cabinet card portrait of George Fenwick taken, probably in the 1890s, by John Richard Morris of Dunedin. National Library reference no: PA3-0169.

**Figure 3:** Portrait of Forrest Ross, held at the Hocken Library, Dunedin.

**Figure 4:** Malcolm Ross, at Ball Hut, Tasman Glacier according to Duncan Ross. [1890s] National Library reference no: 1/2-008246-G

**Figure 5:** Noel Ross as a child, dressed as a mountaineer - Photograph probably taken by one of his parents. [ca 1894] National Library reference no: 1/2-054916-F

**Figure 6:** Coach and passengers, crossing a river. [ca 1890s]. National Library reference no: 1/2-008248-G. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 7:** Malcolm Ross as published in the *Otago Witness* on February 6, 1901, p. 30.

**Figure 8:** Members of the parliamentary press gallery 1904. National Library reference no: 1/2-118594-F

**Figure 9:** Governor Ranfurly's party that crossed the Huiarau trail from Waikaremoana to Ruatoki [March 1904]. National Library reference no: PA1-q-634-01. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 10:** Members of the Board of the New Zealand Press Association at the annual conference in Auckland in 1902. National Library reference no: 1/4-014957-F.

**Figure 11:** View of the reporters' room at the *Auckland Star* newspaper 1906. National Library reference no: PA1-0-373-06b.

**Figure 12:** The literary staff of the *Dominion* newspaper, Wellington, in about 1910. National Library reference no: PAColl-0450-15.

**Figure 13:** Quintin McKinnon and Ernest Mitchell. National Library reference no: PAColl-7581-36.

**Figure 14:** Ignace Paderewski about 1910. National Library reference no: 1/2-098859-F.

**Figure 15:** Climbing Ngauruhoe in 1907. One of the climbers is James Cowan. National Library reference no: PAColl-5800-06. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 16:** Men hauling wreckage and a body on beach at Cape Terawhiti, Wellington, after the wreck of the ship *Penguin* in 1909. National Library reference no: 1/1-020152-G.

**Figure 17:** Archibald Forbes - the "King of Specials" published in the *Otago Witness* December 9, 1882, p. 8.

**Figure 18:** James Cowan and Alys Stowell about 1914. National Library reference no: PAColl-5877-1.

**Figure 19:** New Zealand and Samoan group, during the 1888-1889 civil war in Samoa. National Library reference no: 1/1-006636-G. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 20:** Naval machine gun crew with maxim gun, during the Samoan civil war 1888-1889. National Library reference no: 1/1-006638-G. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 21:** Horses being shod at the camp at Newtown Park, Wellington, during the South African War 1899-1902. National Library reference no: 1/1-006672-G. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 22:** F. B. Hughes, the photographer sent by the *Otago Daily Times* and other New Zealand papers to South Africa, 1900.

**Figure 23:** New Zealand soldiers, on board a troopship en route to Samoa 1914. National Library reference no: 1/4-017518-F. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 24:** New Zealand troops in Western Samoa, August, 1914. National Library reference number: 1/4-017529-F. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 25:** Colonel Robert Logan Apia, Samoa 29 August 1914. National Library reference number: 1/4-017522-F. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 26:** Dr Guy Scholefield 1930. National Library reference no: 1/1-018774-F.

**Figure 27:** T.W. Leys, of the *Auckland Star*, taken about 1924. National Library reference no: 1/1-001452-G.

**Figure 28:** Ellis Ashmead Bartlett.

**Figure 29:** Charles Bean, Australian official war correspondent, at Mena Camp, Egypt, 1914. Australian War Memorial ID no: A05381.

**Figure 30:** War correspondents H. W. Nevinson, Malcolm Ross, and Lester Lawrence, Reuter's at Imbros 1915. Australian War Memorial ID no: G01411.

**Figure 31:** Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. Australian War Memorial ID no: A03549.

**Figure 32:** Brigadier Generals Johnson, New Zealand Field Artillery Brigade, Russell, Monash, Johnson of New Zealand Light Infantry, Stephenson and Antill of 3rd Australian Light Horse, waiting for Lord Kitchener. Australian War Memorial ID no: 01325. Photograph by C.E.W. Bean.

**Figure 33:** Colonel William Malone about 1914. National Library reference no: 1/1-014786-G.

**Figure 34:** Peter Schuler, correspondent for the Melbourne Age, on his way to Egypt. Australian War Memorial ID no: G01560.

**Figure 35** Extract from *New Zealand Truth*, January 8, 1916, p. 5

**Figure 36:** World War I camp at Seraphim, south of Cairo, February 24, 1916. National Library reference no: 1/4-017541-F. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 37:** Bernard Cyril Freyberg standing on a diving board in a bathing costume. Taken at the Te Aro Baths, Oriental Bay, Wellington. National Library reference no: 1/2-044404-F.

**Figure 38:** Quinn's Post, Gallipoli, 1915. National Library reference no: 1/2-168793-F.

**Figure 39:** James Allen, Minister of Defence between 1912 and 1920. National Library reference no: 1/1-001203-G.

**Figure 40:** Sir Thomas Mackenzie and Malcolm Ross 1917. Photograph taken September 9 or 10, 1917 by Henry Armytage Sanders. National Library reference no: 1/4-009496-G.

**Figure 41:** Allied war correspondents. Australian War Memorial ID no: A00712

**Figure 43:** 25 Ferncroft Ave, Camden, near Hampstead, where Forrest and Noel lived while Malcolm was in France. Photograph taken by Lyn Ross in 2007.

**Figure 44:** A cellar in the ruins of a Belgian house used as a headquarters by the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company during the latter part of 1917. Captain F G Phippard of the unit is seen at the entrance to the dugout with Malcolm Ross (right). Australian War Memorial ID no: E01902. Photograph by C.E.W. Bean.

**Figure 45:** Disabled tank labelled Edward, February 1918. National Library reference no: 1/4-017536-F. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.

**Figure 45:** New Zealand journalists inspect a German dugout at Haplincourt, September 4, 1918. National Library reference no: 1/2-013569-G.

**Figure 46:** Visiting New Zealand journalists on the battlefield at Haplincourt, September 4, 1918. National Library reference no: 1/2-013568-G.

**Figure 47:** New Zealand troops marching through the town of Le Quesnoy, France, November 10, 1918. National Library reference no: 1/4-017543-F. Photograph

**Figure 48:** Cartoon - "A natural mistake" by M.C. Meikle and published in *The Observer*, June 9, 1917, p. 17.

**Figure 49:** British war correspondent Philip Gibbs.

**Figure 50:** New Zealand soldiers erecting a commemorative cross to those who died in the Somme Battle, 1916. National Library reference no: 1/2-013632-G.

**Figure 51:** Major E. N. Mulligan of the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company (standing) and Malcolm Ross (sitting on sandbags), outside the camouflaged entrance of a tunnel. August 12, 1917. Australian War Memorial ID no: E04630.

**Figure 52:** Gun crew in mud at Passchendaele, 1917. National Library reference no: PAColl-2667-014.

**Figure 53:** A general view of Bapaume after its capture by New Zealand troops, August 29, 1918. National Library reference no: 1/2-013546-G.

**Figure 54:** Crowd around a New Zealand regimental band playing in Le Quesnoy, the day after its capture, November 5, 1918. National Library reference no: 1/2-013705-G.

**Figure 55:** *Capture of the walls of Le Quesnoy*, by George Edmund Butler, 1920. Department of Internal Affairs, National Collection of War Art. Ref: AAAC 898 NCWA 535.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Those doctoral candidates who have gone before well know how important is the support they get from their supervisors, colleagues, fellow researchers, librarians and family as they pursue their research. The years of mental travail involved would be unendurable without their unstinting encouragement and helpfulness. Despite predictions I actually thoroughly enjoyed the process and much of that is thanks to the disparate group of people mentioned above. Firstly, I acknowledge my two supervisors, Dr Alan Cocker, acting head of the School of Communication Studies at AUT University and Dr Jock Phillips, eminent New Zealand historian and author and currently general editor of *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* based at the Ministry for Culture & Heritage. They have kept a benevolent eye on my progress and weathered the many drafts and accompanying questions with equanimity and praiseworthy patience. Any deficiencies in the outcome cannot be laid at their door. I have been most grateful for their constructive criticism and gentle reins. I was very fortunate to have discovered two descendants of Malcolm Ross, one in New Zealand, Duncan Ross, and one in Australia, Lyn Ross. That has been a most rewarding partnership as we foraged and fossicked to find information about a man and his family that appeared to have left few traces of their presence. I thank them both for their helpfulness and interest. No researcher could achieve anything worthwhile without the advice forthcoming from the many librarians with whom one comes into contact during the course of study. My thanks go to the librarians at the AUT University library, Auckland Central City Library, University of Auckland Library, National Library, Alexander Turnbull Library, Archives New Zealand and the Hocken Library in New Zealand and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The Australian media historians have been wonderfully supportive of their New Zealand colleague. They have had to endure three consecutive conferences on some aspect of Malcolm Ross but have always been encouraging and constructive with their comments. I have promised to submit a new topic for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australian Media Traditions conference in Sydney in 2009. My thanks also to Iain Stephenson, based in Wellington, who carried out urgent late research for me right on deadline. My own colleagues in the School of Communication Studies, as well as my family, have withstood the roller coaster ride of my research remarkably well and I thank them profoundly for their forbearance and fortitude in the face of my rather manic approach to doctoral research.

## **ABSTRACT**

In April 1915 a journalist named Malcolm Ross was appointed New Zealand's official war correspondent to cover the actions of the country's troops wherever they might be fighting during World War I. Few today appear to have heard of this man so the task of this research was to discover who he was, why he was chosen and how effective he was as a correspondent. The fact he had not been remembered hinted at two possibilities; the first was that as little attention has been given to New Zealand's media history so he had become one of the forgotten and just awaited some eager historian to rediscover him or, secondly, he had been forgotten because he had not left a lasting legacy or tradition worthy of remembrance. It was a conundrum waiting to be solved and that was the purpose of the research. What was uncovered was a man, born of Scottish working class parents who by 52, when he was selected as official war correspondent, had reached what appeared to be the pinnacle of his career. He was successful, both financially and socially. He had been an exceptional mountaineer and sportsman. His journalism and photographic skills had made him one of the leading journalists of his day. Few were surprised when he was appointed as the country's first official war correspondent. It is the contention of this thesis that from the time of his appointment, Ross's reputation and status eroded to the extent that his final years after the war appeared to have been spent in relative obscurity. The reason for this will be explored and largely hinges on the almost overwhelming criticism Ross received for his efforts as war correspondent. A major part of the research was devoted to determining whether this criticism was fair and whether Ross warranted elevation into the ranks of the undeserved forgotten of our country's media heroes.

**Figure 1 Malcolm Ross about 1910.**

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. The thesis as biography

This thesis is a biography. The biography has been called by one scholar “the quest for the person” (Bowersock, 1991, p. 27) and that resonates well here. This thesis goes in search of Malcolm Ross, New Zealand’s first official war correspondent, who was born near Dunedin in 1862. Biographies, according to scholars such as Mark Feldstein (2006) can generally be divided into two categories: critical or analytical biography and narrative or “pure” biography (p. 470). The former is characterised by a more academic, scholarly tone and focuses on some part of the subject’s life rather than the whole of it. It might, for example, focus on a subject’s work and relate that to the type of work carried out by others in the same field. Detachment, scepticism, neutrality are words commonly used to describe this type of oeuvre. The same cannot be said of the second type of biography. Here the focus is on the individual in all his or her uniqueness and the quest is for the extraordinary. The language is more vivid and celebratory. This thesis leans more to the former style than the latter, but does not exclude elements of “pure” biography. Scholars of biography suggest that whatever the style used, similar overarching questions need to be asked. And these shall be asked of this work. First, how worthy is Ross of a biography? How significant and interesting was his life and work? Why does any of it matter? How has Ross or his work shaped the world of New Zealand journalism and war reportage? What light does Ross’s life throw on wider historical trends? Second, can a biography shed new or original light on Ross? How does it fit into existing scholarship? These questions will be answered in this thesis. As a post script, it seems redundant to explain that the subject of this biographical work is dead. This thesis, therefore, is not only a biography but a history. And as a work of history, the thesis also has its particularities.

## 2. History as narrative

*“One rightly criticises a work of history for being mistaken or uninteresting, but there is no warrant for saying description is a lesser historical aim than explanation” (Megill, 1989).*

From a brief investigation into the theory of history it is clear that in the last 20 years or so there has been a lively debate among historians as to the nature of their calling. Without delving too deep, it is clear that narrative history has seen something of a second flowering after being cast into the shadows by the post modernists. However, this revivification has not been without its setbacks. Its detractors are still numerous. “The celebrated ‘revival of narrative’ has had to work against the prevalent suspicion that ‘narrative history’ is epistemologically and methodologically defective”(Megill, 1989, p. 30). So what is narrative history? “Narrative is the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly overcrowded and disordered chronological reality”(Cronon, 1992, p. 1349). A narrative history is not just a chronicle of events (McCullagh, 1987, p. 30); the flow of events needs to be organised. “In some sense those facts have to constitute a ‘story’” (Dray, 1971, p. 157). “And stories are discursive entities that display at least the traces of a plot” (Norman, 1991, p. 125). To shift from chronicle to narrative, one must structure a text to have a beginning, middle and an end” (Cronon, 1992, p. 1367). This is quite apposite for a biography of a dead individual. In this case, Ross was born, had a career as a journalist and war reporter, and died thereafter. Narrative history is not just descriptive but includes what Megill (1989) called “the four tasks of historiography”, recounting, explanation, argumentation or justification, and interpretation (p. 627). Recounting tells “what is the case?” Next comes an explanation of some aspect of historical reality. Argument or justification is the third aspect which might take the form of commentary or analysis. The fourth and final task is interpretation – that is, the historian “necessarily views the past from a present perspective”. Megill said all must be present but some histories will give greater emphasis to one or other of the aspects. A work where recounting has a predominant role will “inevitably be ordered in narrative form”. Megill posited four elements to narrative – action, happening, character and setting – and the interaction of these four forms the narrative. “Accordingly the crucial question to ask, in deciding whether a given work is best seen as an instance of narrative history is not ‘Is this text organised in a chronologically sequential order?’. It is rather ‘How prominent in the text are the *elements* of narrative?’” (p. 645).

One of the criticisms of an historical narrative is that it cannot be true. Academics such as Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit called narrative histories “fictional” or “metaphorical” (Lorenz, 1998). They argued for a “radical discontinuity between narrative and reality” (D. Carr, 1986). Thus scholars have spent many journal pages

examining this issue (D. Carr, 1986, p. 117; Lorenz, 1998; McCullagh, 1987; Topolski, 1981; Torstendahl, 2003; Wood, 2001). Topolski, for example, asked whether it was possible to get a true picture of the past through an historical narrative. David Carr was concerned about the truthfulness of narrative histories and whether their claim to represent the reality of past events was defensible (p. 117). “Traditional narrative historians claim to tell us what really happened,” said Carr. Some may do it well and some may not “but nothing in principle prevents such narratives from succeeding at their aim”. Cronon cited David Carr in defence of historical narrative. Carr argued for continuity and that far from being arbitrary, “narratives reflect one of the most fundamental properties of human consciousness” (Cronon, 1992, p. 1369). Norman contended that “constructing an historical narrative need not falsify the past” (Norman, 1991, p. 133). “Construction does not mean falsification,” he insisted. “The fact that a narrative is the result of a creative process, a construct that articulates the past anew, does not by itself compromise its truth. It might do so badly, or wrongly, of course, in which case that would have to be pointed out” (p. 135). This was a point also made by Carr. Once written a historical work is then open to critique from fellow historians and errors, exceptions, enlargements etc noted or commented on. As biographer Richard Holmes (1995) noted: “The possibility of error is constant in all biography and I suspect that it is one of the elements which gives the genre its peculiar psychological tension”(p. 175). He didn’t mean errors in documentation or the deliberate slanting of an account but: “I mean the reader can see, from the outside, an honest relationship developing between biographer and subject, and the deeper this becomes the more critical are those moments – or areas – in which misunderstanding or misinterpretation become evident.”

### 3. The journalist as historian

As a journalist attempting to be an historian it is piquant to note some of the issues that exercise the minds of her historian colleagues. Just the reading of the titles of journal articles is enough to give a journalist a fellow feeling. Here are two examples by way of illustration: “Telling the story” (Slavin, 1990) and “A place for stories” (Cronon, 1992). Journalists have always called their articles “stories” and have faced the twin complexities of “truthfulness” and “objectivity”. For the first, the word “story” itself is problematic. “Telling a story” in the vernacular, means “telling a lie”! The concept of “objectivity” continues to exercise the minds of historians and journalists alike. Rolf Torstendahl (2003), in “Fact, truth and text”, noted that historians “could not conceive of their profession without relating it to objectivity, either as goal within reach or as an

ideal that could not be attained but which was always worthy of striving for” (p. 307). Journalists would say “Amen”.

There appear to be many parallels between what the two crafts or professions practise. One of the major differences is that historians are concerned with a more distant past than a journalist who is wrestling more with the here and now and under heavy time constraints. Journalists must deal with sources; they must investigate, gather evidence, and then present the information in a readable and credible form usually under time pressure. While the inverted pyramid still holds sway the use of narrative style is becoming more accepted as a way to tell stories. Journalists also would make claims to the truthfulness of their work, as do the historians. So does this mean that journalists would make good historians? Journalists have been said to write the “first rough draft of history”<sup>1</sup> so there seems no reason why they couldn’t go on to write a final draft. Certainly Steve Weinberg (1992) believed journalists were in their element when writing biography (p. 30). Investigative reporters, in particular, are trained to dig out information, one of the important tasks of history. Not all journalists made good historians, however. In the field of media history there have been examples of less than stellar work produced by journalists. Two recent Australian examples pertinent to the topic of this thesis spring to mind. *Gallipoli – untold stories from war correspondent Charles Bean and front-line Anzacs* was written by a *Sydney Morning Herald* writer, Jonathan King along with photographer Michael Bowers (2005). This book is careless with its facts - the authors don’t let them stand in the way of a good story. The work, in places, has become “fictional”, as historians White or Ankersmit might say. Attribution is often sketchy so any reader who wished to check the veracity of statements or facts is left baffled. A similar scenario is evident with *Myth maker – Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, the Englishman who sparked Australia’s Gallipoli legend*, written by journalists Fred and Elizabeth Brenchley (2005).

None of these authors were bound by Geoffrey Elton’s strictures about sources. “We historians are firmly bound by the authority of our sources...nor must we use fiction to fill the gaps,” he said in a chapter in *The postmodern history reader* (Jenkins, 1997, p. 179). The importance of factual accuracy is intrinsic to both historian and journalist. In the days when papers such as the *New Zealand Herald* were described as “papers of record”, facts were considered pre-eminent and explanation and interpretation were rare.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the late *Washington Post* publisher Philip L. Graham’s definition of news.

Historians of those times also believed in the “primacy and autonomy” of facts to the extent of fetishising them, according to E. H. Carr (1961, p. 15). Some New Zealand journalists in that era would have agreed with those sentiments and in fact left these shores to find journalistic work elsewhere where there was less emphasis on the “stultifying uniformity of a journalism, which demanded factual chronicling and verbatim reporting” (Scholefield, n.d.). So a journalist writing an academic thesis must be careful to attract the encomium of historians and not their reprobation. The task of the historian, as depicted by E. H. Carr, is very similar to that of a journalist’s, although perhaps the historian would disagree. Carr talked about how accurate facts were a necessary condition of an historian’s work but they were not his or her “essential function” (p. 8). “The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate” (p. 10). As with modern journalism “the element of interpretation enters into every fact of history”.

#### 4. The duties of the historian

In *A pocket guide to writing history*, the author, Mary Lynn Rampolla (2004), talked about the conventions of writing history (p.54). Her first recommendation was to “respect your subject”. “The people who lived in the past were not necessarily more ignorant or cruel (or conversely more innocent or moral) than we are.” This point is emphasised very strongly in an essay in *History & Theory* by Antoon de Baets (2004). “Concern for the dignity of the subjects of historical study constitutes the most important of several classes of responsibilities of historians” (p.158). Holmes (1995) described the stages through which the biographer passes in the relationship to the subject. He said that in the first stage the biographer has to make a conscious identification with the subject and described it in the terms of a “kind of love affair”. “If you are not in love with them you will not follow them – not very far anyway” (pp. 66-67). Holmes said the true biographic process begins “precisely at the moment, at the places where this naïve form of love and identification breaks down. The moment of personal disillusion is the moment of impersonal, objective re-creation.” Originally I did not specifically choose Ross as a subject; rather I was intending to write about all of New Zealand’s war correspondents from early days to modern times. This was obviously too great a task to execute in depth and so the thesis was narrowed down to the phrase “the first official war correspondent”, at the time having no knowledge of who that was. So there was no “love affair”. On starting my research, indeed my first

impressions of the man were highly critical because I happened to read Auckland's weekly newspaper *The Observer*, which was a mine of gossip about people of the day. This paper had a distinctly negative view of Ross and that coloured my initial impressions of him. I rather despaired at what I initially discovered about the man. For me disillusion came first, but gradually as the picture of Ross was slowly built up I saw my subject in a different light. As Holmes concluded:

Once known in any detail and any scope, every life is something extraordinary, full of particular drama and tension and surprise, often containing unimagined degrees of suffering or heroism and invariably touching extreme moments of triumph and despair, though frequently unexpressed. The difference lies in the extent to which one is eventually recorded, and the other is eventually forgotten. (Holmes, 1995, p. 208)

Rampolla cautioned the history writer to be aware of one's own biases. Behan McCullagh (2000) contended that historians, and one could add, journalists, expect their accounts to be fair and not misleading. Sometimes, however, unfair accounts are the result of bias on the part of the writer (p. 39) He called bias "deplorable" and claimed it could be avoided. "It is not detachment that is needed, but a commitment to standards of rational enquiry." Another convention of historical writing to be aware of is the avoidance of anachronisms, or what is often called today "presentism" – that is where actors from the past are judged by modern standards or where ideas, events, people or things are "represented in a way that is not consistent with its proper historical time" (Rampolla, 2004, p. 54). In the case of this study, when the history is comparatively recent, there is a danger of judging Ross and the events of his time through the lens of today. But the enterprise is one of trying to bring the person alive in the present without distorting the facts of the "unattainable past", as Holmes (1995) said. The biographer tries to bring the past alive, bring it back by "skills and crafts and sensible magic" (p. 27).

## **5. Methodology**

Just as there has been lively debate amongst historians about truthfulness and objectivity and the pleasures and pitfalls of narratives, there has been an equally contentious debate about the proper historical method. One side seems hell bent on the "scientification" of history with laws or rules being defined which can then be tested empirically. Another view rejects this approach and insists on the interpretation and

understanding of historical events without the requirement of general laws to do so (de Vries, 1983, p. 253). This thesis is inclined to the latter rather than the former. Nobody would argue, however, that the most fundamental resource of the historian is the historical document. As Vernon Dibble (1963) explained, historians at one time or another are either working from documents or on facts or events which are external to those documents (p. 203). The document, said John Milligan (1979) “must first measure up to what the authorities call external criticism” (p. 178). The historian must ask “Is the source authentic?” It is necessary to first establish the worth of the document before assessing its contents. While it is possible to establish the authenticity of documents, Milligan said that when it comes to analysing historical documents “there is no absolute certainty”. Having established the authenticity of a document the researcher must then turn to its contents. The question now posed is “Are the contents credible?” and the first and what seems obvious next step is to determine what the document actually said.

E. H. Carr (1961) alluded to the 19<sup>th</sup> century fetishism, not only of facts, but an equally persistent fetishism of documents (p. 15). This is pertinent to my study where most of the material at the root of my research is primary documents. As Carr rightly pointed out, “facts, whether found in documents or not, have still to be processed by the historian, before he [sic] can make any use of them” (p. 16). Not only must an historian record they must also evaluate, so this presents a dilemma for the historian, as Carr noted. Not only must the historian compile facts from the past as objectively and as accurately as possible, but she must then write, in the present, a history which is the “subjective product” of her mind. This ends up being a “continuous process of interaction between the historian and his [sic] facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (p. 35). One could add his final dictum that “historians, like any other scientist” *or journalist*, “is an animal who incessantly asks ‘Why?’” (p. 112).

Holmes (1995) has spoken of the biographer’s dependence on the survival of personal papers (p. 84). Much of the research for this thesis has been based on personal documents – diaries, letters and autobiographies. The task in relation to Malcolm Ross has been made difficult because of the dearth of information about him. He left little in the way of personal writings – there are no diaries or journals as can be found for Charles Bean the Australian war correspondent. Some letters from Ross were in Archives New Zealand in Wellington. What we learn about the man is often through the eyes of his peers or others with whom Ross came into contact or to whom he was

responsible as the official correspondent. Alan Bryman (2004) referred to J. Scott's distinction between personal documents and official documents, and his further division of the latter into private and state documents (p. 381). So the personal documents available include letters written by Ross to members of his family, friends and members of the Government. The most useful diaries are those of Charles Bean housed at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. He often mentioned Ross in these. The autobiographies are those of Ross's fellow World War I war correspondents. Bryman contended there was a growing interest in the visual in social research, with the photograph being the "most obvious manifestation" of this trend (p. 384). This is of particular interest when related to Ross as he was recognised as an accomplished photographer. He took a camera with him to the front. However, only a few of his wartime photographs have been acknowledged with a citation so it is impossible to assess the worth or impact of his visual output. Another source of information about Ross is official state documents. The most significant ones were those connected with his employment as official war correspondent, namely the Defence Department, the Department of Internal Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office. Documents from private sources are also invaluable and for this thesis, material from the New Zealand Press Association archives was very useful, if extremely dirty!

In the context of this study media outputs are highly significant. Research has involved many hours poring over old newspapers, in particular the *New Zealand Herald*, *The Press*, the *Evening Post*, *Otago Daily Times*, *Otago Witness* and the *Auckland Star*. The weekly gossip sheets, *The Observer*, based in Auckland, and *New Zealand Free Lance* and *New Zealand Truth* based in Wellington, were also a great source of information. The latter three papers were highly opinionated and items, especially with regard to Ross, needed to be treated with caution. All had a decided view of Ross which had to be counterbalanced against other information. Research was facilitated in 2007 when the National Library made some of its old newspapers searchable online through *Papers Past*. This saved hours of reading microfiches and resulted in much more information coming to light about Ross and his family. The major dailies were used mainly because they did or did not carry Ross's despatches. And as far as these were concerned the originals were not extant. What was published were highly censored and edited accounts. When analysing these despatches they are viewed journalistically, ie did the despatches meet such journalistic criteria as clarity, balance, fairness and accuracy?

## 6. New Zealand and general war scholarship

Since October 21, 1899, when the first New Zealand troops to fight overseas left Wellington bound for South Africa to fight for Britain in the South African War, New Zealanders have seen combat in most of the major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. There have been countless stories and histories written about these engagements and the part New Zealand soldiers, sailors and airmen played in them. In his book *Quinn's Post* Australian historian Peter Stanley (2005) commented that Gallipoli was "surely the most overworked subject in Australian military history" with several books on the topic appearing regularly every year (p. 234). The same could be said of New Zealand, with books appearing on New Zealand's role at Gallipoli and other theatres of war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a seemingly endless stream. Some that were published on World War I during the years of my research included *No better death*, the diaries and letters of W.G Malone, (Crawford, 2005), *On my way to the Somme*, (Macdonald, 2006), *New Zealand's Great War*, (Crawford & McGibbon, 2007), *Dark journey: Three key New Zealand battles of the Western Front* (Harper, 2007), and this year *The face of war: New Zealand's Great War photography* (Callister, 2008).

There have been many volumes written world-wide on the experiences of individual war correspondents. They range from stories about William Howard Russell (Hudson, 1995) who made his name reporting on the Crimean War in 1854 to some of the more modern, such as New Zealand-born Peter Arnett (Arnett, 1994). He made his name as a war correspondent in Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s and the Gulf War in the 1990s. But what there hasn't been is a detailed and focused examination of the New Zealand media's coverage of war. New Zealand appeared to have no established tradition of war correspondence if *The Oxford companion to New Zealand military history* was to be believed (McGibbon, 2000). This contention will be explored in a later chapter. But Malcolm Ross was the first official New Zealand war correspondent. Few people appear to have heard of Malcolm Ross. The primary aim of this thesis was to discover just who this person was and what contribution he made to New Zealand journalism and war correspondence.

A secondary aim of this thesis was to determine how well Ross covered the war for the readers back home. Were his despatches published in the New Zealand papers or did journalists from other lands take up the majority of space in the war news sections? This seemed to be a significant issue, as it would be supposed that a New Zealand journalist

would best be able to report on and interpret New Zealand military operations to New Zealand readers. How well was Ross's voice heard back in New Zealand? Was it as well heard as that of Charles Bean, the Australian official war correspondent in his country? What traditions did Ross lay down for future New Zealand war correspondents?

Many words have been expended on the media's role in wartime. This research has given rise to a new concept – the “media war” and debate has arisen over which was the first of the media wars. William Howard Russell of *The Times* is credited as being the first civilian war correspondent. Thus the Crimean War of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century is said to justify the title of first media war. But the South African War at the turn of the century has been labelled “the first mass media war” (“Bringing it all back home”, 1999) and the Vietnam and Gulf wars have also been depicted as leading contenders for the title. Without taking sides in these disputes, it does demonstrate that a lot of time and scholarship is now being devoted to the study of the role of the media in wartime - but, to date, not the New Zealand media. There is no existing research on New Zealand war correspondents from any age. Initially the thesis was going to look at a history of all New Zealand war correspondents but this was obviously far too extensive a project to be undertaken by one person. As far as material on Malcolm Ross himself, this is also sparse and this was where my research became focused – to determine just who this man was and what he did and whether he did it well. Information about Ross was not readily available apart from obituaries, and the information seems to have been largely replicated in both the *New Zealand dictionary of biography* and the 1966 *Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. The New Zealand Press Association archives at the Alexander Turnbull Library have yielded some information, as have copies of the Auckland and Wellington gossip weeklies the *Observer* and *New Zealand Free Lance* respectively. Ross seems to have left very few personal letters and wrote only one book on the war, *Light and shade in war* with his son, Noel (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916). Archives New Zealand has a small amount of information, mainly in the form of letters Ross wrote to the then Minister of Defence, James Allen and other Government officials. Some of his despatches are held at Archives New Zealand. A little supplementary information on Ross was discovered at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Two relatives of Malcolm Ross contacted me in the course of my study and they have been able to fill in more of the Ross family background. These included some of Ross's letters to family

members. In my penultimate year of doctoral research I discovered that Ron Palenski was writing his Masters thesis on Malcolm Ross. This was completed in late 2007.

During my doctoral study I attended three biennial Australian Media Traditions conferences in 2003, 2005 and 2007 and presented peer-reviewed papers on Malcolm Ross and related topics. The first was entitled *The appointment of New Zealand's first official war correspondent - Malcolm Ross* (Oosterman, 2003) the second was *Inky wayfarers: New Zealand journalism and the Australian connection* (Oosterman, 2005), and the third *Malcolm Ross - New Zealand newspapers and the Samoan "troubles" of 1899* (Oosterman, 2007a) A further peer-reviewed paper was presented at the annual Journalism Education Association of New Zealand conference in Wellington in December, 2007 called *New Zealand war correspondence before 1915* (Oosterman, 2007b) and subsequently published in the *Pacific Journalism Review*.

## 8. Content

The first chapter of this thesis covers Ross's life up to his appointment as New Zealand's first official war correspondent. It considers his family background, the position he attained in colonial New Zealand and his role as a journalist in order to understand why he was chosen as official correspondent in 1915. The second chapter focuses on the period of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which falls conveniently between the South African War and World War I. It examines New Zealand journalism of the time – its conventions, myths and practices. There is a dearth of first hand accounts from journalists about themselves and their profession but nevertheless a picture does emerge of the state of journalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The third chapter examines Malcolm Ross's writings from his early days on the *Otago Daily Times* to his work in the Parliamentary Press Gallery before the outbreak of war. Other writing outside these fields is also considered. The fourth chapter investigates war correspondence before 1915 and then examines how and why Malcolm Ross was appointed as official war correspondent. Ross was initially sent to Gallipoli, and the sixth and seventh chapters consider both what he did and what he wrote while at the Dardanelles. When the Anzac forces were transferred from Egypt to the Western Front in 1916 Ross accompanied them and remained with the New Zealand troops until November 1918. The eighth and ninth chapters follow Ross's movements and accomplishments during this period and until he returns home in September 1919. A short epilogue chronicles his final years as they are known to his death in 1930. The

conclusion endeavours to summarise Ross's life and achievements and to reach some decisions thereto.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Malcolm Ross: Otago pressman, noted climber and author

#### 1:1 Introduction

At the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 a New Zealand-born journalist was at the peak of his career. He had literally climbed some of the country's highest mountains, he was, unusually for a pressman, financially well off and socially he rubbed shoulders with the political greats of his day. He was an accredited correspondent for at least two of the country's leading newspapers and for some overseas ones. His name was Malcolm Ross. This chapter will trace Ross's life from his birth at Saddle Hill, Otago on July 13, 1862 to the outbreak of war in August 1914. Not a lot is known about Ross's childhood and some of this early information has been supplied by descendants. The chapter describes a man raising himself from humble beginnings in Otago to a position of national status. It also examines the social milieu from which Ross arose to illustrate how this rise was possible.

#### 1:2 Early years in Otago

Like many children born to immigrant parents in the 1860s in Otago, Malcolm Ross came from a working class family. His Scottish grandfather, Malcolm, and his father, Alexander, were labourers, the latter having left Ross-shire to work on the Victorian goldfields for eight years before immigrating to Dunedin on the *Gil Blas* in March 1860 ("Obituary: Alexander Ross", 1908; D. M. Ross, 1904; L. Ross, personal communication, February 5, 2007). He was one of those arrested at Ballarat in 1854 during the infamous Eureka Stockade incident when gold miners revolted against an oppressive official regime and were suppressed by armed troopers.<sup>2</sup> Ross was imprisoned in the Ballarat camp on December 3 with 114 other miners, went to court, but was released on December 12 uncharged (Hocking, 2004). David Ross, Malcolm's poet brother, mentioned this in a hand written autobiographical entry he supplied to *The Bulletin* in 1904 (D. M. Ross, 1904). Only eight months after arriving from Australia, Alexander had married Sutherlandshire-born Mary McDonald ("Knox Church Dunedin

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander Ross's son, Malcolm, later wrote of the incident in a three part series for the *Otago Witness* in 1880 but never mentioned his father as having played a part in the riot (M. Ross, 1880a; 1880b; 1880c).

marriages”, 1860-1920). It is likely that the English they knew was learnt in either Australia or New Zealand. Alexander was Gaelic speaking, and, if not Gaelic, Mary's first language was a Scottish dialect, according to the couple's great grandson, Duncan Ross (D. Ross, personal communication, July 26, 2005). The marriage must have been rather a coup for the 36-year-old Alexander. New Zealand society suffered from a dearth of women (Olssen, 1981, p. 251; J. Phillips, 1996, pp. 36-37) and a single woman of 24, as Mary McDonald was, would have been highly sought after. However, the pair had known each other in Australia, according to their son, David (D. M. Ross, 1904). Mary had arrived in Dunedin from Melbourne in March aboard the *Pirate*. On that same ship was John Gillies, the father of Thomas Gillies, so this may explain why the couple married at the Gillies' home at Palichet Bay, Dunedin (L. Ross, personal communication, February 5, 2007). Thomas Gillies was a significant figure in provincial and national politics who later moved to Auckland and eventually became a Supreme Court judge (Rennie, 2006). The Gillies family, as did the Rosses, emigrated from Scotland to join the many other Scots that now made up the majority of the population of the region.<sup>3</sup> Alexander and Mary were married by another Scot, Dr Donald Stuart, the first and long serving minister of Knox Presbyterian Church.<sup>4</sup> The witnesses were Emily Street, niece of Edward Lear, the English artist, illustrator and writer of humorous verse, and later to marry one of John Gillies' sons, Robert (Wright-St Clair, 1996) and John Booth.

A year after Ross arrived in Dunedin Australian Gabriel Read found gold at Tuapeka (Jones, 1966), which is just over 90kms from the city, and so Dunedin was on track to becoming the pre-eminent city in the colony. The Otago goldfields were “spectacularly productive”, according to historian Michael King (2003), and as a result the population of Dunedin “exploded” from 1700 people in 1858 to 18,500 by 1874, much to the chagrin of Auckland which until then had been the leading city by population (p. 207). J.B. Condliffe (1936) contended that the dominance of the Otago and Canterbury provinces was one of the important facts to remember in the following years. It was not until 1901 that the population of the North Island again surpassed that of the South (p. 35). Keith Sinclair (1969) said the South Island story was one of “Europeans, their

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<sup>3</sup> The 1861 census reveals that of the overseas born population of the province, 42 per cent were born in Scotland, 36 per cent came from England, 15 per cent from Ireland, and 4 per cent from Australia (McLintock, 1966a).

<sup>4</sup> Stuart was to marry Malcolm Ross and his wife 30 years later.

sheep and their gold”. “While life in the northern provinces was disrupted by the Maori troubles of the 60s, the southerners prospered” (p. 106). Christopher Holloway, who came from England in 1874 to investigate opportunities for English labourers in the young colony, started his journey in Dunedin and was struck by the prosperity and egalitarianism of the city.

Everything here betokens prosperity; the inhabitants are well dressed, thoroughly respectable. The children with their shining rosy cheeks are the very picture of health. — A man's a man here, as you see them walking along the streets, their head erect, and their whole bearing impresses one with the idea ‘that Jack is as good as his master’. No cringing here, — yet there is no rudeness — but everything around betokens comfort, respectability, and happiness. (Arnold, 1981, p. 80)

Among those making their way in the province was Alexander Ross, who turned his hand again to gold mining at Gabriel’s Gully and Dunstan, but was “never lucky” (D. M. Ross, 1904). The family then settled for a time under the Horse Range, then Palmerston South where Alexander “bossed some road works” (“Obituary: Alexander Ross”, 1908). However, his thoughts must have turned to farming because some time after his first child Malcolm was born in 1862, he moved his family to a farm “The Grange” at Shag Hill near the new township of Palmerston, 47km north of Dunedin (L. Ross, personal communication, February 5 2007). This reflected a general trend occurring throughout the lower South Island – the opening up of more and more land for farming and settlement. The large pastoralists were being challenged by increasing numbers of men wanting to farm, but on a smaller scale. To help achieve this the Otago Provincial Government established a scheme where special districts required for close settlement could be created and the land put up for sale in small lots (McLintock, 1966). Part of the Palmerston district was so proclaimed in 1865. “The Grange” was quite possibly owned by John McKenzie. A “close friend” and “fellow townsman” of Alexander Ross, John McKenzie (“Obituary: Alexander Ross”, 1908) was also from Ross-shire and both had come out from a country being ravaged by the highland clearances and rent by schism between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church Presbyterians. They probably knew each other from Scottish days, according to Duncan Ross, and may in fact have been related by marriage (D. Ross, personal communication, July 26, 2005). John McKenzie’s mother was Catherine Munro. His wife was Annie Munro. Alexander's mother was Margaret Munro. McKenzie had bought 80 acres at Shag Valley in 1865 and in the same year he became the clerk and treasurer of the

Bushey Road Board, and secretary of the local school committee (McLintock, 1966). He went on to become a force in national politics, eventually becoming the Minister of Lands.<sup>5</sup> He was responsible for getting David Ross his job as an agent in the stock department under W. A. Scaife (D. M. Ross, 1904).

A feature of the district was Mt Puketapu which dominated the landscape near the town. Holloway commented on it in particular.

The scenery from the top of this mountain is magnificent. At its foot lies the pretty little town of Palmerston. Then you have a beautiful view of Shag Valley well studded with smiling homesteads and flocks of sheep, and other cattle. Then you behold the River Shag winding its serpentine course through the valley till it empties itself into the sea. In the distance you behold the wild mountain range — while on the eastern side of the mountain you have a splendid view of the ocean for many miles. (Arnold, 1981, p. 81)

It is not too much of a stretch of imagination to think that Malcolm might have developed his love of mountains from his first contact with Mt Puketapu. He did not leave the district until a few weeks before his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday so he most probably climbed the mountain during his boyhood. He may have shared his climbing adventures with his brothers, Archibald (b. n.d.), David (b.1865) and Kenneth (b. 1867) who were born in the district. The last two brothers, John (Jock) (b. 1869) and Duncan (b. 1877), and his sister, Ina (b. 1874), would have been too young to engage in such endeavours. If they weren't exploring their new home the four older boys would have eventually attended the newly established Palmerston School, which opened in 1865.<sup>6</sup>

The early years at Shag Hill must have been harsh ones for the young family. Kenneth, for example, was born in a tent at Palmerston, according to another direct descendant, Lyn Ross (L. Ross, personal communication, April 11, 2005). While the early years for new immigrants may have been a struggle, as Holloway noted on his visit to Palmerston, it was possible to carve out a successful life despite humble beginnings. This was confirmed by a Mr J. Keen who told Holloway “that 10 years before he had had scarcely a shilling in his pocket, but now by industry and perseverance he was in an

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<sup>5</sup> McKenzie was knighted by the Duke of Cornwall in 1901 and died at Palmerston in August that year.

<sup>6</sup> However, the earliest pupil records for the school, held at the Hocken Library in Dunedin, date from 1878 around the time the Ross family left the district so there is no record of any of the boys' attendance at that school.

independent position” (Arnold, 1981, p. 82). This also seemed to have been confirmed by the Ross family. They moved from Shag Hill in June 1878 and bought land in the Glenkenich hundred, near Tapanui (D. M. Ross, 1904). The hundred had been declared in 1875 and then two more years were spent surveying the land into farms and selecting town sites (Duff, 1998, p. 3). The 200-acre farm the Ross family bought had been part of a large holding previously owned by James Logan. The original owner of the subdivision had been a Mr Rodger but the parcel had been further divided between the Rosses and the Russells, according to Geoffrey Duff in *Kelso & Glenkenich schools*. David Ross said Glenkenich, where the farm was situated, was a new deferred payment settlement. Oliver and Williams (1981) would point to the Ross’s holding as an example of the “triumph of the family farm” in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the social and political power shifted from the hands of the long established squatters to smaller landholders (p. 257; Olssen, 1981). But in 1878 the Ross family had a very unfortunate start in Glenkenich. Archibald, the second eldest Ross boy, 14, died of rheumatic fever three days after they arrived in the district (“Untitled”, 1878; D. M. Ross, 1904).<sup>7</sup> Alexander and Mary Ross farmed there for the next 14 years before retiring to nearby Kelso as respected locals.<sup>8</sup> The couple were given a resounding farewell in the local hall as both were considered “old and highly respected settlers in the Glenkenich district” (“The country”, 1894). All the children save Malcolm are recorded as having attended the Glenkenich School, which opened in September 1877.<sup>9</sup> It is unclear what Malcolm did for the next few years until he joined the staff of the *Otago Witness* some time in 1880. Perhaps like his younger brothers did later, he helped on the farm. Records do not show Malcolm as having matriculated from school or as having attended Otago University, something that was claimed in his obituaries and in encyclopaedia entries (“Death of a journalist”, 1930; “Mr Malcolm Ross”, 1930; “Obituary - Malcolm Ross”, 1930; McCallum, 2003). What he did spend some of his time doing was entering games and puzzles organised by the local papers and winning some of them. He first appeared in the *Otago Witness* in January 1876, aged 13, with a riddle and his name was published several times during the year as a puzzle winner as it was throughout 1879. He next appeared, along with two of his younger siblings, at the Glenkenich School’s

<sup>7</sup> There seems to be no record of his birth and no indication where he has been buried.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander was instrumental in founding the Kelso Caledonian Society and was also a great patron of Highland games and in his prime a dancer of repute at local sports gatherings (L. Ross, 2007). Mary must have been a keen participant in local shows. Lyn Ross has in her possession a trophy presented to her great great grandmother in 1886 by the Tapanui Farmers Club for champion dairy produce.

<sup>9</sup> The school records can be viewed at the Tapanui Museum.

prize giving. David won firsts for reading, geography and etymology and John won the prize for attendance, presented by his mother. Seventeen-year-old Malcolm was there to award the new prize for singing to William Smith (“Glenkenich”, 1880). Later news items suggest Malcolm himself was something of a vocalist. It was noted that he sang and recited at many social events.

### 1:3 Becoming a journalist

What encouraged Ross towards a career in journalism is unknown. But it was an interesting career choice for a young man with his background. One can only assume that his few years at primary school engendered a love of writing and reading<sup>10</sup>. The *Otago Witness* said Ross commenced his journalistic career as one of its correspondents, being subsequently promoted to a position on the reporting staff of the *Otago Daily Times* (“Untitled”, 1901a). His first effort for the *Witness* was *Country rambles*, a series of chats with farmers, in June, 1880 when he was not quite 18 (“Country rambles”, 1880). In it he shows his early erudition with an allusion in the article to Tennyson’s famous poem, *The Brook*. One of his first bylined efforts was the aforementioned account of the Eureka Stockade incident in Australia. According to the *Otago Daily Times* archives, Malcolm joined the editorial department of that paper in June 1881, just before his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday (“Otago Daily Times & Witness Newspapers records”, 1880-1882). It seems so far that many of the momentous occasions for the young man were occurring in the winter around his birth date.

The *Otago Daily Times* had been co-founded by Julius Vogel in 1861, a year before Malcolm Ross’s birth, and was the first daily in the colony (King, 2003, p. 227; Scholefield, 1958, p. 7). Guy Scholefield,<sup>11</sup> a fellow journalist and author, said the early newspapers were well produced, edited and written. As influential organs leading colonists were happy to make use of them, and as many of the journalists were university educated men, often classical scholars, they took the opportunity to influence affairs through journalism. “Thus newspaper proprietors often had the services of capable men to write their leading articles or to edit the paper” (p. 7). *The Observer*, an

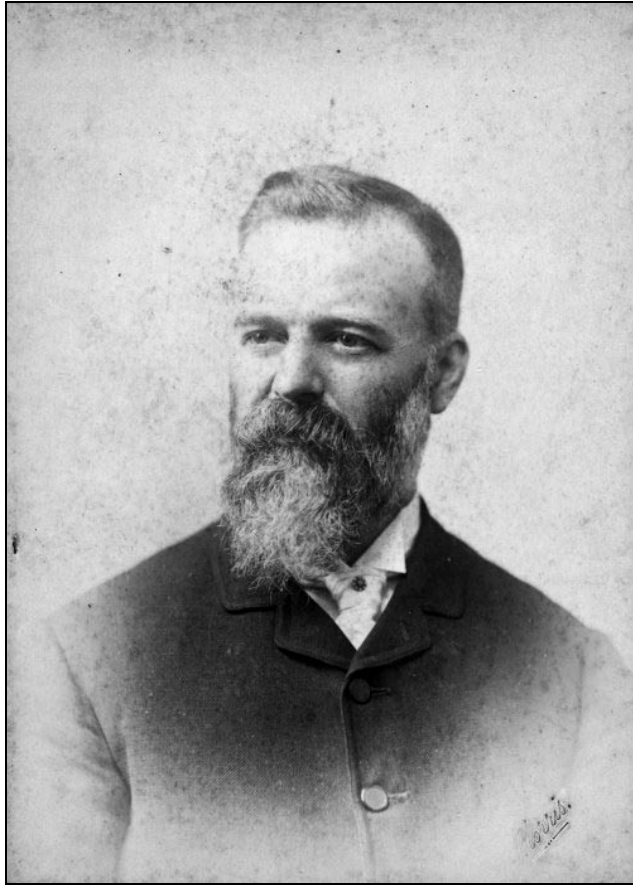
<sup>10</sup> He had something in common with one of his brothers, David, who produced five books of poems, *The afterglow*, *Hearts of the pure*, *Morning red*, *The promise of the star* and *Stars in the mist* (McLintock, 1949, p. 776).

<sup>11</sup> Guy Scholefield is a significant character in Malcolm’s Ross’s life story as will be seen in later chapters.

Auckland-based weekly gossip sheet, confirmed the expertise of those early journalists. The *Times* was staffed by a “brilliant band of pressmen” such as B. L. Farjeon who became a novelist; E. T. Gillon who became one of the “most rigorous writers New Zealand journalism has known” and H. W. Robinson, a sub editor at the paper but who went on to become a District Court Judge and Stipendiary Magistrate (“Untitled”, 1904a). When Malcolm Ross joined the staff, the editor was James Ashcroft (“Board of directors minute book”, 1878-1884). However, in 1890 the managing director of the paper, George Fenwick, became the paper’s co-editor, a position he held until 1909 (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917). He was a leading light in the Press Association, Newspaper Proprietors’ Association and the Empire Press Union and was knighted in 1920 (Strathern, 1966). *The Observer* called him “one of the newspaper kings of New Zealand” (“Untitled”, 1907b). At the jubilee of the United Press Association in 1930, the then chairman, A. G. Henderson, said George Fenwick was one of the early journalists who had “trained in a day of rigid principles and conservative practice” and who had “laboured in a field limited by narrow conventions” (Henderson, 1930). Scholefield described the *Otago Daily Times* as “moderately conservative in politics” but a paper which set high standards in reporting, in particular in the law courts (Scholefield, 1958, p. 175). The paper claimed a circulation of 3,000 in 1876, although the *Otago Guardian*, which put its own circulation then at 1,500, thought its rival’s claim “grossly exaggerated” (Byrne, 1999, p. 57).

The earliest wage book for the newspaper held by Dunedin’s Hocken Library is for the period 1880-1882 (“Wage book”, 1852 - 1979). This included weekly wage sheets, with the surnames of individual staff members and the amount they were paid listed under the section they worked in. The surname Ross first appeared in the time sheet of June 17, 1881 under the headline “Editorial”. As a cadet Ross earned £1 a week. It was a small newsroom to service the four-page daily paper.<sup>12</sup> There was a senior journalist (Nicholls) who was the sub-editor on £5.10, and five other reporters including Ross, the cadet, and Graham, the shipping reporter. Ross’s salary crept up to £1.10 on the anniversary of his start and by his third anniversary he was earning £2.10 (“Wage book”, 1880-1882, 1882-1885). In 1883 Ross was about to experience a change in editors as the board of directors of the company became increasingly disenchanted with the performance of James Ashcroft. Despite the editor’s protestations he was given

<sup>12</sup> The paper went to eight pages on March 16 1899 (“Board of directors minute book” 1895-1901).



**Figure 2 George Fenwick in the 1890s.**

notice and 26-year-old Ernest Twopeny appointed at £520 a year (“Board of directors minute book”, 1878-1884). The depression of the 1880s was about to bite and workers on the *Otago Daily Times* had cause to fear for their livelihoods as the directors started discussing major cuts to salaries and wages (“Board of directors minute book”, 1884-1894). Company profits started falling and as W. H. Reynolds, the chairman of the board, said in the eighth annual report of 1886, the “state of trade generally has been even worse than it was during the preceding year and newspaper property has suffered equally with other classes of business”. In May the managing director George Fenwick was telling the board that...

in view of the great falling off in the revenue for the last three months just ended compared with the same period last year I deem it imperative that a general reduction of 10% in salaries and wages should be made at once. (“Board of directors minute book”, 1884-1894)

While the directors agreed to halve their fees Fenwick was left to decide on where any reductions in wages or salaries would be made. He didn’t appear to touch the reporters’ wages but he gained a fight with his compositors when he decided to reduce the price

paid for their piece work. Despite the difficult times Ross's wages kept creeping up, to £2.15 in May 1886, £3 in May 1887 and £3.10 in September 1888 ("Wage book", 1885-1888). In that time he would have been covering the daily life of the city whether sporting events, church meetings or the activities of local dignitaries, but in his spare time had obviously discovered the delights of the countryside and become a competent bushman and had started his love affair with mountains.

In all the *Otago Daily Times* minute books and letter books very little praise is given to any of the reporting staff, but that was about to change in 1888. Malcolm Ross had the opportunity to make his mark as a reporter when, aged 26, he was sent on the *Otago Daily Times*-sponsored expedition to search for Professor Mainwaring Brown, lost in early December when on a three-man expedition to the head of Lake Manapouri (Hall-Jones, 1976, p. 97; Holm, 2004).<sup>13</sup> Ross was even then recognised as "a good bushman and mountaineer" ("West Coast exploration", 1888). George Fenwick and the board of directors were so impressed with Ross's reporting efforts from the search they officially commended him and raised his salary as a gesture of appreciation. Fenwick told the board of the "marked ability" displayed by Ross in connection with the search. Ross's efforts, as the company's active representative on the search party, and his "highly interesting account of their work, should prove of great service to the *Times*, and seemed to merit special recognition at the hands of the board", said Fenwick. The board resolved, as "Mr Ross's improvement in general reporting work had been very marked and such as to entitle him to a rise in salary" ("Board of directors minute book", 1884-1894). His salary was raised to £4 per week from January 1, 1889. In the letter to Ross telling him of his good fortune, Fenwick had this to say:

At the meeting of the board yesterday I had pleasure in bringing under the notice of the members present the highly satisfactory manner in which you carried out the arduous work devolving upon you in connection with the search for Professor Brown. I did so with the view of arranging that the company should mark their appreciation of your work in some satisfactory manner, as well as the generally satisfactory

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<sup>13</sup> Professor Mainwaring Brown, of the University of Otago, had disappeared while looking for a pass over to Doubtful Sound in Fiordland. His body was never found. The whole colony was agog with news of the subsequent searches. Ross claimed his search party was the first to discover what later became known as the Wilmot Pass (Holm, 2004, p. 34).

progress you have made as a member of the *Daily Times* staff. (Fenwick, 1882-1892)

About 10 days later in early January, 1889 Ross asked for permission to take part in another search for Professor Brown to be made by one of the original Brown expedition, John White. The board agreed on the understanding that Ross would pay his own expenses ("Board of directors minute book", 1884-1894). The wage book for the period shows that Ross was away for about five weeks from the end of March and it was not long after that that he handed in his resignation and finished up on June 21, 1889, almost exactly eight years since he joined the staff ("Wage book", 1888-1891). Again June had proved an auspicious month. George Fenwick was clearly disappointed to see him go. In a letter dated June 18 to Ross, Fenwick said he had received Ross's resignation with "genuine regret".

It has been with very great pleasure indeed that I have watched your steady progress since you joined the *Times* staff as a lad some years since. Still you have the satisfaction of knowing that your qualifications are esteemed as of a very high order by those who have had control of the paper. Thank you for the good work you have repeatedly done for the company's papers. (Fenwick, 1882-1892)

When he left the *Otago Daily Times* Ross was earning just over £200 a year.

## **1:4 Moving on up**

The Dunedin electoral roll of 1887 recorded Malcolm Ross as a reporter living in Great King St ("Electoral roll - Dunedin", 1887). The *Stone's directory: Otago and Southland* noted this also for three consecutive years - 1887, 1888, 1889. In 1887 he was boarding in Great King St, between Hanover and Fredricks Sts, in the home of William Sutherland, the grocer, with two medical students. This was very handy for all the boarders – the medical school was across the way and around the corner were the offices of the *Otago Daily Times*. Ross was joined at his address the following year by a fellow reporter, Horace Bastings.<sup>14</sup> By 1890 he was recorded on the electoral roll as a clerk living in Leith St ("Electoral roll - Dunedin", 1890). In the intervening year the entrepreneurial James Mills, the managing director of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, engaged Ross as his private secretary (McCallum, 2003). How this arose is unclear but Ross must have been employed by Mills some time after he left the

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<sup>14</sup> He gained notoriety in 1900 for refusing to stand for the toast to the Queen at a military luncheon for which he received a severe reprimand from George Fenwick ("Board of directors minute book", 1895-1901).

*Otago Daily Times* in June 1889 and one presumes at the very least at the same salary as when he left the newspaper if not more. Among his duties Ross had to accompany Mills on visits to other parts of the country and elsewhere. *The Observer* records in 1894 one such visit to Auckland.

Manager James Mills of the Union Steamship Company is in Auckland this week. He affects rusty boots and startling red ties. In every other respect Mr Mills is very quiet. He is a popular man.

Malcolm Ross, who has attained some fame as a New Zealand alpine climber, was in Auckland this week. He is private secretary to Mr James Mills. ("Untitled", 1894, p. 5)

Ross not only went to Auckland with his employer but also on occasion to Australia. The pair went to Sydney in October 1895, for example ("Untitled", 1895). He also travelled the Pacific islands while with the company ("Untitled", 1900c). Ross worked at the company's office but continued to keep his hand in as a journalist. William Thomas (1960) recalled reporting on Robert Stout's electioneering address in Dunedin where the only other reporter present was Malcolm Ross, "then a freelance journalist doing temporary work for the *Otago Daily Times* during the election period 1890" (p. 26). Ross never again served as an editorial staff member on any newspaper. Taking secondary jobs while still acting as a journalist was not unusual, as will be seen later when Ross accepted the role as parliamentary reporter for *The Press* and *Otago Daily Times*. It appears it was acceptable then as it is now, to operate as a journalist while holding down some other job. The remuneration for freelancers has never been substantial. However, free lancing does bring up the question of journalistic ethics, and in particular in Ross's case, conflicts of interest. This will be seen in a later chapter when Ross covers the wrecking of the Union Steamship Company's ship *Penguin* in 1909.

It was probably around the late 1880s that he met his future wife Forrestina Grant, known to her family as Bessie, and to the rest as Forrest. The Grant family was of some note in Dunedin. Forrest's father was a company secretary from England and kept a large home, Inglewood, in Dunedin (McCallum, 2003). Forrest was one of seven children, four girls and three boys, and was named after her mother. One of her sisters, Isabella, had married Thomas Whitson in August 1876, and he became the Union Steam Ship Company's secretary in 1891 (L. Ross, personal communication, February 6,

2007). The Whitsons were of some standing in the Dunedin community. Their house, Rosebank, at 582 George St between Park and Dundas Sts (Johnson, 1993), was a centre for the arts, and many people from the theatre, stage and musical circles stayed with them, including Robert Louis Stevenson.<sup>15</sup> Isabella kept a diary and in it, during 1901, she recorded the occasional visits of the younger Rosses in particular Malcolm and his sister, Ina, and younger brother, John (Whitson, 1901). By 1894 according to the *New Zealand Post Office directory*, (1894-95) the Whitsons had moved from the upper side of George St where homes had a view across the university to the harbour to higher up the hill in Heriot Row. Forrest, who was two years older than Malcolm, was an early pupil at Otago Girls High School and after training as a teacher and attending the University of Otago, ended back at her old school in the English department (McCallum, 2003). She left there to marry Malcolm in Dunedin on March 7, 1890 ("Knox Church Dunedin marriages", 1860-1920). The notice in the *Otago Witness* read as follows:

Ross-Grant, on the 7th March, at the residence of the bride's parents, by the Rev. D. M. Stuart, assisted by the Rev. Rutherford Waddell, MA, Malcolm, eldest son of Alexander Ross, of Rossville, Kelso to Forrest, fourth daughter of George Grant of Inglewood. Dunedin. ("Marriages", 1890, p. 24)

The society pages of the paper went a touch further:

A pleasant party assembled at Inglewood, Queen Street, on Friday, 7th inst., to witness the marriage of Miss Grant to Mr Malcolm Ross. The Rev. Dr Stuart and the Rev. R. Waddell officiated on the occasion, the bride's sister and three little nieces attending her as maids. After the marriage the guests were favoured with an inspection of the wedding presents, which were unusually numerous and costly. They numbered over 100, and included most of the usual silver work seen on these occasions, noticeable amongst them being the handsome tea and coffee service presented by the Girls' High School, and a magnificent brooch of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies sent from Home. A glimpse of some of the bride's dresses was calculated to make one quite envious of her wardrobe. ("Alice's letter to her readers", 1890, p. 41)

The reporter went on to rhapsodise over Forrest's dresses, describing them in great detail including the bride's "travelling dress" of dark brown tweed embroidered with pale brown, which was "very becoming". "Miss Grant was held in great esteem at the

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Whitson was a founder and vice-president of the Dunedin Shakespeare Club. A plaque and memorial tree planted in the Shakespeare Garden in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens commemorate Whitson (L. Ross, personal communication, February 6, 2007).

Girls' High School, and the school was granted a holiday on the occasion of her marriage,” the item concluded. The couple lived at one point with Forrest’s parents in Queen St (“Stone's directory: Otago & Southland”, 1892) but by 1893 they were living in Royal Tce, according to the 1893 electoral roll, with Forrest listed under domestic duties and Malcolm still as clerk. This was both a literal and metaphorical rise in Dunedin society for Malcolm. He moved from the lowly flats of Leith and Great King Sts to the well-to-do heights of Royal Tce, and he had married into a well educated, artistic and genteel family, the Grants. His success with his outdoor pursuits would also have played a part in being accepted into the higher reaches of colonial society.

**Figure 3 Forrest Ross.**

### **1:5 Peak experiences**

In his obituaries it was said that Ross was a keen sportsman good at athletics, cycling, rugby, rowing, tennis and golf. Obviously he was a very fit young man as he played rugby well enough to be a “very fast three quarter back” for the Otago provincial team in 1885 and 1886 (O'Hagan, 1981, p. 37).<sup>16</sup> As a member of the Dunedin Rugby Club he played four games for Otago against Wellington, Canterbury (twice) and New South Wales. There is a picture of him in the Otago team of 1886 in O'Hagan's book *The pride of southern rebels*. In 1888 he moved from being a player to being an administrator. In that year he was appointed secretary of the Otago Rugby Football Union whose vice presidents included two members of Parliament, James Allen, the future Minister of Defence, and Thomas Mackenzie,<sup>17</sup> the future High Commissioner in London, and the soon to be missing Professor Mainwaring Brown (“Otago Rugby Football Union”, 1888). In 1898 the management committee of the union nominated Ross as its representative to the national body, the NZRFU (“Football”, 1898; “Notes by Forward”, 1898).

Rugby was not his only sporting interest – he was also a keen tennis player and golfer. He was not content just to play, however, and was equally active in committee rooms as he was on the court or golf links. In 1896 he was recorded as the “energetic” secretary

<sup>16</sup> In his military records Ross is recorded as being 5' 8" tall and weighing 11st 4lbs, so he was not a big man – a characteristic of a backline player up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>17</sup> These two men were to be significant figures in Malcolm Ross's future career.

of the Otago Lawn Tennis Association. In the association's tournament in 1896 Ross and his partner were runners up in the men's doubles championship and Forrest Ross was runner-up with her partner in the women's ("Tennis tournament", 1896). Eleven years later Malcolm was the mixed doubles and men's doubles winner in a Parliamentary tennis competition organised by the Rosses ("Members at play", 1907). It appears the couple continued to organise this tournament until at least 1910 ("Women in print", 1909). Ross was elected chairman of the New Zealand Lawn Tennis Association in October 1905 and was still chairman in 1909. He agitated for New Zealand to secede from the Australian Association and compete in the Davis Cup as its own nation ("Lawn tennis", 1908). This did not happen until 1923.

On the golf course Ross was also successful. At the New Zealand Golf Championships of 1899 he is recorded as being the winner of the handicap event ("New Zealand Golf Championship", 1899). The overall champion was Arthur Duncan, 23, who went on to win the amateur event nine times. In 1911 it is clear Ross had continued his interest in competitive golf by entering the Ranfurly Cup with his partner H. Gore and making the playoff. They were runners up ("Golf - Wellington Club", 1911). He must have introduced his son Noel to the pastime, because the young man was a member of the Wellington Golf Club, along with his father, in 1915 ("Wellington Golf Club annual meeting", 1915). Malcolm was often in the society pages as playing golf with Governor Ranfurly.

Another sport in which, it is claimed, Ross had an interest was cycling. According to the *New Zealand Free Lance*, Ross rode the first "high bike", the penny farthing, in New Zealand ("All sorts of people", 1904). In August 1869 Dunedin and Auckland were both publicising the manufacture of the velocipede, as it was first called, by local ironmongers ("The first bicycle", 1869; "News of the week", 1869). But the penny farthing came along later in the 1870s. Ross would have been quite young if it was true he rode one of the first. He was proficient enough by 1885 to compete in bicycle races at the local athletics club, winning both "the maiden flat and the maiden bicycle race", most probably not on a penny farthing but the later "safety bicycle" ("Amateur athletics", 1906n). In one of his later despatches, sent from Samoa, during the "troubles" of 1899, Ross wrote of riding a bicycle round the districts (M. Ross, 1899u).

However, much as he probably enjoyed all those sports, it was climbing mountains that really captured Malcolm Ross's interest. When the *Otago Daily Times* sent him as a

member of the paper-sponsored search party for Professor Brown, he was described as already having made a name for himself as a mountaineer (“Untitled”, 1888). In 1885, for example, with Harry Birley and G. Marshall, he had climbed the glacier on the north east face of Mt Earnslaw at the tip of Lake Wakatipu, later naming the glacier after Birley (Galloway, 1969). But it was on their honeymoon to Mt Cook and the Tasman Glacier that Malcolm and Forrest’s real “wanderings” began, according to Graham Langton (2002). While Ross had already been on the Mainwaring expedition and one to the head of Lake Wakatipu, most of the significant mountaineering came after marriage, with Forrest taking part in many of the expeditions. That honeymoon trip was written up in the *Otago Witness*.

Mr and Mrs Malcolm Ross, of Dunedin, have recently visited Mount Cook. A trip was made to Green's fifth camp at the foot of the Ball Glacier. The journey was successfully accomplished in two days from the Hermitage, Mrs Ross being the only New Zealand lady who has ever attempted it. The party slept under an Alpine pine on the way up. Subsequently Mrs Ross crossed the Ball and Hochstetter Glaciers, and Mr Ross went up the Tasman Glacier to Mount De La Beche. Mrs Ross succeeded in making the return journey in one day. (“Local and general”, 1890, p.11)

It must have been on that honeymoon that their first and only child Noel was conceived. He was born on December 4, almost nine months to the day since the wedding.

Ross was a founding member of the New Zealand Alpine Club in 1891 and Forrest joined the following year. Ross was also elected to the British Alpine Club in 1909 (M. Ross, 1891-1896). Besides holding executive positions in the New Zealand club, Ross also edited the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* from about 1893-95 (McCallum, 2003). Ross lost the editorship in what he obviously considered a rather underhand manner. He had been away in Australia and on his return found the editorship had been handed over to John Meason, a member of the Canterbury branch of the Alpine Club, without Ross being informed. Apparently someone had argued that he would be only too glad to give up the duty. “This is rather extraordinary, seeing that I had never, either verbally or in writing, expressed such a desire to anyone. On the contrary, the editorship was the one office in connection with the club which I cared to have” (M. Ross, 1891-1896). Over the years after their marriage, either singly or together, or with Malcolm’s brothers Kenneth, John or David, Malcolm and Forrest climbed Mt Earnslaw (1892), attempted Mt De la Beche (1893) and Mt Cook (1894) and Mt Tutoko in Fiordland (1895). This

latter expedition was sponsored by the *Melbourne Age* and Malcolm wrote it up for the paper on completion (“The Leader expedition in Fiordland”, 1895; “Overland to Milford Sound”, 1895). Unlike his wife who was modest about her climbing achievements, Malcolm sometimes exaggerated his efforts, as claimed by Graham Langton.

He wrote about their climbing for a Melbourne audience and implied a successful climb. But it emerged that they failed to reach any summit, and that Madeline was the attempted peak, not Tutoko. Malcolm never claimed so much again, but his reputation suffered, and for some later achievements he did not receive due credit. (Langton, 2002).

In 1893 Ross scaled Paritutu at New Plymouth from the more difficult seaward side, something never before accomplished, according to the local paper, the *Taranaki Herald*.

Mr Ross speaks of the ascent as the most difficult rock climb he has accomplished alone, with the exception of one near the summit of the Remarkables some years ago, and worse than anything encountered on his recent ascent of Mount De la Beche (10,050 feet), in the Mount Cook district. (“Ascent of Paritutu”, 1893, p. 2)

It is believed that Ross and the party that climbed the Hochstetter Dome in early 1897<sup>18</sup> were the first to use crampons in New Zealand, a set of metal spikes that clips onto mountaineering boots and are used for ice climbing or glacier walking.

The Central Plateau drew the Rosses in 1898 and there, accompanied by A. R. Lowe, then assistant secretary of the Wellington Acclimatisation Society, and a Mr Russell, they climbed Tongariro, Ngauruhoe, and the northern peak of Ruapehu, Te Heuheu. In an item in the *Otago Witness* it was mentioned that Ross could carry swags of 114lbs which is nearly 52kgs – an enormous load for any man, let alone the moderately tall, slight Malcolm Ross (“Milford Sound”, 1898). He must have been exceptionally strong to carry such a weight. Before they climbed the mountains, the Rosses had helped Lowe release rainbow trout fry into the streams of the Tongariro area. When Malcolm climbed Ngauruhoe again in 1907 his 9000-word account of his exploit was published in the *New Zealand Herald* (M. Ross, 1907). During the climb Ross was accompanied by

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<sup>18</sup> John Pascoe (1969) has a chapter on the expedition of Ross and Fyfe to the Whataroa in 1867. (pp. 156-165).

James Cowan, who had left the *Auckland Star* to become an attaché at the Tourist Department (“Untitled”, 1906g) and James McDonald, the department’s artist and photographer. Ross’s son Noel was also to have made the ascent but injured his foot and had to wait at the camp at the foot of the mountain. It was claimed that this was the first time the mountain had been climbed in the winter season (Cowan, 1907a, 1907b). Two years later Ross was again on the mountain after it began erupting in March (M. Ross, 1909c). *The Observer* had this to say about the 1907 *New Zealand Herald* story:

Malcolm Ross is spreading himself in the columns of the *Herald* and other papers over the valorous deeds of himself and his youthful son Noel.<sup>19</sup> in climbing over the ice and snow to the top of Ngauruhoe. To judge from the liberal sprinkling of the capital "I" through his articles, it was Malcolm himself who performed the most prodigious feats - Jimmy Cowan and his other mountaineering mates hardly count. But though the egotistical Malcolm seems to reckon he has done something unique, other people remember the mountain has been scaled before under even more trying conditions. Dr Bell<sup>20</sup>, made no great song about it either, but then Dr Bell is not a self advertising newspaper “special”. (“Pars about people”, 1907, p. 5).

It is clear from these observations that Ross’s propensity to sometimes magnify his achievements was becoming known and unappreciated, at least by some of his fellow scribes. These responses are telling when considered in the light of the mythology that was arising around the colonial concept of masculinity, especially after the South African War of 1899-1902. As Jock Phillips (1996) outlined in his *A man’s country?* “This war established a mythology about the military virtues of Pakeha males which in its broadest principles remained unchanged for the next 50 years – a mythology which structured national self perceptions and affected behaviour” (p. 144). Some of the virtues Phillips cited were physical superiority, adaptability, stoicism, natural talent, inner discipline and *modesty* (my emphasis). While Ross was clearly physically fit and possibly exhibited most of the other characteristics, it was the apparent lack of the latter virtue, modesty, which seemed to so incense some of his detractors. Even today New Zealanders appear “very sensitive to any declarations that by being successful, an individual is superior” (Hull, 2003). This has since been named the “tall poppy syndrome”. There is a conundrum here as other published accounts mention Ross’s modesty when talking about his exploits. Ross travelled the Otago province giving

<sup>19</sup> As noted by Malcolm in his report, Noel did not actually make the climb to the summit.

<sup>20</sup> J.A.M. Bell was the Government geologist who climbed Ngauruhoe in July-August, 1906.

lectures on his mountaineering adventures illustrated with magic lantern slides, and often the one facet commented on was his modesty. For example:

The Choral Hall was comfortably filled on the evening of the 27th ult. by those desirous of hearing Mr Malcolm Ross's lecture on the Alps from Milford to Aorangi, and to see the collection of pictures, which numbered a hundred, illustrative of the different localities. Though the lecture lasted nearly two hours, Mr Ross succeeded in riveting the attention of his audience with his interesting description of the Southern Alps and of his climbs among them, and was frequently applauded. The views proved to be very fine, the snow scenes coming out beautifully clear and bright. At the conclusion of the lecture the Rev. W. Hewitson moved a vote of thanks to all those who had assisted in connection with the entertainment, and briefly referred to the pleasure he had had in listening to Mr Ross's *very modest* (my emphasis) description of his adventures. ("Local and general", 1896, p. 21)

In one other way he did not fit the masculine myth of the day, and it was seen most vividly in his relationship with his wife. She was clearly a woman ahead of her time – well born, well educated, talented, artistic,<sup>21</sup> adventurous and independent, and she appeared to play an equal role in the Ross conjugal partnership. This was not common in that era, but it was obvious that Malcolm held her in high regard and letters show he loved her dearly. Ross researchers, such as Graham Langton, have questioned why the couple only had the one child, Noel, born on December 4, 1890 ("Birth notice", 1890). It is possible, besides medical reasons, that Forrest was satisfying social expectations by bearing at least one child, but needed no more to demonstrate her womanly virtues thus allowing her to pursue her other interests. Her husband clearly accepted this and was happy to see her success, which in many ways was as great as his. She was an acknowledged mountaineer, author and journalist in her own right. Forrest wrote of her adventures in a book published in 1900 called *A lady mountaineer in the New Zealand Alps* (F. Ross, 1900b). She also wrote another book, *Round the world with a fountain pen : The log of a lady journalist* (F. Ross, 1913) and wrote numerous newspaper articles (F. Ross, 1900; 1929).

Ross and his wife made further successful climbs in the Southern Alps culminating in what is regarded as Malcolm's greatest climbing achievement, the first traverse of Mt Cook in January 1906 when he was 43 ("Ascent of Mt Cook", 1906; "The ascent of Mt Cook", 1906). In addition to "colling" the monarch of New Zealand mountains (i.e

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<sup>21</sup> Margaret Selves, of Gisborne, has two paintings of Forrest's hanging in her lounge.

crossing over its highest peak from one side to the other), Ross's party, which included legendary mountaineer Tom Fyfe, did two other climbs, one a first ascent of a peak of over 8000 ft on the Liebig Range, and the other an ascent to within 300ft or 400ft of the summit of Eli de Beaumont, which is 10,200 ft high. The *Grey River Argus* noted the event:

Mr Ross states that the party had no difficulty in reaching the summit of Mount Cook in the record time of thirteen hours, but the feature of this climb was the descent on the Hooker side. As to his own share in the work, he has nothing to say, but he pays a very high tribute of praise to the other New Zealanders, Messrs T. C. Fyfe and Peter Graham, to whose many excellent qualities the complete success of such a big undertaking was due. ("The ascent of Mt Cook", 1906, p.1)

Ross described the historic traverse in one of his many publications, a 22-page booklet, *The first traverse of Mount Cook* (M. Ross, 1906b). It will be noted that he made no claims about his success and gave credit to his climbing partners. It was not long after that that Ross and Tom Fyfe climbed Mt Egmont in the Taranaki ("Climbing Mt Egmont", 1906).

Ross claimed in his book *A climber in New Zealand*, published in 1914, that through his Austro-Hungarian connections, he also helped organise the introduction of chamois as a hunting resource to the Southern Alps in 1907, in exchange for native birds (p. 3). According to him, "my friend Kontre-Admiral Ritter Ludwig von Höhnel", the aide de camp on the staff of the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, was in New Zealand and they talked about introducing chamois to the colony. Ross then introduced Höhnel to T. E. Donne, the head of the Tourist Department who then discussed the matter with his Minister, Sir Joseph Ward. It was agreed that eight chamois would be sent to New Zealand via London in exchange for some native birds. The chamois arrived on March 14, 1907.

**Figure 4 Malcolm Ross equipped for mountaineering.**

## **1:6 Artistic pursuits – photography**

Forrest was an accomplished painter, in both oils and watercolour. She had studied art as a young woman at the Dunedin School of Art and Design winning recognition, in

particular, for her still life studies (“School of Art and Design”, 1895). While she was showing her work at the Art Society’s annual exhibition Malcolm was displaying his efforts with the camera.

**Figure 5 Noel Ross as a child, dressed as a mountaineer. Photograph probably taken by one of his parents about 1894.**

They exhibited their work together for many years both in Dunedin and Wellington. The first mass produced Kodak camera had been launched in the US by George Eastman in 1888 and was soon using the new celluloid roll film developed by Eastman’s company (Utterback, 1995, p. 134).

At some point Malcolm Ross took up the camera using it on most of his climbing expeditions from at least 1891 (“Art Society Exhibition”, 1891). He is recorded as exhibiting photographs for the Dunedin Photographic Society in 1891. He borrowed Alexander Turnbull’s Kodak when he did the “colling” of Mt Cook in 1906 “and with it I took the first photograph of a party on the summit of that mountain,” he told his friend (M. Ross, 1906a). Ross became a regular exhibiter and judge at camera and art shows, a

**Figure 6 Coach crossing a river taken in the 1890s. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

man “whose ability and taste” as a photographer was well-known by 1897 (“Art photography”, 1897). It could be claimed that Malcolm Ross was one of the country’s first press photographers. His pictures taken during the Samoan “troubles” in 1899 were published in *The Weekly Press*, for example (“The disturbance in Samoa”, 1899). In 1901 Ross went with W. H. Triggs of *The Press* to the Commonwealth celebrations in Melbourne. Wellington’s *New Zealand Free Lance* observed: “As Malcolm has taken his trusty camera with him, he is likely to put in quite a record time this week in the snap-shooting line. He will be worth talking to when, he gets back” (“All sorts of people”, 1901a). Many of Ross’s photographic efforts are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, in particular albums of the tours he went on with the Governors of the day. Some of Ross’s photographs taken on the Governor’s tour of the Cook Islands were published in the *Otago Witness* of November 1900 (M. Ross, 1900b).

## 1:7 The lure of Wellington

Parliament originally sat for only about six months of the year and the *Otago Daily Times* either relied on the news services to provide coverage of sessions or occasionally sent its own reporters from Dunedin to cover parliamentary affairs. As early as 1882 George Fenwick was finding this system increasingly unworkable and wondering whether it was time to have a special reporter based in Wellington during the session (“Board of directors minute book”, 1878-1884). Editors Ashcroft and Twopeny both made the trip to the capital at various times to carry out this particular duty. The issue seemed to lie in abeyance for a few more years before it arose again in 1887 when Fenwick once again contemplated assigning a special correspondent to Wellington. In April Dunedin journalist and poet Thomas Bracken was taken on during the parliamentary session for £5 a week (“Board of directors minute book”, 1884-1894). In May 1892 Fenwick discussed the Wellington job with journalist Gresley Lukin who agreed to become the correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press* for £4 a week. He remained in that position until May 1896 when he became editor of the *Evening Post* (Fenwick, 1896-97). The two southern papers now needed to appoint a new man to the job of special parliamentary correspondent (“Board of directors minute book”, 1895-1901). W. H. Triggs, the editor of *The Press*, offered to do the job but then withdrew his application. George Fenwick suggested that perhaps Bryne of the *Tuapeka Times* might be Lukin’s replacement. He then talked to Malcolm Ross about whether he would be prepared to move to Wellington as parliamentary reporter. Fenwick wrote to Lukin about the chances of securing Ross for the position. “If we can do so, I feel that we should be well served. The only problem might be that the work might not be sufficient to tempt him” (Fenwick, 1896-97). The difficulty was in the correspondent being able to secure work while the House was not in session. Fenwick asked Lukin whether the *Evening Post* might be able to give Ross some work in the recess.

He is, for example, in addition to being a good general reporter, capable of some special work as an art critic, and in connection with football and other athletic sports. He would I think develop into a first class parliamentary correspondent and I hope we will be able to secure him. (Fenwick, 1896-1897).

Fenwick was aware that Ross was probably getting a “fair salary in his present position” at the Union Steam Ship Company so suggested to *The Press* they should each pay Ross

£115 a year. This is not much more than Ross was earning on the *Otago Daily Times*, but it is clear he saw opportunities he could exploit when Parliament was not in session. In 1897 Parliament sat from April to the end of December so Ross was free to take on other work if he could find it.<sup>22</sup> Ross accepted and by the beginning of June 1896 was on his way to Wellington to take up his new duties.<sup>23 24</sup>

After a few months in the job he appeared to be doing it to the satisfaction of Fenwick at least. In a July 2 letter to his man in Wellington Fenwick commented: “You have done very well indeed on the whole and if you keep as well up to the mark for the rest of the session we shall have every reason to be satisfied” (Fenwick, 1896-97). In April 1897 *The Press* was considering making Ross its business agent in Wellington and asked Fenwick if this would be acceptable to the *Otago Daily Times*. Fenwick signified his approval “so long as it doesn’t interfere with *Otago Daily Times*’ correspondence”.

You asked if Ross was commercially reliable. I do not think you have the slightest hesitation in appointing him from that point of view. I can unhesitatingly give him the highest possible character. You will be perfectly safe in his hands. (Fenwick, 1896-97)

So along with his parliamentary duties Ross took on the press agency for *The Press*. It is unclear what these agency duties entailed, but suffice it to say it would have been another string to Ross’s economic bow. However, Ross must have decided being a special for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press* was not as lucrative as it might have been because in September 1899 he asked the two papers for a salary increase to £300. He got £274. The *Otago Daily Times*’ board agreed it was desirable Ross’s services be retained “even at increased remuneration” (“Board of directors minute book”, 1901-08). In 1902 he got his £300.

The Ross residence at 12 Hill St was directly opposite the Parliamentary Library and close enough to Parliament for Malcolm to walk to work. He held his Press Gallery

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<sup>22</sup> The Parliamentary debates of the following years indicate that sessions of Parliament usually started around June, sometimes July, and lasted anywhere from the end of October to the beginning of December. This left Ross available for other work in the intervening months.

<sup>23</sup> The *New Zealand Post Office directory 1896/97* recorded Ross as still living in Royal Tce so one suspects that perhaps he left his family behind (he now had a son, Noel,) until he found suitable lodgings for them in the capital. He appears to have lived in Grey St until 1900 when the directory records him as living at 5 Hill St. Some time between 1908 and 1911 the family moved to their residence at 12 Hill St.

<sup>24</sup> The move to the capital, Wellington, from the south by the Ross family was a reflection of a general trend throughout the country of people drifting to the cities especially those in the north.

position for many years before and after World War I. He appeared in photographs in the Press Gallery most years from 1902 through until 1914. Once back from the Western Front he appears again in most years from 1920 through to his death in 1930. He represented the *Press* and the *Otago Daily Times* until 1929 when he became correspondent for the *Hawke's Bay Herald* (O'Neill, 1963, p. 151). He was its president/chair on several occasions" ("Untitled", 1906d). At some date after the move to Wellington, Forrest joined Malcolm to become one of the first women to report on Parliament although she was not permitted to sit in the Press Gallery with the men (McCallum, 2003). Malcolm was a member of the Wellington branch of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists and is recorded as being present at many of the institute's meetings ("Institute of Journalists", 1898; "Untitled", 1911a).

After finishing his secondary schooling at the prestigious Christchurch private boys' boarding school, Christ's College,<sup>25</sup> young Noel then followed in his parents' footsteps and entered journalism, first in the reading room at the *Evening Post* and then as shipping reporter ("Corporal Noel Ross", 1915; Lawlor, 1935, p. 6; p. 153). He later joined the *New Zealand Herald* and then became one of the inaugural journalists on the new Christchurch daily, the *Sun*, in January 1914 ("Untitled", 1914a). It is clear that both parents thought the world of their only child. He is mentioned in many of Ross's articles and letters with pride and delight in his accomplishments.<sup>26</sup> The Rosses relied on the rather curious, and some might say pretentious, spelling of Noel's name as Noël. In the manner of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century educated middle classes Noel also called his parents, pater and mater.

Malcolm and Forrest clearly revelled in being close to the political action in the capital and mixing with prominent members of Wellington society. Len Richardson (1981) claimed that by the end of the century the Liberals, led by "King Dick" Seddon, had become a "party with mass organisation and a strong leadership" (p. 205). However their dominance was under threat from a new "alliance of large and small rural property-holders" which eventually became the Reform Party, lead by W. F. Massey (p. 209). The Rosses had arrived at a significant turning point in the country's political

<sup>25</sup> In the Christ's College Old Boys' Association database Noel Ross was student number 2219, in Moreland House from 1905 – 1908. URL: <http://www.ccoba.com/schoollist/index.php>

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm even sent a photo of Noel at four and a half to a climbing colleague in Edinburgh (M. Ross, 1895e). Perhaps it was the one of Noel in the mountaineering costume pictured earlier.

history and Malcolm would be there to report on it from the Press Gallery benches. It is presumed that the couple's move to the capital coincided with the development of the friendship between the Rosses and the Masseys - a friendship which led later to numerous calls of favouritism when Ross seemed to land sought-after positions.



**Figure 7 Malcolm Ross as published in the *Otago Witness* on February 6, 1901 p. 30.**

Malcolm and Forrest frequently entertained Massey and “others of the right wing” at their Hill St home (Scholefield, n.d.). William Massey himself was said to be intolerant of those who did not share his own “somewhat narrow religious and political outlooks and principles” (Gustafson, 2003). So as friends it can be assumed the two men held similar conservative views. But also Malcolm Ross came from the very roots of the Reform Party’s support base – a small family holding. There is a suggestion that at some stage Massey boarded with the Rosses (“Me! ”, 1915). Certainly both Massey’s wife, Christina, and at least one of the Massey daughters, stayed with the Rosses in 1908 and 1909 (“Ladies column”, 1905; “Women in print”, 1908; “Untitled”, 1909d) and it appears the Masseys may have lived in the Hill St residence while Forrest was abroad in 1910 (“Untitled”, 1910b). And Forrest, it seems, stayed with the Masseys at least some of the time while Malcolm was overseas in 1913 (“Women in print”, 1913).

Mrs Massey was at the farewell party for Forrest before she left for Egypt with her husband in April 1915 (“Women in print”, 1915).

**Figure 8 Parliamentary Press Gallery 1904. Malcolm Ross is in the back row fourth from the right, M. C. Keane is third from the left at the back.**

This friendship Ross had with the leading parliamentarians of the day, in particular those supporters of the Reform Party, again raises the question of conflict of interest. Journalistic ethics say a reporter should not get too close to those he or she reports on. However, in a small democracy such as New Zealand it has always been difficult to successfully walk this line. In Ross’s day, with the unstated but accepted recognition that journalists worked for Reformist or Liberal papers and therefore would follow their paper’s thinking on political matters it was probably not such a sin. It was only when Ross became an employee of the Government as the official war correspondent that cries of cronyism and partisanship started to emerge.

Another of Ross’s friends was Alexander Turnbull, from whom Malcolm borrowed a camera for some of his climbing expeditions, and to whom he wrote during his time on the Western Front (M. Ross, 1916o; 1916M). Turnbull had taken over the family general merchant firm, W. and G. Turnbull, after his father’s death in 1897 (Hitchings, 1966). Although six years younger than Ross, Turnbull had similar interests – sport, (especially golf), geography, natural history, exploration and, of course, books. They both became Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society with the right to use the acronym FRGS after their surnames. Ross claimed many other influential friends. Mention has already been made of Ludwig von Höhnelt. In *A climber in New Zealand* Ross also talked about “my friend Lord Islington” who invited Ross to give a lecture at Government House, Wellington (M. Ross, 1914a p. 21).<sup>27</sup> *The Observer* recorded in 1912 that Ross was often seen playing golf with the Governor. “Malcolm is the strenuous youth whose photo generally appears in the weeklies playing a game of golf with the Governor or climbing the Southern Alps and his native modesty is the special joy of all scribblers” (“Untitled”, 1912e). This illustrated Ross’s inclination to name drop and his pride in meeting and mixing with prominent people.

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<sup>27</sup> Lord Islington became Governor of New Zealand in June 1900 replacing Lord Plunket but resigned in December 1912 to take up a post in India.

A further famous friend claimed by the Rosses was Nellie Melba, the Australian opera singer, who visited New Zealand in 1903, and whose tour Ross may have helped organise, although this has not been substantiated. Forrest devoted a chapter in her book *Mixed grill* to her relationship with Melba (F. Ross & N. Ross, 1934, pp. 73-80). When Forrest travelled to Europe in 1910, she was invited by the diva to stay with her in her Paris home and to support her backstage at some of her London performances (F. Ross, 1913, p. 65). Margaret Selves of Gisborne has a letter from Melba to Ross returning some books. The singer wished Ross success with his book and hoped it “got the success it deserves”. The letter was signed “Your sincere friend, Nellie Melba”. There was no date on the letter but it bore a Government House stamp (Selves, personal communication, April 1, 2007). It possibly referred to Ross’s book *A climber in New Zealand*.

Probably the most influential friendship was that between Ross and another Governor of New Zealand, Lord Ranfurly. Ranfurly arrived in Wellington a year after Ross in 1897, and it is clear that Ross developed a close enough friendship with the Governor for the latter to recommend in 1900 to the editor of *The Times* of London, that Ross be that paper’s representative in New Zealand (C. F. M. Bell, 1900-1911). Ross spent some time in a professional capacity with Lord Ranfurly. In 1900 he accompanied the

**Figure 9 The party that crossed the Huiarau trail from Waikaremoana to Ruatoki. Back row; Dr Maui Pomare (left), Captain Gilbert Mair (4th from left). Seated; Malcolm Ross (left), Major Dudley Alexander (2d from left), Lord Ranfurly (3d from left), James Carroll (standing).**

Governor as *The Press* correspondent to the Pacific when the Cook Islands and Niue were annexed for New Zealand. They visited Tonga, Niue, the Cook Islands and other smaller islands and Ross wrote stories and took photographs, many of which are now held in an album at the Alexander Turnbull Library (“Album documenting the Pacific cruise”, 1900). Ross managed to annoy George Fenwick over his proposed trip with Ranfurly to the Islands. Instead of communicating directly with Fenwick, Ross told Triggs of *The Press*, who then told Fenwick. The latter was obviously puzzled why Ross had not contacted him himself. “I am still in the dark as to whether he has gone as our representative, but suppose that is so. I must say I don’t like this kind of treatment” (Fenwick, 1900-1901). Fenwick was still complaining to Triggs a month later about Ross’s failure to communicate with him. In 1904 Ross again accompanied the Governor on his state visit to the Bay of Plenty and the Far North. As well as Ranfurly and Ross,

the vice-regal group comprised Ranfurly's secretary, Dudley Alexander, James Carroll, Dr Maui Pomare and Gilbert Mair. The party travelled on horseback via Lake Waikaremoana and the Huirau Ranges to a meeting of the representatives of all the Maori Councils of New Zealand, at Ruatoki. After returning to Auckland they sailed to the Far North, where they attended a number of hui. Most of the photographs were taken by Ross, whose book *Through Tuhoe land* described the journey (M. Ross, 1904). The photographs are a wonderful record of the districts and people the party came in contact with. Ross's friendship with Ranfurly persisted after the latter returned to England.<sup>28</sup> In a letter to Ranfurly in 1905, Ross was less than complimentary about the new Governor, Lord Plunket. "Strictly between ourselves, Lord Plunket is not a worthy successor" (M. Ross, 1905). He then indulged in some gossip about the new occupants of Government House. He would have been pleased to see Plunket replaced by Islington.

*The Observer* regularly pilloried Ross for his self promotion. In August 1912 Ross was appointed by the Government as secretary to the prestigious Imperial Trade Commission. Commissioners eventually arrived in New Zealand on February 24 the following year beginning hearings in Dunedin and moving slowly up both islands and then departing for Australia on March 24. Ross's task was to prepare the way for the commission's work, compile reports and arrange evidence. *The Observer* commented on Ross's appointment:

Malcolm Ross that exceedingly young pressman of 50 has been given a job by the Government to "make the necessary arrangements for evidence to be taken by the Imperial Trade Commissioners while they are in New Zealand". He manages in his newspaper articles to convey the impression that he alone was on the spot at the moment the Post Office was burnt down and the *Penguin* wreck took place,<sup>29</sup> or the House resigned - and it is a very good asset for a public writer. He has been in his time president of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and is still it is believed, London *Times* correspondent in New Zealand - a billet that does not entail much loss of sleep and is not unrewarded. Mrs Malcolm Ross is also a press writer and together they shoo the wolf a very long distance from the doorstep. Ross is the only person the writer knows who turns up to afternoon functions in bell topper and frock coat - otherwise he is to be seen in his golf socks. ("Untitled", 1912e, p. 4)

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<sup>28</sup> Forrest visited the Ranfurlys in Ireland in 1910 (F. Ross, 1910).

<sup>29</sup> In 1909 the *Penguin* was ship-wrecked off the south coast of Wellington with the loss of 72 lives.

There are several themes that emerge from this commentary. The first is the fact of Ross being the recipient of a plum job from the Government and the implication that this was because of his friendship with members of Government, especially the Prime Minister. This theme emerged repeatedly during the course of Ross's career. The second recurring theme is that of Ross's supposed lime lighting, his inflation of his own importance, especially by the consistent use of the personal pronoun in his writing. This was exacerbated, for the *Observer* writer, by his apparel. There was a suggestion that in wearing a topper and frock coat Ross was aspiring to be more than he was. There was nothing of the "shabby genteel" ("Cost of living", 1904) of most journalists about Malcolm Ross. Erik Olssen (1981) in his chapter *Towards a new society* talked about the stratification of New Zealand society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The middle group of skilled working men was expanding and differentiation between strata in this middle group became more important within the cities and larger towns, said Olssen. "White-collar workers, petty proprietors and professionals must be distinguished from each other" (pp. 250-278). One gets the feeling, however, that Malcolm Ross did not just want to be distinguished from white-collar workers, (he had been one, of course, for a short time), but in fact he wanted to move even further up the ladder and become part of the "uppermost stratum". If the gossip columns of the Wellington papers are anything to go by, Malcolm Ross and his wife were well grafted into the upper levels of Wellington society. As already mentioned they played tennis and golf with the governing and military elite. The couple went to soirees, "at homes", or (shivooos as they were sometimes called), balls and receptions at Government House on a regular basis. They took part in tea parties, plays and recitals, exhibited their art – Forrest, and their photographs – Malcolm, sang or recited at social functions, and generally participated in all the acceptable activities of the well-to-do. The gossip columns noted the comings and goings of the Rosses as well as of their relatives, noting the marriages – Malcolm's sister Ina to Magrie Brookes, the town clerk at Milton, for example, ("Personal items", 1907) and the deaths – of Forrest's father, George Grant ("Untitled", 1902b), sister, Isabella ("All sorts of people", 1905), and brother, Thomas ("Mr T. Grant", 1907; "Personal matters", 1907) and Malcolm's father, Alexander Ross ("Obituary: Alexander Ross", 1908).

In the 1912 article *The Observer* referred to Ross's position as *The Times* New Zealand correspondent. There was a curious little item that appeared in the *Evening Post* of January 1901 which told of Ross being the first to buy the coveted universal penny

postage stamp at the General Post Office on New Year's morning. He bought it for the London *Times* ("Our penny postage system", 1901). By 1911, in fact, Ross had lost his position as *Times* correspondent to Wellington journalist A.R. Atkinson. It is clear from a series of letters from the editor of *The Times*, C.F.M. Bell, that towards the end of Ross's post as *Times* correspondent, Bell had become somewhat irritated with Ross's performance (C. F. M. Bell, 1900-1911). Letters asking for Ross to speed up his delivery of stories, to follow instructions, to provide "adequate" copy on time ultimately led to his agreement being terminated in October 1911.<sup>30</sup> At one point Ross must have asked for payment of £15 per column. Bell wrote back that "New Zealand didn't offer opportunities for expensive journalists". Bell's letters showed that Ross was receiving from between £100 - £160 a year as *Times* correspondent. Atkinson was to be paid £300.

This brings us to the final theme highlighted in *The Observer's* comments – that of income. It is clear that the Ross family earned good money for the times and this was probably resented by many journalists who were often on subsistence salaries. Ross and his wife were clearly making a good living from their writings – whether from the sale of their books, journal articles or other endeavours on the side, such as the Trade Commission work or as agent for the pianist Paderewski in 1904, something claimed for Ross in the *New Zealand dictionary of biography* (McCallum, 2003).<sup>31</sup>

## 1:8 London calling?

In 1883 the *New Zealand Herald*, *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press* were in talks about the feasibility of establishing a London office with a journalist and a "canvasser" able to procure advertising for the three papers ("Board of directors minute book", 1878-1884). Nothing much was done about progressing this idea until October 1892 when the question arose again when A. G. Horton of the *New Zealand Herald* suggested an office could be opened in the British capital at a cost of £167 per annum for each paper. After a series of meetings between the three papers it was agreed to set up the office with a maximum to be spent a year of £500 ("Board of directors minute book", 1884-1894).

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<sup>30</sup> To be fair similar letters were also sent to the *Times's* Australian correspondent, Arthur Jose. He was not sacked, however. In 1912 Jose was receiving £900 a year.

<sup>31</sup> In his interview with Paderewski published in the *Otago Daily Times* in 1904 Ross intimated that he had "a good deal to do with the arrangements in Wellington for the appearance of the famous pianist" (Ross, 1904a).

The position of London correspondent was offered to Charles Rous Marten who left in June 1893 for England.<sup>32</sup> Fenwick was never happy with the journalist's performance and in 1897 Malcolm Ross's name was being put forward as a possible replacement (Fenwick, 1896-97). Fenwick wrote to Triggs on April 23 saying Ross would make a good "Home" correspondent but that it was probably too late to suggest it, even though he was unhappy with Rous Marten's efforts (Fenwick, 1896-97). On the same day he wrote to Horton saying basically the same thing but hinting that Ross was "not averse to accepting the position as Home correspondent". Nothing came of this because Rous Marten stayed as London correspondent until his death in 1908. And it wasn't Ross who replaced him. It was that other Dunedin journalist, Guy Scholefield, who won the position against a large number of applicants ("Board of directors minute book", 1908-1917). He was the chief reporter of the *New Zealand Times* and called by *The Observer* a "capable and pushing young journalist" ("Untitled", 1908). Dunedin-born Scholefield had tried to get a job on the *Otago Daily Times* on at least two occasions. In July 1896 he asked Fenwick for employment but no openings were available. "Vacancies only occur at rare intervals. I may say that openings on the New Zealand press are not numerous," Fenwick told Scholefield, saying there was "great difficulty in getting into any of the offices" (Fenwick, 1896-97).

In 1906 Scholefield tried again when the *Otago Daily Times* advertised for a new sub editor but he lost out to an Auckland man ("Board of directors minute book", 1901-08). 1908 was his year to finally succeed in working for the southern paper, as well as *The Press* and *New Zealand Herald*. Scholefield was 15 years younger than Malcolm Ross but he was also beginning to make his name in literary circles. He was a university graduate, a competent journalist and was also becoming known as an author, publishing in 1908, in association with Emil Schwabe, *Who's who in New Zealand and the Western Pacific*. Another historical work, *New Zealand in evolution*, was published the following year in London (Porter, 2007). In this respect, he and Malcolm Ross had a lot in common, but history was to treat one more kindly than the other.

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<sup>32</sup> Another syndicate of evening papers, including the *Auckland Star*, had its own London correspondent, Alfred Rathbone. Rathbone was the founder of *The Observer* and had been a reporter on the *Auckland Star*. He later went on to own the *Bay of Plenty Times* ("The Observer silver jubilee", 1905). Fenwick rated Rathbone as better than Rous Marten (Fenwick, 1900-1901).

## 1:9 Authorship and other writing

Ross was able to combine his two loves, writing and outdoor exploration, and wrote many pamphlets and books about his experiences, as did his wife. By 1914 Ross had written several tourist and publicity pamphlets, especially on the South Island. This included *A complete guide to the lakes of Central Otago: the Switzerland of Australasia* written for and issued by the Lakes District Sub-Committee of the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition (M. Ross, 1889a). In 1895 he wrote two pamphlets, published in Melbourne, *Picturesque New Zealand* and *Through Fiordland* (M. Ross, 1895a, 1895b). Then there was *West Coast sounds of New Zealand*, a small booklet which recorded a trip Ross made to Dusky Sound (M. Ross, 1897). For several years Ross had a chapter in the New Zealand official year book on the “scenic wonderland” of the country (“*New Zealand official year book*”, 1897, 1898). In 1900 he compiled, with his wife providing a poem, *A souvenir of New Zealand's response to the Empire's call* about the country's response to call ups for the South African War (M. Ross, 1900a). Again Ross was on hand in 1901 to record the visit of the future George V and his wife Mary in *The duke in Southern Isles: New Zealand's loyal welcome* (M. Ross, 1901b). In April 1901 Ross had written to Triggs proposing he accompany the ducal party on its North Island tour. Triggs told Fenwick who again was offended at not being told directly. He asked about the cost of the trip and whether it was necessary for Ross to be on the tour when a Press Association journalist would probably be already covering it. Ross prevailed because he went on the tour writing for the syndicate of the *New Zealand Herald*, the *Press*, *Otago Daily Times* and *Evening Post*. Only a few days after his April letter to Triggs, Ross asked Fenwick if he could go to Melbourne with Triggs to cover New Zealand affairs there. Fenwick said no, the cost was not warranted. Ross went anyway (Fenwick, 1900-1901). Pushing his luck even further in 1902 Ross wrote to the *Otago Daily Times* wanting to go on a trip to Fiji for the King's coronation and on the relief ship to Antarctica. His wishes were not granted. It seemed Ross was slowly deserting his old mentor Fenwick for Triggs of the *Press*.

Probably Ross's most notable work prior to the outbreak of World War I was *A climber in New Zealand* (M. Ross, 1914).<sup>33</sup> In his preface to the book Ross said the contents were composed of articles that had appeared in the *London Times*, *Alpine Journal*,

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<sup>33</sup> The book is being advertised on the online bookstore, Alibris, for \$1085.33.

*Otago Daily Times*, *Press*, *New Zealand Herald*, *Evening Post*, *New Zealand Times*, *Melbourne Age* and *The Australian*. There were mixed responses to the book. A reviewer in the *Geographical Journal* said Ross gave a “careful account which is practically a complete historic resumé of the story of alpine climbing in New Zealand”. Ross was complimented on his “vivid and clear descriptions” and “very well told” anecdotes of exciting climbing incidents. The reviewer was particularly impressed with “the quite unusual excellence” of the accompanying photographs (“Mountaineering in New Zealand”, 1914). On the other hand *The Observer* commented:

Malcolm Ross, the New Zealand pressman who toted the Imperial Trade Commission round these islands when it was here, has written a book *A Climber in New Zealand*. Malcolm means climbing mountains not mounting socially. He is being rather applauded for his book in England and this extract from *The Times* (London Literary Supplement) is worth putting down. “He is a practiced writer, though his very aptitude leads him to sometimes turn out his thoughts in phrases which we at home have begun to find exhausted. It is a long time since we called the sun ‘Old Sol’ or wrote about ‘the fragrant incense of tobacco’.” (“Untitled”, 1914d, p. 5)

The reviewer has picked up on Ross’s penchant for overly euphuistic language. While he was writing his books and pamphlets Ross also continued writing on a freelance basis for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press*, besides his Press Gallery work. In 1895, for example, he interviewed Samuel Clemens, aka Mark Twain, for the Dunedin paper (M. Ross, 1895d). He covered the *Penguin* disaster in 1909 (M. Ross, 1909a; 1909b). On many occasions he got his own byline, something rare in those times, otherwise he was generally “our own correspondent”. A later chapter will examine in some detail Ross’s writing before 1914 to determine just how good a journalist he was.

## **1:10 Overseas travel**

Mention has already been made about Ross travelling through the Pacific Islands and to Australia, but 1899 was a particularly significant year for travel. In January George Fenwick received a telegram from Ross intimating he proposed leaving at once for Samoa to act as special correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times*, *The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald* at Apia during the continuance of the disturbances which had arisen over the election of the new king (“Board of directors minute book”, 1895-1901). Ross eventually spent around three months reporting from Samoa. This topic will be covered in more detail in a later chapter. As well as travelling overseas for work, Ross and his wife both travelled abroad for pleasure in the years before war broke out in

1914. Malcolm visited Australia on several occasions. He mentioned it in his interview with Mark Twain and he went at least twice while editor of the *Alpine Journal* (M. Ross, 1891-1896). In 1910 Forrest travelled alone to Europe, and wrote *Round the world with a fountain pen* (F. Ross, 1913). Malcolm followed in 1913-1914 and while away in Europe visited, among other things, various fishing conservatories to collect information on European fish culture (F. H. D. Bell, 1913, 1914). He travelled extensively in Belgium, Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Hungary. His tour included two journeys over the Carpathians and visits to the Danubian districts and to Serbia and Roumania covering many thousands of miles ("New Zealand's war correspondent", 1915a). He had intended to write a book about his travels but the outbreak of war interfered with this plan ("Obituary - Malcolm Ross", 1930). He was recorded as having been present at the opening of the British Parliament in March 1914, sitting in the House of Lords to observe ("About people", 1914). He arrived back in New Zealand on April 8 ("Personal matters", 1914).

## 1:11 Conclusion

By the outbreak of war in 1914 Malcolm Ross was 52 and at his peak - socially, occupationally and financially. While he had been born into a humble Scottish labouring family, in subsequent years, through a good marriage, sporting prowess, a career close to the centre of power and the friendship of important personages, Ross managed to move up the social scale to a position of gentility. His upward mobility was aided by an excellent income gleaned from his writing and work for the Government on various projects. This income was further added to by the journalism and authorship of his wife.

Malcolm Ross presented himself in formal clothing as often as not, something which *The Observer* chose to scoff at. The paper obviously believed Ross had ideas above the station of a mere reporter. The studio photograph of Ross featured at the beginning of this thesis shows a dark haired, handsome man with regular, fine features and a serious even melancholy mien. According to his brother Kenneth, Malcolm had a scar on his lip where he fell out of a tree as a youngster (K. Ross, n.d.). A mole is observable on his left cheek. One suspects this carefully posed shot helped to disguise Ross's rather prominent ears, more obvious in other photos available of him. His military files showed he was not a big man, but rather of medium height and slender build. This photograph was used by the press when Malcolm was being considered for the job of

official war correspondent. He does not look 52 in this picture. It is said to have been taken by Stanley Polkinghorne Andrew in 1910 according to the National Library which holds the original negative. However, commentators did mention Ross was youthful looking for his age on several occasions.

The comments by the Auckland weekly publication *The Observer* about Ross have been used extensively in this chapter and in later ones. It is one of the few resources which had any sort of comment to make about Ross personally and it is clear the paper took a rather dim view of him. The test is to decide whether *The Observer's* acerbic comments about Ross were justified. He was undoubtedly successful. As a New Zealand-born man he had risen in colonial society to a reasonably high level but perhaps not quite to the "uppermost stratum". He could call Prime Ministers, Governors and Army generals his friends. He and his family were financially well off. He had been recognised by two international bodies for his climbing and outdoor feats. He was a published author and able photographer. Ross's cardinal sin, according to his detractors, was that he was not humble. But there is some conflict over this view of Ross's demeanour. Some of Ross's contemporaries held a contrary view. Perhaps he was seen by some envious souls, his journalistic colleagues in particular, as an early tall poppy that needed to be put in his place. He was genuinely successful in many arenas. He was also married to a highly successful woman and was blessed also with a likeable and talented son. The Rosses were early media celebrities. Later chapters will examine in more detail aspects raised in this chapter, in particular how good a journalist Malcolm Ross was and whether his supposed vanity was observable in his later years as New Zealand's first official war correspondent.

## CHAPTER TWO

### New Zealand journalism prior to World War I

#### 2:1 Introduction

Before considering Malcolm Ross as a war correspondent it is necessary to consider the state of newspapers and journalism in pre war New Zealand. The first daily paper, the *Otago Daily Times*, was established in 1861. From that time and up to the 1920s newspapers were in their heyday feeding an almost insatiable desire by New Zealanders for news. And journalists sprang from all walks of life to meet the demand for the gathering and writing of the news. Whether it was young lads straight from school like Malcolm Ross, mature men from other professions or men who worked their way up through the newspaper machine rooms, there seemed a steady supply to staff the country's newsrooms. Few of these men, and they were mainly men, were New Zealand-born. Malcolm Ross was one of the exceptions. Like Ross, also, many journalists were freelance, often unable or not willing to face the long hours and difficult conditions in a newsroom. It was a volatile time, with intense competition driving most papers and often resulting in costly battles in court. The journalists were also a restless lot it seems, moving from paper to paper within New Zealand but just as likely to head across the Tasman. Malcolm Ross was not one of these and possible explanations for this will be explored. Many went to Australia for better pay and working conditions and better outlets for the more literary minded. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was the former that drove the journalists to unite and form unions throughout the country. Work in New Zealand newsrooms was long and arduous and for little pay. No wonder there was (and still is) continued debate over whether journalism was a trade, craft or a profession and just what the attributes of a good journalist should be.

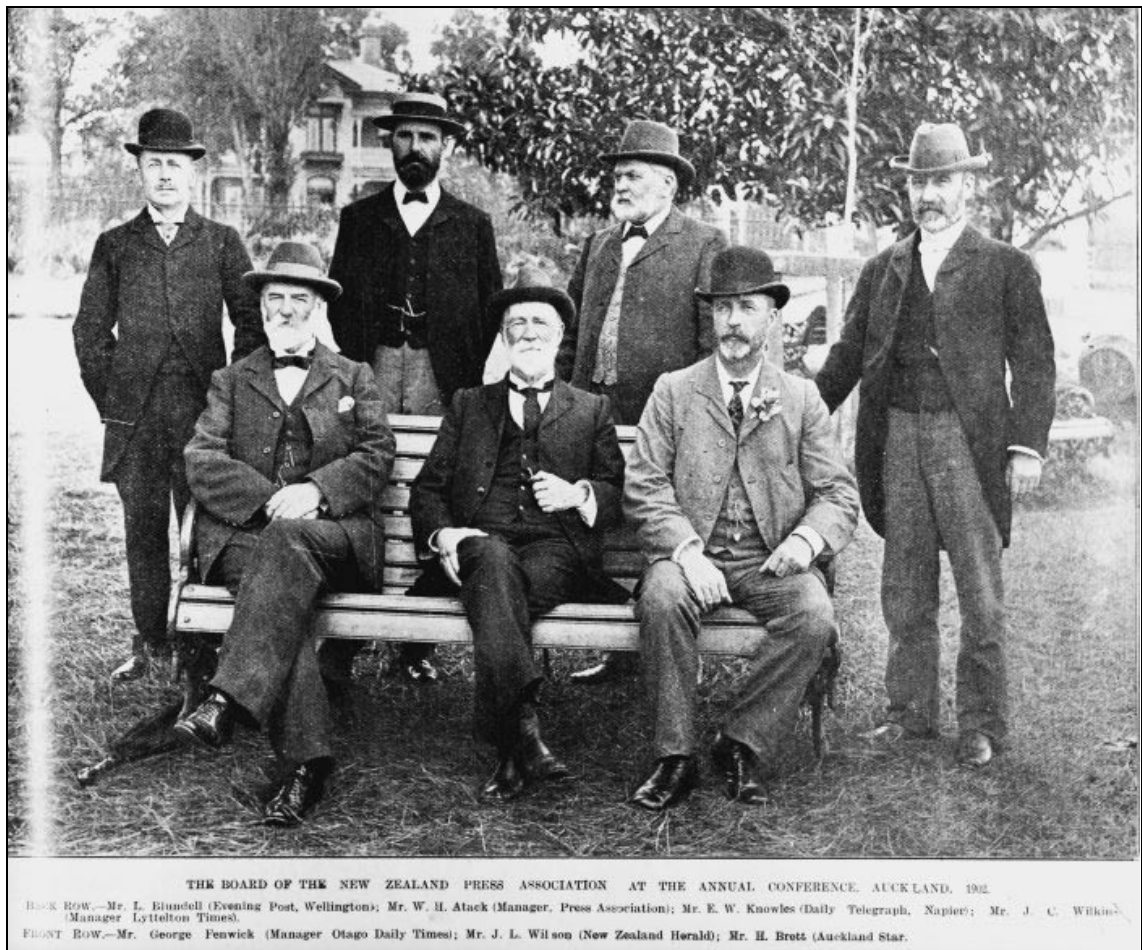
#### 2:2 Pre war newspapers

Before the outbreak of war in 1914 establishing newspapers was a popular activity in New Zealand. In 1895, according to the New Zealand official yearbook, there were 188 publications in the country, 52 dailies, 16 tri-weeklies, 28 bi-weeklies, 64 weeklies, three fortnightlies and 25 monthlies ("New Zealand official year book", 1895, p. 169).

“Rag planting” continued apace in the 1900s and reached its zenith around the 1920s, according to Guy Scholefield (1958) In 1900 few settled districts did not have their own newspaper (p. 19). . Whatever form they took, whether dailies, weeklies or something in between, these local “rags” were isolated enough initially, by bush and bad roads, to flourish without competition (pp. 16-20). Keen journalists with a hand press and some type was “all that was necessary to hoist in the wilderness the banner of a free press” (p. 17). Scholefield numbered seven men who between them were responsible for “planting” more than 45 papers in New Zealand and elsewhere. Champion “rag planter” Joseph Ivess established at least 30 newspapers before he died in 1919, five of these being in Australia (Harvey, 2003; Scholefield, 1958, p. 17). New Zealanders were avid readers and there was an enormous variety of papers of all persuasions to choose from. By 1911 the number of publications registered reached 237 with 64 dailies for a population of just over a million (“New Zealand official year book”, 1911). With the increase in the number of newspapers came a corresponding increase in the number of agencies supplying news to New Zealand from round the world. From Reuters, to Australian, Canadian and other agencies the overseas news flowed in (Fenwick, 1929). In 1930 the chairman of the United Press Association, A. G. Henderson was talking about the demand for news in the country being “insatiable” (Henderson, 1930). “The public want all the news and the newspapers must supply it and every year sees the opening up of fresh news sources.” Fred Miller (1967) corroborated this in his autobiography (p. 14).

How to disseminate this news around the colony became a crucial issue and various solutions were tried until in 1878, at the instigation of George Fenwick the New Zealand Press Association was established “for the mutual exchange among its members of telegraphic intelligence and for the procuring of cable news from overseas” (Sanders, 1979, pp. 4-9). The inaugural membership of the association was 26 papers and in co-operation with the Government the association secured a special wire for members’ telegrams. However, the papers that had not been included set up a rival body and after some considerable protest eventually won the same rights to the wire service. This state of affairs could not continue and in 1879 it was decided that all members of the New Zealand press should belong to one organisation and it would be open to all newspapers with a scale of entrance fees for each class of newspaper. A new name was chosen for the organisation – the United Press Association – and one of the main rules was that no member could join another agency for the procuring of news that might

compete with the new association (Fenwick, 1929). In later years this resulted in many seeing the UPA as a monopoly with a stranglehold on news dissemination. The first manager of the UPA was E. T. Gillon, who like Malcolm Ross, began his journalism career on the *Otago Witness*. Gillon was the first chief reporter of the *Otago Daily Times* and eventually went on to become the editor of Wellington's *Evening Post* twice. He managed the UPA for five years from 1879 (Verry, 1993). The irascible W. H. Attack was the best known of the managers serving the association from 1886-1930, virtually throughout Malcolm Ross's career as a journalist. He was an influential figure, especially when it came to the appointment of the first official correspondent for World War 1, and thereafter during the term of that appointment.



**Figure 10** Members of the Board of the New Zealand Press Association at the annual conference in Auckland in 1902. In the back row are (L-R): L Blundell, W H Attack, E W Knowles and J C Wilkins. In the front row are (L-R): George Fenwick, J L Wilson and H Brett.

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of journalists employed by all these papers. The census of 1886 recorded around 49 reporters, all men, and around 390 others from the newspaper industry such as managers, office boys, clerks, runners, writers, readers, correspondents, proprietors, editors and publishers. This number grew to around 581 in

1896, 675 in 1901 and 702 in 1906. By 1915 the New Zealand Institute of Journalists claimed there were “not more than 600 pressmen” in the country at that time (“Journalists’ send-off”, 1915).<sup>34</sup> One presumes freelance journalists were included in that number, and so Malcolm Ross.

The competition between rival newspapers in the cities was fierce, according to Alan Mulgan (1958), who joined the *Auckland Star* as a cadet in 1900 (p. 75). Scholefield (n.d.) attested to the intensity of the competition in Wellington when *The Dominion* was launched there in 1907. In Dunedin the main rivalry was between Ross’s old morning paper, the *Otago Daily Times*, and the *Evening Star*, owned and edited by George Bell, with Mark Cohen as literary editor. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that other Fenwick paper, the *Otago Witness*, led the field of 61 weeklies and was “the soundest” in the colony” (Scholefield, 1958, p. 169). Imagine the environment in Christchurch in 1912 when Ed Huie, an Australian by birth, started up *The Sun* to bring the number of papers in that city to seven – three evening, two morning and two weeklies.<sup>35</sup> Huie faced “one of the most determined and best organised newspaper monopolies in New Zealand”, according to *The Observer* (“Untitled”, 1914a). It was rumoured that *The Press* and *The Lyttelton Times* were working together with joint funds “to smash the interloper”. They did not succeed immediately. It wasn’t until 1935 that the *Sun* was put to bed for the last time (Scholefield, 1958, pp. 224-226). During the days of five papers in Christchurch, the scoop type of journalism was revived, according to Miller (1967). “Reporters worked in the consciousness that their competitors were always likely to put one across them. Those days were supercharged with tension” (p. 63). In those heady times, said Miller, the scoop was the journalists’ “pinnacle of success”. “They believed one good scoop would make a journalist for life.” King of the scoops in New Zealand appeared to be Albert Cohen of the Dunedin *Evening Star*, followed by Cootamundran Fred Doidge of the *Auckland Star* (Waterson, 2004). *The Observer* spoke admiringly of Cohen’s scooping abilities and in particular when he beat other journalists to a financial story in 1902. “This is something like smart ‘special’ work” (“Untitled”, 1902e). Doidge, later to become the first president of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association, and one of four finalists in the search for the first official war correspondent (“Official war correspondent”, 1915). He used to incite

<sup>34</sup> The institute would not have included publishers and proprietors or other non reporting members of the newspaper industry in its consideration of reporter numbers.

<sup>35</sup> Noel Ross was one of the inaugural journalists (“Untitled”, 1912a).

*Auckland Star* staff to scoop the *Herald* when the opportunity offered (“Untitled”, 1913j). It is difficult to assess whether Ross had this scooping ability. Certainly his account of the Mainwaring Brown expedition was exclusive as were his numerous accounts of his own climbing exploits, but he was directly involved in these events himself. He was not alone in reporting the wreck of the *Penguin* either. The editor of *The Dominion* was at the site of the wreck and wrote reports about it for his and other papers (M. Ross, 1909b). Later events do not point towards Ross having a particularly strong nose for news. Unusually for a reporter he was just as often a newsmaker, especially with his mountaineering exploits. He and his wife were often the subject of news items in the papers of the day. Ross could be considered an early Paul Holmes. Certainly the papers then were just as interested in gossip about notable people as they are today.

Patrick Day (1990) noted in his seminal study of New Zealand newspapers from 1840-1880 that in the early days the political ambitions of their owners was what drove newspapers not financial profit (pp. 234-243). Political linkages were “open and accepted as proper”. However as the century progressed, readership grew together with advertising and a shift towards making a profit began to dominate the minds of owners. “This requirement lead to modification to the political role of the New Zealand newspapers,” said Day, and he noted an important change in the nature of newspaper political involvement. Whereas previously proprietors might have supported particular individuals, now they supported more general political groupings. This was to such an extent, that a Member of Parliament in 1917 could claim that 80 per cent of papers in the Dominion were Reformist and supporters of Massey. Journalists themselves might claim they were not partisan; an idea supported by Jeb Byrne’s (1999) study of early New Zealand papers. “New Zealand newspapers were loath to let stand perceptions that they were other than fully independent politically” (p. 62). Nevertheless the organisation of papers that Malcolm Ross belonged to, the *Otago Daily Times*, *The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald*, were all seen as firm supporters of Massey.

### 2:3 New Zealand at the turn of the century

About 1900, and in the midst of the South African war, which had been underway for nearly a year, the population of New Zealand saw a significant shift from the South to the North Island. The drift of the population northwards was probably the most

important change that took place in New Zealand between 1890 and 1935 (Condliffe, 1936, p. 229). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this move accelerated, sometimes not fast enough for Aucklanders, in particular, who were tired of being under the “thralldom” of a Government made up predominantly of South Island politicians (“Untitled”, 1900e). In 1901 about two fifths of the population lived in towns of more than 1600 people (Condliffe & Airey, 1935, p. 216). By 1906 Auckland was the leading city with census returns showing nearly 90,000 inhabitants - a 22% increase since the last census in 1901. Wellington had about 64,000, Dunedin 57,000 and Christchurch 49,000 (“The leading city”, 1906). The makeup of the population was still largely working class and immigrant. By 1906 there were 33 New Zealand-born Members of Parliament (“Untitled”, 1906e). Even in 1916 three quarters of the older age group were English immigrants, so until about 1930 immigrants exceeded those born in New Zealand of immigrant parents (Rogers, 2000). Journalists reflected the population with few claiming New Zealand as their birthplace although as the century progressed this became more likely. Malcolm Ross and Guy Scholefield were some of them. Notable journalists who originally hailed from England included Henry Brett, (*Auckland Star*) Mark Cohen, (*Evening Star*) Frank Morton, (*Triad*) Thomson Leys (*Auckland Star*) and William Lane (*New Zealand Herald*).

The growth of towns and movement northwards brought new influences into New Zealand politics. “Commercial and industrial employers gained influential places and organised themselves powerfully in Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturers' Associations and the Employers' Federation” (Condliffe & Airey, 1935, p. 217). Not only that, but new political movements were born and flourished in this period. Gustafson recorded that after 1900, as a conservative, farmer-supported Reform party evolved, at the same time there appeared a “succession of trade union and socialist political organisations” (p. 13). He noted that prior to 1900 trade unionism was “weak and incohesive” but the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw heightened union activity. By 1907 there were 900,000 inhabitants of New Zealand and 34,978 of them were trade unionists, as *The Observer* noted acerbically (“Untitled”, 1907c). Journalists were one of the groups who eventually became organised albeit rather slowly and with the encouragement of their colleagues across the Tasman. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Along with a variety of socialist, syndicalist and labour organisations there arose a number of publications to represent these interests. The most notable of these was the *Maoriland Worker*, edited at one time or another by Australian journalists

Henry (Harry) Holland and Bob Ross (Gustafson, 1980, p. 158). The latter had been the editor of *The Flame*, a Marxist paper in Broken Hill, when he accepted an invitation to come to New Zealand to edit the *Maoriland Worker* in 1910. Holland had had a fiery time as a union radical in Australia having been imprisoned there for libel and sedition. He became the editor of the *Maoriland Worker* in 1913 but was imprisoned not long after for sedition during the general strike (Gustafson, 1980, p. 158). Another Victorian-born compositor turned journalist, J. T. (Tom) Paul, was prominent within the union movement particularly in the south (Olssen, 2003). Paul continued to write a regular, bylined column in the *Otago Daily Times* (Miller, 1967, p. 29) while organising a myriad of union affairs and even at one time editing his own union paper, the *Beacon*.

## 2:4 The Australian influence on journalism

Australian-born journalists made as much a mark as those from the mother country. From 1901-06 the number of people born in Australia and now living in New Zealand rose from 26,991 to 47,256. In the same period New Zealand had a net increase in migration from Australia of more than 42,000 (Gustafson, 1980, p. 30). William Lane, while born in England, made his name in Australia for his radical socialist views and the foundation of a collectivist colony in Paraguay. The founder of *The Boomerang* in 1887, and the editor of the *Worker* in 1889, he became disillusioned after the failure of the New Australia colony and came to New Zealand to write leaders for the *Herald*. He was made editor in 1913 (Goldstone, 2003; Scholefield, 1940, p. 481) “From the leader of a socialistic settlement to the leader writer of a conservative newspaper is surely a great change,” said *The Observer* (“Untitled”, 1904c). Another Australian journalist, who went on to make his name in New Zealand journalism and who was also associated early on with Lane, was Gresley Lukin. Born in Tasmania, Lukin worked on various Australian papers before buying *The Boomerang* from Lane. He sold it in 1892 and after a period in New Zealand became the editor of Wellington’s *Evening Post* (“Gresley Lukin - Obituary”, 1916c; Scholefield, 1940, pp. 507-508).<sup>36</sup> By 1909 *The Observer* was calling him the “grand old man of the New Zealand press” (“Untitled”, 1909a). A further Australian to make his mark in the newspaper world in New Zealand was the fiery newspaper proprietor and politician Fred Pirani. He came to New Zealand from Melbourne at the age of six and eventually trained as a printer, became a journalist,

<sup>36</sup> As noted earlier, Lukin acted as the Wellington parliamentary correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press* before taking up his editorship.

newspaper proprietor and Parliamentarian (S. Oliver, 2003). Another example was W. Farmer Whyte who became the sub editor of the *New Zealand Herald* in 1907.<sup>37</sup> He was a well known NSW journalist who had been associated with Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* for 12 years and had been on the staff of other papers in that state ("Untitled", 1909b).

## 2:5 The New Zealand journalist

Dissolute drunkards or Bohemian dreamers? New Zealand journalists in the pre war era are hard to classify but it is certain that most of them fitted somewhere on the continuum between these two states. What is more probable is that many of them were "inky wayfarers", a term coined by the *The Observer* to describe the highly mobile journalists of the times ("Untitled", 1913b). Detailed information about journalists from those days is hard to come by, because worthy scribblers though some may have been, very few of them left any reminiscences by which to judge. Those who did often wrote from several decades in retrospect and with rose tinted spectacles. However by dint of research of books, journals, reports and newspaper coverage a picture does begin to emerge of the New Zealand journalist of the pre war period.

The number of ex-newspapermen in Parliament<sup>38</sup> pointed to an interesting trend in New Zealand journalism in the early 1900s. There were many paths into journalism and many out of it. For older journalists a common path into the reporters' room was through the printing offices or the composing floor. Several notable journalists took this road into journalism. William Berry, who guided the destinies of the *Herald* as editor for 27 years, began life as a compositor on the *Scotsman* ("Death of William Berry", 1903) as did a later editor William Lane (Goldstone, 2003). Thomson Leys was apprenticed as a compositor on the *Daily Southern Cross* before it was absorbed into the *Herald* (Mogford, 2003). Henry Holland (O'Farrell, 2003) and Tom Paul (Olssen, 2003) began their working lives at the composing stone. So did Guy Scholefield before he joined the staff of the *New Zealand Times* in Wellington (Porter, 2007). Other men entered the reporters' room via the printing office. One of those was Martin Luther

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<sup>37</sup> Papers generally only had one sub editor in those days.

<sup>38</sup> When Jeb Bryne (1999) first examined the careers of 19th century New Zealand Premiers, he was surprised to note that at least six of the 15 had significant newspaper experience: William Fox, Edward William Stafford, Alfred Domett, Julius Vogel, John Hall and John Ballance. "Later I was to find that newspapermen holding lesser office on the national and provincial levels were also plentiful. Journalists, it was obvious, were firmly ensconced in the governing elite of New Zealand during the last century" (p. 61).

Reading, who became editor of the *Lyttelton Times*. He started his career as a printer's devil<sup>39</sup> in Napier ("Untitled", 1914c). In 1913 *The Observer* carried the obituary of a journalist well known on both sides of the Tasman - Peter Henry Robertson. Though born in Auckland he spent a large part of his working life in Australia as a law reporter, and music and drama critic. "Robbie" started in the machine room of the *New Zealand Herald* and became foreman machinist on Dunedin's *Evening Age* and eventually rose to become a reporter. ("Untitled", 1913e). George Main, "one of the best known and very oldest New Zealand journalist" ("Untitled", 1901c), in June 1901 as a member of the *Herald* staff, celebrated his 50th year of newspaper work ("Untitled", 1901d). "Geordie" was a "striking example of the fact, long recognised in the profession that the best journalists graduate from the printing room" ("Untitled", 1902d). Up to the age of 40 he was associated with the mechanical staff of the *Herald* before making the switch to journalism<sup>40</sup>. Of course at this time there were still those newspapermen who did everything themselves – the printing, composing, newsgathering, writing, canvassing and dispatching such as Herbert Pettit of the *Kawhia Settler* ("Untitled", 1905f).

Another route into the field of journalism was via other professions outside the newspaper industry altogether. Claude Jewell, an editor of *The Observer* and on the staff of the *New Zealand Free Lance* and the *New Zealand Times*, was once a law clerk in Thames. It was his descriptive letters to New Zealand papers from the South African war that won him "a congenial billet" on *The Observer* ("Untitled", 1907d). Godfrey Turner was another who studied law but left it for journalism and served his apprenticeship on *The Press* and the *Times* in Christchurch. (Lawlor, 1935, pp. 253-254). There was "Whang" McKenzie who started life as a schoolteacher but gave up and joined the *Otago Daily Times* in his early 20s. He began in the jobbing department and thence graduated to proof reading, sub editing until finally becoming sports editor and a renowned rugby commentator (Miller, 1967, p. 44). Also a teacher was Melbourne-born Charles Allan Marris who spent time as a clerk and a schoolteacher at Ballarat and Ipswich before eventually turning up at Wellington's *Evening Post* as a journalist (Lawlor, 1935, pp. 229-230; Scholefield, 1940, pp. 507-508). Tasmanian-born Gresley Lukin tried engineering, acting, and the civil service before turning to

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<sup>39</sup> An apprentice in a printing establishment.

<sup>40</sup> He wrote the booklet *The newspaper press of Auckland* when a member of the *New Zealand Herald* staff (Main, 1891). Main "died by his own hand" in July 1902 ("Untitled", 1902c).

journalism (Scholefield, 1940, pp. 507-508). William Lane began his working life as an office clerk (p. 481). William Pember Reeves was a barrister but turned to journalism and became editor of the *Lyttelton Times* and the weekly *Canterbury Times*. He was also an historian, poet, Parliamentarian and educationalist (Condliffe & Airey, 1935, p.265).

Some were enticed into journalism from farming. One of these was a young man who later became famous for inventing an early version of the teleprinter, Donald Murray. From between 1902-1906 his progress with his invention was followed avidly back in New Zealand (“Untitled”, 1902g; “Untitled”, 1903a; “Untitled”, 1904c; “Untitled”, 1905b; “Untitled”, 1906f).<sup>41</sup> Much of his work was carried out in Australia while he worked on the Press Gallery for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>42</sup> Another farmer was Sam Saunders, the editor of the *Lyttelton Times* for 23 years. “Like most journalists who count, he didn't begin journalism for a crust” (“Untitled”, 1914b). At the bottom of the ladder were the cadet reporters, some straight from school. Malcolm Ross, Alan Mulgan and Arthur Heighway were three of them. The latter joined the *Otago Daily Times* as an office boy in 1904 but “found his bent” increasingly toward the editorial side, so he acquired shorthand and joined the reporting staff four years later at the age of 20 (Heighway, 1979, p. 5).

Some journalists had little education and were largely self-taught. One such was R. W. Robson who was born in the bush, never attended school, but was taught his letters by his mother (Heighway, 1979, p. 10). He acquired shorthand and became a very good journalist, according to Heighway, and was responsible for establishing the *Pacific Island Monthly*. It is not clear just how much education Malcolm Ross had, possibly only until the family moved to Glenkenich. He was not recorded as having attended school there, although by this time he was nearly 17. What he was doing from then until his job on the *Otago Witness* is unknown. The claim he went to university is unsubstantiated.

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<sup>41</sup> In the 1920s Donald Murray's invention was being used by newspapers in New Zealand (Henderson, A. G., 1930, p.11).

<sup>42</sup> Alex Fraser, the Sydney representative of the United Press Association, believed he deserved some credit for the invention having been its originator. Apparently he and Murray had a falling out and it was the latter who gained the kudos for the new telegraphic printer (“Untitled”, 1903a).

**Figure 11 View of the reporters' room at the *Auckland Star* newspaper 1906.**

Few journalists had a tertiary education. Those who did included Ross's future wife, Forrest Grant. Examples of other reporters who had tertiary degrees were M. C. Keane, E.T. Gillon and J. P. Grossmann, who was on the *Auckland Star* for a period and described by Mulgan as a "clever chap" (Mulgan, 1958, p. 79). Some journalists took university papers in their spare time. For example, Heighway took papers such as constitutional history in his "teenage preparatory years" (Heighway, 1979, p. 5). Maybe this is what Malcolm Ross did as well but there is no record of him having done so in university archives.

**2:6 The literary journalist**

There was another type of man (and they were generally men) who was attracted to journalism, perhaps more out of the need to have a steady income and the chance to demonstrate their creative writing skills rather than any particular love of news reporting as such. These were the nascent poets, novelists and playwrights of the country who found little outlet for their talents outside the press. They were the final fruits of the flowerings of Bohemianism that saw its zenith in the 1860s and 1870s (Lloyd, 1985, p. 25).<sup>43</sup> One gets the impression that these men entered journalism reluctantly. Press work was not the first love of Charles Marter, for example. He spent some years on the stage before he "received the call from the other phase of Bohemianism – journalism" ("Untitled", 1905e). But like many of these men, for one reason or another, he "drifted" across the Tasman to become chief sub editor and principal drama critic for Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*. The eminent Frank Morton was seen as "the arch Bohemian". Morton was the "missioner to the heathen of respectability" (Lawlor, 1935, p. 235). Miller (1967) described him as the "last of the old Bohemians" and the office legend at the *Otago Daily Times* (p. 18). George Shaw, a witty member of the Press Gallery, died in 1903 and was eulogised by *The Observer* as "an out and out Bohemian" ("Untitled", 1903d). The spirit of Bohemianism obviously still lingered in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pat Lawlor (1935), for example, helped found the Bohemian Club in Wellington not long after he joined the *Evening Post* in the early 1900s (p. 21-22). Clem Lloyd (1985) claimed in his history of

<sup>43</sup> The term Bohemian as it applies to the arts denotes a person whose paramount interest is literary or artistic in nature. Thus the lifestyle of the Bohemian tends to differ dramatically from what might be considered established norms (What is a Bohemian? <http://home.swbell.net/worchel/define.htm>).

the Australian Journalists' Association, that despite its association with Bohemianism in the 1860s and 70s journalism was an increasingly respectable profession by the 1890s (p.25). The writer from *The Observer* rather wistfully it seems alluded to this change after attending the jubilee of the *New Zealand Herald*. Viewing the current crop of young journalists the writer said it made "a pen wielder of over 40 feel like a fossil of an antediluvian period". "For the newspaperman of today is juvenile, alert, physically vigorous and not the careless Bohemian dreamer he used to be" ("Untitled", 1913h). Whether the poets, novelists and playwrights who turned to journalism were "careless Bohemian dreamers" or not they still had to make a living and seemingly this was not an easy thing to do at this time, especially as freelancers. That is probably why so many of them made their way to Australia in the hope of better returns for their literary efforts. Will Lawson, for example, was a poet who landed a newspaper job on Sydney's *Evening News*, and soon after had a book of poems published ("Untitled", 1914b). Arthur Adams, the poet, novelist and journalist, did not stay long "harnessed to the wheel of journalism" at the *New Zealand Times*. After only six months as associate editor he went to Australia to write another novel (Lawlor, 1935, pp. 164-165). He still retained his journalistic links, however, acting as editor of the *Red Page* and *The Lone Hand* and also worked on the *Sydney Sun*. Dick Harris, a "most competent literary man and unassailably among the best three poets this country has", went from the *Wellington Mail* to Sydney ("Untitled", 1914a). Many others went to Australia to combine active journalism with novel or playwriting, or poetry including Jim Philp, a well-known journalist in the 1900s, formerly of Auckland but who went to Sydney and became a dramatist ("Untitled", 1901g). John Y. Birch, who was drama critic for the *Herald* and later went to the *New Zealand Times*, wrote plays. *The Observer* noted that he left the *Herald* for a "better and more highly paid position on the staff of the *New Zealand Times*, which, by the way, is the usual step in the direction of an Australian appointment" ("Untitled", 1905g). It does not appear as if Birch took that step, because two years later he was back again in "Grandma's maternal care" ("Untitled", 1907c). J. L. Kelly, at one time the editor of *The Observer* but in 1902 on the *New Zealand Times*, published a volume of poems ("Untitled", 1902f).

In his autobiography, Mulgan (1958) discussed the dearth of outlets for literary journalists at this time. There was little New Zealand demand for articles and stories. The *Auckland Star*, where Mulgan first began as a cadet, published hardly any contributed matter. One or two papers in the South, for example the *Otago Witness*,

encouraged local writers but the “pay was apt to be microscopic” (p. 84). Getting one’s name in print was considered to be sufficient reward. Only a handful of people were interested in local creative writing and criticism, said Mulgan.

The Sydney *Bulletin* was the chief mark for the freelance. It was unique in the world in its brand of pungent and irreverent comment. Primarily the *Bulletin* was a nursery of Australian nationalism and literature but it helped to give many of our young writers a start and fostered a New Zealand spirit. (Mulgan, 1958, p. 84)

By 1907 Guy Scholefield, then chief of staff of the *New Zealand Times* in Wellington, was rebelling against the type of news gathering that had become commonplace in New Zealand newsrooms. “News gathering went against the grain. I regretted there was so little demand for creative writing and viewed without enthusiasm the stultifying uniformity of a journalism which demanded factual chronicling and verbatim reporting” (Scholefield, n.d.). Pat Lawlor (1935) reported in his autobiography how the staidness of the New Zealand press weighed on the more creative journalists of the period (p. 176). He told of Eric Baume whose copy was considered by his sub editors as being “too bright, too atmospheric” and whom he advised that there was “only one thing to do and that was go to Sydney”. Another young journalist, Hector Bolitho, was also forced to go to Australia “because his worth was not recognised by his own country” (p.180). “New Zealand has editors who are in sympathy with writers but none who put heart into writers by paying them adequately. Dominion writers were in the tragic position of having no market worthy of the name in their own country” (p.233).

It was quite clear that Malcolm Ross was neither a “Bohemian dreamer” nor a literary journalist. Ross lived his life well within the norms of accepted social behaviour and indeed his life appears to have been directed towards total acceptance into genteel, middle class New Zealand society and higher if he could manage it. And as far as literary ambitions were concerned these seemed totally devoted to recording his own mountaineering exploits, working as a publicist for the Government in extolling the virtues of the New Zealand countryside and later chronicling his war time experiences. He did indulge in the occasional versifying and certainly his prose was often inclined to the poetic as evidenced by this extract from a review of some of Ross’s early writings from the *Otago Witness*.

Choosing a pretty nook on the high cliff, we sat down and watched and talked. And the while we waited and watched the shadows lengthened till the far-off west was glowing with the last long kiss of day. Majestic cloud forms banked themselves up about the western horizon, and down behind these, like a golden ball, the big sun slowly sank, while the distant hills were ablaze with gold, and the sky gorgeous with beautifully-graded tints of amber and gold, against which the dark promontory in the middle distance, with the trees in it, stood in a black bold relief that made the gorgeous colouring of the distant sky still the brighter. For a while the sun seemed lost — put out, as it were, by a great bank of inky cloud, — but a minute afterwards, irresistible, he pierced the fleecy-fringed cirro-stratus, and bathed the hills and tinted the clouds with a still greater glory. The tide was at its full, and the sunlight glittered in the calm waters streaming up from the distant promontory to the rocks at our feet in one broad, shimmering silver band. (“*The Witness* Christmas number”, 1888, p. 17)

There was one “praiseworthy effort to provide a medium for publication to writers who are essentially of the soil”, as the *Otago Witness* called it, which was launched in New Zealand in July 1889, the *Zealandia*, and edited by William Freeman Kitchen, editor of Dunedin’s *Globe* newspaper, and a man who was soon to have a very chequered and scandalous career in the colony.<sup>44</sup>

The magazines of Britain and America are so numerous, varied, excellent, and cheap that it is only by appealing to New Zealand sympathies that any magazine published in this colony can hope to live. On looking through the first number of “*Zealandia*” we find that this has been kept steadily before the editor and contributors. This being so, it gives us real pleasure to be able to say that from a literary point of view the contents of the magazine are very creditable to the colony. (“*Zealandia*”, 1889, p. 22)

Ross was an inaugural contributor to *Zealandia* with a description of some of the country’s natural wonders. “He seems to have an eye for what is telling in a landscape, and his style of treatment hovers on the edge of poetic prose” (“*Zealandia*”, 1889). The

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<sup>44</sup>Kitchen resigned as editor and managing director of the *Globe* in August 1891 and was listed as having died in May 1893 at the age of 30 in Tasmania. He was then discovered a short time later back in Dunedin under an assumed name and claiming to be the husband of an 18-year-old clairvoyant. Kitchen was later arrested for desertion of his wife, Annie, but the case fell through. Annie obtained a divorce from him on the grounds of adultery and bigamy (Back from the dead, 1893; Divorce court, 1893). Kitchen was said to have then left for America as a member of a theatrical group (“Untitled”, 1893). However his name cropped up again in 1897 when the editor of the Sydney *Truth* (and later founder of the *New Zealand Truth*) was charged with defamation for calling Kitchen, among other things, a bigamist. Kitchen committed suicide in December 1897 in Sydney, some said as a result of *Truth*’s comments (“Local and general news”, 1897).

first issue of the publication - “a purely New Zealand literary magazine”- was reviewed by the *Taranaki Herald*.

It promises well, though there are points in the general “make-up” that require attention, and that at once. Among the contributions is a poem by Mr Bracken, humorous and well worth reading, a descriptive article on the southern lakes by Mr Malcolm Ross, one of the cleverest hands on the staff of the Otago Daily Times, a complete tale by Mr W. P. Reeves, M.H.R., which in itself is worth the money charged (sixpence) for the number, and a paper by the Rev Rutherford Waddell, a Presbyterian Minister, on “Social Responsibilities,” in which he out-does Henry George, who is " not sufficiently Radical " for him. There is good value for the money in the first number, and we hope to see this little monthly develop into a permanent and creditable magazine. (“Untitled”, 1889b, p. 2)

It appears the magazine ran for 12 issues and stopped after the final issue in June 1890.

## **2:7 Australia – the land of opportunity**

It was not just the literary journalists who saw Australia as a land of opportunity. There was a steady stream of New Zealand reporters who headed across the Tasman in the early 1900s. *The Observer* gives a hint of why this migration was happening in such large numbers from an Auckland perspective.

It has been a characteristic policy with the Auckland daily papers for years past to train journalists for the press of the South and Australian colonies. When a man is worth a decent salary, he is compelled to go abroad to get it and the newspaper that trained him commences again on fresh and cheap material. (“Untitled”, 1905g, p. 4)

In a later issue it observed how “singular” it was that so many Auckland trained journalists had to go elsewhere “to win positions worth having”. “The best billet on the local staffs are generally reserved for imported talent” (“Untitled”, 1905d). In 1906 Ernest Hoben, in an article on New Zealanders in the Commonwealth of Australia, named at least 15 journalists with New Zealand training currently on the staffs of Sydney newspapers, whose rank varied from editor and leader writer to reporter. There were also other pressmen in other parts of Australia. “The fact is that many of the daily newspaper offices here are training grounds for men who have to go elsewhere in order to get salaries commensurate with their abilities. New Zealanders are more appreciated in Australia than at home” (“Untitled”, 1906a). Hoben himself was that “energetic

pressman who engineered the NZ Rugby Union into existence” in 1891 and left for Australia to become assistant editor of the *Sydney Mail* (“Untitled”, 1903c).

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* appeared to be the most popular destination for New Zealand journalists. “The *Telegraph* seems amazingly fond of New Zealand scribblers and almost the whole of the staff has come from this hotbed of shorthand” (“Untitled”, 1913c). The literary staff was largely recruited from Wellington newspapers. Among the journalists was theatrical critic, Pat Nolan, who began his newspaper career as a writer on the *New Zealand Herald* (“Untitled”, 1907a). Thomas R. Roydhouse was “one of the most distinguished of the New Zealand band or pressmen who are helping to lengthen the columns of the Sydney metropolitan press” (“Untitled”, 1910a).

There were many journalists, of course, who resisted the blandishments of the Australian press. Malcolm Ross was one of them. He was obviously making enough money with all his various ventures not to be obliged to seek wealth or job satisfaction elsewhere. He also had a working wife who would have been contributing to the family bank balance quite healthily. Another was Martin Reading of the *Lyttelton Times*. “Unlike a large number of senior men in the profession he has resolutely refused to listen to the voice of the Australian charmer” (“Untitled”, 1914b). Whether journalists stayed in New Zealand or made the trip across the Tasman there was considerable mobility amongst journalists within New Zealand at this time as well. On yet another drift of journalists *The Observer* commented in 1906:

Twas ever thus with the local papers. Sooner or later their most capable men slip away to other parts of the colony where the worth of a journalist is appraised at a higher figure than by the Auckland proprietaries and the conditions of employment are more tolerable. Either that or they find private ventures or Government billets more attractive than press work as it is carried on here. (“Untitled”, 1906h, p. 5)

Those Government billets were numerous too, and Malcolm Ross seemed able to successfully secure some of them. “What with labour journals and mining journals and the editing of various state publications ... the Government has quite a number of journalistic billets in their gift nowadays” (Lloyd, 1985, p. 30). Patrick Galvin, for example, was a New Zealand and Australian journalist and editor, in 1905, of *NZ Mines Record*, the official journal of the Mines Department. He had the distinction of being a close friend of Thomas Bracken, the author of the New Zealand national anthem

(“Untitled”, 1905a). The Government Tourist Department also welcomed journalists; Malcolm Ross wrote occasionally for it and James Cowan was employed by it. Hansard reporting was another lucrative position for a journalist – in Australia as well. “Hansard writers were rather better paid than newspaper journalists and parliamentary reporting for the official Hansard offered one of the few career opportunities outside newspapers” (Lloyd, 1985, p. 30). Grattan Grey had received £400 when he was Hansard chief reporter (“Despotic tyranny”, 1900). A further Government “billet” was to be added later with the post of official war correspondent in World War I. Malcolm Ross, the New Zealand journalist to be appointed to this position, received £450 plus expenses (“Supply: Department of Internal Affairs”, 1917). His counterpart in Australia, Charles Bean, received £600 plus his captain’s pay and perks (“Appointment of war correspondent”, 1915).

## 2:8 Duties of a pre-war reporter

It is not easy to ascertain what was expected of pre-war journalists but by reading the papers of the time and finding some personal reminiscences it is possible to gain some idea of the journalists’ routine and the expectations of them. Here is one such example from July 21, 1900 of the *New Zealand Free Lance* entitled *Reporters and reporting*.

**Figure 12 Group portrait of the literary staff of the *Dominion* newspaper, Wellington, in about 1910. (Front row) fourth from the left, M. C. Keane (assistant editor) and third from the right C. W. Earle (editor in chief).**

“By one of them”:

The reporter's profession is one of the noblest. He must be trustworthy, he must be vigilant, he must be quick of apprehension, he must be nimble of finger and sharp of eye and he must always be ready to take a drink when offered - he rarely has sufficient coin to offer one. The reporter's duties are multifarious. He commences his morning by interviewing a decomposed corpse; passes his midday hours with the fallals and furbelows of a bride and her bridesmaids' dresses; smells but does not taste the luscious food for the dinner for some patriot at dusk; spends his evenings recording, to him, utterances of some seeker after popular favour; undresses with the fire bells ringing in his ears; is closing his second eye in sleep when he remembers that he has omitted some item of news which the opposition paper has got; jumps up again and goes to the office, only to be sworn at by the sub-editor for not having his copy in on time. (“Reporters and reporting”, 1900, p.18)

James Hutchison (n.d.) had rather a similar view. He got his first reporting job on the *Evening Herald*, a small struggling Dunedin paper connected with Thomas Bracken. The reporting staff was “small and weak but members received an excellent all round training”.

They had to turn their hands to anything and everything. There was no specialist amongst them. The assignments made for them covered the whole gamut of life in the city and suburbs. It was expected of the reporter that he should with equal readiness describe a cattle show and discuss a theatrical first night, that he should attend a meeting of the Presbytery in the morning, express a learned judgement about a football match in the afternoon and report a meeting of the city council in the evening, that he should profess a familiarity with the exhibits at a flower-show and that he should be prepared to represent his paper at an execution and woe betide him if and when he blundered. To miss the points of a prize pig was only one degree less fatal than to find a flaw in a pianoforte recital. Generally we may be said to have been credited with a knowledge and a versatility greater than we possessed. (Hutchison, J., n.d.)

Cadet reporters had to cover just about everything and there was not much time to specialise in any particular area. “If you were ignorant, you had to learn,” said Alan Mulgan (Mulgan, 1958, p. 75). There was no external training for journalism. Fred Miller (1967) said cadets were given church bazaars, annual meetings, sports clubs, “safe routine jobs” and sometimes they accompanied senior reporters on their rounds (p. 22). He wrote about the *Otago Daily Times* of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and said even then there were no typewriters and everything had to be written by hand. Reporters had to write legibly and if the sub editor couldn't make sense of their copy they were called over and “addressed in terms that left no room for doubt” (p. 42). Then there were the cables in their often unfathomable language which had to be translated, the missing words filled in and composite ones expanded to make sense. This was arduous, time wasting work, said Miller (p. 42). John Bell Thomson (1977) recalled a comment made to him as a junior reporter by a senior sub editor which highlighted for him what was required of a young journalist. “You have a future in the game if you work hard and learn enough shorthand to help you report a rowdy discussion accurately – but your copy does not cause me much trouble – and you can SPELL!” (p. 56).

This was an age when shorthand was mandatory and a man was judged and promoted solely on his skill as a note taker. Arthur Heighway (1979) told of his success with

shorthand. He realised that if he wanted to get into reporting he had to acquire shorthand. He did this

first through a short course at night school and then by speed practice through Mother reading to me prior to tests. I found I was blessed with a speedy hand which was to prove a great factor in future progress. (Heighway, 1979, p. 5)

Under tests he managed to reach an astounding 220 words a minute.<sup>45</sup> Heighway described an assignment he went on with Don Cameron, one of the senior reporters. The two men were to report on a pre-session policy speech by Sir Joseph Ward in Invercargill on a Saturday evening.

Ward spoke for 100 minutes - this was in the days before handouts; Sir Joseph, a very fast speaker, always spoke extempore from brief notes. We agreed, Don Cameron and I, to each take a full note for we had all Sunday in which to transcribe. We typed continuously throughout Sunday and put the copy on the wire that evening. The tally was 19,000 words, giving a substantial average of 190 words a minute. That was real reporting. (Heighway, 1979, p. 9)

But shorthand was a two edged sword for a reporter, according to Miller. “If he becomes a slave to it and places no reliance on his memory or his interpretative writing he is only a stenographer” (p. 22). He also remembered Don Cameron, who he described as “a literary tape recorder” who helped build the *Otago Daily Time*’s reputation for accuracy. “He was the product of his age in New Zealand journalism, but by today’s standards he would never hold a job. *The Times* was accurate, all right, but by heaven it was dull” (p. 25). There is no information to say whether Malcolm Ross had shorthand but to have got as far as he did it seems likely he did command this ability. By learning shorthand many men who would otherwise not have got a job as a reporter did so. One such was Peter Robertson who “taught himself shorthand, developed his literary faculty and rose from the machine room to grip the reporter’s pencil”(“Untitled”, 1913f). Not everybody used the Pitmans shorthand system. Frank Hyde, who was associated with the *Wellington Press*, the *Winton Record* and in 1906 bought the *Whangarei Advocate*<sup>46</sup> was one of the few journalists who chose to use Graham’s, an American variant of Pitmans (“Untitled”, 1906b).

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<sup>45</sup> AUT University journalism students must attain 80 words a minute under test.

<sup>46</sup> Hyde was at one time private secretary to Sir Joseph Ward (“Untitled”, 1906b).

Heighway (1979) reckoned he had “a rattling good all-round experience” in his couple of years on the *Otago Daily Times* with major interviews and reports of important meetings (p. 7). When the English rugby team visited Dunedin in 1908 he helped the sporting writer report it by sitting in the open on the touch line and typing his dictation. He reported an address by Ernest Shackelton after his famous boat journey from South Georgia following the wrecking of his vessel, and wrote up many reports on Sir Truby King, “a name famous in child welfare for his special dietary programme and a notable figure in Otago” (p. 9). As medical superintendent of the Seacliff Mental Hospital, King was just beginning his “expository programme” in a series of lectures.

I was frequently assigned to report him and I have to say that he was exemplary in seeing that his statements were accurately recorded. He insisted on seeing “copy” of his addresses before publication and waited patiently to that end. (Heighway, 1979, p. 9)

Journalists rarely if ever got their work bylined and this became a bone of contention as the decades progressed. As late as 1915 Grattan Grey was speaking persuasively of the need for bylines before the Commonwealth Electoral Commission in Melbourne. In the course of his evidence he stated that he was in favour of the French system of signed articles in the press (“Journalists should have bylines”, 1915).

Such articles would improve the tone of journalism, and give a status to journalists that they did not have at present. Journalists who could prove their ability would get credit for their work. They would write with a greater sense of responsibility; their work would be of the very best, and the public would be protected to a greater extent than under the system of anonymity. (“Journalists should have bylines”, 1915, p.4)

He was also in favour of all letters to the editors, review, and criticisms being signed. Anonymity made it “impossible for an individual journalist to gain any public recognition as superior in his occupation,” noted Patrick Day (1990, p. 169). This denied him bargaining power with his employer, ensured low prices for his work and stifled individuality. It was not unheard of for some journalists to get a byline. Tom Paul and A. H. Grinling did (Miller, 1967, p. 29). In 1905 the *Thames Advertiser* “struck out on a new journalistic line” by publishing signed articles (“Untitled”, 1905c). Malcolm Ross stood out for the regularity with which he had his work attributed to him specifically. So he certainly gained public recognition and he was able to negotiate good rates of pay for his work. However, whether this made him “superior in his occupation”

seemed to be strongly resisted by some of his colleagues. As Hull noted earlier there was great sensitivity around the idea that any individual and Ross in particular, might be superior to others. By having a byline, also Ross was clearly visible and therefore open to criticism, unlike those who used sobriquets.

Many ethical issues arose for journalists in the pre war years and helped to set precedents which are still followed today. For example, in 1909 *The Observer* recounted the story of an Auckland reporter who gained admission by false pretences to a meeting which was not open to the press and then reported the meeting. The reporter used labourer's clothes to attend a workers' meeting. The Wellington branch of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists condemned the action of the reporter much to the annoyance of the Auckland branch, which asked Wellington to withdraw the resolution condemning the action. The Wellington branch refused and was backed up by the council of the institute saying it should "uphold the status of journalism which was prejudiced by the action complained of" ("Untitled", 1909e).

Two separate cases, one in 1894 and one in 1901 highlight a practice that is also a modern day phenomenon, that of journalists refusing to reveal their sources. The first case involved Ernest Hoben, then a reporter on the *Evening Post*, and his editor E. T. Gillon who between them were "responsible for one of the biggest press sensations that have taken place in New Zealand" ("Untitled", 1903c). According to *The Observer* it was Hoben who discovered and published the fact that Colonel Fox, the commandant of the New Zealand forces, had quarrelled with the Ballance Ministry and subsequently resigned,<sup>47</sup> "when it was jealously hugged by Ministers to their breasts as a State secret". The Government was furious and set up a Royal Commission to investigate the leak, but though it sat for weeks in various parts of the colony its labours were in vain. Hoben and Gillon were summoned to give evidence before the commission, but declined to go and refused to disclose the source of the information. "I hold this to be a point of journalistic honour from which no departure is possible," Gillon is reported as saying (Verry, 1993). James Hutchison (n.d.) recalled the case in his unpublished memoirs. The premature disclosure of the contents of Fox's report "provided for a time a first-class political sensation". Hutchison detailed the chain of events which lead to the newspaper report as he did also for the second example of journalistic ethics.

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<sup>47</sup> Fox had compiled a highly controversial report on the country's volunteer forces ("Two honourable journalists", 1897).

This second case involved that prince of scoops, Albert Cohen. As a member of the Press Gallery Cohen was accused of breach of privilege in 1901 when he published the evidence from a hearing of the Goldfields and Mines Committee before it was laid before the House (“Untitled”, 1901e). According to Hutchison (n.d.) it was a breach of parliamentary privilege to publish the report of a committee before it had been presented to the House which appointed the committee “but the press is rather contemptuous of the authority of Parliament when that august body proposes to assert its privileges”. Cohen had asked an MP friend for an advance copy. In commenting on Cohen’s actions *The Observer* said that when questioned concerning the source of his information Cohen “like the honourable pressman that he is, declined to disclose” (“Untitled”, 1901e). “By his cleverness in obtaining and publishing the evidence...he rendered valuable service to the public whom he serves” (“Untitled”, 1901f).

There was one journalist who was not so lucky and who was unable to escape the consequences of his actions. It occurred during New Zealand’s involvement in the South African war. In 1900 Grattan Grey, the chief of the Hansard reporting staff, was dismissed by the Government for pro-Boer sentiments he expressed in a letter to the *New York Times*. *The Observer* was almost apoplectic in its denunciation of the Government’s action in terminating Grey’s appointment (“Untitled”, 1900a). An *Observer* leader writer called the dismissal “an act of national shame...utterly opposed to the democratic principles of our age and society” and a “violation of the right of free speech and a gross interference with his [Grey’s] personal liberty” (“Despotic tyranny”, 1900). Other newspapers agreed. The Grattan Grey Testimonial Committee personally thanked the editors of *The Observer*, *Evening Post*, *The Press*, *Waimate Times*, *New Zealand Free Lance*, *Evening Standard*, *Sydney Bulletin* and *Sydney Truth* for their “strenuous advocacy of freedom of thought and speech and the maintenance of the liberties of the people” (“Untitled”, 1900b). Their efforts were for nought; the Government did not change its mind and Grattan Grey departed for Australia, wrote books and edited various newspapers there and did not set foot again in New Zealand for another eight years (“Untitled”, 1912d).

## 2:9 Libel

A bone of contention for New Zealand journalists was the country’s libel laws. The first dozen or so years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw journalists crying out for a change in

these regulations. When the Libel Bill No 4 was tabled in Parliament late in 1900 much discussion and dissension within newspaper ranks followed. The Libel Bill “would be the death knell of freedom of speech in this colony”, claimed *The Observer* (“Freedom of speech - Mr Seddon's device to muzzle the press”, 1901). “It gives no privilege whatever to the press. Hitherto, a free interpretation of the law is that a newspaper was entitled to reasonable latitude in criticism so long as the matter was true, without malice and for the public good.” The paper said that the “greatest political abuses might occur in the government of a country but under Mr Seddon's law not a newspaper would dare open its lips in disapproval or condemnation”. *The Observer* leader said the newspapers needed to be fearless and independent in exposing abuses. Later in the year the paper continued to inveigh against the libel laws, and in so doing illuminated current thinking about the freedom of the press in New Zealand.

If Mr Seddon succeeds in carrying his new Libel Bill, it will be more dangerous to publish a newspaper in New Zealand than in Russia and wholly out of the question to issue a journal containing criticism or comment of any kind whatever. The bill fairly bristles with penal clauses. Mr Seddon has taken freedom of speech by the throat and with the aid of the criminal law and prison degradation is going to throttle it. (“Freedom of speech - Mr Seddon throttles it”, 1901, p. 2)

The leader writer saw the move as an attack upon the rights of the people, “which have been to some extent at least championed by the press”.

Take away that right of criticism, this freedom of speech, and ruffianism and villainy in high and low places, in public and private life, will stalk unchallenged through the land. It is the complaint of the public now that the press is not independent, that it will not attack abuses and that it is servile and time serving. The present libel law penalises the independent journalist and protects the ruffian. (“Freedom of speech - Mr Seddon throttles it”, 1901, p. 2)

The paper was ecstatic a year later when a journalist, W. T. Hornsby, “struck a blow for the liberty of the press” in Carterton, when, on being sued for libel, he refused to divulge the name of the writer of a letter to the editor. His lawyer said the Supreme Court had held that a journalist could not be compelled to reveal the name of the writer (“Untitled”, 1902a). In 1902 the New Zealand Institute of Journalists published an address given by E. F. Allan (1902) on July 19 to the Wellington branch of the organisation on journalism and the law of libel in an effort to clarify the issues.

Introducing the topic, Allan commented that with a few exceptions, the law of libel in the country was much the same in 1902 as it was in England in 1826. “As pressmen and as New Zealanders, we cannot but regret that this colony should have lagged behind in securing the freedom of the press”. One of the reasons put forward by *The Observer* to explain its opposition to the current libel laws was that “it is the complaint of the public now that the press is not independent, that it will not attack abuses and that it is servile and time serving” (“Freedom of speech - Mr Seddon throttles it”, 1901).

Newspapers were not making any headway with regards to the libel laws as evidenced when the president of the New Zealand Institute of Journalists, Mark Cohen, wrote in 1903 to the United Press Association requesting that the organisation take up the cudgels against the Libel Bill. The UPA passed that task on to the National Proprietors Association (Sanders, 1979, p. 35). Obviously nothing much was achieved because in 1907 *The Observer* was still complaining about the laws, this time in response to a libel action against Robert Way of the union weekly *Worker*. “Respectable journalists” of this country, it was noted, had been trying to secure an amendment of the libel laws, bringing them into line with the “more liberal and less drastic laws of England” (“A brutal libel”, 1907). It was apparent that Way was not numbered among those considered respectable by *The Observer*.<sup>48</sup> What was particularly galling for practising journalists concerned about the libel laws was that there were as many as 14 Parliamentarians who were journalists or proprietors who might have been expected to be sympathetic to this desire for change (“Untitled”, 1909c).

Inter-newspaper rivalries often spilled over into the courts in libel actions. One notable spat occurred in 1909 between Melbourne-born C. N. Baeyertz, the publisher of the musical and artistic monthly *The Triad* and M. C. Keane, the editor of Wellington’s *The Dominion*. They were “snarling at each other” with Keane instituting libel proceedings because of some offensive remarks made by Baeyertz (“Untitled”, 1909d). The latter was forced to apologise but this was neither the first nor the last time the cantankerous Baeyertz faced the courts for similar cause. *The Observer* also ended up in court for contempt in 1913 after publishing cartoons in September of a local magistrate. The cartoonist, William Blomfield, and proprietor, W. J. Geddis, were tried in Wellington but the court found in their favour. The paper published a full outline of the court

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<sup>48</sup> Way, a journalist who had attended the University of Queensland without graduating, arrived in New Zealand from Australia in 1900. He was active in union affairs in Auckland before World War I (Gustafson, 1980, p. 169).

proceedings (“Untitled”, 1913g; 1913j). Two rival Croatian newspapers started up in Auckland in mid 1899, the *Bratska Slaga* and the *Danica*, and before long the editors were “slanging each other” and taking each other to court. The former was no longer publishing in July of that year (“Untitled”, 1899f). Malcolm Ross himself had an altercation with the *Dunedin Star* in 1903 over comments which the paper published about a Ross cable to the *London Times* on the subject of the Auckland cabinet makers’ dispute. “The *Star* heavily bludgeoned his statements and at the same time imputed motives” (Mulgan, 1958, p. 74). The *Star* had to withdraw and apologise to Ross. Papers got sued on a regular basis as well, by members of the community. For example, in 1899 Wesley Spragg failed in a bid to sue the *Waikato Times* for “commenting rather adversely on the quality of his milk, butter and cheese and his style of doing business” (“Pars about people”, 1899e).

## 2:10 Conditions of work

As well as having to contend with restrictive libel laws, journalists in the pre-war years were also facing difficult and often oppressive working conditions. Both Mulgan and Miller, as already stated, started as cadet reporters, the former at the *Otago Daily Times* and the latter at the *Auckland Star*, and they wrote a little about their working conditions and the atmosphere in the newsroom. The cadets learned from their seniors to whom they owed obedience, respect and the title “Mister”. Mulgan said when he started at the *Star* in 1900 the paternal attitude was pretty general in the newspaper world of the time (p. 74). Miller’s uncle was unimpressed with his nephew’s chosen profession. His view: “Journalists as a class were the most disreputable section of the community, most were dissolute drunkards” (p. 13). Miller avoided debating that opinion but did record, although in an admiring sort of way, various alcohol-induced escapades of some journalists. Geoff Sparrow (1960) was a little more forthright when discussing Australian journalists at the time. “Journalists had the reputation of being hard drinkers. Intoxicants were often taken as an escape from the long hours of wearying mental effort” (p.19). It was accepted practice that reporters were never off duty “even when asleep”. They were lucky to get one half day off a week. There was “much that was disagreeable” about the job and “much of it was boring” (Mulgan, 1958, p.75). Again Sparrow (1960) saw the conditions rather more trenchantly. “Journalism in those days was politely called a profession, but in fact, it was little better than a miserably-paid and sweated trade” (p.14). “His pay was pitifully inadequate, his hours of work almost

intolerable” (p.16). The work was varied and there was not much leisure though more on an evening paper than the morning ones (p.68). When Mulgan (1958) went to *The Press* his day was hectic. He started at 7-8am and worked until 2am or later and was lucky to be in bed by 4am. He often worked through without a break, eating at his desk when he could. This regimen lasted 11 years (p. 86). Heighway (1979) recorded a rather similar scenario when sent on an assignment to cover the grounding of a passenger vessel, the *Waikare*, on a summer excursion to the Milford Sounds in 1910. He got a call at midnight to catch the 8am train to Bluff to report the rescue of the passengers. He reached Bluff at 2.30pm and waited up all night until 6am the next morning when the rescued passengers arrived. He got his story, went back to Dunedin arriving at 2.30pm, sat down at his typewriter and typed steadily until 10pm when he handed in the full length story of about four and a half columns. He received a bonus of £1 for his work (pp. 9-10).

When talking about the attributes of a good journalist, J. L. Kelly (1900) showed some understanding of why some reporters did not rise to any great heights in their job.

The general tendency, I should say, is for the long years of routine drudgery for twelve to sixteen hours daily, to sink a reporter into a rut, to crush out his originality and individuality and thus bar his way to the top of his profession. (Kelly, 1900)

Percy Freeth, in delivering a paper to the Wellington branch of the NZ Institute of Journalists in 1900, had this to say about working conditions for journalists:

Sweating is not unknown in the profession here, and it is notorious that the less opulent proprietors are not always the greatest offenders. There are journalists in some cities working for less than coal-lumpers' wages. These men are supposed to 'keep up appearances', to be well dressed, to live – necessitating high rents – in close proximity to their offices, to respond to the exceptional calls made upon their benevolence, to act generously in regard to the quid pro quo, and to preserve the status and appearance of gentlemen. The bulk of them succeed, God – and the good housewives, whom a quick prescience enables them to achieve – knows how, but it is a hand to mouth business from first to last. (Freeth, 1900).

When describing his conditions of work Miller expressed amazement that while George Fenwick and the *Otago Daily Times* crusaded on various Otago unions' behalf, the proprietor remained oblivious to the fact that his own reporters were working seven

days a week (p. 17). Editor Hutchison (n.d.) seemed rather ambivalent about his conditions at the *Otago Daily Times*.

The life of a reporter was very much more strenuous then than it was after the members of the newspaper staffs abandoning their calling as a profession for that of a trade, formed themselves into unions of workers and sought the benefit of industrial awards, My salary was, at the highest, never equal to even a half of the salary received, at the present time of writing, by reporters holding positions corresponding to the rank which I occupied, and my hours of work must have been double those that are now thought to be as long as any reporter should be kept on duty. There was no 40-hour week or anything like it. I cannot say that I felt a sense of hardship, though it was very rarely that I had a night to myself and though my circumstances forbade anything but a modest livelihood. (Hutchison, n.d.)

Rumblings in his newsroom, nevertheless, started in 1904 when the reporters expressed their dissatisfaction with the low salaries and long hours of work. Nothing much was done about it then ("Board of directors minute book", 1901-08). Two years later Fenwick reported to the board of directors that there was a general movement afoot among the reporters and others on the literary staffs of the principal New Zealand papers for increased remuneration, "the feeling being somewhat widespread that the present rates of pay were inadequate". He acknowledged that the salaries of the reporting staff on the *Otago Daily Times* were certainly low compared with papers of similar standing ("Board of directors minute book", 1908-1917). In December 1909 Fenwick tabled a comparison of literary staff and salaries of various New Zealand newspapers as at December 1 before his board of directors. The table showed that the *Otago Daily Times* staff earned on average a good £1 - £2 less a week than their colleagues at *The Dominion*, *Evening Post*, *The Press* and *The Lyttelton Times*.<sup>49</sup> As a comparison it is interesting to note what the remuneration was for teachers at the time. In 1901, as Parliament was debating teachers' salaries, it was recorded that the average annual salary for teachers was £99 although it differed throughout the colony. In the Railway Department the average salary was £101, in the Post and Telegraph Department £124, in the Customs Department £198 ("School teachers' salaries", 1901). In 1892 MPs under the Payment of Members Act were paid £240. ("Development of MP salaries and allowances", 2008). This was an annual sum in lieu of an allowance.

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<sup>49</sup> There were no figures for the northern papers such as the *New Zealand Herald* or the *Auckland Star*.

Senior journalists, therefore, were paid about on a par with MPs but without the long session breaks the parliamentarians received.

In 1911 the reporting staff of the *Otago Daily Times* was once again complaining about being overworked (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917). But it was not until 1913 that something was done about the state of southern journalism. It does seem strange with so much union activity being reported in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that New Zealand journalists took so long to organise. Sparrow (1960) had an answer to this when discussing Australian unionisation. “It was not easy to convince men of individualistic tendencies, personal ambition and Bohemian traits that a spirit of co-operation and mutual reliance was their only means of salvation from an economic thralldom” (p.14).

## **2:11 Co-operation among journalists**

Before unionism the country’s journalists had established an organisation to cater to their needs. The New Zealand Institute of Journalists (NZIJ) was established in 1892 and was modelled on the British Institute of Journalists (Elsaka, 2004). It was then incorporated under the New Zealand Institute of Journalists Act in 1895 (“New Zealand Institute of Journalists Act 1895”, 1895).<sup>50</sup> The bill did not have an easy passage through Parliament (“Institute of Journalists”, 1895). In 1893 the bill passed the Legislative Council but was defeated in the House. During 1894 it never got a second reading. In July 1895 it finally was sent for the third reading in August after which it passed into law. There was dissension among parliamentarians, as there was among journalists themselves, about the status of journalism. The debate was whether journalism was a profession, a craft or a trade. An ex-journalist MP, A. W. Hogg, contended during the third reading in July 1895, that journalists were seen by their abilities and “not in consequence of any diploma or examination by a board of professors which they had passed” (“Institute of Journalists”, 1895). William Hutchison,<sup>51</sup> another ex-journalist, claimed journalists like poets were born and not made. (This point of view was reiterated by J. L. Kelly, the president of the NZ Institute of Journalists in a paper given to the Wellington branch in 1900. He agreed that a

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<sup>50</sup> Malcolm Ross had been a member of the NZ Institute of Journalists for some years. In 1912 his son Noel was also a member (“Untitled”, 1912a).

<sup>51</sup> Father of James Hutchison, who became editor of the *Otago Daily Times* in 1909.

journalist was born not made. “This is another way of saying that heredity plays a greater part than environment and training in the making of the successful newspaper reporter and writer,” he said (Kelly, 1900). Another MP, J. A. Miller, during the debate on the bill, asked whether journalists were professionals or workingmen who might be better off registering as a trade union “unless they were prevented by false pride” (“Institute of Journalists”, 1895).<sup>52</sup> But as James Allan said the objective of the bill was to raise the status of journalism. It was a moot point whether this occurred. The institute by the early 1900s seemed moribund. According to Mulgan (1958) the Institute of Journalists did nothing to improve conditions for journalists largely because the inclusion of editors and proprietors “fatally cramped its style” (p. 83). The institute was overtaken eventually by the activities of the New Zealand Journalists’ Association established out of Wellington in 1912.

Canterbury journalists attempted to unionise at the beginning of the century but this had failed by 1908 through apathy and rumours that dismissal awaited any ardent unionists (NZPA, 1962, p. 17). *The Observer* only ever obliquely referred to journalist conditions and the union movement. In 1902 it noted that wages had gone up for some and hours shortened. “However certainly there are some classes of unorganised labour, such as the eminently respectable but underpaid quill driver, which gain no compensating benefits from these changes in economic condition” (“An interesting problem”, 1902) In 1904 the paper offered a reason why journalists might not be interested in organising.

With the teachers and the journalists, for example, an imaginary professional dignity forbids it. The idea of forming a mere union is repugnant to their fine feelings. They must have institutes that hold solemn conclaves, and talk about upholding the traditions of their craft. And in straining after the shadow of professional dignity they lose the bone of increased emolument which their less toney trades neighbour triumphantly carries off. The consequence is that in these shabby genteel walks of life men of ability and education are being sweated for either the enrichment of firms already well endowed or for services to the public that ought to be remunerated handsomely. (“Cost of living”, 1904, p. 2)

In the writer’s view, these were the days of combination for material advantage and the people who stood aloof from that system were always in danger of being crushed. It was not long after the demise of the incipient Canterbury Journalists Union that unionism among Australian journalists was accomplished. The Australian Journalists’ Association

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<sup>52</sup> In 1899 Malcolm Ross moved that the NZ Institute of Journalists be registered under the Industrial, Conciliation & Arbitration Act but the motion was defeated ( “Position today”, 1911).

was launched in December 1910. Grattan Grey was a foundation member (Sparrow, 1960, p.35). “There is little doubt that it was the experience gained by Dominion journalists while on holiday in Sydney that directed the steps that subsequently led to the formation of the NZJA in 1912,” according to the official history of the NZ Journalists’ Association (NZJA, 1933, p.12). Australian unionists gave impetus to their New Zealand colleagues in their efforts to unionise. The second attempt at unionisation came out of Wellington. Journalists, such as J. J. Grealish, Emil Schwabe, E. V. Hall and John Hardcastle, who all went to work in Australia at one time or another, observed “how lusty was the newly-born Australian union” (NZJA, 1962, p. 18). After a conference in Wellington, which decided Auckland would be the headquarters, the organisation was registered as the NZ Journalists’ Industrial Association. Branches were established in the main centres but not without difficulty. Canterbury journalists were forced to go to the Arbitration Court because of employer antagonism – the president and vice president of the National Proprietors Association were based in Christchurch (“Journalists’ dispute”, 1913a; 1913b). Employers claimed unionism for journalists was against the public interest (“Journalists’ dispute”, 1913b; NZJA, 1962, p. 20). This action by the Canterbury journalists was said to be a world first of its kind (NZJA, 1962, p. 21). Journalists in the Otago union and on the *Otago Daily Times*, for example, were all sacked but were rehired after adverse publicity in the opposition daily (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917; NZJA, 1933, p.48). It is interesting to compare the Australian Journalists’ Association Award that came into effect in January 1912, with the award achieved by Canterbury journalists in June 1913. Senior reporters under the Australian award received £7 on morning papers and £6 on evening papers (Sparrow, 1960, p.54). Senior Canterbury journalists received £5.15, generals, £5, juniors, £3.10 and cadets, £1.5- £2.5 (“Journalists’ dispute”, 1913b; NZJA, 1933, pp. 46-47). Where the Australians had three weeks holiday, Canterbury journalists had two weeks. The agreement between the *Otago Daily Times* and the Otago branch of the union was rather different. In December 1913 agreement was reached between the Otago papers and the union. Minimum salaries were instituted at £5.10 for senior journalists and £4.15 for general reporters (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917). The proportion of seniors in a staff of 10 was two, of general reporters, five and of junior reporters, two. Working hours were not fixed at a certain number a week but provision was made for time off and preference was to be given to members of the union when hiring. The cost was £700 more a year to the *Otago Daily Times*, reported

Fenwick to his board. Two senior reporters moved up from £4.10 to £5.10 (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917).

After unionisation the New Zealanders continued to receive encouragement from across the Tasman. National conferences of the association received letters of support from the Australians, reciprocal agreements were made and the desirability of maintaining close contact with the AJA was frequently stressed at early meetings (NZJA, 1933, p. 18). Fraternisation with Australian newspapermen continued in other areas too. Tom Mills, who owned the *Feilding Star* with Fred Pirani, is recorded as the president of the Australasian Provincial Press Association in 1913 – a task he relinquished to R. H. Barnet, of Gawlor, at the end of the year (“Untitled”, 1913i). New Zealand journalists were also active in Australian unions. Besides Grattan Grey being a foundation member of AJA, John (Jack) Barr, the sub editor of the *Bulletin*, supposedly helped “lay the foundations” of the Journalists’ Association in Sydney. He was its president in 1912 and was “largely responsible for the much better wage conditions existing in the Australian scribblers’ world” – or so said *The Observer* (“Untitled”, 1912c).<sup>53</sup> Fraternal relations between Australian and New Zealand journalists only went so far, however. Later in 1912 there were indications that the Australian Journalists’ Association was trying to get UPA staff in Sydney to join its ranks. The board of UPA resolved to fight this at all costs and in court if necessary. It felt it was undesirable for UPA staff to be connected with a union or association of journalists registered under the Australian Arbitration Act (Sanders, 1979, p. 44).

## 2:12 The ideal journalist

It is interesting to consider what journalists of the times saw as the ideal journalist. This is not an easy exercise but there are some hints. *The Observer*, in its often caustic way, did laud some of the journalists it mentioned in its gossip pages for good journalism, but often after they had died. The following description of George Main, then the president of the Auckland branch of Institute of Journalists, occurred in 1901. He was described by *The Observer* “as one of the best known and very oldest, New Zealand journalist”. “As a collector of news he has no rivals; as a paragraphist he excels, he knows everybody also, as a theologian he is also great, a marvel as a teller of anecdotes and as an authority on papers he is high up (“Untitled”, 1901c). William Berry, for 27 years the

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<sup>53</sup> Neither Lloyd nor Walker mentioned Barr. However, Sparrow (1960) does refer to Barr as being a vice president of the central committee of AJA in 1912 (p.61).

editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, was eulogised for his “fine literary tastes and culture” as “wonderfully well informed” and “a sound and logical writer” (“Death of William Berry”, 1903). An ex-American journalist who died at Christchurch in 1903, P. S. Cassidy, was an example of what New Zealand journalism did not aspire to, according to *The Observer*. Cassidy once attempted to “graft Yankee methods upon New Zealand press work” when manager of the *New Zealand Times*. He opened a column of racy comments on men and events. “The New York style of personalities proved extremely offensive to Wellingtonians and the experiment was dropped after a few months trial” (“Untitled”, 1903d). Charles Otto Montrose was praised on his death as “one of the best all round press men of the colony”. “Nothing came amiss to him whether it was breezy paragraphs, topical rhyme, shorthand reporting, leader writing or the working up of a good sensation!” (“Untitled”, 1907d). Ernest Hall, whose “passion for gaining experience has made him a bird of passage on the *New Zealand Times* and *The Dominion*”, was noted for his accuracy and curiosity (“Untitled”, 1912b). In 1913 when Peter Henry Robertson died he was fondly remembered by *The Observer* as “an old type of pressman who stuck to the almost vanished habit of using a fine literary style in recording common facts, nor did he ever descend to the commonplace style so prevalent today of loose and unskilled writing” (“Untitled”, 1913e). To Miller (1967), Frank Morton was the epitome of a good journalist. At the *Otago Daily Times* he was considered the “office legend” with a reputation as a “superb writer”.

It was said he was such a skilful weaver of words that his copy could not be touched by a sub editor because every sentence was vitally linked with those preceding and following it, and the excision of any part would destroy the whole sense. (Miller, 1967, p. 18)

These commentaries from *The Observer* and others go a small way towards gleaning an idea of what sort of journalism was appreciated in the pre war years. Certainly Malcolm Ross never garnered the praise for his writings as those journalists already mentioned. But there was a paper presented to the Wellington branch of the NZ Institute of Journalists in 1900 which laid out in much more detail the attributes considered necessary for a journalist to succeed.

The paper was delivered by J. L. Kelly (1900), then the president of the institute and a one time proprietor of *The Observer* (“The Observer silver jubilee”, 1905). In his paper *The making of a journalist* Kelly set out the steps by which “a man advances from the

ranks of the undistinguished mass and becomes fit to wield the reporter's pencil, or the editor's pen – and shears". As explained earlier, Kelly believed that "a certain natural endowment" was the primary essential to the making of a journalist – a "rare combination of physical and mental qualities".

According to my view, the chief distinguishing mark of the potential journalist is the faculty of discerning "news" – of knowing instinctively what the public wants to read in the daily or weekly paper. The reporter must have a keen scent for the new, the unusual, the interesting, the striking. (Kelly, 1900)

Kelly believed that this would mean a journalist's mind needed to be "perennially fresh and plastic to new impressions". "He must have a tireless curiosity – a desire to 'know, you know' – and yet must have the tact to gain information without being impertinent or prying." He realised, however, that the profession was so arduous and so exacting in its demands on nervous energy "that only very exceptionally-constituted men are able to maintain this perennial freshness and keenness". "The man who is languid, who is indifferent to the minutest movements and changes going on around him, or who has not the habit of close watchfulness, need never hope to attain eminence in the journalistic profession."

Next to the faculty of observation, Kelly placed great weight on "prompt decision and rapidity of action". "Generally speaking, the reporter who hesitates is lost. He must seize the passing incident, note its salient points and transfer them to paper while his impressions are vivid." Besides these "natural endowments, physical and mental" so cherished by Kelly, he noted the importance of a journalist having "a thorough mastery of the language he is to employ". He must have a solid grasp of shorthand and "literary taste and power of expression". He must have a good knowledge of past history and current and international affairs and an "intimate insight into the character and career of prominent men". This then is Kelly's view of the ideal journalist. Apart from the strict requirement for shorthand and the implication that all journalists were male, it does not differ very fundamentally from what is perceived as the ideal journalist of today, except perhaps in the language with which they have been described. But the last word on the pre World War I view of journalism is left to two men, both noted journalists in their day, W. Farmer Whyte and M. C. Keane. "The true journalist is he who places journalism before the journalist," said Whyte in *The Australasian Journalist* of 1913

(“Untitled”, 1913a). Keane’s view was more pragmatic. The best journalist is the man who least frequently falls into error – by error I mean mistakes in fact, mistakes in taste, mistakes in judgement, and mistakes in opinion” (Keane, 1916).

## **2:13 Conclusion**

The three and a half decades prior to the outbreak of World War I was a time of growth and expansion for the country’s newspapers providing journalistic work for a similarly growing number of men, and some women. Competition and rivalry were rife which often resulted in court cases but also in some excellent news gathering. Changes within the press were mirrored by changes in New Zealand society as the population slowly drifted northwards and away from rural areas into the cities. While workers and immigrants still dominated, people such as Malcolm Ross were among the new breed of citizens who were not only New Zealand-born but were working their way up the social scale from their humble working class origins. The Australian influence was significant and manifested in the newspaper industry with many Australian-born journalists holding down jobs in New Zealand. Conversely, many New Zealand journalists sought jobs in Australia either for better pay and conditions or for more outlets for their creative endeavours.

While Ross may have gone to Australia for holidays or to cover affairs of concern to New Zealand he never felt compelled to seek a permanent job across the Tasman. His job, income and status as a freelance journalist were secure enough in New Zealand for him to not need to seek new journalistic pastures. For example, by 1902 he was earning £300 for his Press Gallery work, which was not a full year, and around £100- £150 a year for being the London *Times* correspondent. This does not take into account what he earned for other writing he did, his books, pamphlets, journal contributions, Government work etc. Then there was what his wife earned as a writer, and later his son.

Although many journalists working in New Zealand newsrooms came from other parts of the British Empire, they also came from many different backgrounds and with varying levels of education. Ross was unexceptional in his background or education and certainly was no “Bohemian dreamer”. He appeared to have few overtly literary aspirations, unlike many of his colleagues. What he did have was the ability to take as much advantage of any opportunities on offer as he could, whether they were reporting,

acting as agent for overseas commissions or visiting celebrities or writing publicity material for Government departments. For the years he worked in the *Otago Daily Times* newsroom he must have suffered the long hours and low wages of every other New Zealand journalist at the time but he left for what must have been better pay and conditions at the Union Steam Ship Company. He was then able to command even better pay as a “special” in the Press Gallery and was also free to garner other work where he may and take time off to climb his beloved mountains. This chapter described some of the attributes of the ideal journalist as seen by the reporting fraternity of the time. It is the task of the following chapter to discover whether Ross had any of these attributes and to discover just how good his news gathering and writing skills were.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Malcolm Ross's journalism prior to World War I

#### 3:1 Introduction

In many ways, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Malcolm Ross was not typical of the journalists of his day. He was New Zealand-born and started his journalism almost straight from school. He only ever worked full time in the *Otago Daily Times* newsroom, and then only for eight years before becoming a freelance. As such he was well paid and could also work the hours that suited him. As a result, when Parliament was not in session he could pick and choose the jobs he would do. He appeared to have no creative or literary aspirations which were unfulfilled in New Zealand and which might have necessitated a move to Australia. Though the call of an Australian career never came this did not mean he was a stay-at-home. He made many trips across the Tasman and further afield to the Pacific and Europe. Because he never again served in a newsroom as a general reporter after the *Otago Daily Times*, so he never had to suffer the harsh working conditions of his newsroom confrères. Despite this he did support their moves to form a union. The issue this chapter wants to explore is whether Malcolm Ross was a good journalist - could he write? To determine this several major pieces of his pre-war writing have been selected for study and assessment. Only those writings which bore his name have been included in this selection or where there is absolutely no doubt that he was the author. None of his Parliamentary Press Gallery articles have been included and this could be considered a major omission. However, the focus of the research was Ross's war correspondence, and besides, it was impossible to say with accuracy which were his Parliamentary writings as they did not carry his bylines as a general rule.<sup>54</sup> Any assessment of his writing must be made in the context of the time and not from a 21<sup>st</sup> century standpoint. His writing will be judged against that of his contemporaries.

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<sup>54</sup> For example, he wrote under the byline "Our Own Correspondent" but this nomenclature continued while he was away reporting on the Samoan "troubles". For this reason also, an interview with Nellie Melba, which appeared in *The Press* on February 20, 1903 under the byline "By our special reporter", has not been included although all the signs point to it having been written by Ross and would help to explain the Rosses' subsequent friendship with the Australian singer.

### 3:2 The late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century “newshole”

Before analysing Malcolm Ross’s writing it is germane to consider the typical makeup of a New Zealand daily newspaper, and to do this, Dunedin’s *Otago Daily Times* is the example. The reason for considering the whole paper is to make clear what space was available for journalists to fill with their news. In the years that Ross was at the *Otago Daily Times* the paper was only a four-page broadsheet. In August 1893 the paper’s board of directors considered increasing its size to eight pages, because most of the big colonial dailies were already that size (“Board of directors minute book”, 1884-1894). But it was not until March, 1899 that the paper eventually went to eight pages (“Board of directors minute book”, 1895-1901). The paper, except for display advertisements, carried no illustrations or cartoons. The font size was small, about 8pt and with little leading (the space between the lines) and with nine columns per page,<sup>55</sup> there was a surprising amount of space to fill. Sentences were run on, not paragraphed every sentence or two as is the modern custom. One column of type could contain around 2250 words. Headlines were generally one column, maybe two columns if it was a particularly important story and the headlines were often “stacked” anywhere from one to five or six deep, again depending on the story. Generally the headlines were not “bolded” to make them stand out in any way. There was little effort made to lay out stories in a reader-friendly manner. Stories ran down the column and across to the next one until they finished. A new story would start where the previous one ended. It was quite rare to find a byline on any story.<sup>56</sup> Much use was made of nom de plumes, and generally most journalists knew who the writer was as did the readers. It is more difficult for a 21<sup>st</sup> researcher to know, however. Illustrations, if there were any, were usually line drawings. It was not until the 1890s that photographs started appearing in newspapers.

The front page of the *Otago Daily Times* on Saturday, December 15, 1888, which has been chosen at random, as an example, carried advertisements for such things as shipping and business notices, amusements and other general items. Page two carried one and a half columns of advertising and the rest were general news paragraphs, cablegrams from overseas and nationally. Column nine carried a 20-sentence story

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<sup>55</sup> The columns reduced to eight per page when the paper went to eight pages.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Schudson (1995) notes that as more of the stories in the 1920s became interpretive, so too were more bylined ( p.63).

about Professor Brown's disappearance. There were few if any headlines and those that did appear were in small, unbolded type. Page three carried three and a half columns of education news, letters to the editor and an article on an island cruise by a contributor and the rest was advertising. The back page carried seven and a half columns of advertising and the remainder was general news and some court cases. In all there were 23½ columns of advertising and 12½ columns available for news. This meant a ratio of advertising to editorial of around 65:35. Despite this high degree of advertising there were still around 30,000 words for news – a large “newshole” to fill on a daily basis.<sup>57</sup>

### 3:3 Pre-war journalistic style

How were those 30,000 words used? Looking back from the 1950s when he wrote his autobiography, Mulgan noted that newspapers in those early years were “more concerned with little things”. The whole conception of news was narrower. There were fewer features. Interviews were not so common. Reports were longer and reporting and editorial writing was more conventional. But it “hit harder”. Journalese was more common. Newspapers were “less bright” (p. 76). In earlier chapters it was noted that the concentration on factual, verbatim reporting left many of the more creative journalists cold and they fled for the more conducive journalistic climes of Australia (Oosterman, 2005).

The type of reporting conducted in New Zealand in the pre war years was very much dependent on either a mastery of shorthand or a very good memory or both. An example of this type of reporting appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* of Monday, December 17, 1888 on the back page. It carried a single column, three-line headline “*The New Zealand Exhibition 1889-1890 - The public meeting*” and ran over three and a half columns. It began in this inconsequential way: “A public meeting in connection with the above was held in the Princess Theatre last evening. The building was crowded in all parts, a number of ladies being among those assembled in the dress circle.” Certainly none of that was of particular importance. The verbatim coverage of what was said at the meeting then followed – around 7700 words (“The New Zealand exhibition”, 1888). Readers would have had to wade through the mass of verbiage and distil the important elements for themselves. As noted, the summary lead and inverted pyramid structure

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<sup>57</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* of the same day was 12 pages with a four-page supplement completely devoted to news, gossip, serialised novels, drama, art, gardening, chess and other topics. The paper used an eight column layout with slightly bigger and bolder headlines for its news stories than the *Otago Daily Times*. The ratio of advertising to editorial (not counting the supplement) was around 48:52.

was not a common element in journalism of the 19th century. In other words the journalist did not summarise the highlights of the story in the first sentence, called in journalism the “intro” or summary lead. The journalist made no judgement, or attempt to interpret, the information gathered.

Chronologically presented news gave way to a summary lead and inverted pyramid structure that required a reporter to make a judgement about what aspect of the event covered mattered most. News stories increasingly conveyed the meaning of the act reported in a timeframe larger than that of the act itself. In these ways, journalists proved themselves not relayers of documents and messages but legitimate interpreters of news, able to write not just about what they, like any observer, can see and hear but also about what is unheard, unseen, or intentionally omitted. (Schudson, 1995, p. 91)

This was generally not evident in any New Zealand journalism until after World War I. The commonly used news paragraph of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not use a summary intro nor did it follow the inverted pyramid style. Here is an example from the *New Zealand Herald* of May 20, 1907:

The benevolent trustees have forwarded the following resolution to the Charitable Aid Board: “That the trustees desire to impress on the members of the Charitable Aid Board the urgent necessity of erecting, without further delay, a hospital for incurables, as their sad experience proves it is undesirable that patients suffering from diseases of a negligent character should be located in the benevolent institution with those who are suffering from minor diseases, or from physical disabilities or old age.”

Mr. Arkle was against a hospital being erected. He thought that it was a mistake to multiple these institutions. The time might come when the Government would not be able to advance subsidies, and the whole expense would fall on local bodies. Dr. Batchelor said he did not see any difficulty in providing room for incurables on the grounds of the institution. A separate institution would cost a lot more.

On the motion of Mr. T. Mackenzie, M.H.R., it was resolved that a reply be sent that the urgency for such a building had not been made clear, and that when the matter required consideration the Board would deal with it.

This is a clear demonstration of a typical news story from the pre war period. It had no summary intro, it did not follow an inverted pyramid style of presenting the most important information in descending order of importance and it used reported speech throughout. There were no direct quotes from the sources used. The important information, i.e. what the board decided at the meeting, came last.

### 3:4 The interview

Also largely uncommon in this period was the interview. Schudson (1995) has charted the history of this journalistic technique, which is believed to have started with American journalists in the 1850s, spread slowly to Britain and Europe but not widely used until after World War I (pp. 72-77). He believed the interview was seen initially as an “independent genre of journalism separate from reporting and regarded as a news event in itself, a journalistic coup” (p. 82). The interview might take the form of question and answer or follow a more leisurely narrative style. It was unusual for there to be any direct quotes, and this did not become common practice, said Schudson, until the 1920s. He is speaking of Britain and America, but his comments are largely true for New Zealand journalism as well, as we will see from some later examples. Early journalists tended not to take notes and often relied solely on their memories. In fact, Schudson noted that handbooks on reporting in 1901 urged reporters to write as few notes as possible and never to use shorthand. New Zealand journalists did not follow these precepts. Good shorthand speed was one of the few prerequisites for a job in a colonial newsroom. In the northern hemisphere, it was thought that notebooks and pencils would scare subjects away from an interview. This view didn’t change until the 1930s when reporters were advised for the sake of accuracy to take notes (pp. 81-81). In the early days of the interview the technique was often viewed as an invasion of personal privacy and was heavily criticised (Brady, 1976, p. 226; Schudson, 1985, p.78). Generally interviews were conducted with willing subjects and the written up interview shown to the subject before publication. In the previous chapter Arthur Heighway (1979) chronicled this system when he reported Truby King’s lectures (p. 9).

*The Observer* reported an example of an interview carried out by an *Auckland Star* reporter at Waiwera with Sir Julius Vogel, where the latter “unrolled quite a Rhodesian scheme of annexation”.

The reporter, satisfied that he had a “sensation” in his notes, proceeded to transcribe in a quiet room in the hotel. In about ten minutes Vogel's orderly sought out the pressman, and said: “Sir Julius's compliments and he will feel obliged if you will refrain from referring to the New Hebrides.” The reporter sulkily promised to excise the reference - one of the plums of the interview. A few hours later Vogel sent requesting another excision, but by this time the pressman was hastening with his copy to the city, anxious to get his prize into cold type. When he reached the office he found Vogel had wired to the editor cautioning him not to use a single line of the interview until he had seen it. “Wire it to me -

collect!” said the telegram. And so the 5000-word interview was telegraphed back to Vogel at Government expense, to be bowdlerised before publication. (“Untitled”, 1899e, p. 7)

Here is an example of the opening sentences of an interview from *The Press*, of February 20, 1903 with Nellie Melba, the Australian opera singer, who was on tour in New Zealand (“Madame Melba”, 1903). The writer is only identified by the byline “by our special reporter” but is almost certainly Malcolm Ross although this cannot be verified. It does, however, illustrate some of the points made by Schudson about interviews and writing style of the period.

An appointment to proceed to the Studholme Junction to meet Madame Melba, though one had, in the course of a fairly long professional career, foregathered with a number of notabilities in various walks of life, was calculated to inspire a feeling of the keenest interest at meeting one of the greatest living exponents of the gentle art of music. The visit of Madame Melba to New Zealand will remain as a notable event in the memories of those privileged to hear her sing in the plenitude of her powers, and at the zenith of her worldwide success. (“Madame Melba”, 1903, p. 5)

The story continued in this vein for another two long sentences before launching into the “chat” with the diva herself. This followed the format described by Schudson (1985), where there was a preface before the interview proper started (p. 82). There was definitely no summary lead or intro to this story. While the style of the time did tend to the flowery and the verbose, the prolixity and pomposity of this 59-word introduction would be hard to beat. The writer of this purple prose was not unique, however. Christopher Scanlan (2002) noted that before the end of the 19th century stories were “almost always told in the traditional, slow-paced (some might say long-winded) way”.<sup>58</sup>

Whether they were fairy tales or newspaper accounts, they began with a signal that something important, useful, inspiring or entertaining was about to begin (“Once upon a time”). The narrator, or storyteller, started at the beginning and continued to the end, leaving the outcome until the last (“And they lived happily ever after”). (Scanlan, 2002)

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<sup>58</sup> What leads to the conviction this is Malcolm Ross writing, is the statement “though one had, in the course of a fairly long professional career, foregathered with a number of notabilities in various walks of life”. Ross was wont to insert himself into his work in just such a way - drawing attention to his experience in interviewing notable people. It can be seen in his interview with Paderewski.

Uncommonly for the time, according to Schudson, the Melba interview did contain many direct quotes from the diva, although it tended to be in the question and answer format. For example:

“How did you like your first New Zealand audience?” was the first question asked. “They were beautiful,” was the earnest reply. “So appreciative, so enthusiastic; really it was quite a pleasure to sing to them. The hall, too, was excellent. I seemed to have no trouble at all in the singing.” In reply to the question as to how they compared with Australian audiences, Madame said: “They were quite as good as any that I have sung to, and I was greatly delighted.” (“Madame Melba”, 1903, p.5)

This small extract also highlighted an obviously historical phenotype of the New Zealander – the compulsion to ask visitors what they thought of New Zealand and how New Zealand compared with Australia!

The *New Zealand Herald* of early 1899 carried what it called “Special interviews” with selected individuals. One such was entitled *A colonial in the Old Country* and was an interview with an Auckland business leader. It began:

A Herald reporter recently interviewed Mr. R. Cameron, manager of the Auckland Savings Bank, who has just returned to Auckland after a pleasure trip to England and America. Mr. Cameron, who has been all his life in Auckland, willingly consented to give his impressions, as a colonial, of what he saw of life in the Old Country as compared with life in the colonies. (“Special interviews”, 1899, p. 3)

After a very brief summary of Mr Cameron’s views on England and its prospects for young men, what followed was largely a question and answer session between the reporter and Mr Cameron. The reporter posed a question, such as “What impressions did you form of London?” Mr Cameron then responded and was quoted verbatim for about 10 or 12 sentences, at which the reporter then posed another question, and so on. There was no byline to the story of any sort.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The *New Zealand Herald*, as often as not, did not run bylines at all, not even “by our own correspondent” so it was often difficult to determine the source of the item, unless it was mentioned in the actual body of the story, as it was in the above example.

Schudson (1995) theorised that the rise of the interview coincided with the rise of reporters as a group becoming more self conscious and autonomous (p. 91). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, said Schudson, quoting Robert Wiebe, “the identification of the middle class with political parties weakened while their identification with, and allegiance to, occupations and occupational associations grew”. For reporters this took the form of Press Clubs and, one could add, unions. This occurred in New Zealand in the early 1900s. As a result reporters’ pay rose and journalists began to think of themselves as professionals, although this was a hotly debated subject – and still is. Schudson claimed that as newspapers became more business oriented and focused on making money, this then freed the journalist “from the necessity of adhering to the publisher's party lines” and made him more independent. Thus grew a coterie of elite journalists who became quite famous. Schudson named Richard Harding Davis as an example. By the use of the technique of the interview the reporter “exercises autonomy and demonstrates to the public and the news institution alike an intimacy with powerful people.”<sup>60</sup> Reporters are judged professionally by the sources they keep” (pp. 66-67). Patrick Day (1990), as mentioned in a previous chapter, echoed these comments when looking at the development of New Zealand newspapers in the 1880s. Malcolm Ross still adhered to his papers’ political stance so in that respect he was not independent. However, he was an early user of the interview technique, exercised autonomy in securing his stories and clearly demonstrated his intimacy with powerful people. He could quite rightly be called one of New Zealand’s first celebrity journalists, if not the first.

### 3:5 Point of view

In a 1912 issue of the *New Zealand Journalist*, an anonymous writer identified only as Rus, weighed in against the overuse of the personal pronoun “we” and the prevalence of writer opinion in news stories. He bewailed the inability of writers “to get outside their own personality, and deal with matters from a strictly journalistic point of view” (Rus, 1912). This has particular relevance to Malcolm Ross who had a marked predilection for using the personal pronoun, especially, “I”, in his early stories. This was commented on unfavourably by *The Observer* when Ross’s appointment as official war correspondent was made public (“Me! ”, 1915j), (See Appendix B) but as will be seen

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<sup>60</sup> There were few examples of interviews seen in the course of research into papers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and when they were visible they were still largely in the format as described by Schudson. The use of the interview as a normal part of newsgathering was still to evolve.

from the articles selected below, he had already developed the personal point of view very early in his journalistic career. Rus, however, saw it as a problem for many reporters in the pre war years.

Sometimes the “we” business is so overdone that one is inclined to the opinion that the writer is a hopeless egotist and unable to speak, write, or argue without giving prominence to the personal pronoun. This is bad style undoubtedly, and when subjects are approached from such a narrow point of view the writer’s contentions lack the force exerted by impersonal anonymity. (Rus, 1912, p. 4)

Ron Palenski (2007) contended that the use of the personal pronoun was a style unusual in newspapers for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it is clear this was not the case (p. 7). It was in common usage and Ross was not unique in this respect. He could be pointed to, however, because his stories were identifiable as his, so he was an easy mark for critics. Special correspondents, who were often hired for their particular expertise, such as William Morgan, for example, in his New Zealand Wars despatches for the *Daily Southern Cross*, used “I” extensively and often inserted his opinion into his accounts.

Moketu has been taken, and is now occupied by our troops. It was a hot bed of kingism – the pa where plans were concocted and bloody resolves made. It was taken in the name of the Queen, and I suppose that implies confiscation. It is a fine piece of country, and I hope to see many of our gallant volunteers getting a slice of it. Our settlers – many of whom are being ruined by the present war – will not object to such land as some compensation for their immense losses. I am surprised that Tuamata has not been dealt with in the same way... I cannot make out how this pa has been neglected, and why it has not been ransacked... I hope to see this place cleared out, and occupied like Moketu by our troops. (Morris, 1963, p. 42)

The difference between Morgan and Ross, however, was that Ross was a trained journalist, Morgan was not. Fred Rollett, who wrote for the *Auckland Star* from Apia in 1899, also used the personal pronoun extensively in his reports. He did not get a byline, however, so was not so easily recognised as the writer.

### **3:6 Ross’s journalism**

The Ross articles selected for study fall into four separate groupings which in total should give a reasonably clear picture of Ross’s abilities as a writer. They span from the

earliest piece in 1888 to an article published in 1909. The first group of three stories were the ones that made Ross's name as a reporter on the *Otago Daily Times* when he went on the expedition to find the missing Otago University professor. The second group includes two interviews, with novelist Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) and Polish pianist Jan Ignace Paderewski. The third group includes two articles on mountaineering, the ascents of Ngauruhoe in 1907 and 1909. The fourth group are news stories about the wreck of the *Penguin* in 1909. Ross's war reporting from Samoa in 1899 will be considered in a later chapter.

### 3:6:1 The missing university professor

A news item in the *Otago Daily Times* on December 15, 1888 alerted readers to the loss of Professor Mainwaring Brown near Lake Manapouri. The article was written by J. White, a Dunedin solicitor, one of the three-man party, of which Brown had been a member. White had sent an urgent message from Lumsden shortly after 7 o'clock the night before reporting that the professor had gone missing. It wasn't until the seventh sentence that readers learned this crucial fact, although the headline stated it (White, 1888a).<sup>61</sup> A leading article on the same day told readers that Malcolm Ross, a member of the paper's staff, had started from Dunedin on Saturday morning to take part in the search for Brown along with Thomas Mackenzie, MP for Clutha, as leader, Quintin Mackinnon, and later to be joined by Charles Brown and Jack McKay in Lumsden ("West Coast exploration", 1888). The expense of this search party was borne by the *Otago Daily Times*. The paper apologised to readers for postponing the publication of a special report on Central Otago that Ross was preparing. He didn't have time to write it up before he was sent off on the Brown expedition ("The loss of Professor Brown", 1888).<sup>62</sup> On that same day the paper continued the report from J. White about the circumstances surrounding Brown's disappearance. It ran to a full column of about 2234 words. Papers around New Zealand carried the report of the missing professor ("Lost in the bush", 1888; "Search for Professor Brown - worst feared", 1888; "A

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<sup>61</sup> This appeared to be quite a common practice – where the headline alerted the reader to the main point of the story. Sometimes information in the headline was not even mentioned in the body of the text.

<sup>62</sup> Readers did not have long to wait. The indefatigable Ross was in the *Otago Daily Times* on January 1, 1889 with the first instalment of *The route of the Otago Central – an account of the Ministerial tour*, followed four days later with the second part. Along with *Otago Daily Times* editor, Ernest Twopeny, Ross and other journalists accompanied a party of 12, including the Premier and two Ministers, MPs and civil servants on a tour of Central Otago (M. Ross, 1889b; 1889c). The two accounts ran to around 15,000 words in total.

professor missing”, 1888). Ross telegraphed his first story *The expedition in search of Professor Brown* from Lumsden and it was printed the next day (M. Ross, 1888a). Ross began his story thus:

We left Dunedin on Saturday morning very poorly equipped owing to the promptness of our departure, but at Balclutha Mrs Mackenzie met us with some of the things that were necessary for the work we proposed to undertake, such as matches, put up in hermetically sealed boxes, a pocket compass etc. (Ross, 1888a, p. 2)

What followed was a straightforward account of the efforts made by the search party to get as near to the site where Brown went missing as soon as it could. Ross used the subjective personal pronoun “we” throughout the report, to refer to the members of the party. The sentences were generally short and succinct and Ross managed to convey some of the drama involved in such a search. His saga continued on December 20 under the headline *The search for Professor Brown – return of Mr Mitchell's party* and told of meeting up with Ernest Mitchell and his team and the problems of reaching the search site (M. Ross, 1888b). This was another succinct account of about 500 words and written under rather trying conditions as the party rowed in a leaking boat or camped on inhospitable shores. “I am scribbling this on a schist rock for a table, and the sand flies are making a meal of me,” said Ross before handing his report to Mitchell to take out. Five days later the *Otago Daily Times* carried a report of a third search party which had set out in the vessel *Stella* led by J. White (White, 1888b). Then on December 27 Ross’s 8000-word report of the expedition to find Brown was carried over four columns on page three under the headline *The Manapouri expedition - no trace of Professor Brown* (M. Ross, 1888c). He managed to wax eloquent about the scenery, making passing literary references to William Blake, John Ruskin, and Walter Scott in so doing. The following passage illustrates his poetic turn of phrase.

...then later when the moon rose and cast a silver band across the lake from shore to shore, and changed the roseate tints of Te Anau’s snows to colder hues, the beauty of the scene was enhanced a hundred fold. (Ross, M., 1888c, p. 3)

For Paul Fussell (1975) in *The Great War and modern memory* this type of language demonstrated the turn of the century fashion for the classics and English literature that was coupled with a commitment to “cultural improvement” through popular education and “self improvement” (p. 157). The Dunedin Scots were staunch supporters of this

ethos so it was not surprising to see Ross's knowledge of the popular writers and poets of his day showing through in his writing. He often used the themes and motifs from the classics and English literature, especially with their emphasis on what Fussell called "the quiet action of personal control and Christian self-abnegation (i.e. sacrifice)" (p. 21). This was exemplified in such books as G. A. Henty's boys' adventure stories and those by other writers such as Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad. The language used was "raised" or "high diction" or, as Fussell claimed, "essentially feudal language" with such words as comrades, foe, peril, gallant, plucky, the fallen, perish, manly, fate, the heavens and so on sprinkled heavily throughout.

The Brown search party finally reached White, Goring and Brown's camp and explored the area around it, finding a small lake which they named Lake Mainwaring in the professor's honour. They did not find Brown so erected a cross and cairn in his memory near his final campsite. This story again was a perfectly straight forward recounting of the search, its difficulties, the grandeur of the scenery and the failure to find any sign of the professor. Ross was not only searching for a missing person. Apparently he also knew something about the local flora. F. R. Chapman recorded that Ross found a single specimen of the *Celmisia* plant, a variety of mountain daisy, and "one of the finest of the genus" at Disaster Burn. Chapman named it *Celmisia brownii* after his "lamented friend" Mainwaring Brown (Chapman, 1889). In his final report Ross told how the party returned, the likely reason for Brown's disappearance and proffered some advice for any would-be explorers in a three column final report entitled *The Manapouri expedition - The return journey - hints to explorers* (M. Ross, 1888d). This article was probably the least convincing of them all. Ross was defensive about praising the scenery, as if he had been accused of "overdrawing" it. This was an early sign of the rather florid style that sometimes crept into his narratives. A 26-year-old offering advice to prospective alpinists could be considered rather presumptuous and the tone he used when summarising his companions' efforts appeared rather condescending considering they had vastly more experience in bush craft than he did. According to the *Otago Daily Times*, Thomas Mackenzie was the leader of the expedition. Ross claimed in his article that he asked Mackenzie to join the party. He also took exception to a claim in a letter to the editor that the party was led by Quintin Mackinnon. This suggests that perhaps he saw himself as the leader. However, both Mackenzie and Mackinnon were

very experienced bushmen. Mackenzie,<sup>63</sup> had already explored much of the lower South Island, in particular leading a party to estimate the height of the Sutherland Falls (“Mackenzie, Sir Thomas”, 2007). He was eight years older than Ross. Quintin Mackinnon and Ernest Mitchell had just returned from exploring the Clinton Valley and crossing the pass which lead to the Arthur Valley, Sutherland Falls and Milford Sound (“History of the Milford Track”, 2007; Lawn, 1977, pp. 261-262). Ross was the rookie here. This is a pointer to his tendency, observed by others, of elevating his importance around significant events.

**Figure 13 Quintin McKinnon and Ernest Mitchell about 1888.**

Aside from that, his accounts did win the praise of his acting editor and board chairman, George Fenwick and the board of the *Otago Daily Times* (“Board of directors minute book”, 1884-1894). None of his articles bore his byline. They were always “by our own reporter” but everybody knew it was Ross because the paper had announced him by name as being the journalist undertaking the expedition.

### **3:6:2 The interviews**

Two interviews have been chosen that it is certain Malcolm Ross wrote. The first was with novelist Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) who visited New Zealand in 1895 and for which Ross gained a byline by name (M. Ross, 1895d) and the second is with Jan Ignace Paderewski, the famous pianist, who came to New Zealand in 1904 (M. Ross, 1904a). Ross met Clemens when they were both on the liner *Mararoa*, en route to Dunedin. He had “several interesting chats” with the novelist in the intervals when the latter left his work for a change of scene and a smoke on the upper deck. It is interesting to ponder whether Ross alerted Clemens to his identity as a freelance journalist. It may have been a coincidence that the two men were on the same ship. At the time Ross was working for the Union Steam Ship Company, whose vessel the *Mararoa* was.

He related in the story that as “the stereotyped interview” was “distasteful to most literary men of any ability”, he discreetly kept pencil and notebook out of view.

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<sup>63</sup>He became Prime Minister in 1912 for a few months after the resignation of Sir Joseph Ward and later became London High Commissioner.

Schudson mentioned that journalism handbooks in the northern hemisphere recommended this. It meant the journalist had to have a very good memory if he was to remember all the details of the conversation. Another point of interest was Ross's reference to the "stereotyped interview" which implied that even in 1895 the interview was not as new to the New Zealand press as suggested. Ross believed that "the gifted author never dreamt for a moment that he was being 'drawn out' for an interview."<sup>64</sup> That shows an astonishing level of self conceit on the 33-year-old Ross's behalf, that he would imagine that Clemens would not be aware he was being pumped for information. John Brady (1976) quoted an amusing story written by Clemens in 1875 about an interview which showed he was quite aware of journalists and the tricks they used to obtain interviews (p. 227). The immediate point which strikes one from a modern viewpoint with this story is its length - about 1700 words. The published story contained one short, direct quote from Mark Twain which fits the received wisdom regarding interviews of the time being largely reported speech. Ross began the story as follows:

The first thing that strikes you about Mark Twain is his wonderful head of hair-now alas! turning grey, though he is not yet 60 years of age. Some people say that he has no time to get it cut, but there are men who do not speak charitably of their fellow men but with envy and malice aforethought, and they are mostly bald. (M. Ross, 1895d, p.4)

He then went on to describe Clemens' "wonderfully keen eyes" and then his "measured utterance". And "after you have conversed with the famous American humourist once or twice you will have arrived at the conclusion that he is a real good fellow and a man with considerable force of character". After describing how he met Clemens, Ross then got down to the business of discussing how the novelist went about his writing, his favourite books, modern literature, and his future plans. Ross used the personal pronouns rather a lot in this interview; "I" nine times, "my" twice, "me" once and "we" three times. The tone of the whole interview was laudatory, as Schudson suggested most early interviews were.

The second interview, with Paderewski in 1904, was even longer than the one with Clemens. It ran to just over 2000 words. Ross began the story as follows:

Mr Paderewski, not "Monsieur" nor "Herr" but simply plain "Mr", after the English fashion, his wife, his "Erard", 37 trunks of wardrobe and

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<sup>64</sup> It also reinforced the belief that Ross might not have told Clemens he was a journalist.

general luggage, and a parrot purchased by Madame in Melbourne, have arrived, and in a few hours the people of Wellington who have been fortunate enough to obtain seats for the first recital this evening will have an opportunity of seeing the first-named and of hearing what he can do with his “Erard”. (M. Ross, 1904a, p. 2)

This is a 76-word sentence and introduction to the story of the Polish pianist’s arrival in Wellington for a concert. There is no explanation what an “Erard” is so it is left to the reader to puzzle over and decide that perhaps it was his piano.<sup>65</sup> Ross continued:

During my career as a journalist it has been my privilege to meet and to interview many notable and interesting people - Premiers and politicians, Governors and admirals, artists and litterateurs from Mark Twain with his charming personality, to the uncrowned King of Samoa standing gloomily on the deck of a British man o’ war with the 4.7 guns scarcely done smoking from the bombardment. I have run the gamut of modern interviewing but never before have I met a man with such splendid character, personal charm and magnetism as Paderewski. (M. Ross, 1904, p.2)

By 1904 it seems clear Ross felt well acquainted with the techniques of interviewing which still consisted largely of reported speech. It also is consonant with Schudson’s comment that interviewing was regarded as a “news event in itself, a journalistic coup”. There are two instances of direct quotes, and these from two of the pianist’s acolytes not the famous man himself. The comments expressed in this passage are just the sort of thing that probably enraged Ross’s colleagues. It would have been seen as Ross “blowing his own trumpet” or “skiting”, something frowned upon as described earlier. The structure of the article is interesting, as the introduction is an attempt to provide something of a summarised lead, however long and convoluted. After about 250 words describing himself, his interviewing history and how he had obtained this interview, Ross finally got down to the business of describing his journey on the train with

**Figure 14 Ignace Paderewski about 1910.**

Paderewski and his entourage and his interviews with members of the party, including the pianist himself. The tone, as with the Clemens “chat”, was largely adulatory, as Schudson suggested it would be. Paderewski was a “splendid character” with “personal

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<sup>65</sup> A quick Google by a modern reader discovered that indeed it was a brand of piano.

charm, and magnetism". Both interviews dwelt in some detail on the physical characteristics of their subjects - understandable in an age when newspapers were only just starting to use photographs. Despite the manner in which both stories had been written, there was a good deal of factual information presented to the reader. It appears that Ross acted as the pianist's agent while he was in New Zealand. The *New Zealand Free Lance* noted that it was quite a common practice in the United States for pressmen to leave "Newspaper Row to become managers and *avant coureurs* for dramatic and musical companies".

In the colonies, the pressman generally sits tight to newspaperdom, and does not even go out on the road for a vacation. Are times changing? Are we in the experimental stage, journalistically as well as politically? The Wellington papers have been capitalising Mr. Malcolm Ross's name as representative for Pianist Paderewski. ("Untitled", 1904d, p. 3)

The *New Zealand Free Lance*, unlike its sister publication in Auckland, *The Observer*, was quite admiring of Ross's achievements.

There is no end to the experience Mr. Ross is piling up into his journalistic life. He has taken his courage in both hands, and gone into the South Seas as a war correspondent, and as a descriptive writer; he has won fame at the crook of his alpenstock on our Southern Alps. He was so successful as an "Otago Daily Times" reporter that the U.S. S. Company marked him down as its own, and made him a private secretary: he married a clever literary lady, and established himself in Wellington as a special correspondent with such success that he became the New Zealand special for the "London Times," and consequently the friend of Governors, Premiers, Lord High Admirals, and whatnot. And now he has become the representative in the Capital City of the prince of pianists, Paderewski. Here's to you, Malcolm. May your shadow never grow less. ("Untitled", 1904d, p.3)

It is possible to compare the interview with Paderewski with one done by a reporter on the *New Zealand Herald* two weeks earlier and on the arrival of the pianist in Auckland from Sydney. The tone of the story was no less laudatory.

By the steamer Zealandia last night Jan Ignace Paderewski, the illustrious pianist, arrived in Auckland from Sydney. Mr. Paderewski, who is accompanied by Madame Paderewski, and is piloted by Mr. John Lemonne, spared a few moments to chat with a *Herald* reporter prior to disembarking. A man in the prime of life, he displayed a genial temperament, a hearty nature, richly imbued with the faculty for enjoying

all things beautiful, and a peculiarly friendly disposition that sets up an air of pleasant intercourse even with strangers. Paderewski's personality beamed from his clever face, two kindly eyes lighting up his countenance. ("Paderewski in Auckland", 1904, p. 5)

The intro was succinct and much closer to a modern summary lead, with the who, what, why, when, where and how all answered in the one sentence. The 240-word story proceeded:

He had, he said, enjoyed the whole of this Australian tour very much, and had been looking forward intensely to seeing beautiful New Zealand. He waxed enthusiastic over the trip from Sydney to Auckland. "All today," he said, with characteristic expression of pleasure, "has been nothing but joy. Yours is a beautiful country." He was quite evidently much delighted with the scenery in the harbour, and stated that it had filled him with the agreeable anticipation on this his first visit to New Zealand. Asked to say what he thought of the taste of Australians in music, Paderewski replied that his audiences had been so enthusiastic it would be difficult to say what they liked most. He found the taste for classical music more pronounced in Melbourne. Here, he said, he intended giving us classical, romantic, and effective music, to suit all tastes. ("Paderewski in Auckland", 1904, p. 5)

This story had at least one direct quote and on that same topic mentioned regarding Nellie Melba's interview – New Zealand and the Australians! The remainder of the article was background about the pianist's tour in New Zealand, date of concerts etc. This was more of a news story than the full scale interview which Ross managed to organise. However, it did show that an enterprising journalist could garner some words from the great man if he tried, despite what Ross said about Paderewski not granting interviews.

### **3:6:3 Mountaineering**

Malcolm Ross wrote many accounts of his mountaineering exploits, and for the purposes of this chapter, his two ascents of Ngauruhoe are being used as examples. *The volcanoes of New Zealand - ascent of Ngauruhoe* appeared in the *New Zealand Herald* in 1907 (M. Ross, 1907) and *Expedition to Ngauruhoe - successful ascent of the volcano* in the *Otago Daily Times* in 1909 (M. Ross, 1909c). Both expeditions arose because of a burst of volcanic activity by the mountain, which is situated in the Central Plateau of the North Island. Ross began his first account as follows:

The recent increase of volcanic activity in New Zealand was of sufficient importance to justify the formation of an expedition to the scene of the recent outbreak, which expedition, if successful, would be certain to produce information of an accurate and interesting nature, and so it has proved. (M. Ross, 1907, p. 6)

This was not quite as lengthy as some of his opening sentences but it was still 48 words. It is convoluted and confusing. It leaves it to the headline to indicate where this “outbreak” might be occurring. This was not unusual. On several occasions it has been noted that accounts relied on the headline to provide crucial information which was then not mentioned in the body of the story.<sup>66</sup>

While the 1907 article was bylined “from our special correspondent” Ross actually named himself and his son, Noel, in the body of the story. Ross, James Cowan and a man called McDonald climbed Ngauruhoe to observe the crater and its activity.<sup>67</sup> In his customary fashion Ross related it as a straightforward narrative, chronicling the expedition in time – the ascent began, the crater was reached, the descent occurred. It

**Figure 15 Climbing Ngauruhoe in 1907. One of the climbers is James Cowan.**

was around 2700 words long and ran over two columns in the paper. As this was a first hand account the story was peppered with the personal pronoun “I”. There was no interchange with the other two men at all. Neither their feelings, opinions nor their observations were asked for or commented upon. There was some justification for *The Observer’s* caustic remarks cited earlier that it was Ross alone who performed the “most prodigious feats”. In the course of the climb, in vile weather, Ross went on ahead and lost sight of his companions. It is ironic, that back in 1888 when Ross was advising readers about what to do and what not to do in alpine conditions he had this to say. “The leader should always keep his men in touch with one another, and on no account should any member of the party be allowed to wander away on his own account” (M. Ross, 1888d). He did the same on the return journey, and it was dark before Cowan and McDonald rejoined Ross, hardly the actions of the responsible alpinist he was exhorting others to be nearly 20 years earlier. Two years later Ross again scaled Ngauruhoe in the

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<sup>66</sup> One such was the story mentioned earlier “*The New Zealand Exhibition 1889-1890 - The public meeting*”.

<sup>67</sup> Noel Ross was left behind after an accident to his foot and so took no part in the climb.

company of G. G. Wilson, a Public Works engineer who had been up the mountain the day before the eruption, and 19-year-old Norman Johnston. The story was bylined “by our special reporter” and ran over two columns of around 2000 words in the *Otago Daily Times*. Here is Ross’s introduction:

The midday express train from Wellington landed me on the Waimarino plains at 10.20 on Friday night, and a tramp of two miles brought me to Mr. Johnson's camp where I spent the night. Next morning, in company with Mr. G. G. Wilson (Public Works Engineer) and Norman Johnston (a lad of 19, who was spending his holiday in his brother's camp), I started on a long tramp to establish a camp at the base of the volcano. (M. Ross, 1909c)

This is probably the most banal and uninspiring introduction of all the articles presented here for study. Maybe as this was the third such climb he had made of the mountain he could think of nothing new to say about it. His writing of such stories had become predictable. “I went up the mountain. I looked at the mountain. I came down the mountain.” There is a difference from the 1907 story of the ascent, however. This time Ross did let one of his companions speak, albeit indirectly. He reported Wilson’s visit to the crater prior to the eruption and what he found there, and this did add some interest to the narrative. His account is again prolific in its use of the personal pronoun “I”.

### **3:6:4 A news story - the wreck of the *Penguin***

On Friday, February 12, 1909 the Union Steam Ship Company vessel *Penguin* was wrecked during a storm off Wellington’s south coast with the loss of 72 lives. This made it the greatest maritime disaster of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McLean, 2007). New Zealand newspapers covered the disaster in great detail, including the *Otago Daily Times* for whom Malcolm Ross was freelancing. While the initial reports came from Charles Earle, the editor of the Wellington paper, *The Dominion*, Ross went out to Oterangi Bay himself to gather information and his story appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* three days later on Monday, February 15 under the headline *The scene of the wreck – bodies strewn along the beach – a graphic description*, and bylined “By our special correspondent, Mr. Malcolm Ross”. His story began as follows:

In the teeth of the storm yesterday morning it was no easy task getting out to Oterangi Bay, where it was reported that wreckage and bodies were coming ashore from the *Penguin*, but after some difficulty in obtaining a horse I found myself on the way. I had but the faintest idea

of the route, but I was fortunate in falling in with a party of four - two men from the telegraph department and two from the post office. (M. Ross, M., 1909b, p. 7)

**Figure 16 Men hauling wreckage and a body on beach at Cape Terawhiti, Wellington, after the wreck of the ship *Penguin* in 1909.**

It is immediately clear that Ross will use a narrative style to write this report and will use the personal pronoun “I” as he does so. He described in detail the difficulties of getting to the site of the wreckage and then gave poignant descriptions of the bodies he found on the beach.

I had not ridden more than 100 yards before my attention was attracted to something on the beach. It proved to be a body of a little boy six or seven years of age. A few inches of white legs showing between his black stockings and his shrunk knickers first attracted my attention. Poor little chap, he was such a little fellow, and he had such a big lifebelt for him. It had been hurriedly fastened, for the lower strings were loose... He was a fair haired little chap and his face was purple and swollen, but it was pleasing to note that there was no sign of terror or suffering in his expression. (M. Ross, 1909b, p.7)

In the course of moving along the beach he came across a group of men recovering bodies. One of them was the editor of *The Dominion*, who, Ross said after two hours sleep, had, with the assistance of one stereotyper who could set up type, succeeded in getting out a special edition of his paper with the first printed news of the wreck. He had then taken a tram to Karori and walked over the hills to the scene of the disaster. This rebutted a comment made in 1912 by *The Observer* that Ross managed in his newspaper article to convey the impression that he alone was on the spot when the *Penguin* wreck took place (“Untitled”, 1912e).

The account, which was one of many carried by the *Otago Daily Times* that day, was long, running to around 2800 words. The style is reminiscent of his earlier accounts of the search for Mainwaring Brown. He followed it up with a list of the drowned passengers and in another story scotched rumours that had been circulating about unattended bodies. In the second story in particular, *Landing the bodies in Wellington*, Ross once more took the personal point of view:

Some very wild rumours have been in circulation today, and all sorts of absurd statements have been made about the bodies not being attended to. These may reach you from other sources, and I may as well state on

absolute authority and from my personal knowledge that they are absolutely without the slightest foundation; indeed, some of them seem to be absolute lies, and it is most extraordinary how such stories could have got into circulation. (M. Ross, 1909a, p.7)

It is as if Ross considered he was the authority on the matter and therefore entitled to present his opinion on it. This flew in the face of objective, anonymous reporting as wished for by Rus. It is probably understandable that his first story was written as a first hand account. However, one would have thought, for the second story, which was more of a straight news story, Ross could have found sources who could have commented on whether bodies were being left unattended or not. Ross could then not be accused of being unable “to get outside” his own personality, “and deal with matters from a strictly journalistic point of view” as “Rus” might have done. Another feature of Ross’s two latter reports of the wreck of the *Penguin* was his open support for the Union Steam Ship Company, his old employer. Despite saying he had “no brief” for the company he went on to stoutly defend the local manager. To avoid charges of bias he would have been better to have found another source to comment on the actions of the company over the disaster. In fact, one would have thought Ross would have been able to tap a company representative on the shoulder for this. It was actually rare for Ross to cover a straight news story. It appeared as if he was quite incapable of writing in the functional and anonymous manner required of such journalism. Indeed, an experienced journalist and contemporary of Ross, Tom Mills, said Ross was “an artist in photography” and his wife “had the keener news sense” (Mills, 1865-1955).

### **3:7 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to examine Malcolm Ross’s journalism to determine whether he was a good writer or not. In order to make a judgement a range of examples of his pre-war known work was selected and included interviews, news stories, and personal accounts. His work was then judged in light of the journalistic standards of the time. The time span covered by Ross’s writing was from 1888 when he wrote about the disappearance in Fiordland of Professor Brown to 1909 when Ross covered the wreck of the *Penguin* and wrote about his ascent of Ngauruhoe. The first point to note is that Ross’s work was published and quite often with the rare privilege of his own byline. If we are judging the man by the standards of his own time, he was obviously considered a notable journalist by those who employed his services. His work was clearly valued to be accorded the space and the byline. His style largely reflected the journalism of his

age insofar as it was lengthy, chronological and often flowery and long winded. This often orotund and diffuse writing could be seen in the most prosaic of his accounts. He brought this style to all his writing whether it was interviews, personal accounts, news reports and later his Gallipoli despatches. What made his style distinctive was the prolific use of the personal pronouns. This was not so obvious in his Mainwaring Brown pieces and this perhaps could be explained by the fact he was still a general reporter in a newsroom where the use of the personal pronouns was probably discouraged as poor journalism. Once he became a freelance and “special” correspondent his tendency to insert himself into his stories became more overt. Objectivity did not appear to be a requisite although he must have been taught that in his newsroom experience. In the two interviews selected for examination he could not forebear from pointing out to his readers the part he played in obtaining the interviews and how significant it was that he was able to get them. This did fit with Schudson’s view that an interview in those days was a “journalistic scoop”. Whether he could be called a “hopeless egotist”, as “Rus” implied people were who consistently used the personal pronoun, may be rather harsh, but it does beg the question about Ross’s vanity. This is relevant when one considers Ross’s early work where another of his predilections manifested - his occasional tendency to inflate his importance in the event he was reporting and to downplay the contribution of others. This often left him open to criticism which Ross reacted to quite defensively. This pattern became more evident later in his career when his Gallipoli despatches were published to relentless critique from some quarters. What Ross was, in this writer’s opinion, was not so much a news journalist but one of the country’s first celebrity columnists and that was perhaps why he was given a by-line. This is reinforced by Ross’s partiality for tendering his opinion on whatever he happened to be writing about. Since leaving the *Otago Daily Times* newsroom Ross had basically become a freelance columnist when he was not reporting Parliament. In that case, having a point of view was not as problematic unless he was reporting straight news stories, as for example, the *Penguin* wreck.

As with most of his journalism, Ross chose the narrative or chronological style, and often wrote in a grandiose and, to a modern mind, prolix manner. This was not an unusual style for the period, as previously noted by Scanlan and also Fussell. The latter called it “literary earnestness”. In fact Scanlan cited William Howard Russell’s leisurely style of writing his Crimean War reports where there was no sense of urgency because of the time it would take for the despatch to get to its destination (Scanlan,

2002). Readers were used to this lengthy, chronological, rather opulent style from their journalists. Space was not an issue in 1899 and newspapers seemed prepared to run these long reports. Ross's introductions were very wordy and complex but he did make some attempt occasionally to try and summarise the main angle in them. However, this could have been the work of the subeditors. Schudson has explained that the summary lead and inverted pyramid structure were not common elements in journalism of the 19th century.

In the eyes of J. L. Kelly did Ross meet the criteria of the ideal journalist as described in the previous chapter? Kelly said the distinguishing mark of the potential journalist was the ability to recognise news and knowing what the reader wanted in their newspaper. To begin with, it was clear newspapers were quite ready to publish Ross's descriptive stories up until war broke out and even until the end of 1915. After that his efforts were more problematic. Then the emphasis turned to short, snappy, newsy paragraphs which could be transmitted by telegraph and this was a style Ross seemed unsuited to. The opening up of the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century must have been an exciting time and Ross was in a unique position to write about it and at length. Times changed however, much of the exploration of the country was completed, and Ross had to find something new to write about, apart from his Parliamentary work. War correspondence might be just the thing.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **New Zealand war correspondence and the appointment of the country's first official war correspondent**

#### **4:1 Introduction**

When war broke out in October 1914 between Germany and Great Britain, New Zealand was one of the first countries to offer troops to the Mother Country and the first detachment set sail for Samoa almost immediately. On board one of the ships was Malcolm Ross who had arranged with General Alexander Godley to accompany the 1<sup>st</sup> New Zealand Expeditionary Force to occupy German Samoa. This was his second foray as a war correspondent and while the convoy was preparing to depart the British authorities cabled the New Zealand Government that each member of the Commonwealth could send one journalist to cover the fighting of their troops. On his return Ross stepped into a storm. Opposition papers and politicians were incensed that he, a well-known Reformist newspaperman, had gone to cover the taking of German Samoa. The dispute over this segued into eight months of wrangling over who was to be the journalist to follow the New Zealand troops overseas. But while Ross might have been an obvious choice for the job, there were other journalists who had good credentials who could be considered. Not the least of these was James Shand, who had performed creditably as a correspondent during the South African War of 1899-1902, or Guy Scholefield, who was doing good work as the London correspondent for the syndicate of papers which included *The Press*, the *Otago Daily Times* and the *New Zealand Herald*.

Before examining the course of the imbroglio over the appointment of the country's war correspondent it is timely to discuss the Dominion's tradition of war correspondence so far. This will briefly traverse the New Zealand Wars (1840s-80s), Samoan "troubles" (1899), South African War (1899-1902) and the Boxer rebellion (1899-1901) where New Zealand journalists were active. It will indicate how the various newspapers viewed war correspondence in the period before the outbreak of war in 1914. What it reveals is a strong tradition of war correspondence despite the suggestion to the contrary

made by *The Oxford companion to New Zealand military history* (McGibbon, 2000). For a small country it had a solid history of war correspondence, if an under-researched one, and the establishing of this tradition will be explored. The chapter will then turn to the twists and turns of the appointment of the country's first official war correspondent to World War I.

#### **4:2 Inspiring war correspondents prior to 1899**

Many New Zealanders in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were inspired by the exploits of renowned war correspondents from Britain and elsewhere. Before the New Zealand Wars of the 1860s, William Russell of *The Times*, with his despatches from the Crimean War of 1853-1856 was highly regarded. Later, such journalists as Archibald Forbes, who covered the Franco-Prussian War, in the early 1870s and the Russo-Turkish campaign of 1877 ("Is the war correspondent doomed?", 1904; Lovelace, 1978; Ward, Waller, Trent, Erskine, Sherman & van Doren, 1907-1921) and Bennett Burleigh of the *Glasgow Daily Mail* were published widely back in New Zealand. As well the country was often visited by war correspondents on lecture tours. Probably the most eagerly awaited was Forbes, who was to have arrived in the country in May, 1881 but did not on account of poor health ("European summary", 1881).



**Figure 17 Archibald Forbes - the "King of Specials".**  
(Published in the *Otago Witness* December 9, 1882, page 8.)

Local newspapers followed the fortunes of overseas war correspondents with particular avidity, and no one more so than Forbes. Apparently the papers couldn't get enough of him and his exploits, and carried numerous stories about the famous journalist. Forbes finally turned up in Invercargill to give his first lecture to a full house on November 28 the following year ("Archibald Forbes in New Zealand", 1882). He slowly made his way up to the North Island but seemed to have stepped on a few colonial toes in the process, if a long and impassioned article in the *Otago Witness* of March 1883 was anything to go by ("Colonial heroes", 1883). He left for Melbourne on March 27 ("Telegrams", 1883) and suffice to say not much more was heard in the papers about Mr Forbes.

Another war correspondent to visit was Howard Vincent, the special war correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* with the British army in the Danube during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 ("Mr Howard Vincent", 1884). He toured the country in October 1884. He was followed a year later by George Augustus Sala, of *The Telegraph* ("Passing notes", 1885; Hatton, 1885; Sala, 1885). Phil Robinson, the war correspondent with the *Daily Chronicle* visited New Zealand in 1888 and was extensively reported while in the country ("A celebrated war correspondent", 1888; "Experiences of a war correspondent", 1888; "An interview with Mr Phil Robinson", 1888) as was his very messy divorce late in May 1889 ("Judicial separation", 1889; "Phil Robinson and his troubles", 1889; "Phil Robinson's divorce case", 1889). Next to make a speaking tour was David Christie Murray, war correspondent of the London *Times* ("Mr David Christie Murray", 1890; "Looking at war", 1890) followed by H. M. Stanley, war correspondent in Abyssinia and finder of Livingstone ("The Stanley lectures", 1892). The final war correspondent of note to tour the country prior to the South African War in 1895 and the Samoan "troubles" in 1899 was Frederic Villiers, the veteran correspondent of the *Standard* who witnessed the taking of Khartoum 10 years earlier ("A notable visitor", 1895; "Frederic Villiers", 1895; "A great war correspondent", 1895; "Mr Villiers on New Zealand", 1895). New Zealand newspapers seemed particularly interested in the dangers correspondents faced in the execution of their assignments. They ran stories of arrests, expulsions and deaths of correspondents on overseas battlefields ("Pen and sword", 1863; "A Soudan war correspondent's memorial", 1888; "A martyred correspondent", 1898; "More pressmen arrested", 1898; "A war correspondent in Spanish custody", 1898) Certainly war correspondents in these

days were news in themselves and were seen as romantic, dashing figures living on the edge of danger as they pursued their craft.

#### **4:3 New Zealand war correspondence before 1915**

Did New Zealand have any war correspondents of its own before 1915? It has been suggested in *The Oxford companion to New Zealand military history* (hereafter *The Oxford companion*) that New Zealand had not established a strong tradition of war correspondence (McGibbon, 2000, p. 578). The book claimed most war reporting had been sponsored by the state and that New Zealand war correspondents had been noted “for their journalistic competence rather than for literary talent”. *The Oxford companion* devoted a mere seven sentences to New Zealand war correspondence prior to World War I. It seemed appropriate seeing the author’s major study was Malcolm Ross, the country’s first official war correspondent in World War I, to try and discover whether there was any sort of tradition of war correspondence before his appointment and to test *The Oxford companion’s* assertion. A preliminary investigation seemed to show that newspapers did show some enterprise in independently sending journalists to various conflicts in an endeavour to provide readers with an appreciation of events through the eyes of New Zealanders. Despite the great cost in some instances, men were sent around the country to cover the New Zealand Wars and to South Africa. Newspapers were not just concerned about covering wars which involved the country’s own soldiers. They sent journalists to cover the turbulent events in Samoa in 1899 and in China in 1901. Newspapers often joined together to send a journalist overseas – one way of offsetting costs. More is known about the joint efforts of *The Press*, the *Otago Daily Times*, *Evening Post* and the *New Zealand Herald* in this regard, but future research will surely show that other big papers of the pre-war years such as the *Auckland Star*, and the *New Zealand Times* also employed men to act as war correspondents at various theatres of war. Whether these examples of war correspondence can be described as establishing a tradition will be discussed. The Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary defines the word tradition in two ways that are relevant to this study; as an “inherited established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behaviour (as a religious practice or a social custom) or “a belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable” and as “the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction”.

### 4:3:1 The New Zealand Wars 1840s-1880s

Not much is known about New Zealand journalists' views on war correspondence but there was one indication to be found in a leading article of Dunedin's *Otago Daily Times* on August 28, 1900 under the headline *War correspondents*. The leader noted that war correspondents at the turn of the century were now regarded as a "necessary adjunct to a modern newspaper" but it was rather dismissive of the need to cover the conflict between Maori and white settlers. This does suggest that by 1900 a tradition of war correspondence had developed. This newspaper certainly appeared to think so.

In the early days, when war was waged in various parts of the North Island against the Maori, there were little or no opportunities for the war correspondent and recent enterprising journals in this colony devoted more attention to exploration and the opening up of new country for settlement than to warlike subjects. From time to time representatives of this journal have headed or taken part in many such expeditions. ("War correspondents", 1900)

For New Zealand's oldest daily newspaper, the New Zealand Wars must have slipped its memory if it could consider the Parihaka campaign of 1881 as "the first real opportunity afforded in this colony to the war correspondent". Edward T. Fricker represented the *Otago Daily Times* on that occasion. Of course, there were several northern journalists who covered the New Zealand Wars. A notable one was William Morgan, who worked out of Drury and sent reports to the *Daily Southern Cross* and occasionally the *London Weekly Review*, over a period of about six months (Morris, 1963, p. 7). He is not mentioned in *The Oxford companion*. As a young man Morgan began a journal a few days after leaving England in 1852. This journal formed the basis of the many published accounts he wrote during the war in the Franklin area from July 1863. His despatches were often published in other New Zealand newspapers. *The Daily Southern Cross* had other correspondents writing about the war, such as Charles Williamson. He covered the Waikato and Tauranga campaigns for the paper often with H. Willoughby, the special correspondent representing the Melbourne *Argus* ("Local and general", 1883). As well, the editor, Robert James Creighton, spent some time in the field as a correspondent, according to Guy Scholefield (Scholefield, 1958, p. 78). The opposition paper in Auckland, *The New Zealander*, also fielded a war correspondent, albeit a volunteer one, John Sheehan, who later became Minister of Native Affairs ("Our public men", 1878). None of these men were mentioned in *The Oxford companion*.

Others that were cited by *The Oxford companion* included G.W. Woon, the owner of the *Taranaki Herald*, who the editor believed could lay claim to the title of New Zealand's first war correspondent. "As a member of a volunteer unit, he produced a journal of events based on the fighting in Taranaki from 1860 to 1861" (McGibbon, 2000, p. 578). Guy Scholefield (1958) recorded that Woon served his apprenticeship in the *New Zealander's* Wellington office before headline for Taranaki to become the nominal editor of the *Taranaki Herald*. He bought the paper in 1854 and was the editor for most of the time from then to 1867 (p.129). The regular *Journal of events* he published from 1860 at the commencement of the Waitara conflict was seen by Scholefield as a "valuable source for the history of that period", since Woon was a member of the Rifle Volunteers "and knew what was passing". Other correspondents to cover the New Zealand Wars, said *The Oxford companion*, were W.D. Campbell (*Lyttelton Times*), Gustavus von Tempsky (*Daily Southern Cross*) and John Featon, who published a history of the Waikato campaign in 1879 (Featon, 1879). One could also point to Charles Otto Montrose who made his mark with letters from the front when he was a foot soldier with one of the regiments of the line during the wars. He later became the sub editor of the *Auckland Star* under T. W. Leys ("Untitled", 1907d). There are probably other men (and they were almost always men) as yet unresearched who covered the wars. A common feature of war correspondence of the time appeared to be journalists combining their newspaper work with their own military activity. That is certainly true of Woon, von Tempsky and Montrose. So for *The Oxford companion* to claim Woon as the country's first war correspondent is probably premature considering so little research has been carried out on the subject.

#### 4:3:2 The Samoan "troubles" 1899

*The Oxford companion* made no mention of the war correspondence conducted during this tumultuous period in Samoan history, but at least three journalists were sent to report on the conflict there. One of these was Malcolm Ross, a freelance journalist writing for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press* who, when Parliament was not in session, was free to choose his assignments. Why did Ross go to Samoa? European settlers, in the period 1873 to the mid 1890s, mainly British, German and American, sought land and influence and stirred up Samoan politics that were already riddled with inter-tribal strife (Campbell, 1989, p. 99). Even from 1875 when the first kingship was established, and Malietoa Laupepa became head of state, (Barclay, 1978, p. 114), unrest

continued. Rivalries and jealousies amongst the European settlers saw Laupepa deposed and then reinstated as power seesawed from one group to another.

The three major powers had signed treaties of friendship with Samoa from 1878-79, all keen to keep their trading privileges and other advantages, such as land, coaling stations and naval bases (A. Ross, 1964, p. 173). The Samoans were increasingly concerned about the instability being generated by the Europeans tussling over their country, especially from the German quarter, and appealed to Britain, New Zealand and the United States at various times to take them under their protection. Things came to a head in late 1898 when Laupepa died and a struggle over the succession between Mataafa and Laupepa's son, Tanumafili, ensued (Barclay, 1978, p. 124; "Fighting in Samoa", 1899). German interests supported the former and British and United States interests supported the latter. Ross was sent to Samoa because of New Zealand's interest in the island nation but also, one suspects, because two other large New Zealand dailies, the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Auckland Star*, had sent or were about to send

**Figure 18 James Cowan and Alys Stowell <sup>68</sup> about 1914.**

journalists to Apia. The *New Zealand Herald* reporter was Fred Carr Rollett and he was in Samoa when Ross arrived. Rollett was made the agricultural editor of the *Auckland Weekly News* and *New Zealand Herald* in 1898 ("Obituary: F. Carr Rollett", 1931). He was alluded to in two of Ross's early dispatches (M. Ross, 1899b; 1899f). The other journalist was James Cowan, acting for the *Auckland Star*, who, like Ross, "had a late look-in" to the Samoan situation ("Untitled", 1903b). Cowan, who was fluent in Maori, wrote a very highly regarded official military history of the New Zealand Wars (Cowan, 1925) as well as a book on Maori participation in World War I (Cowan, 1926).

In January of 1899 George Fenwick, the managing director of the *Otago Daily Times*, had received a telegram from Ross in Wellington intimating he proposed leaving at once for Samoa to act as special correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times*, *The Press* and the *Evening Post*. Ross said he estimated that costs would be well under £50.

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<sup>68</sup> Although the caption of this photo says Alys Stowell it is possibly Cowan's wife, Eileen Constance Stowell, one of the daughters of Henry Stowell, of Ngapuhi descent and a noted Maori scholar and translator who eventually becoming an official interpreter in 1908 for the Native Department in Wellington (Colquhoun, 2007). Cowan married Eileen in 1913 (Gibbons, 2007).

Fenwick telegraphed Ross to say the *Otago Daily Times* would share the expenses of the correspondent with the other two papers ("Board of directors minute book", 1895-1901). This is an interesting situation where it appeared to be Ross calling the shots and deciding what news he would cover and contrasts with his later position as official war correspondent in World War I. Fenwick and the *Otago Daily Times* board did not always accede to Ross's applications for special assignments. This time they did, largely because the topic was of such interest to New Zealanders but also, one suspects, because the other large New Zealand dailies, the *New Zealand Herald* and *Auckland Star* had journalists at Apia.

Ross must have left straight away because his first despatch was published on February 14, in the *Evening Post*, (M. Ross, 1899a) and the following day in the *Otago Daily Times* (M. Ross, 1899c) and *The Press* (M. Ross, 1899b) having been sent from Apia on February 8 on the steamer *Mariposa* to Auckland from whence it was then telegraphed to each subscribing paper. It took about five days for the steamer to get from Apia to Auckland, so the news was still fairly fresh when it arrived in New Zealand. This first batch of stories was run over the next few days. That first report was published on the same day in *The Press* and the *Otago Daily Times* but the presentation differed somewhat between the two papers. *The Press* story ran to more than 10,000 words over six columns and was continued the next day with a further 5000 words and the following day with around 3500 words. Ross began his despatch in *The Press* thus:

Another stage in the history of Samoa has been reached, and the curtain having just been rung down on a scene of bloodshed, pillage, and banishments, here now we are again in the midst of a comedy that some Gilbert and Sullivan might very well set to rhyme and music, were it not for the fact that tragedy still looms darkly ahead. (M. Ross, 1899b, pp. 5-6)

The *Otago Daily Times* story began in this manner:

Through seas of molten glass, gently heaving, a summer's sun above, and all around a narrow circle of horizon, at intervals with splendid masses of cloud, our ship, deep laden with coal and cargo, plugged steadily northward, and now our last morning with gorgeous tropic sunrise has come quickly over the placid waters, and the misty island looms ahead. (M. Ross, 1899c, p.4)

It is impossible to say why these intros were so dissimilar. The sub editor of either paper probably had something to do with it. *The Press* introduction was a much more promising one with an attempt at a summary intro but was still rather long – 62 words. As for the *Otago Daily Times* intro, this sounds more like Ross as it appears more contrived and demonstrates his love of poetic phraseology even when about to recount dire occurrences. He then devoted several thousand words to describing the background to the “troubles” before setting off, sometimes with the *Herald* reporter, Rollett, to interview the “rebel King”, Mataafa, the newly installed King, Malietoa Tanu and his vice-King, Tamasese. With all these Ross uses a mixture of reported speech and direct quotes, the latter not common for the times, according to Schudson. Ross then interviewed Dr Raffel, the German president of the municipality, appointed by the Berlin Treaty powers, followed by the German Consul, the Chief Justice, the British Consul and finally the American Consul. Sometimes he mentioned the name of the various officials he spoke to, and other times it was just “the Chief Justice”, or “the American Consul”. (The *New Zealand Herald* reporter tended to do the same.) He did not talk to any of the European or Samoan residents, other than the officials mentioned. There were no “man in the street” interviews. He concluded his marathon effort with his own review of the situation in Samoa. He said, after all that he had learned, he was “forced to the conclusion” that the Berlin Treaty had been “an absolute failure” and that in his view tripartite control would never be a success in Samoa. His solution was for either Britain or the United States to annex the islands, although his and the Islanders’ preference was for Britain to do so. None wanted Germany, said Ross. “The present extraordinary state of things should not be allowed to continue another day, and it would be well if the colonies took some prompt action in the matter.” Ross was echoing the opinion that had been expressed for several decades by New Zealand.

By March 1899 the conflict was becoming more inflamed and the United States and British had resorted to bombarding Samoan villages from their warships out at sea. At the end of March, the New Zealand Government offered the British the use of the Government steamship *Tutanekai* to ship mails to Samoa and asked the British Secretary of State if it wished New Zealand to send 500 armed constabulary and two Maxim guns to help in restoring order (“The Samoan situation”, 1899a). The offer was repeated but speculation, rife in press circles, was that the offer of troops would not be accepted (“Untitled”, 1899a; “War in Samoa”, 1899b). It wasn’t but the use of the *Tutanekai* was (“The crisis in Samoa”, 1899). According to the London correspondent

**Figure 19 Fighting during the Samoan "troubles" of 1899. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

of the *Otago Daily Times*, the offer was being hailed with “delight” in London as evidence of the strength of the Imperial spirit (“The Samoa trouble”, 1899). *The Observer* ridiculed the Auckland Volunteers for their keenness to get into a fight with the Samoans. The paper accused Premier Seddon and Major Murray of the Auckland Volunteers of being “desperately eager to win a cheap renown by embroiling New Zealand in this miserable war against a party of half naked and poorly armed Samoans, who have been egged on by German instigation to stand by what they believe to be their rights” (“April foolery and colonial jingoism”, 1899). The *Taranaki News* (quoted in *The Observer*) asked what Samoan ever did an Auckland Volunteer so much harm that he should be “dying to go over and cut a few native throats” (“Untitled”, 1899d). The Australians were either entertained or sobered by New Zealand’s offer of troops. The *Melbourne Argus* (quoted in *The Press*) said New Zealand’s eagerness to “get mixed up” in the Samoan hostilities was “likely to cause as much amusement as admiration, perhaps more” (“The war in Samoa”, 1899c). Sydney’s *Freeman’s Journal* was sombre. “It would have been a sorry exhibition, to have witnessed troops from New Zealand – the home of democracy – engaged in the task of suppressing an effort of a free people to enthrone the ruler of their choice” (“Untitled”, 1899d).

*The Press* saw the offer of troops in a much more serious and positive vein. If accepted, the offer would “mark a new era” in New Zealand’s history, it said. New Zealand now recognised its responsibilities as a part of the British Empire (“Auckland volunteers for Samoa”, 1899). The *New Zealand Herald* was equally overcome by the import of the offer of troops. “The proposal to dispatch troops to Samoa is a new revelation to the world of the power of the British Empire,” said a leader (“Untitled”, 1899b). It didn’t actually believe the offer would be accepted, however, but the gesture was obviously thought to be enough to show the Mother Country it had New Zealand’s support. These were Imperialistic views when compared with those of *The Observer*, which weighed into the debate with a leader under the headline *The Samoan bungle*.

It is really high time that Great Britain, the United States and Germany retired from Samoa and allowed the natives to try and govern themselves. Since those three powerful Christian nations first meddled in the islanders affairs their mutual jealousies and pitiful bungling have kept the unfortunate aborigines in a state of continual ferment and have

led to much effusion of bloods into a condition closely resembling anarchy. ("The Samoan bungle - How not to govern", 1899, p. 2)

The paper had already published a cartoon on its front page on January 23, 1899 lampooning the three powers (Blomfield, 1899a).<sup>69</sup>

Ross filed extensive despatches in March on the fighting (M. Ross, 1899e, 1899f, 1899g, 1899h, 1899i, 1899j, 1899k, 1899l). He was able to go virtually where he pleased and write what he wanted. As *The Press* commented in one of its leaders on the situation, Ross "very pluckily went to the front, in the very thick of the fighting, and he has sent us a very graphic picture of the conditions under which the war is being carried on" ("The war in Samoa", 1899d). This included tales of lootings, beheadings, bombardments, forays into the jungle and the like.

Gaunt's men had sallied out again after the shelling, and the rebels poured a hot fire at them. The aim was low, and not many bullets came over us. On the left of the road I found the captured force thick with the friendlies. On the right were others, and here I spied the British Consul Dr. Odell from the American flag ship and Mr Hall (the most daring of the interpreters). I crept up to them, and gleaned a few particulars of the position, but it was difficult conversing in ordinary tones so loud and continuous was the rattle of the rifles. Lieutenant Gaunt was just in front of our fort and only 150 yards from the enemy. He had crawled on his stomach to within 30 yards of the rebel entrenchment. He found it thick and strong, with loopholes for the rifleman, and it extended a long way through the bush. I attempted to take a couple of photographs, and then dodged back to cover. A wounded man went past on the back of a comrade. Another dropped and was hurried back by four of his mates, with a nasty wound in his side. The doctor dressed it hurriedly, and the man was carried off the field. The firing got hotter and another man fell. A bullet clipped a twig off a tree overhead and another splashed on the stone wall just in front of us. Crash went a volley from our Martini-Enfields in front, and crash with a somewhat deeper sound came an answering volley from the Sniders and Springfields of our white-capped foes, whom we rarely by any chance saw, so dense was the forest and so thick their stone wall. And all the time there was a continuous fusillade of stray shots. A rebel volley sounded more to our right. Were we going to be outflanked? Both sides were pumping lead now with a vengeance. Gaunt's 120 was being thinned out. It was apparent that they could not take the second fort. (M. Ross, 1899y, p.6)

This is a lively description of some of the action that has clearly been witnessed first hand by Ross. This passage should be compared with later despatches Ross made from

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<sup>69</sup> Another appeared on May 13 after the news of the three-man commission being appointed to find a solution to the situation (Blomfield, 1899b).

Gallipoli and the Western Front. He rarely recounted such first hand episodes as this. It was after one of Ross's despatches in April depicting the bombardment of Samoan villages by British and United States warships that Wellington's *Evening Post* came out strongly against what was happening in Samoa, calling it an "international scandal". The following editorial, which appeared on April 29 was incandescent in its rage against the bombardment "from which the three Powers concerned can hardly emerge with ought but discredit".

Apart from the evident desire of our naval men from the first to "have a smack at" somebody, and the uncompromising attitude of the German officials, the organised attacks upon the Samoans by the united British and American forces have been both inglorious and ineffective. But the most deplorable, if not barbarous, part of the whole business has been the wanton destruction of the lives and property of the natives by the combined warships of the English speaking powers along the whole line of coast within reach of modern naval artillery. ("The Samoan scandal", 1899, p. 4)

*The Press*, in comparison to *The Observer* and *Evening Post*, was only slightly more muted in its view of the "troubles" in Samoa. This was not to say the paper followed the events there with any less interest – in the course of about five months *The Press* ran 11 leaders on the topic. For example, this from a leader on the Berlin Treaty which had established the form of government reigning in Samoa: "It is safe to say that in the whole history of diplomacy a more ridiculous arrangement was never before made, and a more farcical form of government was never set up" ("The war in Samoa", 1899a.). *The Press* leaders complained about British "indifference" "apathy" and "supineness" and the "nobility" of the Samoan people and regretted the bloodshed but not in such forceful and condemning tones as the other two papers ("Germany and Samoa", 1899; "The news from Samoa", 1899; "The Samoan people", 1899; "The situation in Samoa", 1899). The *New Zealand Herald* was restrained in its view of the "troubles" in Samoa. Its many leading articles also criticised the Berlin Treaty and urged Premier Seddon to assume the lead in getting "a united representation from all the Australasian colonies" and "in a respectful but forcible way" point out to the Secretary of State the impossibility of securing peaceable government in Samoa under the Treaty of Berlin". The treaty had "broken down". The situation would never be settled "so long as three powers insist upon having a hand in the administration of affairs" ("Affairs of Samoa", 1899; "Samoa and the Powers", 1899). In April Ross's reports show no signs of losing impetus (M. Ross, 1899m; 1899n; 1899o; 1899p; 1899q; 1899r; 1899s; 1899t; 1899u)

and more despatches followed in May when the commission of three, representing the United States, Britain and Germany, was sent out to investigate the situation and report back. Ross was plainly unhappy about the order to cease hostilities and keen to see the fighting continued.

The Moana, which arrived from New Zealand on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, brought news of the appointment of a High Commission to inquire into the Samoan troubles. In the meantime, however, the position had been further aggravated by the attitude and actions of the rebels. The news that there was to be a cessation of hostilities therefore came at a very inopportune moment. Just, in fact, as the rebels were on the point of being thoroughly whipped. In another week or ten days the Americans and the British would have solved the difficulty, the rightful King would have been secure on the throne, the Supreme Court and the Berlin Treaty upheld, and the peace of Samoa practically assured for many years to come. (M. Ross, 1899u, p.5)

This passage is a very clear indication of Ross's stance revealing him as a thoroughly unreconstructed British Imperialist.

By early May Ross is winding down his despatches as an armistice is declared (M. Ross, 1899v; 1899w; 1899x; 1899y; 1899z; 1899A; 1899B). His final report from Samoa was published in the *Otago Daily Times* on May 20 and ran over two and a half columns or around 5500 words. He began it by quoting Rudyard Kipling's "Take up the white man's burden". This appears to be an account from an earlier despatch and is written in quite a light hearted manner, with further quotes from poems sprinkled throughout. He intersperses factual chronicling of the carnage of war with lyrical descriptions of the countryside.

Already some of our men are lying 40 fathoms deep outside the reef, and others, officers and men, with severed heads, are resting beneath the painted headboards of a new cemetery in Mulinuu, heedless alike of bugle calls, the crash of the Nordenfeldts, or the booming of the big 6 inch guns. The night is inky black, but the searchlights of the warships send their long gleaming fingers athwart the bay, and houses and palms and the white surf on the outer reefs are every now and then revealed with startling suddenness from out of the gloom of the tropic night. The talea trees stand stiff by the roadside, the fronds of the tall palms wave gently in the night air, or a ripe mango flops down beside us, challenged every few yards, we walk on. The waves of the great lagoon come to the very street, and between their everlasting sighing we can hear the distant diapason of the long Pacific rollers as they churn themselves into foam on the outer reef. (M. Ross, 1899B, p. 2)

This is the leisurely, literary, and often long winded style so beloved of the time and of which Ross was an adherent par excellence. We are reminded that he was writing for an audience which did not have the benefit of any illustrations. Writers felt they had to paint word pictures for their readers. It is presumed that Ross then returned to New Zealand in time for the next session of Parliament.

What of Ross's efforts in Samoa? He initiated his assignment to Samoa which says something for his understanding of newsworthy events and his desire to be there to report them. He may also have seen it as an opportunity to further his journalistic career, as the exploration of the young colony was largely complete and he needed to find another avenue for his writing. He was fortunate that in January 1899 he was not needed for his Parliamentary duties because the House was in recess. In the time he was away he wrote thousands of words on the Samoan "troubles", largely from the British, and so

**Figure 20 Naval machine gun crew with maxim gun, during the Samoan civil war 1899.  
Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

New Zealand, point of view. He allied himself firmly with the British and United States military and was permitted to accompany officers on many of their missions and was often in the thick of the fighting. Ross would never again have such license to act or to write. There appeared to be little formal censorship. His despatches were lengthy affairs, minutely detailed, and often with graphic depictions of the actions he witnessed interspersed with flights of literary fancy extolling the beauty of the surroundings – a recognisable Ross peccadillo. He did not otherwise tend to romanticise war. However, the British or American soldiers were always "brave", "daring", "cool", "fearless" or "bold" in action. His reports were liberally sprinkled with the personal pronouns. Rollett, the *New Zealand Herald* man, also wrote long pieces and occasionally used the personal pronoun, so Ross was not alone in that. His writing did not differ in style from any other sort of writing he had done before going to Samoa. His despatches were merely an identifiable extension of his usual form of journalism which had been formulated over the 18 years since joining the *Otago Daily Times* in 1881. Ross's Samoan experience in 1899 was probably one of the reasons he was chosen 15 years later to accompany the 1<sup>st</sup> New Zealand Expeditionary Force when it was sent to capture German Samoa.

Initially Ross talked to all the leading figures in the conflict, but after that concentrated solely on reporting from the one side. By allying himself with the British and Americans, and the Malietoa party, he therefore made no effort to stand above the conflict and take a neutral position in his reporting. With all the freedoms he experienced in Samoa Ross did not take the opportunity to move beyond the one point of view. In some of his reports Ross could not forebear proffering his own opinion on the state of affairs he had been witnessing. When he did, these opinions were largely reflective of those of the New Zealand Government and of his own newspapers - *The Press*, *New Zealand Herald* and the *Otago Daily Times*. *The Evening Post* appeared to be one of the only major daily newspapers which held a more oppositional view of the conflict. As well as written accounts Ross also supplied photographs, in particular from his first interviews with all the leading actors in the unfolding drama. Thirteen of these were published in *The Weekly Press* of February 22, 1899 (M. Ross, 1899d).

### **4:3:3 The South African War 1899-1902**

With a second war looming between the Transvaal and Great Britain in 1899 George Fenwick of the *Otago Daily Times* was writing in July to the principals of the *New Zealand Herald*, *New Zealand Times* and *The Press* about the possibility of jointly sending a war correspondent to South Africa. Fenwick put forward as a candidate, Major D. M. Kennedy, who had spent four and a half years in South Africa. He estimated the cost for a correspondent for six months to be from £380-£400 (Fenwick, 1899-1902). Nobody was expecting the war, if it occurred, to last very long. The *Auckland Star* leader writer, possibly editor T. W. Leys, hinted at what readers might be looking for from their correspondents at the “seat of war”.

When we take up the papers to read the war news it will be a minor matter how the fortune of battle has turned, compared with the least information as to how our boys have stood their ground. It will not be of General This or Major That we shall be most anxious to hear, but of names familiar to our mouths as household words - men of Auckland, Waikato, Coromandel and the rest. (“Untitled”, 1899g, p. 4.)

In that same paper of October 9 among the Auckland contingent of volunteers being farewelled before embarking for Wellington was Private Claude Jewell, 27, second class shot, of the Auckland Mounted Rifles. He was to make his name writing despatches from South Africa for the *Auckland Star*, thus continuing the tradition of soldier journalists. In a mirror of the Samoan conflict New Zealand had offered troops

to support Britain in South Africa in September but this time the offer was accepted and troops left the country on October 21 (Crawford, 2000, pp. 59-63). This was the first time in the country's history that New Zealand soldiers had left for service overseas. New Zealand contributed 10 separate contingents of around 6500 volunteers.<sup>70</sup> *The Observer* noted in November 1899 that two Australian pressmen had been sent to South Africa to write up the war for the big dailies, Donald Macdonald, and W. J. Lambie. Other journalists to cover the war for Australia were bush poet and journalist A. B. "Banjo" Paterson and A.A.G. "Smiler" Hales. *The Observer* was predictably scathing about what New Zealand dailies might do.

The cheapest thing in the "special war correspondent" line is alleged to have been accomplished by a big New Zealand daily. Directly it heard that the Government was despatching three tailors away in the SS *Waiwera* to complete the contingent's uniform on the trip to the Cape, it bespoke the literary services of one of the snips. Of course he will be paid according to measure and is expected to turn out slops of stuff. It may be shoddy but still it will sell the paper all right. ("Untitled", 1899h, p. 6)

Certainly the paper was not far off the mark as regards the newspapers' feelings about the expense of sending correspondents overseas. The minutes of the board of the *Otago Daily Times* recorded the decisions made regarding New Zealand newspapers sending correspondents to South Africa ("Board of directors minute book", 1895-1901). In September the board discussed whether to send a correspondent and noted that it had had received an offer from Major Kennedy to do the job. However board members believed the cost of sending a special correspondent to the Transvaal would turn out to be too expensive. They decided to try and arrange with one of the Melbourne papers for the right to use their war correspondence. At the end of September, George Fenwick wrote to the editor of the *Cape Times* to arrange for correspondence to be sent to Dunedin in the event of war breaking out. This was felt by board members to be more satisfactory than using any of the Melbourne papers or than sending their own man. However by mid October and after war had broken out, the big three papers, the *Otago Daily Times*, *The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald* were again in talks about jointly sending correspondents to South Africa. The latter two papers pressed to send two people and picked J. Elder Moultray, a well known painter from Dunedin, as war artist, and a Colonel Morris. Neither Kennedy nor Morris actually went to South Africa but

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<sup>70</sup> One of these was the author's great uncle Trooper David Bruce, 21, of the 7<sup>th</sup> contingent, who died with 23 others at one of the last major battles of the campaign at Langverwacht Hill, (Bothasberg) which ended on February 24 1902.

provided expert military commentary for opposing papers as the war progressed (“All sorts of people”, 1901b). Strangely no mention was made in the *Otago Daily Times* board minutes of James Shand, who accompanied Moultray with the 1<sup>st</sup> contingent. *The Evening Post* did, however.

We have despatched two special correspondents (Mr Moultray, of Dunedin, and Mr Shand, of Auckland) to the scene of operations, with instructions to keep us especially well posted up in the doings of the New Zealand Contingent, and we have no doubt their letters will be looked for with the keenest interest. One of these correspondents is on the troopship *Waiwera* and the other is travelling in a merchant steamer by way of Australia. We have made other arrangements for securing promptly general news relating to the war, and the Press Association has also engaged a correspondent, so that as far as human foresight can judge the readers of the *Evening Post* ought to be well served with news. (“The Evening Post's war correspondents”, 1899, p. 4)

James Shand had been a court reporter for the Dunedin *Evening Star* (Thomas, 1960, p. 26), and was later to be the chief sub editor of the *New Zealand Times* (Miller, 1967, p. 40) and editor of the *Thames Star* (Scholefield, 1958, p. 113).

The cost of sending correspondents was a big consideration for the New Zealand newspapers. It was expected to be around £500-£600 for all the papers in the syndicate. The *Otago Daily Times* board agreed to send correspondents. However, all did not go smoothly for the chosen men.

We were somewhat unfortunate in having Mr Moultray as well as our representative with the second contingent being struck down with enteric fever; but Mr J. A. Shand, our second representative with the first contingent, has admittedly done good work although he too was laid aside for a few weeks from the effects of the dreaded enteric. (“War correspondents”, 1900)

By March 1900 Moultray had been invalided back to New Zealand. He had been attached to Lieutenant-General French's cavalry division in the six months he was in South Africa but after becoming prostrated with fever was warned that a second bout could be fatal (Shand, 1900a; 1900b; “Back from the front”, 1900). Some of his sketches of the war were published in the *Otago Witness* (Moultray, 1900a; 1900b).

**Figure 21 Horses being shod at the camp at Newtown Park, Wellington, during the South African War 1899-1902. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

The directors of the United Press Association considered the possibility of sending a “special” journalist to South Africa but were also concerned about the likely cost. They were also aware the major papers were sending correspondents. After much discussion the directors decided to appoint Major (Captain) William Madocks of No 2 Company of the 1st contingent to act as their correspondent at £3 a week for one to two columns of news specifically of the New Zealand troops. After seven months this arrangement was rescinded as unsatisfactory. Madocks’ despatches arrived late if at all. “There are now so many correspondents deluging the New Zealand press with letters that there is no necessity for us to continue,” said association manager A. W. Attack, “especially as they send much later news”(United Press Association, 1899-1900).

According to the *New Zealand Free Lance*, W. D. Campbell, of the *Lyttelton Times*, also went to report the South African War but had returned to New Zealand by September 1900 (“All sorts of people”, 1900). In February of that year *The Lyttelton Times* and the *Otago Daily Times* had decided to send a photographer out to the Transvaal and F. B. Hughes was picked for the job (see photo below), but his work was considered unsatisfactory by Fenwick. In fact Fenwick was generally unhappy with the expenses his paper was incurring over war correspondence by the end of 1900. Not only had the paper expended about £600 for war correspondence from South Africa not including £242 for the cost of the telegraph services (nearly all despatches were telegraphed) the paper was also paying Major Kennedy for his expert commentary back home and its share of Arthur Adams’ despatches from China about the Boxer Rebellion. And the end of the war was still not in sight – so much for a short campaign. By the middle of 1900 Fenwick had had enough and demanded that Hughes, Shand and Adams



**Figure 22 F. B. Hughes, the photographer sent by the *Otago Daily Times* and other New Zealand papers to South Africa.**

**(Published in the *Otago Witness* March 22, 1900, p. 34.)**

be recalled from their various theatres of war (Fenwick, 1900-1901). Hughes had been a “severe disappointment, involving a big expenditure for practically nothing”, and while he thought Shand’s letters were “full of interest” he suggested in August to W. H. Triggs of *The Press* that Shand should be recalled as well. “An occasional letter from one of the other Correspondents would probably suffice,” he told Triggs. Shand eventually returned in late December 1900 and Hughes in late January 1901. Another possible war correspondent was a Dr Purdie, said by Fenwick, writing to W. H. Triggs of the *Press*, in January of 1901, to have been appointed as correspondent with the 6th contingent by Gresley Lukin of the *Evening Post* (Fenwick, 1900-1901).

Shand’s work was well received in New Zealand and he was often awarded a byline for his despatches, a rare honour. The *New Zealand Free Lance* spoke highly of Shand.

Mr. Shand of the *Thames Star*, who has been awarded the African war medal, was an energetic war correspondent who supplied many New Zealand newspapers with “copy” during the opening stages of the war. Oftentimes, when there was no help for it, Mr. Shand was very near the firing line, and whatever happened he was ever most energetic in getting the true points of an engagement from men who were in it. (“All sorts of people”, 1901c, p. 3)

One sentence in *The Oxford companion* outlined the New Zealand press’s contribution to war correspondence in the South African War. It only mentioned James Shand and J.

Elder Moultray and failed to mention Claude Jewell (McGibbon, 2000, p. 578). Jewell had “laid up a good deal of experience of the strenuous work of colonisation in Australia before coming to New Zealand” (“Pars about people”, 1910). As Trooper No 149 with the 1st contingent he wrote numerous reports for the *Auckland Star*. “His ‘copy’ was written in a bright and breezy style and attracted considerable popular attention and commendation,” said *The Observer*. They were also remembered for their “pith and humour” (“Untitled”, 1907d). On his return from the war he went to the literary staff of *The Observer*, serving at one stage as editor, then transferred to Wellington and became a sub editor on the *New Zealand Free Lance*, on the *New Zealand Times* and thence to Taranaki “to manufacture inky thunderbolts” for the *Taranaki Daily News* (“Untitled”, 1911c). He returned to Auckland and wrote for the *Auckland Star* until his death in 1936 (Stowers, 1992, p. 149). Certainly both Jewell and Shand established a tradition of war reporting that met the second criteria of the Merriam-Webster dictionary’s definition quoted on page 115.

#### **4:3:4 The “Boxer” rebellion 1900**

At the same time as New Zealand soldiers were fighting in South Africa, nations were attempting to quell a rebellion that had broken out in China against foreign influence in that country. Russian troops flooded into China and Manchuria, crushing the rebels, the so-called Boxers. The unrest was at its most intense in 1900 from about early May to the middle of September. In June George Fenwick received a letter from the editor of *The Press* wondering whether their papers, along with the *Evening Post* and the *New Zealand Herald*, should send a special correspondent to China. If the costs were shared it was thought this might be £100 each. The *Otago Daily Times* board agreed (“Board of directors minute book”, 1895-1901). As mentioned previously Arthur Adams, the son of a Dunedin surveyor and nephew of E. T. Gillon, previously of Wellington’s *Evening Post*, was chosen in July as correspondent in China. *The Oxford companion* does not mention Adams or this Chinese conflict. In October, three months after Adams had left for China, Fenwick was writing to Triggs suggesting that Adams should be recalled “within reasonable time” (Fenwick, 1900-1901). He obviously felt the £69.15.0 which had already been spent on Adams was sufficient. But Adams was still in China in January 1901 laid up with enteric fever and malaria. While in China Adams reached Peking and met up with Dr George Morrison, the correspondent of the *London Times*. He also joined the Victorian contingent on a 130 mile march into the interior. By the time he returned to Tientsin he had fallen ill and spent two months in bed (“Back from

China”, 1901).<sup>71</sup> He returned to New Zealand on the *Mokoia* on March 21, 1901. Malcolm Ross interviewed Adams, an old Dunedin friend, as he passed through Wellington on his way south (M. Ross, 1901a).

#### 4:3:5 War correspondence and the Russo-Japanese War 1904

The next war to be given maximum exposure in daily newspapers round the world but to which no New Zealand journalists appeared to have been sent was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. However, it has been included because of its implications for the future of war correspondents. In January of 1904, with war looking likely between Japan and Russia, the *Otago Daily Times* was contemplating whether it should send a correspondent and photographer to cover the conflict. Fenwick was willing to spend £250. As always, he discussed this with his fellow editors on *The Press*, *New Zealand Herald* and *Evening Post* – the syndicate called the New Zealand Associated Press. By mid February for some reason the arrangement fell through (“Board of directors minute book”, 1901-08). Nevertheless, watching events from southern latitudes, the *Otago Daily Times* saw ominous signs for war correspondents in that conflict. In a leading article the paper mourned what it saw as the demise of this breed of journalist. After a brief existence of 50 years, and a string of notable war correspondents ranging from Russell, through Forbes and George Steevens to Bennett Burleigh, the day of the war correspondent was over, the paper feared.

...brilliant as has been the record of the past, and however undoubted the many services rendered to the public, there are ominous signs that the day of the war correspondent is done, and that his place will be filled by agencies leaving little loophole for the exercise of the individuality which makes for fame. The influences at work in this direction do not signify any abatement in journalistic enterprise, but are traceable first and foremost to the development of increasing facilities for telegraphic communication, and secondly to the growing secretiveness of governments leading to the imposition of such restrictions as render the best efforts of war correspondents practically futile. (“Is the war correspondent doomed? ”, 1904, p. 6)

The paper was referring in particular to the Russian and Japanese combatants’ refusal to allow journalists to accompany their armies. According to Philip Knightley (2000), the Japanese “imposed a stifling censorship and kept the band of international

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<sup>71</sup> Falling ill while being a war correspondent seemed to be one of the hazards of the job, as Ross was later to discover.

correspondents cooling their heels in Tokyo's best hotels"(p. 64). The *Otago Daily Times* leader continued.

... only the veriest outline of the operations has been allowed to trickle through, and this for the most part obtained from official sources, supplemented occasionally by hearsay descriptions of some of the more important encounters. In no case has there been any opportunity for brilliant accounts of the battles from the pen of eye witnesses. ("Is the war correspondent doomed? ", 1904, p. 6)

The paper added that of later years, and especially during the South African War, there had been a growing feeling that the great daily newspapers were not receiving adequate return for the large sums of money spent by them on special war correspondents.

The restrictions imposed by the war office authorities were doubtless due to the large number of correspondents sent out and the increasing competition for news and the Censor naturally favoured the press agencies which supplied a number of journals rather than isolated effort on behalf of a single paper. The result was to discount largely the value of a special war correspondent. ("Is the war correspondent doomed? ", 1904, p. 6)

Another factor, said the *Otago Daily Times*, unknown in the days of Russell and Forbes, was that a despatch, arriving weeks after the telegraphic account of any event, to some extent lost its interest.

Nowadays the reading public has been educated into having its news red hot: what they want is the facts, and they are not so very particular as to how those facts are served up. Plus the brief telegraphic summary robs of half its interest the war correspondent's most vividly written account, and only an exceptionally gifted man, such, for instance, as Steevens, of the *Daily Mail*,<sup>72</sup> can depend upon interesting the public. ("Is the war correspondent doomed? ", 1904, p. 6)

Readers of this editorial might have remembered these comments when considering Ross's efforts as a war correspondent in Gallipoli and France during World War I. Nobody seemed to consider that he was an "exceptionally gifted" writer and so they might have anticipated he would have problems if his accounts were telegraphed.

The editorial said it was too early to correctly weigh up the arguments for and against such strict secrecy regarding the operations of the rival armies of Japan and Russia as to

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<sup>72</sup> George Warrington Steevens was appointed by the *Daily Mail* as war correspondent to South Africa in 1899 and died at the siege of Ladysmith in 1900.

justify the rigid exclusion of all war correspondents from the field of battle. While the success of an important campaign might be endangered by the premature disclosure of plans, and a general may be occasionally embarrassed by the adverse criticism of a newspaper man, “yet posterity has proved the value of independent testimony when the methods of belligerents are called into question”. The writer of this leader was remarkably prescient and astute in his observations. He was foreshadowing many of the problems the official war correspondent was to face in World War I. One feels he was also wistfully farewelling the romantic notions of the war correspondent as hero.

#### **4:3:6 Last foray of an independent war correspondent - Samoa**

New Zealand became involved in World War I after Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. As evidenced in previous conflicts which concerned the Mother Country, New Zealand was quick to offer her military services. In fact, it was the first of the ex-colonies to do so, if a story in the *New Zealand Herald* is to be believed (“New Zealand's help - First offered”, 1914). Britain was as equally quick to accept and secretly charged New Zealand forces with capturing German Samoa (Crawford, 2000, p. 174). When the two troopships set forth on August 15, on board one of them, Troopship No 1, the *Monowai*, was Malcolm Ross, probably still basking in the glow of publishing his book, *Climber in New Zealand* a few months before. German Samoa was successfully taken without resistance on August 29. The press obviously chafed under the censorship restrictions which forbade them even speculating where the troops may have been sent. A *New Zealand Herald* leader bemoaned the “dense fog which enshrouds every area under the control of the military and naval authorities” (“The secrecy of war”, 1914). The Governor even had to appeal to the nation to understand the need for secrecy and not spread rumours about the destination of the NZEF (“Movements of forces”, 1914). Official acknowledgment of the action was finally received by the New Zealand public via London on Monday afternoon August 31 in the *Evening Post* and by the *New Zealand Herald* and *Otago Daily Times* the next morning (“Samoa and the war”, 1914; “Untitled”, 1914e).

The *New Zealand Herald* correspondent in Noumea stole a march on Ross and sent off a report, published in the paper on September 3, describing the troops’ rendezvous at New Caledonia (“Britain rules Samoa”, 1914). Why didn’t Ross do the same? In his first report he commented on calling in at Noumea:

One might have posted news of our expedition here, but so far as I was concerned, I decided to play the game and say nothing. Letters sent from here might fall into the hands of the enemy, and, so as far as our expedition was concerned, might give away the whole show. (M. Ross, 1914b, p. 7; 1914c, p. 9)

Michael Field in his two books, *Mau* (1984), and *Black Sunday* (2006) pilloried Ross for his “patriotic self-censorship” and classed him as a “fairly poor journalist” for not sending off a story, saying that at that stage there was no censorship (Field, 1984, pp. 6-7; 2006, p. 31). However Field was wrong, there was censorship and it had been imposed very soon after war had been declared (“War in Europe”, 1914, p. 380). And the stance of New Zealand newspapers on censorship was made quite clear on several occasions, notably by *The Press*. In a leader in *The Press*, in April 1915 the writer (probably editor Triggs) claimed it was

...the supreme duty of journalists to sink their own feelings and waive their own views in order that nothing might appear in the newspapers likely to impair the discipline of the New Zealand force, or give any assistance or encouragement to the enemy. This is a democratic country and we all regard it as our birthright in times of peace to express our views and ventilate our grievances in public and to do so through the medium of the public Press. By this time, however, it should be sufficiently plain to all of us that with the Empire at war, many of our peace time ideas must go by the board and that the safety of the country and the success of our arms must be made the first consideration. (“The press and the war”, 1915, p. 8)

Readers had to wait a day after Ross’s return on September 7 to read the first of his

**Figure 23 New Zealand soldiers, on board a troopship en route to Samoa 1914. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

despatches (M. Ross, 1914b; 1914c). He also submitted an official report to the Government on the taking of Samoa and this was forwarded to the United Press Association.<sup>73</sup> Both aroused a political hornets’ nest on publication. The rivalry between political parties and their respective newspapers erupted in Parliament when it was learned that Ross had stolen his journalistic confreres’ thunder by accompanying the NZEF to Samoa. At the last minute, he had made arrangements to go with the troops

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<sup>73</sup> He also found time to write a one and a half column article for *The New York Times* which was sent from Wellington on September 19 and bylined “by Malcolm Ross FRGS, special correspondent of *The New York Times*” (M. Ross, 1914h).

with the commandant of the New Zealand forces, General Alexander Godley. In his dispatch Ross indicated how hurried the arrangements were.

There was little time left for packing, all one could do was to hurriedly throw a few garments and odds and ends into a suitcase and make a dash for the wharf in a taxi, but the troopships had already gone into the harbour, after the hurried farewell to the force at the Basin Reserve, and we had to skirmish round the waterfront in the dark until we located the launch that was taking General Godley back from the troopers. The ships were invisible in a grey mist that had settled down upon the harbour. The launch nosed her way through this, and soon I found myself at Troopship No 1. (M. Ross, 1914b, p.7)

Ross had obviously informed either Fenwick or Triggs of what was happening before he left, because the minutes of the *Otago Daily Times* board on August 21, while Ross was sailing to Samoa, said that arrangements had been made with him to leave New Zealand with the 1st NZEF as special correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times*, *The Press*, *The Dominion* and *New Zealand Herald* with the salary to be £8 per week plus expenses of £10 towards photographic equipment. Ross was expected to be absent about two months ( "Board of directors minute book", 1908-1917). He was only away for three weeks, which must have gladdened the hearts of the newspapers' accountants. He wrote four very long narrative pieces which were published in the *Otago Daily Times* (M. Ross, 1914b, 1914d; 1914e; 1914f;), parts of which were also used in the other papers. Some of Ross's photos were also used (M. Ross, 1914g).

While Ross's masters may have been happy, the opposition politicians and the opposition papers were not. Opposition leader Joseph Ward accused Massey in Parliament on the day that Ross's reports were published of discrimination in favour of Reformist newspapers and of favouritism towards Ross. If journalists were to go with the Expeditionary Force, they should be representative of all sections of the press in the Dominion, said Ward. "...there was a feeling at the moment that there was a one-sided arrangement being made in the special interests of the Reform Party as far as the Press was concerned." Ward wanted to know how Ross was selected to go to Samoa ("Expeditionary force: Press correspondent", 1914). Massey replied that after the troops

**Figure 24 New Zealand troops in Western Samoa, August, 1914. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

had been farewelled he returned to the House in the evening to find Ross on the bureau telephone trying to arrange for a launch to take him out to one of the transports lying in the stream. Ross told Massey he had arranged with General Godley to go with the 1<sup>st</sup> NZEF, apparently on his own initiative. When Ross returned he called to see the Prime Minister and agreed to supply a report of the action in Samoa to the Government. This was written up and sent to Massey that day. Ward was still not convinced and claimed that if a journalist was to accompany New Zealand forces then his reports should be made available to all the country's newspapers. Massey was satisfied that this had been done because he had sent the report to the United Press Association which then distributed it. It was pointed out that at least two other journalists had applied to go to Samoa, although the Government denied any knowledge of these applications. They were said to be H.T.B "Bertie" Drew, one time owner of the *Manawatu Times*,<sup>74</sup> and an Ashburton journalist, Mr Choate.

In a letter to the editor of *The Press*, M. L. Reading, the editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, complained about the privileges which *The Press* seemed to enjoy in obtaining Government news before it was available to other newspapers and the Press Association. He was also incensed about Ross going to Samoa.

When the Advance Expedition left for Samoa the editors of the bulk of the newspapers were not permitted to know - in confidence, as they might reasonably have been - the destination of the force and were even requested by the Defence authorities to publicly deny that the troops were leaving for Samoa. Yet the Wellington correspondent of *The Press* was allowed to accompany the expedition ostensibly as a guide - or as General Godley put it "a sort of guide" - but as you are aware - the correspondent did not guide the troops, he merely witnessed the occupation of German Samoa and returned immediately to supply the story to the syndicate of newspapers employing him. (Reading, 1915, p. 8)

Massey responded to this criticism by saying that no information about the action against Samoa was to be supplied to anyone "as directed by Imperial Government". As for Ross going to Samoa

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<sup>74</sup> More will be heard of Drew later, as a possible contender for the position of official war correspondent to the NZEF.

...whatever was done in this connexion was an arrangement made between General Godley, Colonel Logan<sup>75</sup> and Mr Ross who was the gentleman referred to. I was not consulted. I do not know whether even the Minister of Defence was consulted or not but I do know that Mr Ross was mentioned in despatches by the Officer in Command of the Expeditionary Force as having been of great service to him in connexion with the occupation of Samoa. (Massey, 1915a, p. 8)

One of the reasons Ross might have been considered for this expedition was because he had knowledge of Samoa from his stint as correspondent there during 1899, which meant Ross was let into the secret of where the NZEF was going. Why would he be going as a “guide” otherwise? Obviously Ross had the trust of the military for him to be informed of the destination of the troops when few others knew. Another point is that he was on the spot and available at short notice. He already had the confidence of the Government and the senior military men. Modern day journalists would applaud his initiative in seeking a berth on the troopship.

**Figure 25 Colonel Robert Logan Apia, Samoa, August 29, 1914. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

The political grandstanding that occurred around Ross’s Samoan assignment did raise important concerns regarding coverage of the war for the New Zealand public. It is clear from the records of the Parliamentary debates that the Government had given very little thought to the ramifications surrounding the sending of press correspondents with the Expeditionary Force. The early September debates in Parliament were an intimation of the controversy that was about to erupt in the following months. Because at the same time as the NZEF was preparing to set out for Samoa, the New Zealand Government was being informed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated August 12 that if it so desired, one war correspondent, representing the whole press of the country, could accompany the British Forces in the field, such correspondent being subject to military regulations (“Expeditionary force: war correspondent”, 1914). Discussion in New Zealand over subsequent months revolved around which New Zealand journalist was going to get the job, how he was going to get it, who would pay him, how he would send his despatches back to New Zealand and for whom he would be writing. Whereas before it had been a decision made by individual newspapers whether to send journalists to cover conflicts, this time it was to be a different story. One journalist alone was to go

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<sup>75</sup> Colonel Robert Logan was the officer in command of the expedition (McGibbon, 2000, p. 475).

and whoever it was, he was going to end up a servant of the Government, and by association, of the military authorities, and not any individual newspaper. A new tradition of war correspondence was about to commence.

#### **4:4 The selection of New Zealand's first official war correspondent**

Guy Scholefield, on the outbreak of war in August, had already anticipated that correspondents would need to be accredited to cover the conflict. An experienced southern journalist, he was the London correspondent for the syndicate of "Government" papers – the *New Zealand Herald*, *Press*, *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Post* (New Zealand Associated Press) the same organisation that Ross wrote for. His application to the Imperial War Office for accreditation was approved by the New Zealand Government and submitted by the High Commissioner, Thomas Mackenzie, to the War Office. He was one of the first to gain accreditation and adopted, along with the other correspondents, the officers' khaki kit without badges or cross belt (Scholefield, n.d.). This occurred in mid August. When news of this reached New Zealand, again there was uproar. The Opposition was furious. Hot words were exchanged in Parliament after it was revealed that on the recommendation of Mackenzie, and agreement by Cabinet, but without further consultation, Scholefield's name had been forwarded to the War Office ("Expeditionary force: War correspondent", pp. 16-19). Joseph Ward raged that a course similar to that taken in Australia ought to have been pursued in New Zealand. In Australia the press came together in September and voted on the journalist who was to represent them all, Charles Bean of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>76</sup> As Scholefield sourly noted after the debacle, the Liberal papers had not taken any steps to have a foreign correspondent of their own.<sup>77</sup> As he pointed out in his unpublished autobiography, he had never applied to be the official New Zealand correspondent. He was invited to go to the Dardanelles in one of the British battleships but declined.

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<sup>76</sup> It wasn't quite as straightforward as that, according to Kevin Fewster (2007). Bean, like Scholefield, applied to be a correspondent immediately it was clear his country's troops would be called up. The Minister for Defence put his decision on hold and then invited the two major newspaper groups to appoint a journalist each. "Banjo" Paterson and Philip (Peter) Schuler were picked. Then came a change of Government and the new Minister of Defence asked the Australian Journalists' Association to nominate someone. That is how Bean got the post of official correspondent, ahead of Keith Murdoch. The appointment of the earlier two journalists was never rescinded. As well as these three journalists, another was to join them, Charlie Smith. He and Schuler joined Bean at Gallipoli for a period and so did Murdoch (p. 2). As well Harry Gullett went to France in 1915 as the Australian correspondent with the British and French armies.

<sup>77</sup> Ross mentioned Rowland Hill as being a Canadian correspondent.

This dispute over Scholefield's application to be a war correspondent brought to light the whole question of how one journalist could fairly represent all papers in the Dominion. It would seem an impossible task for one person to satisfy both sides of the political spectrum, but that is what was attempted. Naturally, in a competition to find a

**Figure 26 Dr Guy Scholefield 1929.**

single war correspondent, the Liberal or "Wardist" papers wanted to be sure that any news would be available to all newspapers in the country impartially. Another question was who would pay for the war correspondent's work – his syndicate, all the papers in the Dominion or the Government? Henry Brett of the *Auckland Star* was among those who did not support the proposal to appoint Scholefield. To his mind papers couldn't afford the cost, the service would be poor, and the despatches would be heavily censored. But Scholefield had a staunch supporter in Triggs, of *The Press*. Triggs had proposed to the UPA that the London-based journalist, while acting for the New Zealand Associated Press, would be prepared to act as cable correspondent for the association if it was prepared to pay its share of the costs (Atack, 1914). The *Otago Daily Times* board of directors' minutes gave some of the background to the manoeuvring around Scholefield's application. Triggs had apparently been detailed by the *Otago Daily Times*, *New Zealand Herald*, *The Press* and *Evening Post* to act as the negotiator on behalf of the group. They had cabled Scholefield to ascertain his likely expenses. He replied that they would probably be around £150, with insurance £100 and field expenses £30 a month. The group calculated that would mean around £85 each paper for three months and about £9.10 thereafter ("Board of directors minute book", 1908-1917). However, Scholefield's application was eventually withdrawn in the face of so much opposition and because nobody would agree to the journalist representing all Dominion newspapers. "The fly in the amber was that Scho's 'stuff' would not be available to all the newspapers in the Dominion and Government journals would thereby effect a 'scoop'" ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915).

There was much discussion about why only one New Zealand reporter was to be allowed to accompany the New Zealand forces. It was galling in the extreme to New Zealand journalists that not only was Australia sending Bean as its official representative but other journalists had been approved as well, notably Philip Schuler,

Banjo Patterson and later Charles Smith, Keith Murdoch, Gordon Gilmour and Harry Gullett. This was despite the Imperial authorities insisting that the Dominions could only send one each. The New Zealand daily newspapers made “one great mistake”, according to the *New Zealand Free Lance*. “They should have sent their men to the front and taken the [sic] chances” (“No real news”, 1915). In fact the *New Zealand Free Lance* had quite a bit to say about this on several occasions. This in January, 1915.

The position is, then, that with a big New Zealand force afield we have no New Zealand correspondent. The newspapers are not to blame for that. They would have sent men with the forces. Individual journalists sought permission to go. But the authorities stated that no war correspondents would be permitted to accompany the Expedition, and there for us the matter ended. It becomes increasingly difficult to know why, or on what grounds, such a statement was made. There are at least half-a-dozen Australian correspondents with the men in Egypt, including one official correspondent in constant touch with the military authorities. (“No real news”, 1915)

And this a month later.

There is still apparently no reason why a private newspaper or syndicate of private newspapers should not send correspondents to the front. Some of the Australian newspapers are represented there, and any quantity of correspondents is at work on the Western Front in France and Belgium. But in New Zealand an official correspondent is to be sent. (“This war correspondent”, 1915)

But a major consideration for New Zealand newspapers, as noted by Brett, was the cost. The competition among so many papers in such a small country had its financial consequences and many could not afford to support their own war correspondent. While readership had increased because of the war, (For example the *Otago Daily Times* increased its circulation by about 2000 copies more a day after war was declared) papers were also experiencing a substantial drop in advertising revenue (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917).<sup>78</sup> Another consideration in the matter of the appointment was freedom of the press. Questions were asked about how a journalist could be expected to act freely if he was writing on behalf of, and being paid, by the

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<sup>78</sup> Another problem later in the war was a shortage of paper and problems of regularity of supply which necessitated a reduction in the number of pages of many newspapers (“Board of directors minute book”, 1908-1917).

Government. This in effect made him a civil servant subject to the constraints of that position. Editorial independence would be severely compromised.

If a correspondent is to be of any value in the matter of letting friends of our troopers know how they are faring, he must occupy an independent position, and not simply be the paid servant of the Government responsible for seeing they are properly cared for. (O'Neill, 1963, p. 150)

With the Scholefield nomination knocked back, the debate simmered on until December when another contender was proposed, again by the Government. The Minister of Internal Affairs, F. H. D. Bell, suggested to the Press Association that Drew, the recent editor and proprietor of the *Manawatu Daily Times* who now worked on the *Evening Post*, might be a good candidate. Scholefield's appointment could be cancelled in favour of Drew, said Bell. However, the Press Association seemed more concerned about who was going to pay the correspondent at this stage, and wrote back to Bell saying that if the Government was going to appoint the journalist then it should pay his salary and expenses (NZPA papers, 1910-1934). Bell was still persisting with the idea of Drew into the new year telling the United Press Association in January that if the papers of both parties wanted to send Drew to the front, the Government would give him the "imprimatur of the New Zealand correspondent" but was still refusing to meet the costs (NZPA papers, 1910-1934). *The New Zealand Free Lance* thought Drew might be a good choice.

It is only four years ago that Mr Drew made a cycling trip through Europe, visiting every country but Russia and Spain, and also doing Egypt en route. He spent a good deal of time in Belgium and Northern France, where most of the fighting in the western zone of the present war has taken place, and he has the advantage of being a very good French scholar and linguist. In this lottery for war correspondent, Drew ought to draw the prize. ("People", 1915)

The association wouldn't have a bar of another Government suggestion and urgent discussions were held over the proper course to be taken in this vexed matter of the appointment of a war correspondent. By mid January 1915 the Government was wearied by the whole issue with Massey telling the *Auckland Star* the appointment "was causing him as much worry as the dispatch of a force of fighting men" ("That war correspondent", 1915). The Prime Minister said he had "urged the newspapers to settle the matter between themselves but apparently they were as incapable of doing that as they were of agreeing upon which Government was best for the country". They were

still quarrelling over the appointment and “dragging the Ministry into the controversy as if it were responsible for the whole trouble”. As reported, Massey said attempts at mediation to date (January 15) had not been successful. “The appointment of a war correspondent is not the easy job he expected it would be and that he will be very glad when it is off his hands,” quoted the *Auckland Star*.

It was clear, because of the “painful contretemps” (“Appointment of war correspondent”, 1915) of Scholefield’s appointment, that some sort of formal process was needed to select the journalist. It was evident the Australian method of giving a vote on the issue to all journalists was not going to be followed. In late January or early February 1915 the Government finally made a decision and told the United Press Association that it would appoint a correspondent for the whole Dominion and pay his salary and expenses. Applications would be invited from journalists throughout the country. However, no decision had yet been made whether the correspondent’s despatches would be cabled or posted although it was becoming clear that posting was being favoured over cables (Atack, 1915a). Some were delighted that finally a decision had been made on the matter of the official correspondent. A leader in *The Press*, probably written by the indomitable Triggs, commented as follows:

In all the circumstances the Government has probably taken the best course in deciding to appoint an official correspondent to go to the front in the interests of all newspapers. The delay in having the matter settled is of no particular consequence, but such delay as has occurred has been the fault of the Opposition politicians working in the interests of Opposition newspapers, who never thought of making arrangements until without approaching anybody but the War Office, *The Press* had practically arranged to have a man at the front...We still think it is not the duty of the Government to come to the assistance of the newspapers but it is not likely that the appointment of an official correspondent will operate as a precedent in the future.<sup>79</sup> Unless he receives very specific instructions the correspondent will not find his work very easy. In the official memorandum the Government observes: ‘The last thing which the men who have volunteered for service abroad desire, is that the official correspondent shall have as his daily provision for the publication of grievances, scandals or complaints. His function will be to record the history of the part taken by the New Zealand forces in the great struggle in which they are about to take part’. (“Untitled”, 1915b, p. 6)

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<sup>79</sup> The editor was incorrect in his prediction. Reporting of World War II was “again almost exclusively within an official framework” (McGibbon, 2000, p. 579).

With a decision having been made as to who was going to pay for the official correspondent, press minds now turned to the method of selection, transmission of messages and manner of man who would be chosen for the post. They might have remembered the words of Guy Scholefield writing from London in March about the dark outlook for war correspondents. “Indeed, if one could read the innermost thoughts of official Whitehall, one would probably find that the genus is dead, and that he is intended to be kept dead, at least as long as the war lasts” (Scholefield, 1915a). After the outbreak of war, the regulations for press correspondents accompanying a force in the field were issued. This meant that journalists would be under military law, not allowed to transmit news except through official channels and anything they transmitted would first “run the gauntlet” of the Censor. Scholefield said the accredited journalists were left to “kick their heels” in London for weeks while unaccredited men had “scoured many miles of roads in [the] rear of fighting armies and had more than once been turned out of the theatre of war”. Because of the rigid restrictions imposed, the war correspondents were going to have to be the soldiers themselves and their letters home, said Scholefield.

But back in New Zealand the selection process for the country’s official correspondent was finally agreed upon. Four editors from throughout the Dominion would meet, consider the applications and narrow the number down to four. The editors’ recommendations would then be sent to Cabinet for the final choice to be made. The United Press Association undertook to impartially distribute the “letters” (i.e. despatches) to all papers that applied for them, for a distribution fee of 1/- (NZPA papers, 1910-1934). In the same month the 12 conditions of appointment were published, and it became obvious that any official war correspondent would have to work under restrictions which were irksome in the extreme (“War correspondent - conditions of the appointment”, 1915). (Appendix A) Despatches had to be sent to the High Commissioner in London not directly to New Zealand and by post not telegraph. “Such news as reaches New Zealand in these circumstances will be censored and then distributed among the newspapers. And in all probability such news will be worth less than nothing” (“This war correspondent”, 1915). The Government would not get “any journalist of much standing at that rate”, notwithstanding a promised stipend of £400-500 a year. This prompted another acerbic reaction from *The Observer*. “Let us hope that the amount will be nearer the latter figure than the former. Genial and brilliant Charlie Bean, Australia’s official war correspondent, gets £600, to say nothing of his

captain's commission and captain's pay and perks" ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915).

After listing 11 conditions, the rider of the 12<sup>th</sup> was that the New Zealand Government retained the right to add other conditions and directions as it saw fit. Despite these stringent terms several Dominion journalists were keen to put "their best toes forward" ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915) for the job and there was much speculation about likely contenders.<sup>80</sup> One can only hazard a guess as to what might have compelled them to want to become a war correspondent. Mark Pedelty (1995) rates a number of "pleasures" such as pay, promotion, notoriety, identity and fantasy as the likely reasons for journalists wanting to take up this calling (p. 5). "The hearts of journalists of all descriptions, competent and incompetent, hopeful and hopeless, from Auckland to the Bluff, have been a fluttering and feverish energy and much weighing of pros and cons characterise many newspaper camps just now" ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915). Many names of likely journalists were thrown up for consideration, notably M. C. Keane, Edward S. Saunders, H. W. Nixon, Andrew Burns and A. G. Henderson<sup>81</sup> from Christchurch; Ernie Hall, Leo Fanning, Bertie Drew, A. N. Field and Malcolm Ross of Wellington; John M. Hardcastle, Fred Doidge and R.W. Robson from Auckland ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915). *The Observer* calculated the odds of either Hall or Doidge getting the nod.

The latter probably feels relieved to know that he was even in the race at all with a man who carries every kind of gun that can be used this side of the firing line. Many 'tickets' would have gone on Ernie had Malcolm Ross decided to take the editorship of the London *Times*, or the command of the Allied armies, or the chairmanship of the London County Council or the presidency of the United States. Long before any names were mentioned at all the whole press world which knows the inner working of the great brain of the authorities exclaimed: 'It's a 'cert' for Malcolm'. ("Untitled", 1915g, p. 4)

Ross was seen by many as being the front runner, if rather a dubious one in *The Observer's* eyes.

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<sup>80</sup> It was about this time that New Zealand heard who the other journalists were who had been appointed by the British Admiralty. Besides Charles Bean for the Australian papers, they were Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, for the London papers and Lester Lawrence, for the provincial English papers ("Untitled", 1915c).

<sup>81</sup> *The Observer* named A. G. Henderson but later the *Sun* spoke of its reporter G. A. Anderson so one wonders if *The Observer* confused the names and this was actually one and the same man.

At first thoughts, the plum was considered certain to go to His Vainness, Malcolm Ross, but his cake is already considered dough. Malcolm starts his story thus wise: - 'I went to the war. I had much trouble to get to the war. My head swelled with the heat of the sun. My horse fell from under me. I told General Blank how to conduct the siege. I believe we shall win,' and so on. ("Appointment of war correspondent", 1915, p. 5)

The weekly *New Zealand Truth*<sup>82</sup> newspaper said later that when the Government announced the appointment of the war correspondent "without hesitation the pen pushers of all political pigments in the Press Gallery, prophesied positively that the post would be Malcolm's for the asking, if indeed, it were not being made particularly for him in return 'for services rendered'." The paper claimed that many were so convinced the job was for Ross they didn't bother to put their names forward ("Our war correspondent", 1915).

Another contender for the position was Arthur Chorlton of the *Evening Post*.

He tried for the job of New Zealand war correspondent, and would have made a rattling success of it, because he is a man of wide knowledge and reading, a keen military student, with a genial, tactful manner well - calculated to "draw out" the most reticent hero. ("Corporal Noel Ross and Arthur Chorlton", 1915)

The four-man committee of editors was selected and comprised a careful representation of the political spectrum with two Liberal editors, T. W. Leys (*Auckland Star*) and M. Cohen (*Dunedin Star*), and two Reformist editors, C. Earle (*The Dominion*) and W. H. Triggs (*The Press*) ("Untitled", 1915e).

**Figure 27 T. W. Leys, editor of the *Auckland Star*.**

Applications closed on March 22 ("Untitled", 1915d; "War correspondent", 1915b) and 46 applicants were then reduced to four - Malcolm Ross, Fred Doidge of the *Auckland Star*, S. Walters, of the sub-editorial staff of *The Press* and Ernie Hall of the *Evening Post* ("The war correspondent – Four names submitted", 1915). The *New Zealand Free Lance* ran photographs of the finalists ("Official war correspondent", 1915). *The Press*, whose editor had been on the selection committee, said on April 1, the day of the announcement of who had won, that it had come down to either Ross or Hall ("New

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<sup>82</sup> *New Zealand Truth* was founded in 1905 by John Norton, of Sydney *Truth* fame ("Change of ownership", 2007).

Zealand's war correspondent", 1915a). *The Observer* commented on each of the candidates.

Doidge is the electric spark who commands the reporting staff of the *Auckland Star*, and a very good hand he is. He buzzes with useful effect all the time and has a well deserved reputation for tracking the palest rumour to its little lair and knocking a piece of live news out of it. He had the special disadvantage of belonging to a paper that does not see eye to eye with the gentlemen on whom the final selection fell, but probably feels relieved to know that he was even in the race at all with a man who carries every kind of gun that can be used this side of the firing line.

Ernest V. Hall is a careful, competent Thames boy at present doing accurate work on the editorial staff of the Wellington "*Post*" acclaimed by pressmen to be an able organiser and a chap who can make other people work.

Mr Walters is not widely known in the great world of scribble. Somebody mentioned that he was a shipping reporter in the south, but this paper hasn't got him on the records of distinguished paper stainers. The final selection is entirely satisfactory - to Malcolm. ("Untitled", 1915g, p.4)

*The Observer* was quite correct, Cabinet approved Ross and after accepting the position, Ross became the country's first official war correspondent, to the satirical amusement of *The Observer*. It marked the appointment of Ross with a poem entitled "Me!" ("Me!", 1915). (Appendix B) So too did some member of the Press Gallery, if *New Zealand Truth* is to be believed. "One ink slinger, more versatile and facetious than his cobblers, celebrated the event in ribald rhyme, the chorus of which declared the appointment to be:

Another little tit-bit for Malcolm;  
Another little lucky-bag for Ross;  
He's Jamsie's jewel and joy,  
He's Willie's white-haired boy.  
And he's always so obsequious to the Boss!  
Though other day-lie pen pushers are cross,  
With "Maykum", sure they aren't worth a toss,  
Oh, his pen just shouts aloud,  
And he does his sponsors proud,  
As they turn to gold his literary dross!  
("Our war correspondent", 1915, p. 7)

"Jamsie" was presumably James Allen and "Willie", William Massey. *Truth* added:

There was scarcely a journalist of any standing from Cape Maria Van Dieman to Stewart Island but felt convinced that the appointment in question was a mistake, but, except for the undertone of disgust in evidence where press pointers most do congregate, not one dared to openly and manfully protest, except "Truth". ("Our war correspondent", 1915, p. 7)

This paper opposed Malcolm Ross's appointment as official war correspondent on three counts: that Ross was a "bitterly partisan journalist"; his appointment was "first and last a flagrant political job" and lastly, that he was, in the paper's opinion, unfitted to fill the post successfully, and perform the necessary work with credit to himself, the Government and the country.

*The Press* provided a much more restrained announcement in its pages. After detailing the selection process the paper called Ross "one of the best known of New Zealand's journalists" and then summarised his journalistic and mountaineering career ("New Zealand's war correspondent", 1915a). Later in August *The Observer* reflected once more on the appointment process.

When an enlightened Reform Government appointed Mr. Malcolm Ross to be the official war correspondent with the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces in Gallipoli the journalistic worlds of New Zealand and Australia were stunned. Before it was known that four names were to be chosen by a committee of four editors from the names of the forty applicants, there were plenty of men ready to say that the job was cut and dried, and that MR would get it. But the semblance of a fair deal led many to believe that a really representative and capable writer would be chosen. Alas, it was only a bluff, a political blind... ("Untitled", 1915j, p. 5)

If *The Observer* and *Truth* are to be believed, there was some sourness in journalistic circles at Ross being appointed. For example, the Christchurch *Sun* was sorry to see that G. A. Anderson, a Sydney journalist, was one of the failed aspirants. His qualifications "really left no one else in the hunt" but he was rejected because he was not a New Zealander, said the *Sun*. "Such searching discrimination is exercised that probably the correspondent chosen will be chiefly recommended by an accident of birth, which will in no way improve the narrations of our men's exploits at the front ("Untitled", 1915f).

Scholefield appeared particularly disappointed as he felt he could not apply for the position but was gracious in his comments. In a letter to Allen in late April he said:

Personally I am disappointed but it was unavoidable. My application to the War Office in the first place was on behalf of my own papers only, and I did not know then that only one correspondent would be taken. If there are any tours of the front in France for which New Zealand is invited to send a representative I should be very glad to be nominated. I have already been once on behalf of our papers and they would not object to my doing any future tours for the press generally. Mr Ross, I suppose, is likely to be with the troops in the East for some time, as Mr Bean has been. If there is anything at all in connection with the war which I can do here I should like to be called upon. In any case I shall not fail to get a hearing for New Zealand when it is possible. (Scholefield, 1915b)

Scholefield had a staunch supporter in Triggs of *The Press*, however, who was especially scornful of papers that relied too much on the Government instead of their own efforts.

A more robust school of journalism in former times devoted its energies to getting news and if beaten on one occasion by an enterprising contemporary, sought to readjust the balance at the earliest opportunity by making a “score” of its own. (“An editor and the Prime Minister”, 1915, p.6)

Triggs ventured to think that the Opposition press would be the losers by not accepting Scholefield as the correspondent.

Our readers have seen what Mr Scholefield has already been able to accomplish. He has given us the best account which has yet been published in any journal of the work of the Grand Fleet. Without any assistance from the Government he spent a week in the British lines in the beginning of March and our readers will agree that his articles describing the life of our men in the trenches have been most interesting and instructive. They have brought vividly before us the actualities of war and should have a good effect in stimulating recruiting. We cannot help the reflection, that if the original appointment had not been interfered with the same correspondent would probably have been using his graphic pen to describe the doings of the New Zealanders on the Gallipoli Peninsula and the public would have benefited. (“An editor and the Prime Minister”, 1915, p.6)

He conceded that Malcolm Ross was a “very able journalist” who would “do his work well” but feared he would be “a little late in arriving on the scene” and experience

elsewhere had shown that the best of journalists were hampered by official restrictions and delays.

We are strongly convinced that the less journalists rely on Governments the better and that the more they are allowed to carry out their work in their own way - subject of course in war to restrictions of the censor - the better will the public's interests be served. ("An editor and the Prime Minister", 1915, p.6)

Many felt Ross got the job because of his political connections, in particular his friendship with the Prime Minister. Massey was forced to defend this accusation of favouritism in Parliament a couple of years later. As Ross was a personal friend of his, Massey said he had not interfered in the selection. He had asked his colleagues to look through the testimonials and announce who was to be the man for the job ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917). It is not hard to see why the Reform Government approved Ross. He had the right pedigree in all respects. Massey's Government, as bound by the Imperial Government, seemed certain to favour the man considered the most likely to understand the requirements of his masters and willing to subject himself to the disciplinary practices that were to be a feature of the war. A few days after his appointment Malcolm Ross, with life insurance of £700 and accompanied by his wife, Forrest, was a first class passenger on the SS *Maunganui* bound for Egypt. He had his Remington Junior typewriter in its leather travelling case and his camera.

#### **4:5 Conclusion**

When war broke out between the great powers in August 1914 the opportunity arose for New Zealand to not only send troops to fight but to send correspondents to report on the fighting. The country already had a solid tradition of war correspondence with newspapers either singly or as a group sending journalists to theatres of war starting with the New Zealand Wars and encompassing the "troubles" in Samoa in 1899, the South African War of 1899-1902, and the "Boxer" rebellion of 1901. Many of the men reporting from the front were also soldiers but a few were not, such as William Morgan, James Shand, Malcolm Ross, Arthur Adams and F. Carr Rollett. War correspondence was an adjunct to their normal work. They were not professional war correspondents. Today they would probably be called "parachute" journalists, in other words reporters snatched from their normal work and set down in a foreign land, to try and make sense of whatever the newsworthy event was they had been sent to cover. Generally they have

little knowledge or understanding of the situation into which they have been plummeted.

These men established a tradition of war journalism that was not that different from the daily newspaper journalism of the time, except perhaps in length. They wrote long, detailed, chronological narratives that covered many columns of their newspapers. Some, such as Ross and Morgan, put themselves squarely in these reports with liberal use of the personal pronoun. They appeared to be largely free to report whenever and wherever they pleased and were not overly hindered by censorship or the military authorities, something that was to clearly change in World War I. There were observable elements of self censorship, however, especially in the work of Malcolm Ross, whose experiences and writing have been more thoroughly researched. For example, his Samoan coverage saw him firmly supportive of the British efforts to secure change. He reflected the New Zealand Government's and the New Zealand newspapers' official stance on the Samoan situation. At home, however, there were signs appearing that the cost of sending journalists abroad to report war was becoming prohibitive. This was clear in the minutes of the *Otago Daily Times* where George Fenwick and his board were always concerned about the mounting expenses of their correspondents, especially in South Africa and China.

At the turn of the century and with the example of the Russo-Japanese War ominous signs had appeared that the work of a war correspondent was going to become more difficult, as indicated by a perspicacious leader in the *Otago Daily Times*. The increasing secrecy of governments saw the rise of censorship and more restrictive regulations governing the activities of war correspondents. As well, the development of faster means of transmitting despatches and the rise of news agencies meant that news was reaching the reading population much quicker. Whereas the lengthy despatches written in previous wars arrived by steamer now the news was being transmitted by telegraph and arriving on news editors' desks the same day. War correspondents were going to have to rethink their craft to meet these challenges. Long reports such as favoured by Ross and other correspondents, unless they showed unusual literary brilliance, were doomed. The heyday of the independent New Zealand war correspondent appeared to be over by 1914. But there was one last gasp. When war was declared in August 1914 Malcolm Ross managed to get himself on board a troopship going to capture German Samoa. He accomplished this for several reasons. He was on

the spot in Wellington from where the ships departed, he knew the military men involved well, he had been to Samoa before and he was confident enough of himself to put himself forward. As has been recorded in previous chapters, Ross never hesitated to seize journalistic opportunities when he saw them, whether it was a trip to the Cook Islands or to Tuhoe country with Governor Ranfurly, or to accompany the Duke and Duchess of York on a tour of New Zealand. To him, arranging to go to German Samoa with the 1st NZEF, would probably have been the usual transaction between himself, his employers and the military commanders. He would not have anticipated the furore that erupted on his return from Samoa three weeks later. It is perhaps easy to understand why the Opposition Wardist politicians and newspapers were so upset about Ross accompanying the NZEF to Samoa. He was the lone journalist to go and he was not only a representative of Reformist newspapers but he was a firm friend of the leader of the Reform Party, William Massey. In previous wars journalists from all sides of the political spectrum had gone to report wars abroad. General Godley, when he made the arrangements with Ross to go to Samoa probably did not understand the political ramifications of allowing only one journalist to accompany the troops.

In the meantime, the Government announced that the British War Office had given permission to each Dominion to send one official correspondent to cover the fighting of their troops. This set the scene for eight months of infighting as newspapers, politicians and journalists debated who this one journalist was going to be. Many could not understand why New Zealand could not follow the example of Australia and appoint several journalists to go to the front. The reason was probably that most newspapers could not afford to carry the cost of sending a man overseas for an unknown length of time. Nobody seemed prepared to disobey the War Office like the Australians did, and send more than one journalist. Guy Scholefield, acting for the New Zealand Associated Press in London, saw an opportunity to become accredited and did so, thereby causing another contretemps back home. He was tarred, politically, with the same brush as Malcolm Ross and so was considered just as unacceptable. While he did not become the official New Zealand correspondent, Scholefield nevertheless did report on the war and went to the Western Front on several occasions. Eventually the Government realised it would have to make the decision regarding the correspondent and agreed to choose a man from a list agreed upon by a committee of editors from all political persuasions, and pay him after he had agreed to 12 conditions of employment. Malcolm Ross, unsurprisingly to many, was appointed. But he was already on the back foot, just as he

was when he went to Samoa in 1899. The fighting had already begun and he would be arriving late on the scene. There were many questions, too, about whether he was capable of adapting to the new conditions being imposed on war correspondents by the military authorities and by the exigencies of modern warfare and communications.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### War correspondence at Gallipoli

#### 5:1 Introduction

The terrible experiences at Gallipoli both for the Anzac soldiers and their families and loved ones at home left a searing memory in the hearts and souls of New Zealanders and Australians. That defeat was the outcome was a further tragedy. For historian Michael King (2003), the effect of this on two countries of small populations “was to make the experience sacred” (p. 299). “Only in this way could such a vast human sacrifice be made comprehensible and acceptable.” The development of Anzac Day as a national day of mourning and commemoration and the subsequent myths of the countries’ “coming of age” are seen as a corollary to that. Journalists who covered the Gallipoli campaign have been cited as being partly or wholly responsible for the development of these so-called “myths”. There are books which encapsulate this notion in their titles such as *Myth maker: Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett – the Englishman who sparked Australia’s Gallipoli legend* (Brenchley, F. & Brenchley E., 2005), *25 April 1915 the day the Anzac legend was born* (Cameron, 2007) and of course Philip Knightley’s (2000) seminal work *The first casualty: The war correspondent as hero, propagandist and myth maker*. For Jenny Macleod (2007), as indicated in her chapter in *New Zealand’s Great War*, it was Charles Bean who “profoundly shaped and propagated what has become known as the Anzac Legend” for the Australians (p. 144). The question is whether Malcolm Ross played any part in “shaping and propagating” a New Zealand Anzac legend. To begin answering this question it is necessary to first consider who the journalists were who were permitted to cover the Gallipoli campaign and under what circumstances they operated before looking specifically at Malcolm Ross and his endeavours on the peninsula.

Initially only three correspondents were assigned to cover the Gallipoli campaign, two from Britain and one from Australia. They were joined by Malcolm Ross 80 days after the two British journalists had arrived. Over the next few months a further eight journalists were to be admitted to the closed theatre of war that was the Dardanelles campaign. Not only were the correspondents under the total control of the military they were geographically cut off from the rest of the world. They could only communicate

and transmit their messages through the military. They were at the whim of the military for transport to and from the battle sites. Given those restrictions, however, they were permitted to visit the front and go as near to the firing line as they wished. This was largely because of the liberal views of the commanding officer, Sir Ian Hamilton, who recognised the importance of war correspondents to the public back home. Strict censorship rules were imposed and enforced, to many complaints. As far as the New Zealand public was concerned, because Ross had arrived late, they read accounts of the battles from this plethora of correspondents both within the proscribed Dardanelles arena, but also from journalists stationed in Egypt and other Mediterranean countries. Ross would be competing for space in New Zealand newspapers with reports from all these men. What the correspondents on Gallipoli also had to contend with, as did the soldiers fighting there, was the unforgiving terrain, the heat, dust, flies, bad food and ever-present danger of being killed or wounded. Most of the journalists escaped unscathed, except for minor injuries, but none of them escaped the constant fight to stay healthy. Jaundice and dysentery laid many a correspondent low. This chapter, then, details Ross's arrival in the Mediterranean and his attempts to reach Gallipoli. Once there the correspondents' working conditions are outlined. An ensuing chapter will look in detail at Ross's coverage of the Gallipoli campaign.

## **5:2 New Zealand and the Gallipoli campaign**

When the first body of New Zealand troops, 8454 men, embarked for Egypt on October 16, 1914 the initial thought was that they were en route for the Western Front. When they arrived at their camp at Zeitoun, near Cairo, for training, this rumour had still not been quashed. However, the British War Council as early as November was considering an attack on the Dardanelles as a means of relieving the pressure on Russia by the Ottoman Turks in the north. Churchill's proposal, a naval attack on the Gallipoli forts on the Dardanelles peninsula, was executed on February 19, 1915 (McGibbon, 2000, p. 172). Britain then decided to send out a disparate group of soldiers and sailors envisaged as a garrison force once the forts were taken. The naval campaign being largely unsuccessful, the focus then shifted to a military assault on the peninsula and that garrison force was now set to lead it. The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, commanded by Sir Ian Hamilton, now included the New Zealand and Australian troops training near Cairo. Hamilton prepared a plan of assault, with the New Zealand and Australian troops attacking at a northern part of the Gallipoli peninsula, Ari Burnu, (later to become known as Anzac Cove) and the British at the southern part, Helles, the

so-called first landing of April 25. On that day, 600 New Zealand soldiers died, more than were killed during the whole of the South African War (Pugsley, 1998, p.16). By the time Gallipoli was evacuated in the third week of December 1915, the Allied forces having failed to defeat the Turks, 8556 New Zealand soldiers had fought at Gallipoli. Of these 7473 were casualties, 2515 having been killed in action, 206 killed through accident or disease and 4752 wounded (p. 24).

### 5:3 The journalist corps

During the Gallipoli land campaign which lasted from April 25, 1915 to January 9, 1916 when the last of the soldiers were evacuated from Cape Helles, the fortunes of the war were covered by a plethora of war correspondents. There were 12 based at the Dardanelles at one time or another (Fewster, 1983, p.12) but never all at once. [Table 1] While the Western Front had to wait until the Battle of the Somme in 1916 for journalists to be allowed near the theatre of war on a permanent basis, during the Gallipoli campaign correspondents were permitted to follow the fighting on the peninsula from the start. Lord Kitchener was bitterly opposed to journalists in the field during wartime but Churchill, himself a war correspondent during the South African conflict, proposed the concept of official correspondents being appointed to cover the war in the Dardanelles (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p.25).<sup>83</sup> Before Malcolm Ross's first despatch from Gallipoli itself, written on June 26 but not published until August 14 (M. Ross, 1915p), New Zealanders had to rely on the corps of overseas journalists to keep them up to date with news of any fighting. This news was largely focussed on the operations of the British, French or Australian troops. New Zealand's efforts were largely ignored or lumped in with the Australians.

Already at the Dardanelles by April 5 was Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, 34, the flamboyant, charismatic journalist of the *Daily Telegraph*, "the highest paid correspondent of today" (Scholefield, 1915c). According to Ian Hamilton he was paid £2000 a year (C. Mackenzie, p. 106) He represented the London papers.

**Figure 28 Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.**

<sup>83</sup> "...in spite of the immense influence of the Press, the Western front was not destined to see a permanent War Correspondent until the beginning of the Battle of the Somme in 1916" (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p. 25)

Charles Bean, the Australian official correspondent, likened the journalist to Byron, describing him as a brilliant conversationalist, a writer of life and colour, if rather prone to exaggeration (Fewster, 2007, p. 213). Lester Lawrence, of Reuters, represented the British provincial papers. This was to be his first foray into war reporting. Ashmead-Bartlett (1928) described him as a “charming and erudite companion, and popular with everyone, but suffers so much from short-sightedness that were he captured, I am sure the first thing he would do would be to hand in his despatches to the Turkish censor!” (p.147). Bean described Lawrence as an “exceedingly well read and intelligent little chap” but inexperienced as a war correspondent (Fewster, 2007, p. 214). Lawrence, who appeared to be an amiable sort of fellow, according to the diaries of his colleagues, did not seem to be a particularly hard working man. Ashmead-Bartlett (1915a) noted in his diary of June 30 that Lawrence had been living at Cape Helles on the beached vessel, *River Clyde*. “He seems to have seen very little of the operations and to have written very little during my absence” (p. 125). He noted later in August that Hamilton had regretted that no one was present to write a descriptive account of June 4 “as Lawrence understood nothing” and that Hamilton had heard that during the battle that Lawrence was on the *River Clyde* packing his luggage and when told of the fight said: “Never mind, I will find out what happened from someone later” (p.159). That “someone” was presumably one of the other correspondents. Lawrence’s myopia would have made carrying out his journalistic tasks difficult and he would have had to rely on his colleagues to tell him what was happening at any distance (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p. 82).

Ashmead-Bartlett and Lawrence had made their own way from England and reached Mudros Bay, on Lemnos Island, to find the navy readying itself for the attack on the peninsula. Each man was assigned to a separate ship, Lawrence to the *Triumph* to watch the British landing at Cape Helles and Ashmead-Bartlett to the *London*, to view the antipodean assault at Ari Burnu (Brenchley, F. & Brenchley, E., 2005, pp. 45-60).<sup>84</sup> Bean, 36, attached to the Australian Expeditionary Force, was also there – he, like Lawrence, was a tyro war correspondent. He left Australia with his country’s troops on October 21, 1914 as an honorary Captain in the company of Phillip (Peter) Schuler, 26, the representative of the Melbourne *Age* (Fewster, 2007, p. 278). Bean and Schuler remained in Egypt and were joined by Charles Smith, 37, the journalist for the competing Melbourne paper, the *Argus* later that year (“Phillip Schuler and Charles

<sup>84</sup> They remained under the control of the Admiralty until this task was taken over by the Army in June.

Patrick Smith", 2005). Bean had withstood an appointment process that saw him pitted against another well known Australian journalist Keith Murdoch (Fewster, 2007, p.2). While never having spent any time as a war correspondent he had extensive Australian and English experience as a reporter and was obviously held in high enough regard by his peers of the Australian Journalists' Association to be nominated by them. This was in sharp contrast to Ross's appointment process which did not rely on the opinion of his reporting colleagues but ultimately on that of Government Ministers.

While the three official journalists were able to view the naval bombardment of the peninsula on February 19 it was only Bean who was given permission by Hamilton to set foot on Gallipoli to cover the landing on April 25. Schuler, with two other correspondents, George Renwick, of the *Daily Chronicle*, and a representative of the *Daily Telegraph*, hired a boat and viewed the action from afar but were forced to leave the battle zone by the Navy and return to Alexandria (Schuler, 1916, p.8). George Ward Price, 29, of the *Daily Mail* had also been in the eastern Mediterranean since March (Ward Price, 1957, pp. 75-77). He had previously been a special correspondent with the Turkish Army in the first Balkan War of 1912 (Fewster, 2007, p. 278). Ward Price had reached Tenedos, the island nearest to the entrance to the Dardanelles, just in time for the opening bombardment which took place on March 18. Then he made his way up to Imbros, which had not yet become the general headquarters (GHQ) of the allied forces

**Figure 29 Captain Charles Bean, the Australian official war correspondent at Mena Camp, Egypt, 1915.**

(Ward Price, 1957, p. 75-77). Ward Price spent the next month or so cruising round the islands as he was not an official correspondent and therefore unable to set foot on the peninsula. He finally joined the press corps at Imbros in October after the National Proprietors' Association made him the official replacement for Ashmead-Bartlett who was sent home, and was there until the troops were evacuated (p. 78) At some point in April the official photographer, Ernest Brooks, formerly with the *Daily Mirror*, arrived to record the events on the peninsula (Hiley, 1993, p. 246). Hiley says Brooks was "young and enthusiastic" but his work as a photographer of the Royal Family had "left him deferential to authority".<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> He was later appointed official photographer on the Western Front.

**Figure 30 Correspondents H. W. Nevinson, Malcolm Ross and Lester Lawrence Imbros 1915.**

Ross joined the initial group of three official journalists on June 24 and prepared to carry out the “principal duties” of his employment. That was “to remain as near as possible to the New Zealand forces at the seat of war and to write regularly detailed accounts of the events in which these forces were engaged and of matters of especial interest to New Zealand and the New Zealand forces”. If these forces were divided into several sections Ross was expected to travel if permitted by the war authorities from section to section so that general information as to all the New Zealand forces could be obtained (“War correspondent - conditions of the appointment issued”, 1915). It seemed that Ross would be able to fulfil these particular conditions of his employment without any hindrance from the military as Ian Hamilton was known to be sympathetic towards war correspondents.

Charles Bean wrote a description of press work at the front on June 20 for the *Australasian Journalist* and although this was not published in a New Zealand paper until September 11 it does give some idea of what conditions were like for the journalists at Gallipoli. He described the delay he experienced in getting to Gallipoli after arriving in Alexandria on December 3, 1914. He did not receive official sanction from the Admiralty until May 2, even though he had been present at the landing on April 25.

The only way I got there was through the friendliness of our own general and staff. Twenty-four hours before sailing, when I had already been attached to the Base in Cairo, General Bridges told me that he had obtained leave for me to go with the force as an officer attached to his staff until such time as permission arrived from the Admiralty. Until that time I had to give a guarantee (and he gave one also) that I would communicate nothing to the press. (Bean, 1915g, p. 13)

### **5:4 Sir Ian Hamilton and the correspondents**

The war correspondents were in a unique situation, as noted by Sydney Moseley (1916), when comparing the situation of the Gallipoli journalists with those finally appointed to the Western Front. The latter, could

...leave a fashionable French hotel after breakfast, take a run of 20 or 30 miles over stone paved roads in a powerful and comfortable car, witness a battle, and get back to the hotel in time to dress for dinner. (Moseley, 1916, pp. 3-4)

Contrasted with that was the situation of the Gallipoli correspondents. As soon as they landed at Imbros they were cut off from all immediate communication with the outside world and subject completely to the instructions of the military in all matters from where they could live, transport, what they could and could not write and when their despatches could be transmitted. Their only source of news was military personnel, generally the officers. There were no neutral sources, neither local people affected by the war nor any person from the other side of the conflict. Despite these drawbacks, Moseley could see some advantages in the conditions of the journalists assembled at the Dardanelles. "Heat we have, hunger and flies, but here at least we are not regarded as dangerous interlopers, and we are as free as the wind to go where and when we list (p. 16). This was largely because of Ian Hamilton's liberal views regarding the presence of the journalists on the battlefield. Those correspondents who wrote of their experiences at Gallipoli, and most of them did, spoke of Hamilton's positive view of the press in wartime. In his own diaries, Hamilton (1920a) outlined his thoughts about war correspondents in a chapter entitled *Bombs and journalists*: "27/06/15: An imaginative War Office (were such a thing imaginable) would try first of all to arouse public enthusiasm by letting them follow quite closely the brave doings of their own boys' units whatever these might be" (p. 337). From his point of view he considered that a "hideous mistake" had been made regarding correspondents and the Dardanelles campaign. "Had we a dozen good newspaper correspondents here, the vital life-giving interest of these stupendous proceedings would have been brought right into the hearths and homes of the humblest people in Britain" (p. 339). In fact he ended up allowing at least a dozen journalists to cover the campaign over the course of 1915. Not only did he see the importance of informing people back home in Britain he also saw the importance of keeping a possible ally, America, informed. He recorded that he had "begged hard" for two American journalists, Frederick Palmer and James Hare, to be allowed to cover the Gallipoli campaign but was turned down "on the plea that the London press would be jealous" (p. 338). As he noted: "Second only to (the) enthusiasm of our own folk comes the sweetening of the temper of the neutral."

In June he recorded in his diary that he had written to Kitchener about war correspondents.

He had doubted whether my experiences would encourage me to increase the number to two or three. But after trial, I prefer that the public should have a multitude of councillors. 'When a single individual,' I say, 'has the whole of the London Press at his back he becomes an unduly important personage. When in addition to this, it so happens, that he is inclined to see the black side of every proposition, then it becomes difficult to prevent him from encouraging the enemy, and from discouraging all our own people, as well as the Balkan states. If I have several others to counter balance, then I do not care so much'. (Hamilton, 1920a, p. 320)

In this entry he was clearly alluding to the influence of Ashmead-Bartlett, who was eventually sent back to England because of his increasing criticism of the whole Gallipoli campaign. Hamilton often commented in his diaries about the war correspondents. He mentioned Ashmead-Bartlett many times, but also Schuler, another Australian, Keith Murdoch, Henry Nevinson and Malcolm Ross (once). In July 1915 he recorded the arrival of Schuler. "I gave him leave to go anywhere and see everything. The Staff shake their heads but the future is locked away in our heads and the more the past is known the better for us" (Hamilton, 1920b, p. 21). Hamilton certainly did not seem to object to the correspondents getting near the firing line. "Some newspaper correspondents have arrived. I have told them they may do whatever they d...d well please" (p.8).

**Figure 31 Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.**

Sydney Moseley (1916) was one of the journalists who noted Hamilton's relaxed attitude to the correspondents.

Against precedents in France and against the advice of his most trusted advisors, he had therefore issued orders that no restrictions whatsoever should be placed upon our movements. We were free to go anywhere, see anything, speak to anyone, write anything and if truthful, our articles would be passed, provided always it was not cowardly stuff, not stuff calculated to encourage enemies or depress friends. (Moseley, 1916, pp. 13-14)

Not all the military were as accommodating. Generally the journalists found some of the high ranking staff officers not quite so relaxed about the correspondents as Hamilton. Bean found Braithwaite, the Chief of Staff, particularly difficult, and saw him as a snob

who supported a lazy GHQ and was “utterly disloyal to his chief” (Fewster, 2007, p. 218). Bean recounted a meeting with Lieutenant Colonel G. E. Tyrrell, the Chief of Intelligence, on the matter of censorship. Tyrrell told Bean that war correspondence was a dying profession.

If the people are properly organised the authorities need not tell them anything at all...In a properly organised nation the Government does not need war correspondents - it simply tells people what it thinks will conduce towards winning the war. If truth is good for the war it tells them truth; if a lie is likely to win the war, it tells them lies. (Fewster, 2007, p. 211)

Ross, meanwhile, had been directed by his conditions of employment to “strictly submit to such limitations and restrictions the Imperial military authorities might impose”. But subject to such strict compliance, he was expected to keep as near to the firing line as war correspondents were usually permitted to approach. Ross finally set foot on Anzac Cove on June 26 and seemed to take advantage of Hamilton’s leniency regarding the correspondents’ ability to get to any battlefield. Ross recorded visiting most of the major sites including No 2 and 3 Outposts, Rhododendron Ridge, Quinn’s Post, the Helles battlefields and viewed the assault on Achi Baba and later Hill (Knoll) 60. In his August 3 letter to his wife, Forrest, Ross described his visit to Achi Baba:

I spent three days at Helles with Bartlett and Nevinson – most interesting days they were too. We stayed with two officers on the stranded *River Clyde* from which part of the memorable and somewhat disastrous landing was made at V beach. We visited the French headquarters and saw the whole of the British position opposite Achi Baba, going into the firing line both on the right and the left. The firing line was only 500 yards off. (M. Ross, 1915n)

It is clear Ross made it into the firing line on many occasions and was therefore able to carry out his duties as requested in his conditions of employment.

## **5:5 Banishment to Imbros**

As a result of the increasing criticisms of the conduct of the campaign by Ashmead-Bartlett the journalists, in late June, were ordered to a camp at Imbros and their previous unrestricted movements seemed about to be curtailed. Bean was told the reason for the decision was “in order to round up Ashmead-Bartlett”. “They (GHQ) weren’t at all satisfied with his proceedings and wanted to have him thoroughly under control – and so made the rule to apply to the lot of us. I must say it is an infernal waste of time” (Fewster, 2007, p. 172). Ashmead-Bartlett (1928) had arrived back at Imbros on June 25

from a trip back to England to be told that in future he was to make his headquarters on the island. “He (Major General Braithwaite) told me that some other war correspondents were on their way out, that we had all been put under the exclusive control of the Army, and had nothing further to with the Navy”(p.136). He said he encountered a “very hostile attitude” towards him at GHQ. He appeared to be the first to establish the correspondents’ camp site, “selecting a shady spot in a grove surrounded by hedges, very isolated, and with a water supply near at hand” (pp. 137-138). When he had been away in England for a month to rekit after his possessions were lost when the ship he was billeted on, the *Majestic*, was sunk, Compton Mackenzie (1929), the novelist, was instructed by Ian Hamilton to take over his role until Ashmead-Bartlett’s return (pp. 105-107; Fewster, 2007, p.166).<sup>86</sup> When he first met the famous journalist Mackenzie noted his “unrelaxing expression of nervous exasperation” and heard Ashmead-Bartlett’s view that the “whole expedition was doomed to failure”(p. 89). The novelist considered that “...probably, the amount of harm Ashmead-Bartlett’s pessimism wrought at home has been over-estimated. He was, after all, only one extra sack of coal unloaded on a Newcastle of ill-will.”

Charles Bean, who was almost continuously based on the peninsula covering the actions of not only the Australian troops but all Allied soldiers, was not at all happy about the change in accommodation. “For the European correspondents who want general news of how the campaign is getting on, this may be all very well. For me – it would be just as good to be in Australia”(Fewster, 2007, p. 167). On June 27 he put his concerns into a memorandum to Australian HQ. The initial response was that no exceptions could be made – all correspondents would be based at Imbros. GHQ did agree that Bean could visit Anzac Cove as often as he wished. But as Bean noted, there would be a lot of time wasted as he sought to travel to and from the peninsula (p.171). On July 6 he headed off to find the correspondents’ camp to discover Ashmead-Bartlett settled in but no tent for himself. By this time Ross had also arrived. In *Light and shade in war*, Ross noted:

No one seemed to know where the war correspondents’ camp was, but at last I came suddenly upon it in a vineyard fringed with umbrageous trees, and at a table in the shade of these trees a young man, bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves, at his al fresco meal. This was a famous war correspondent.<sup>87</sup>  
In the stirring times to come, we were to see a good deal of each other, and

<sup>86</sup> At least one of Compton Mackenzie’s despatches was published in New Zealand (C. Mackenzie, 1915).

<sup>87</sup> Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett

to share many dangers and adventures in common. But in so far as I was concerned the war correspondents' camp existed only in the imagination of the General Staff. There was no tent for me, but eventually I slept in a tent where there were two machine guns, and next day I got my own. (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 76)

On the decision made by the military regarding the correspondents' accommodation on the island, Ross had this to say:

Soon after my arrival at Anzac the General Staff decided all war correspondents should be herded together in a special camp on the island of Imbros. Protests were in vain and threats would no doubt have meant being shot at dawn. (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 76)

The rules were relaxed somewhat for the antipodean journalists because both Bean and Ross spent most of their time based at Anzac Cove. Ross spent a whole chapter of *Light and shade in war* on the various dugouts he inhabited during the course of the campaign (pp. 68-85). The English journalists, Ashmead-Bartlett and Lawrence, and later Henry Nevinston and Herbert Russell, lived at the Imbros camp nearly all the time, according to Ross, while Bean and Ross came to it occasionally "as a haven of refuge, where, in safety from the Turkish shells and bullets, we could write up – as far as the censor would allow – the doings of our own men" (p.78).

While the circumstances under which the correspondents were operating were difficult there were moments of enjoyment and rest and recreation. The camp at Imbros was often the scene of jollity and good fellowship among the correspondents. In a letter to Forrest, Ross described evenings when Ashmead-Bartlett cracked open champagne and asked him to join him. Guests would come to dinner either in a marquee or in a "bower of elms". There was a Greek cook who ran the camp and the mess and servants to wait on the journalists. "Unfortunately one is nearly always at Anzac," noted Ross (M. Ross, 1915n). Ross saw the island camp as a "pleasant place, at once the joy of all who passed by" (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 78). He appreciated the "good food and Greek wine" to be found there, courtesy of the cooks hired to serve the correspondents. He had pleasant memories of trips around the island to buy provisions. In September 12, the correspondents were told by GHQ that they could safely leave the front for several days,

**Figure 32 Brigadier Generals Johnson, New Zealand Field Artillery Brigade, Russell, Monash, Johnson of New Zealand Light Infantry, Stephenson and Antill of 3rd Australian Light Horse, waiting for Lord Kitchener, November 13, 1915.**

so Ross, Bean, Lawrence, Nevinson and Ashmead-Bartlett spent some time on the island of Mytilene (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, pp. 61-67; Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p. 246). Ross and Ashmead-Bartlett stayed for two weeks. Bean said he stayed for 10 days (Fewster, 1983, p. 156). As the weather got colder in October the correspondents and their servants moved out of their tent camp and into a stone cottage, fondly called Chateau Pericles in Panghia. "On the whole we were fairly happy in the Chateau Pericles," said Ross (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 81). However, he did comment in one of his despatches that the change made the work of himself and Bean "a little more difficult" because of the time taken up travelling between the island and the peninsula and the chance that they might miss something if they were not on the mainland, not to mention the danger of being shelled as they arrived or departed from Anzac Cove (M. Ross, 1915y).

He seemed ambivalent about both his refuges.

Personally, I felt quite sorry to say good-bye to my little dug-out at Anzac, on the hard earthen floor of which I used to sleep, oblivious to the noise of the adjacent cannon and rifle fire or the more distant thunder of the guns at Helles, except when one howitzer nearer at hand than the other guns, used to shake the dried marl down into my hair and ears. In our island camp, on the other hand, one enjoyed a blissful immunity from shelling, but when one woke up in the night it was difficult to get to sleep again, because of the absence of gunfire, to which we had got so used at Anzac. Still we do not have shrapnel bursting over us nor chunks of an 11-incher hurtling to earth through the startled air. And that is something to be thankful for. (M. Ross, 1915y, p.8)

## **5:6 Second influx of correspondents**

Hamilton gave permission for further correspondents to join the Gallipoli press corps and on July 12 Henry Nevinson, 58, a foreign correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, arrived in the company of Herbert Russell, 46, for Reuters, and Sydney Moseley, 27, of the Central News and Exchange Telegraph (John, 2006, p. 144). Nevinson was already an experienced war correspondent having covered the South African War, and other European conflicts. To Compton Mackenzie (1929) he was "by far the most remarkable figure among them". "He looked and was a paladin" (p. 237). Bean saw Nevinson as a more accurate writer than Ashmead-Bartlett "more restrained and with a better style and pretty vivid", and also a "clever talker but without Ashmead-Bartlett's extraordinary sparkle" (Fewster, 2007, pp. 213-214). Bean saw himself, Ashmead-Bartlett and Nevinson as "at heart, thorough rebels". Nevinson's liberal views had not endeared him to the British Government and his accreditation as a correspondent had been delayed.

But according to Nicholas Hiley (1993), Hamilton had specifically requested his presence at Gallipoli (p. 252; John, 2006, p. 144). Malcolm Ross was not by inclination a rebel, his was a more compliant or conformist personality. He never gave any hint in any of his personal letters that he was anything but a supporter of Britain's right to wage this war and the indisputable duty of New Zealand to fight on her side. Ross did not appear to be a self reflective person and none of his personal papers carry any comments about his role as a war correspondent and the impact of the war on him personally.

Russell, the son of the novelist W. Clark Russell, was an inaugural journalist on the *Daily Express* before joining Reuters. Ross was to meet him later on the Western Front where he was one of the seven journalists who had been selected to cover that theatre of war (Simkin, 2008a). Moseley (1960) was asked to represent the Central News and Exchange Telegraph Company at the Dardanelles after a variety of jobs at the *Daily Express*, *Evening Times*, editing English journals in Cairo and freelance writing (pp. 3-194) . He was to spend an unhappy time at Imbros, not being in the best of health and not ever having been a war correspondent. He fell foul of Ashmead-Bartlett, who on meeting him on July 14, called him "that terrible Jew boy" (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915a). He agitated to Hamilton for Moseley's removal saying his presence in the correspondents' camp was "extremely objectionable to us" (p. 160). Moseley eventually left in August. The animosity between the two men appeared to be mutual, as Moseley's diaries revealed.

In mid July 1915 Hamilton gave the Australians, Schuler and Smith, permission to visit the peninsula which they did for a month, between July 20 and August 20 ("Phillip Schuler and Charles Patrick Smith", 2005). Keith Murdoch, a third Australian journalist arrived on September 3 and spent three days at Gallipoli en route to taking up a position with the United Cable Service in England (Fewster, 2007, p. 197; King & Bowers, 2005, p. 194). Another journalist mentioned by Bean in his diary on October 2 was Martin Donohoe, an Australian working for the *Daily Chronicle*, and described by Bean as being a "hopeless faker and inventor almost as bad as 'Smiler' Hales"<sup>88</sup> (Bean, 1915b). Bean was the only person to mention this particular journalist being at Gallipoli and it is not clear if he was ever there.

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<sup>88</sup> Australian journalist who covered the South African War.

Compton Mackenzie was detailed by GHQ to administer the oath to the correspondents.

The declaration read as follows:

I the undersigned do hereby solemnly undertake to follow in very particular the rules issued by the Commander in Chief through the Chief Field censor relative to correspondence concerning the forces in the Field and bind myself not to attempt to correspond by any other route or by any other means than that officially sanctioned.

Further, in the event of my ceasing to act as correspondent with the British forces I will not during the continuance of the war join the forces of any other power in any capacity or to impart to anyone military information of a confidential nature or of a kind such that its disclosure is likely to prejudice military operations, which may have been acquired by me while with the British Forces in the field, or publish any writing, plan, map, sketch, photograph or other picture on military subjects, the material for which has been acquired by me in a similar manner, unless first submitted by me to the Chief Field Censor for censorship and passed for publication by him.

Signature of correspondent.....(Hamilton, 1920a, p. 269)

All the journalists signed it, some with rather less willingness than others, according to Mackenzie. Nevinson signed

...with a courtliness of gesture that seemed to express his sense of the slight embarrassment I might be feeling at having to proffer such a superfluous document and at the same time his immediate acknowledgement of the fact that the position of a correspondent had somehow to be clearly set down in black and white. (C. Mackenzie, 1929, p. 238)

On the other hand, said Mackenzie, Ashmead-Bartlett signed last and flung down his pen with “contemptuous petulance” and “murmuring something about it being on a par with the rest of the idiotic behaviour of GHQ”.

How did Ross fit into this group of correspondents? Along with Nevinson he was one of the older men, having turned 53 in July. He was probably not as well educated as his colleagues but did have wide experience both in New Zealand and overseas. He had served as a war correspondent, unlike Lawrence, Moseley and Bean, albeit only for a few months, in Samoa in 1899. He certainly spent a good deal of time with both Nevinson and Ashmead-Bartlett, although Bean had his reservations about this friendship.

Malcolm Ross is a kindly chap but I can't quite make him out. He has been an outspoken admirer of Bartlett's from the day B. arrived here, almost to the point of toadyism – but B. is so brilliant that I think it may be just real honest admiration. At the same time I have heard him give away B. behind his back in a manner which completely staggered me. I don't really think Ross can be quite genuine but, after all, which of us are? He has got some very lovable and excellent points...(Bean, 1915b, p. 33; Fewster, 2007, p. 214)

Bean and Ross were together a lot, as fellow antipodeans, both at Gallipoli and on the Western Front and never again did Bean comment on any aspect of his colleague's character or demeanour. None of the other journalists in their memoirs or reminiscences made any comment about Ross, other than to say they accompanied him to this or that part of the Gallipoli peninsula. One person who did comment, and then in only one word, was not a journalist but the New Zealander, Lieutenant Colonel William Malone, then commander of Quinn's Post. He called Ross "nondescript" after a visit by Ross, Nevinson and Bean on July 17 (Crawford, 2005, p. 239). This makes it extremely difficult to assess Ross as an individual. In his London *Times* obituary Ross was described as a "naturally quiet and reserved man" ("Mr Malcolm Ross", 1930) the antithesis of course to Ashmead-Bartlett. It is clear Ross did not stand out in this eclectic group of pressmen with his personality. Whether he stood out for his war journalism will be investigated in the next chapter.

**Figure 33 Colonel William Malone, about 1914.**

By August the remaining correspondents were again fearful that further restrictions were going to be placed on their freedom. They had learned that Major Delmé Radcliffe had been sent out from England to take charge of them and to replace Captain William Maxwell, the censor (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p.174). Ashmead-Bartlett was not happy. "If my surmises are true and we are expected to go round in a body on personally conducted tours, I shall not stay here any longer." He consulted Nevinson and Ross and they decided to go to Hamilton to find out where they stood. On August 3 the three men rode over to GHQ with Nevinson deputed as spokesman. Hamilton promised absolute freedom of movement. In a letter dated the same day to his wife, Forrest, now in England, Ross talked about this visit. They "interviewed" Hamilton about some matters regarding the lack of opportunity to view battles. They also expressed concern that the arrival of a new censor would mean some curtailment of their liberties. "But we found Sir Ian quite charming and willing to give us all our former liberty in getting about" (M.

Ross, 1915n). Delmé Radcliffe obviously did not endear himself to the journalists. Charles Bean called him a “little worm” and a “little whippersnapper” (Fewster, 2007, pp. 207-208). The journalists complained to Ian Hamilton and Maxwell was reinstated to oversee the remaining journalists. By August 19, according to Ashmead-Bartlett (1928), Moseley had been despatched, Russell had “gone away sick”, Delmé Radcliffe was gone and besides Ross and Bean, there was only himself, Nevinson and Lawrence (pp. 205-206). In September all this was to change after Ashmead-Bartlett wrote a private letter to Asquith, the British Prime Minister, against regulations, and criticising the Gallipoli campaign (Fewster, 2007, p. 207; Ward Price, 1957, p. 78). He had secretly given it to Keith Murdoch, of the Melbourne *Herald*, when he had called in to Gallipoli for a few days, on his way to take up a position in London (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915, pp. 204, 210). The letter was intercepted at Marseilles and that was the final straw for the

**Figure 34 Peter Schuler of the *Melbourne Age* on his way to Egypt 1914.**

military and Ashmead-Bartlett was given his marching orders. He left Imbros on October 2 in the company of Nevinson who was going to England on leave (p.249). Ward Price replaced Ashmead-Bartlett. Hamilton (1920b) wrote in his diary of September 17 that “ a Correspondent writes in and tells us that for the honour of his profession he feels bound to let us know that Mr Ashmead-Bartlett has secretly sent home an uncensored despatch per, of all people in the world, Mr Murdoch!” (p. 190). There has been much speculation among historians who this correspondent might have been. Knightley (2000) pointed the finger at Nevinson (p. 108), but according to Angela John, (2006) Ian Hamilton told Nevinson in private that the informant was the navy’s official photographer (p. 152). Brooks left Gallipoli on July 12 (Hiley, 1993, p. 254), so it is conceivable that it was him. The only other correspondents still at the camp were Ross, Lawrence and Bean. The latter fingered that “little worm of a press officer, Delmé Radcliffe, who I think keeps a spy in our camp in the shape of one of the servants, seems to have found out that Murdoch was carrying the letter” (Fewster, 2007, p. 207). This seems doubtful as Hamilton said specifically that it was a correspondent, but he could, of course, have meant a letter writer. The Brenchleys (2005) repeat Nicholas Hiley’s suggestion it could have been Ross (p. 169). But there is no evidence to back this assertion up. However, after Bean’s comment about Ross almost toadying up to Ashmead-Bartlett and then “giving him away” behind his back, makes one wonder whether Ross may have been the one to speak to Hamilton. That is not sufficient to say

he did, however. Whatever happened, the end result was that details of the letter emerged and such was the outcry in England that Hamilton was recalled and a few weeks later the troops were withdrawn from the peninsula.

Knightley (2000) made much of Murdoch's role in bringing an end to Hamilton's position as Commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and eventually to the Gallipoli campaign itself. He cited Murdoch as an example of how a determined correspondent could make his protest heard (pp. 106-110). But Murdoch was only at Gallipoli for three days and was really only the courier for Ashmead-Bartlett's letter. It was Ashmead-Bartlett who had demonstrated his antagonism to the campaign time and time again and who found ways to get his voice heard even though in the end it meant he was banished from Gallipoli. Knightley seemed to believe that if only the correspondents on the Western Front had been so enterprising the war there might have ended sooner also. Ultimately Ashmead-Bartlett was prepared to risk his career to tell the truth about the war as he saw it, other correspondents were not. Even Bean, who criticised the Gallipoli campaign extensively in his diaries, nevertheless obeyed the rules laid down by field regulations. "I have been so loyal as I could possibly be – have brought myself into constant trouble in Australia by being loyal to military rules" (Fewster, 2007, p 208). Again in a diary entry on July 27 Bean (1915a) commented: "It is strictly against regulations for me to criticize and I have not been asked by the authorities to do so". Bean saw himself as being careful, loyal and scrupulous. It seems, from what has been learned about Ross, inconceivable that he would have broken any rules. He seemed perfectly happy to comply with military regulations although he did grumble, like the other correspondents, about the censorship. But he clearly accepted the military's reasons for imposing it. One just has to recall his comments about revealing any information prematurely about the Samoan Expeditionary Force.

### **5:7 Collaboration or competition?**

With the correspondents largely confined to the camp on Imbros there could be some speculation about how much they relied on each other for information for their despatches. It would be expected that the British journalists would try and outdo each other to be first, and best, with their despatches, as would the antipodean journalists. They would have all had access to any official communiqués but did they rely on other correspondents for eye witness information? They certainly accompanied each other to various battle sites. Bean and Ross would escort British journalists around the

Australian and New Zealand spheres of operation, as did the British journalists around the British and French sites, for the antipodeans.

We do know that Ross supplied information to Ashmead-Bartlett on at least one occasion. After the August 6-8 action to try and take and hold Chunuk Bair, the English journalist noted in his diary of August 11, that: "The Anzac Corps did splendidly and I found some very interesting accounts of the part played by the New Zealanders waiting for me from Ross" (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915, p.175; 1928, p.197). Ashmead-Bartlett had been with Nevinson north of Anzac observing the assault at Chocolate Hill. He used some of Ross's material in his despatches. As there was a general feeling that the New Zealand troops were not getting as much publicity for their actions and were often lumped in with the Australians, it is perhaps understandable that Ross was prepared to assist the English journalists. He was certainly quite ready to take them round the New Zealand positions and introduce them to the New Zealand commanding officers. Henry Nevinson (1918) also mentioned in his account of the Gallipoli campaign that he had been "generously assisted" by the Anzac correspondents Bean and Ross (p. 119).

When Bean commented on Ross's friendship with Ashmead-Bartlett in an October entry in his diary he mentioned that he hadn't seen much of Ross's copy (Fewster, 2007, p. 214) which suggests that perhaps the antipodean journalists did not share information. Bean certainly did not tell Ross about the Gallipoli evacuation orders he had received. He said this plainly in his diary entry of December 17 (Bean, 1915c, p.7). However, Bean himself seemed ready to assist Ross, especially when he was ill. It was Bean who forwarded his notes to New Zealand on the evacuation of the Anzac troops on December 18-19 under Ross's name. His telegram read:

My colleague Malcolm Ross who was with me on warship up to within hours of evacuation has been fighting against serious illness for three weeks and after managing to remain at Anzac to last was invalided to hospital ship much against his will by ship doctor. After endeavouring to write message and almost collapsing in task he asked me to furnish New Zealand Government with the message which I gladly do. These notes have of course been polished and altered a great deal since written by moonlight during actual events but they represent notes made throughout the whole time of evacuation. Bean for Malcolm Ross. (Bean, 1916a)

These notes were published as a diary of events in *The Press*, on January 4 (M. Ross, 1916a), and then in more detail in other papers. Once the word got out that it had been

Bean that had written the evacuation story there was a storm of condemnation that Ross's name had been attached to it. *New Zealand Truth* also had plenty to say about this incident and headlined it as follows on January 8, 1916.

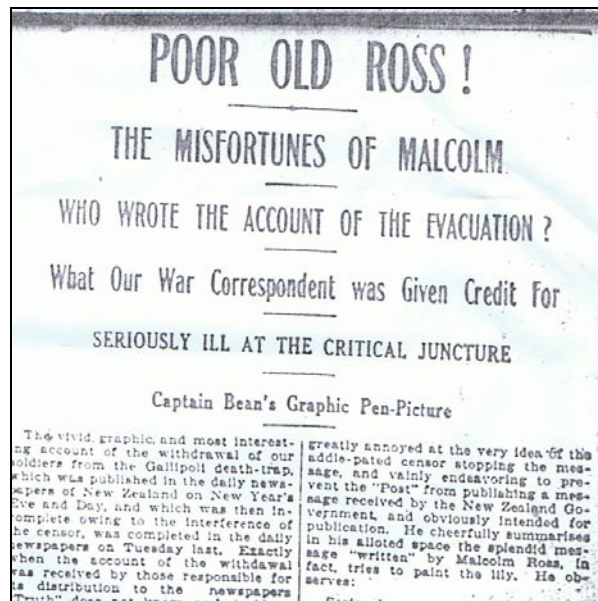


Figure 35 Extract from *New Zealand Truth*, January 8, 1916, p. 5

Describing the published evacuation story as “vivid” “graphic” and even “brilliant” *Truth* said it was prepared to admit that “at last Malcolm Ross had justified his appointment, his existence and enhanced his reputation as a journalist” until it discovered that Bean had written the despatch. Such an account, if it had been written by Ross, would have ‘made’ him, believed the weekly (“Poor old Ross!”, 1916). Another comment appeared in the *Grey River Argus* with the dateline Sydney, January 20. It read: “With reference to the cable giving prominence to Malcolm Ross's story, ‘*The last days at Anzac*’, the local papers point out that Malcolm Ross is ill; and the story was written by Captain Bean” (“Honour where honour is due”, 1916). Bean (1916e; 1916f) himself said later that Ross had written an article, while very ill, which was unsent “because the Censor, when we remaining correspondents had a talk with him, laid down certain lines which clearly ruled the whole of it out”.

It was Bean who realised that scooping his colleagues was out of the question because of delays in getting despatches forwarded to the various newspapers in Australasia and the United Kingdom. Soldiers' letters often beat the war correspondents' despatches into publication. One area where there could possibly be some competition was in the

publication of books about the campaign. Moseley (1960) believed there would be competition to be first out with a book on the Dardanelles experience. He recorded in his diary in July his first meeting with Compton Mackenzie. The latter “sneered at Bartlett’s boast of having received several offers for a book” (p. 145). Moseley thought Mackenzie would also try to be the first to get out a book, as would Nevinson. Ashmead-Bartlett was the first to publish with *Despatches from the Dardanelles* in late 1915. Moseley’s book, *The truth about the Dardanelles* came out in August 1916. Malcolm Ross and Noel Ross’s book *Light and shade in war*, also came out in 1916. Nevinson’s *The Dardanelles campaign* appeared in November 1918. A second book, from Ashmead-Bartlett, *The uncensored Dardanelles*, was published in 1928. *Gallipoli memories*, Compton Mackenzie’s book, was not released until November 1929. Bean was too busy writing his Australian war histories to publish his own thoughts on the campaign. However, he did write a book, published in 1948, called *Gallipoli mission* which dealt with a small mission of Australians who visited Gallipoli in 1919 to carry out research on the battlefields, discuss a plan for the Gallipoli war graves, and obtain from the Turks their story of the fighting. George Ward Price published *Extra-special correspondent*, in 1957 but only devoted 10 pages to Gallipoli. Lawrence does not appear to have written about his Gallipoli experiences, nor does Russell.

## 5:8 Censorship

Something the war correspondents had little control over was the level of censorship. Complaints about censorship surfaced not long after war was declared in August 1914 and continued unabated well after the armistice was signed in 1918. In the context of Gallipoli, however, there are several things to consider. Firstly there was the censorship that went on at the Dardanelles which affected the war correspondents directly and the reading public indirectly. Secondly there was the censorship that occurred after the despatches had left the Mediterranean. In the case of news destined for New Zealand, it often meant censorship in London, Sydney and in Wellington before it ever got to being considered by editors for inclusion in their newspapers. This latter censorship will be covered in the next chapter.

The field censorship at Gallipoli was governed by the British Field Service Regulations 1914 and published in book form. (*Field service pocket book*, 1914). All the war correspondents had taken and signed the oath administered by Compton Mackenzie, where they undertook to follow the rules issued through the chief censor. The chief

censor at Gallipoli was Captain William Maxwell, who had been the *Daily Mail* correspondent in Luxembourg. He had followed wars in the Sudan, South Africa and the Balkans and made a good first impression on Charles Bean (Fewster, 2007, p.p. 64-65). He was probably even more inclined towards the man when he was told some time later by Maxwell that he had hardly to censor Bean's accounts at all (p.172). Ashmead-Bartlett (1915a) was much less sanguine about the censorship. By July 18 he was complaining that the censorship had "now passed beyond all reason". "There are at least four censors all of whom cut up your stuff". He named Maxwell, Colonel Ward, the Chief of Intelligence, General Braithwaite, the Chief of Staff, and Ian Hamilton himself. "All hold different views and feel it their duty to take out scraps. Thus only a few dry crumbs are left for the wretched public" (p. 139). A day later it had obviously all got too much for the correspondent. "I remained at Imbros disgusted with the flies, the excessive heat and the wickedness of mankind generally and the inexhaustible stupidity of the censorship" (p. 140). He had one article where not one single line passed. "Only a few dry bones are left for the public. The articles and cables resemble a chicken, out of which a thick nutritious broth has been extracted" (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, p.159). The British journalist did have a reputation, however, for being able to convince those in command to leave his work alone. "A paper that will baulk [sic] at two lines of Malcolm Ross will swallow 20 columns of Bartlett whole. As a censor wheedler Bartlett is 'on his own'" ("Untitled", 1915m). Ross did not appear to be so lucky. In an early letter to Attack, Ross added as a postscript to a letter: "The censorship here is strict and does not permit of our mentioning names – it takes away from the interest of the article" (1915c). He complained bitterly to others as well, including Allen and Massey, at his unfair treatment by the field censors. In September 1915, he wrote to Allen from the war correspondents' camp, Cephalos:

All our despatches are severely censored and it is very difficult to make them interesting in regards to the intimate details that New Zealanders would like to read about. All the correspondents suffer; Bartlett had all the names of divisions cut out of his descriptions of the Suvla landing and some articles stopped altogether! Nevinson and Lawrence also have had names and divisions censored. (M. Ross, 1915A)

He noted that after the August 6-9 offensive on Chunuk Bair he would have liked to have written about Colonel Bauchop and Colonel Malone killed during the assault and many other "gallant fellows who have gone but mention of names is absolutely interdicted". "I don't think anything can be done unless the War Office can be got to

make an exception in the case of New Zealand because of her distance away.” Someone in a good position to assess the impact of censorship on Ross’s letters was Attack. In his annual review of the UPA year in February 1916, Attack commented on how Ross’s despatches had been “hacked about” by censors. “It would require almost a genius to do good work under the censorship conditions which take all the marrow out of a war correspondent’s work”(Attack, 1916). Correspondence flew between Ross, Allen and Major General Alexander Godley, the Commander of the New Zealand and Australian Division in September regarding the difficulties Ross claimed he was having with the too severe censorship. Godley said in October that steps had been taken to rectify the censorship of Ross’s copy and letters from Ross after that indicated an improvement.

However, the *Grey River Argus* published in October comments from a soldier who talked to a pressman on a troop train about Ross’s difficulties with the censorship.

A trooper stated that he had seen Mr. Malcolm Ross, the Official New Zealand War Correspondent. Mr. Ross, he said, was having a particularly bad run and had showed him many sheets of foolscap scored and marred by the censor to such an extent as to nullify the correspondent's work. Apparently the reason for the censor's harsh treatment of Mr. Ross' copy was that too many details were given. (“The war correspondents - under strict control”, 1915, p. 2)

All the correspondents complained about the stringency of the censorship where generally no names of soldiers were to be mentioned nor the names of military units for fear the enemy might get wind of any vital information. Even Hamilton himself (1920a), expressed annoyance with the demands of the censorship (pp. 320-321). “What is the result of my efforts to throw light upon our proceedings? A War Office extinguisher from under which a few evil-smelling phrases escape.” Most of the journalists accepted the necessity of censorship during war but thought it was unreasonably severe and poorly administered. Moseley (1916) noted that Hamilton’s principles regarding censorship were not always correctly interpreted by his subordinates – “some of whom acted as stodgy editors as well as inconsistent censors” (p. 15). Bean was one correspondent who recorded his utter disgust at how the censorship was being handled at Imbros.

It censors rigorously all the names of officers and regiments out of my letters – written by one who actually saw them; and allows them to be

picked and forwarded second-hand in a bundle of exaggerations and untruths quite uncensored from Cairo. (Fewster, 2007, p. 208)

The final straw for the journalists was when it came to writing up about the evacuation at Anzac and Suvla. On December 21 the remaining correspondents had “worked all day until dinner and even to midnight getting various despatches away”, said Bean.

Ward Price is clearly especially keen on making this story a magnificent one – a chef d’oeuvre – and he couldn’t have a finer subject. The only thing is few people in England will realise what an extremely dangerous operation it was. (Fewster, 2007, p. 258)

Having spent all that time writing up the account of the evacuation the correspondents were devastated to hear from the censor that no details about how the troops had been withdrawn could be used and “that our messages had been carefully read and seriously curtailed” (p.259).

This was like an unexpected shrapnel shell in the pit of the stomach. The despatch on which I had poured out more care than anything of which I have written here – the only chance one has had of even attempting to rival Bartlett’s work (which no man ever censored in this degree). (Fewster, 2007, p. 201)

Bean was bitterly disappointed as the correspondents had spent a long time with the authorities, before beginning to write, discussing exactly what they could cover in their despatches. “As it was, the best article of the campaign goes to the wall.” Ward Price (1957) said in his book that he wrote a full account of the evacuation when he reached Salonika (pp. 81-82) so perhaps he chose to delay his despatch until after he had left Gallipoli and the blue pencil of the censors. His report was printed in *The Times* on December 31 and was “one of the longest despatches printed by that newspaper during the whole war”, he claimed. Extracts from that despatch were published in the *New Zealand Times* on January 4, 1916 (Ward Price, 1916).

## **5:9 Photography**

While the official photographer, Brooks, had been assigned to cover the Gallipoli campaign, the correspondents also took their cameras with them on the peninsula, in particular Ashmead-Bartlett, Ross and Bean, despite army regulations forbidding this. The English correspondent had both a small camera and the much larger “kinematograph”. This was nearly blown to pieces near a Chocolate Hill engagement in

August. As he was trying to catch some of the action with the “cinema” he was shelled and lost his “coat, small camera, walking stick, field glasses and water bottle”. “The infernal old cinema, of which I was now heartily tired, the cause of all my troubles, had, of course, survived and I was reluctantly compelled to drag it back to camp”(Ashmead-Bartlett, 1928, pp. 212-213). In his letter to Forrest in August, Ross talked about his three-day visit to Achi Baba in the company of Ashmead-Bartlett and Nevinson. Ashmead-Bartlett used his “kinematograph” to take various pictures.

If these turn out all right and receive the sanction of the War office, you may see them at “The Palace”. You may be able to recognise me in several of them. I got quite a number of photographs, which I hope will turn out all right. (M. Ross, 1915n)

Because Ross has not left any diaries, it is unclear what happened to the photographs he took. In September 1915 Hamilton told Ashmead-Bartlett that the War Office had telegraphed forbidding anyone but the official photographer, Brooks, to take pictures.

**Figure 36 World War I camp at Serapium, south of Cairo, February 24, 1916. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

Hamilton thought this was “absurd” and that Ashmead-Bartlett could keep taking them (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915, p. 205). Bean was particularly indignant about the vagaries of the military restrictions where the correspondents were penalised by the censors and yet they allowed “any swindler, or at any rate rule-breaker, of an officer, who gets a film or photo, smuggled home past the censor, to have it published in the London press...”(Fewster, 2007, p. 209). According to Fewster, Bean took 1100 photographs on the peninsula and earlier (p.17), some of them reproduced in *Bean’s Gallipoli*.

### **5:10 Other difficulties faced by journalists at Gallipoli**

Bean outlined some of the other difficulties faced by journalists at the Dardanelles in an article in *The Australasian Journalist*, which was reprinted in *The Press* on September 11, 1915 (1915h). He did not see the competition being other correspondents but rather the soldiers and their letters home. “To start with – as far as the correspondent who is working at the front, subject to the field censor, is concerned – the scoop is out. You hand in your copy to the field censor and there your business ends.” It was soldiers’ letters, which always managed to reach the newspapers before correspondents’ reports, that was the issue for Australasian journalists. Reports written by the journalists had to

simply trust for their value to being “a more truthful, connected narrative”, as Bean said. He got to the nub of the problem for those journalists whose papers, like *The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald*, used copious quantities of soldiers’ stories. “As the scoop is out of it and you are bound to be beaten by the soldier’s letter, the real problem is what to write.” Bean resolved this conundrum by deciding on telling the people at home “steadily as near as one could the actual truth... by seeing everything you could with your own eyes and being very careful as to whose stories you trusted.” We have no idea what Ross’s philosophy was so he can only be judged by his output and its contents. This will be examined in the next chapter. Bean was particularly scornful of the stories coming out about Gallipoli from journalists not stationed at the peninsula. He was often incensed at the false news and “imaginary atrocities” that came out of other Mediterranean cities (Bean, 1915e). “War correspondents have so habitually exaggerated the heroism of battles that people don’t realise that the real actions are heroic,” he said in a diary entry (Bean, 1915b, p. 13).

Another issue for the correspondents was getting transport to the battle sites. This often proved an exhausting and time wasting exercise. Again Bean recorded the early difficulties of getting to any of the naval vessels involved in bombarding the shores and then the time wasting exercise of trying to find transport from Imbros to the peninsula when the correspondents wanted it. There was then the problem of trying to find the operational centres on land. For example, Bean recorded on September 30 his and Nevinson’s efforts to find the HQ of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Artillery Brigade. It took them most of the day as “no one seemed to have the least idea where it was” (Fewster, 2007, p. 209).

A further physical difficulty the correspondents faced was getting their “copy” away to their respective countries. Ross described the problems he faced in some detail in his letter of November 7 to the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The majority of the despatches have to be sent from Divisional Headquarters (on Imbros) to Anzac – as a rule I make the journey with them myself – and there they have to await a trawler that takes them to the office of the press censor. At times, owing to rough weather, the trawlers cannot get away. There is necessarily some delay in the censor’s office. Then they have to go by trawler to Mudros where there may be considerable delay. (M. Ross, 1915F)

Once the despatches reached Egypt they still might miss the outgoing weekly mail and suffer even further delay. Ross was constrained more severely than the other correspondents as he was forbidden to telegraph anything. Bean had his despatches telegraphed once they had reached Adelaide or Fremantle. Ross asked the Press Association if his despatches could be telegraphed from Fremantle in the same manner, as Bean was getting several days start over Ross. He wanted his despatches to be telegraphed from Fremantle to catch the first mail leaving Melbourne or Sydney for New Zealand. "But if my letters are late, in competition with Mr Bean's, I hope you will make it clear the fault does not rest with me" (M. Ross, 1915c). Attack and the chairman of the Press Association were not prepared to sanction Ross's request and Attack said so in a letter to Massey.

Neither the chairman nor I think it is necessary. The expense would be very great and an agent would have to be paid in Melbourne to receive and post the letters on. For about five days saving in time it is not worth it. The last budget of letters would have cost at least £10 to wire and now that the telegraph rates are going to be raised in Australia the cost will be still greater. (Attack, 1915b)

Sometimes the correspondents' despatches were held up by Hamilton himself, who wanted to ensure his version of events was published first. Ross was not the only journalist to face such difficulties. They all did as Bean explained when describing the work of the correspondent at the front. Once the censor had made his changes to a despatch, he posted or cabled it "by whatever means he chooses - you have nothing to do with that," said Bean.

And whether it arrives on time or is late is purely a matter of the Post Office. With ocean transport as uncertain as it sometime is, it may take three weeks before a cablegram or a letter gets from Gallipoli to Alexandria. The worst instance I know of was a cable message of Ashmead-Bartlett's which took over a month to reach London - and as you will by this time have realised some of my cable messages and letters have been delayed to very nearly the same extent; while three letters from a wounded friend in Alexandria took four and five weeks to reach me. I don't suppose people in Australia have the least conception of this difficulty. It has nothing to do whatever with the censor - but the fact is that this is war time and you cannot arrange the ferry services to run just as you would like them to in peace. (Bean, 1915h, p. 9)

Once the correspondents got to the peninsula they were faced with the difficulties associated with getting about. The terrain, especially where the Australians and New

Zealanders were embedded, was extremely challenging as the soldiers themselves had already experienced since landing on April 25. From Anzac Cove, the land was a mass of scrub-covered hills and ravines which were always dangerous to negotiate whether during the day or night. Even the narrow beach at Anzac Cove was prey to sniper fire. Safety was a hole dug into a cliff face, for journalists and for soldiers. Bean and Ross both spent most of their time at or near Anzac Cove, living in dugouts, subject to the heat, flies, rats, bad food and the constant danger of being killed. Both men were often ill, spending days huddled in their dugouts. In *Light and shade in war* Ross spoke of the time he spent at No 2 Outpost with the New Zealand Division. He took over the dugout of the “Otago Colonel”<sup>89</sup> the night before the push on Chunuk Bair on August 6.

Of that dugout I have no happy memories. It comes to me in my dreams sometimes as a nightmare. It is the darkest shadow in the whole picture. But for weeks I lived and worked in it, suffering my share of illness and pestilence. It is from that dugout that I date the loss of relatives<sup>90</sup> and friends. Men were killed and wounded all about it. (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 71)

It is certain that Ross knew many of the members of the Otago Mounted Rifles who were involved in the action in August and lost their lives or were wounded. Henry Nevinston (1918) mentioned that some of the New Zealand soldiers “had practised mountain-climbing in the Southern Alps under such mountaineers as Malcolm Ross, their correspondent” (p. 258). Ross was sure to have known the old family friend, Thomas Mackenzie’s 19-year-old son, Clutha, for example, who lost both eyes in one of the actions on Gallipoli (“Pars about people”, 1917). James Allen’s son, John, was killed fighting with the British forces.<sup>91</sup> Ross’s own batman was shot through the leg. Ross himself escaped injury. The journalists, along with the soldiers, faced the unrelenting threat of being hit by Turkish snipers. Ashmead-Bartlett (1928) recounted the visit he and Ross made to the battle site after the big push of August 6-8. A week

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<sup>89</sup> Colonel Arthur Bauchop, of the Otago Mounted Rifles, mortally wounded on August 8 and died at sea on August 10.

<sup>90</sup> Ross’s nephew by marriage, Lieutenant George Muir Grant, 26, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse, (later renamed the 3<sup>rd</sup>) from Victoria, was in the 5<sup>th</sup> reinforcements which embarked from Melbourne aboard the *Palermo* on May 7, 1915. He missed the landing in April but was killed at Lone Pine on August 7, 1915 (“Third Light Horse Brigade”, 1915).

<sup>91</sup> My relatives, Alfred Harpin Corlett, 24, and his brother, Franklin Corlett, 22, fighting with the Wellingtons, were killed during the assault on Chunuk Bair on August 8. They are buried in the Chunuk Bair cemetery on Gallipoli.

later the pair climbed to the highest point now held by the troops up the Rhododendron Ridge (pp. 200-201). “The climb was steep and dangerous, owing to the enemy’s snipers who commanded almost the whole valley from Chunuk Bair, Hill Q and Koja Chemen Tepe.” After a day observing the scene, the two men were cleared out of the front trenches at 5pm as the guns were about to open fire, to prepare the way for a new attack. “On our way down we were nearly scuppered by a machine gun hidden in the thick scrub. We had to lie down in the road and crawl until we came to cover.” Ross and Ashmead-Bartlett were lucky not to be hit. Nevinston, Bean and Brooks were not so fortunate. The former was hit in the head by a shell during the battle for Chocolate Hill but saved by his pith helmet from serious injury (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915, p. 186; John 2006, p. 150) and Bean was hit in the leg by a stray bullet during the August 6-8 push (Fewster, 2007, p. 186). Brooks was wounded and went home in July.

It was just as likely that it would be the “poor food, thirst, heat, dust, flies, dysentery and jaundice” that would lay the correspondents low, as it did the troops. Most of the journalists fell ill during the course of the campaign. Herbert Russell left the peninsula because of sickness in August. Ashmead-Bartlett complained often of being ill and Ross and Bean were sick many times. Ross was sent to Alexandria suffering from jaundice in October according to his Army records (“Ross, Malcolm - WW1 N/N - Army 1914-1918”). On September 10 Ashmead-Bartlett (1928) recorded Ross turning up at the camp from Anzac looking very ill. “He says the conditions of life are horrible there. All Godley’s staff are ill and the percentage of sickness amongst the troops is increasing by leaps and bounds” (p. 245). Bean noted on November 30 visiting the little cottage the correspondents moved into at the approach of winter and finding “poor old Ross in bed with an overcoat over him, and very much in the middle of an attack of jaundice – worse than mine was” (Fewster, 2007, p. 238).

## **5:11 Conclusion**

Before being able to determine whether Malcolm Ross, or even any of the other Gallipoli war correspondents, contributed to any New Zealand Anzac legend or myth it was necessary to consider the circumstances surrounding their assignment to cover the peninsula war. At least a dozen journalists were eventually permitted to report from Gallipoli, mainly antipodeans and English. There were no Ghurkha correspondents and certainly no Turkish ones. French journalists were never mentioned in any of the

correspondents' memoirs. Ross arrived late to the theatre of war and missed some of the most important battles of the campaign. Other journalists were only allowed a brief time on the peninsula. The journalists were a mix of the experienced and inexperienced but the dominant personality among them all was definitely Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. While the military might have been deeply suspicious of him, his fellow journalists seemed to find him a fascinating study. Ross teamed up with both he and Nevinson, the other highly respected English journalist, on many occasions. Whether he was toadying to his influential colleagues it is difficult to judge but it seemed he held these two in particularly high esteem. Perhaps Nevinson returned the compliment, because although he scarcely mentioned Ross in his account of Gallipoli he did attend Noel Ross's funeral in August, 1917 ("Untitled", 1918a).

From the military point of view the circumstances were almost perfect for controlling the journalists. The geographical isolation of the battlefield meant the journalists were physically constrained and reliant on the charity of the military in obtaining their stories and getting them disseminated. The journalists were confined to a camp on an island some distance from the battlefield and so were even more reliant on the goodwill of the military to get to the peninsula. With the tight censorship exerted by GHQ it was certain the journalists would have very little room to go beyond superficial coverage of the campaign. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why Hamilton appeared so accommodating of the journalists. He might have given the Australasian journalists slightly more latitude in following their forces, but neither Ross nor Bean tested the limits of the constraints put upon them. The Englishman Ashmead-Bartlett was the only one to step outside the constraints and air his negative views about the campaign. Hamilton ultimately lost his position as Commander for being so accommodating.

Ashmead-Bartlett took a risk and also lost his position, but probably felt vindicated when Hamilton fell from grace and the Gallipoli campaign collapsed. Bean certainly had his reservations about the peninsula expedition and these were clearly explained in his private diaries but not in his despatches. The dangers inherent in being close to battle affected the journalists. Some were injured and most fell ill during the course of their assignment on the peninsula. This assignment was far from the romantic idyll many imagined the life of a war correspondent to be. The next chapter will focus specifically on the work of Malcolm Ross, his despatches and how they were received

back home. Only then can a determination be made as to his contribution to any Anzac legend or myth that may have arisen since Gallipoli.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Gallipoli campaign and the readers back home

#### 6:1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the general circumstances faced by the war correspondents that were sent to cover the Gallipoli campaign. Now the focus will turn to Malcolm Ross in particular to consider his efforts on the peninsula. Many in New Zealand, especially those who supported the Opposition to the Reform Party of William Massey, were dubious about Ross's capabilities as a war correspondent. However, the fact the appointment process took so long and contributed to his late arrival in Egypt was certainly not his fault. But the doubts aired about his journalistic ability persisted and will be explored in detail to decide if his detractors were correct in their assessment. The main issue to be investigated here is how well Ross covered the Gallipoli campaign. News from the Dardanelles published in selected New Zealand papers will be analysed over a specified period to assess Ross's contribution. The reaction to his despatches back home will also be discussed. A judgement will be made whether the journalistic practices and practical difficulties faced by Ross as a World War I war correspondent weighed against exceptional writing or whether Ross was never equal to the task. Along the way Ross's contribution to an Anzac legend will be explored.

#### 6:2 Press coverage of the Gallipoli campaign up to June 1915

It took almost a year after New Zealand troops left the country before Malcolm Ross's despatches from Gallipoli began to appear in New Zealand newspapers. In that time the reading public had to rely on other non-New Zealand sources for their war news. Early in the war New Zealand newspapers were commenting on the restriction on news and the subsequent paucity of news from the front. In a leader the *New Zealand Herald* commented on "the dense fog which enshrouds every area under the control of the military and naval authorities" ("The secrecy of war", 1914). At this stage New Zealanders were wondering where their troops were being sent and rumours were so rife that the Governor had to appeal publically for "understanding of the need for secrecy" ("Movements of forces", 1914). It was eventually learned that rather than France the troops were in fact destined for the Mediterranean. New Zealanders chafed under the scarcity of news of their Egyptian-based soldiers.

Denied the right of sending correspondents to the front with the Expeditionary Force, newspapers of the Dominion have to rely on scraps of letters written by men in Egypt to their friends at home. It is known that letters written to newspapers will not get past the censor. So strict and unyielding is the censorship as to that that the men find it useless to attempt to write to journalists among their friends. ("No real news", 1915)

Any news that was coming through was from either the British or Australian journalists now based in and around the Gallipoli peninsula. For example, in *The Press*, from February 22-27 there was a despatch from Charles Bean, with his byline, reporting on the work of the Australian troops, and three despatches from journalists working for the *Melbourne Age* – all from Egypt, one of whom was almost certainly Peter Schuler. In April, the month of the landing by the Australian and New Zealand troops at Anzac Cove while Ross was yet to reach Egypt, there were three stories in *The Press* from Bean, two from the *Melbourne Argus* journalist (probably Charlie Smith), one each from General Godley and Ashmead-Bartlett and several official statements from the military. No mention was made of the casualties experienced at the landing but the rumours were already rife that they had been severe ("Our troops in action", 1915). George Ward Price featured in the *Evening Post* on April 3 with a story under his byline on the bombardment of the Dardanelles by the British warships (Ward Price, 1915). Lester Lawrence followed this story three weeks later with his story of the work of the battleship *Triumph* during the landing (Lawrence, 1915). New Zealand was still waiting to hear how her soldiers had fared.

After the long waiting in Egypt, enlivened by only minor engagements with Moslem forces, New Zealand's sons are in a hot zone of war. They were among the troops who landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and they found the Turks in a mood to fight. At the time of writing the only message is one which conveys the King's praise of the New Zealanders' splendid service. The people will soon have full details, but they know that the Expeditionary Force has been thoroughly tested, and the men have won warm words of thanks from the King. ("Australasians in action", 1915, p. 6)

By April 29 New Zealand had still heard nothing of the details of the soldiers' part in the operations. The next day the *Evening Post* ran an editorial anxious about the "meagre" news from Gallipoli. The paper asked for news at the Prime Minister's office but the Government had nothing new.

People who are eagerly awaiting particulars of the battles are assured that information will be given out as soon as possible after its arrival, whether it comes directly to the Government or to the press. Meanwhile vague rumours about casualties should be rejected as the output of fanciful minds. Canard-mongers are always busy in time of excitement, and therefore people are warned against the acceptance of any statement which is not supported by authority of the Government or the Press Association. ("The Dardanelles battle at Suvla Bay", 1915, p. 8)

That same day the *Press* echoed the concern being felt throughout New Zealand. The leading article said "a feeling of joy and pride thrilled through the Dominion yesterday" upon receiving the telegram offering congratulations for the part the New Zealand soldiers had played in the operation at the Dardanelles. On the same page in double column headlines the paper announced in bold capitals "**OUR TROOPS IN ACTION**" but with no details or news of casualties ("Our troops in action", 1915). Another story told of the rumours circulating about severe casualties and repudiation by both the military and the Government that either of them was holding out information. A further story told of a gathering of "four or five thousand people" who "hastily" gathered outside Parliament the day before to hear the news from the Prime Minister.

Still without details of the landing, New Zealand newspapers were doing their best to quell reports of heavy casualties. A *Press* editorial on May 1 called them "lying rumours" but did agree that the delay in furnishing authentic details regarding the New Zealand action was creating a "period of trying suspense" ("Progress of the war", 1915). Even an official account of the landing transmitted from the London High Commissioner only mentioned 16 casualties. Finally a week into May the details of the events in April came to light and the enormity of the sacrifice made by New Zealand troops was revealed. Stories from Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett, Lawrence and others were published the length and breadth of New Zealand as were the columns and columns of the dead and wounded. From now until the time Ross arrived, these journalists were regularly used in New Zealand newspapers but their reports only ever mentioned New Zealand forces incidentally or included them under the umbrella sobriquet of "Australasian". Newspapers did this themselves on occasion, perhaps trying to give some semblance of New Zealand coverage. For example, the *Evening Post* sometimes ran stories under the headline "*The Australasians*" when it was really a story about the Australians with maybe a single sentence reference specifically to the New Zealand troops. Any news, even of the Australians, was welcome! Hopes were high, therefore,

that with their own correspondent, New Zealanders could expect much fuller accounts detailing the actions their troops were involved in. General Godley (1915) was particularly pleased as he explained in a communication with James Allen on May 19.

I am very glad to hear that Malcolm Ross is coming here as Press Correspondent I am sure he is the right man and we have all felt that we did not like being dependent for a report on our doings on Captain Bean, the Australian man, though he is a very good fellow and has often come to me for information and help. (Godley, 1915)

### **6:3 Ross departs for Egypt**

There is no doubt at all that Ross, and therefore the New Zealand public, suffered because of his late arrival at Gallipoli. The protracted appointment process was not of his making and as soon as he received the telegram notifying him that he had been chosen as the official correspondent and he had accepted, he was on his way to Egypt. He did not accompany the First Body which departed on October 14 but left nearly six months later. The reason for this delay in his appointment could be put down to the bitter rivalries between Liberal and Reform newspapers and the irresolution of the Government. Neither the New Zealand newspaper proprietors, nor the Press Association, were prepared to send their own journalists as in previous wars, largely because of the cost. This is rather surprising because news of the war was proving a bonanza for New Zealand newspapers. They seemed to use as an excuse the fact the War office had said the Dominions could only send one journalist each. This did not stop the Australian papers sending more than one, even though Charles Bean was the official correspondent for that country.

Malcolm Ross did not portray the romantic, dashing image of the war correspondent that had been presented to the New Zealand public over previous years. As *The Observer* noted in 1918: “Everyone knows Malcolm is scarcely the beau ideal of a war correspondent”(“Untitled”, 1918d). But as news of the war in Europe started filtering through to the southern hemisphere it was becoming apparent to many that there was no such thing as “romantic” war correspondence. “We no longer hear much of war correspondents at the front. Behind the battle front is the new and more appropriate phrase. The romance of the war correspondents' business has gone with its risks”

(“Untitled”, 1915a).<sup>92</sup> But by 1915, at 52, Ross could be said to be at the pinnacle of his journalism career just like conquering Mt Cook had been the pinnacle of his climbing career.

## **6:4 Malcolm Ross’s arrival in Egypt**

Because of the delays in his appointment, Malcolm Ross did not leave New Zealand until April 8, 1915 and when he did so he was accompanied by his wife, Forrest, who was continuing on to England. They travelled on a first class passage to London, cost £88, with Malcolm being ordered to report to GHQ in Cairo on arrival. The letter confirming his appointment reiterated that he was to send his despatches to the High Commissioner in London, his old friend Thomas Mackenzie, with a duplicate to go to the Under Secretary for Internal Affairs in Wellington. The ship arrived at Port Said on May 17. The next morning Ross travelled to Cairo and one of his first tasks was to search for his son. Why did this take precedence over his war work?

Noel had been among that first body of New Zealand soldiers heading for Zeitoun in October 1914. According to his Army service files, he had enlisted with the Canterbury Infantry Battalion on August 13, 1914 and was immediately promoted to Lance Corporal (“Ross, Noel - WW1 6/134, 1914-1917”). He was 23, almost 6ft and weighed around 12 stone, slightly taller and heavier than his father. Noel had only recently joined the “rank and file” of reporters on the new Canterbury *Sun* newspaper (“Untitled”, 1914a). *The Observer* spoke admiringly of the young newspaperman.

Ross was one of the first pressmen to join the forces, and the way in which his frame filled up and his muscles grew hard after a few weeks' military training, showed that it is a great tonic to sedentary workers.  
 (“Corporal Noel Ross and Arthur Chorlton”, 1915)

He left Wellington on troopship No 10, the *Arawa*, on October 16, according to a chapter in *Light and shade in war*, in the company of the Wellingtons (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916). This was strange as his battalion was on Troopship 11, the *Athenic*, according to the New Zealand Mounted Rifles website (“New Zealand Transports of the Main Body”, 2008). Noel Ross described farewelling his parents in a letter to “Jimmy”. He seemed quite bemused by his father’s attitude.

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<sup>92</sup> Those assigned to cover Gallipoli especially Bean and Ross, who spent most of their time on the peninsula, might have begged to differ. There were risks aplenty and several journalists did not escape the war totally unscathed, including Bean.

The pater is a funny old bird, isn't he? When he had talked a bit to me about keeping my nut down when it wasn't wanted up, he said he had a lot of writing to do for tomorrow's English mail. Then he shook hands rather hurriedly and went down the gangway and along the wharf without even once looking back. His figure faded into a mist as he got near the end, and I had to take a pull on myself and talk hard to mater, who had not gone ashore. (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 28)

His mother stayed on and they "talked of everything but war or going away". "Neither of us felt too cheery, but mater is the bravest little woman in the world, and she kissed me and went down on to the wharf with the cheeriest smile on her face" (p. 28-29). This was a curious little scene. It is quite clear from all the evidence that Malcolm Ross was exceptionally proud of his only child and would have been very aware of the dangers his boy would be facing as a soldier. Noel obviously found his father's reaction rather bewildering. He was perhaps expecting rather more than what occurred. Why did his father react in this unexpected way? It would be easy to be critical. However, showing any sort of emotion at this fateful parting would probably have been out of character for Malcolm, in an age where men were expected to be strong and display a stiff upper lip in the face of adversity, the "stoicism" that Jock Phillips (1996) talked about earlier, or "British phlegm" as Paul Fussell (1975) would term it (p. 181). Being rather reserved, Ross probably found the parting very painful and dealt with it in the best way he could. Women were permitted to show their concern and love more openly. Malcolm did not prolong the agony of separation, with the excuse he needed to finish some newspaper work. It is a hint of the difficulties Ross was to face writing about the horrors of war if he could not face the emotions associated with farewelling his son.

The convoy of ships sailed by way of Hobart, Albany, Colombo and Aden to arrive in Egypt in December. Noel was part of the landing force on April 25 and, having lost his own unit, acted as range finder for an Australian regiment (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 16). He was injured on May 1, 1915 and shipped to a military hospital in Cairo. In *The Times* tribute to the young man published in January 1918, it was said that he was found unconscious from shell shock and wounds outside a Turkish trench on Russell's Top and was put aboard a troopship "on which were about a thousand wounded and lamentably few doctors" ("Obituary - Mr Noel Ross", 1918). There was some confusion over exactly what his injuries were. One report said he had been blown into a ravine by a shell explosion ("New Zealand soldiers", 1915). Later his service record stated that he suffered hemiplegia following a fall on his head and fracturing the base of his skull.

Writing from Zeitoun on May 6, Corporal Rex Hesketh of Auckland described Noel's injuries.

Noel Ross is in hospital here, the poor fellow is paralysed from the body downwards. A shell burst beside him. Luckily he was not hit but the shock, which must have been terrific, knocked him out. I think he will be all right later on - they say so at the hospital. ("Personnel paragraphs", 1915, p. 21)

An extract from a letter Noel wrote to a friend in Christchurch from the Kasr El Aini Hospital was published in the *Auckland Weekly News* on June 24. He said a shell burst almost in the small of his back and knocked him over a cliff ("Corporal's experience", 1915). Noel wrote a much acclaimed piece about "Abdul", his Egyptian hospital orderly, which was published in *Punch* (N. Ross, 1916a) and in *Light and shade in war* (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, pp. 23-26). His later description of the landing was also hailed by the London *Times*, which called it as "the most vivid personal narrative of the Gallipoli fighting which has yet reached this country" (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 13). Noel would not have known that his father had been appointed official correspondent to the New Zealand forces although he would no doubt have been aware his father was a major contender for the position. But Malcolm Ross might not have known his son had been injured as he left Wellington for Egypt on April 8. Noel's name was included in one of the first lists of wounded to appear in New Zealand papers, for example, Wellington's *Evening Post* of May 5 ("Roll of honour", 1915).<sup>93</sup>

On reaching Cairo Ross and his wife searched for Noel. Malcolm finally found him by chance walking down a Cairo street. Noel was eventually invalided to England a month later where he went to live with his mother at Holly Mount, Hampstead.<sup>94</sup> In his first despatch Ross commented as follows:

A mother and her husband were anxious about their son in the 1st Canterbury Regiment, which, they surmised, was with the other New Zealand Forces at the Dardanelles. "Have you any New Zealanders on board?" we shouted across the water. Yes, they had. The parents dashed round to where the wounded were being landed, and found a group already standing about or lying on the grass. They were war stained, but

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<sup>93</sup> His later recounting of searching for his son in Egypt seemed to indicate that perhaps he did not know Noel had been wounded.

<sup>94</sup> The house is still standing and has been visited and photographed by Lyn Ross. See Figure 41.

cheery. They were mostly English Tommies and Australians. There was one New Zealander among them...The mother asked if he knew her son. Strangely enough, she had picked upon the one man in all the ship out of her son's company. The son, he was able to tell her, was wounded, but alive, and likely to recover soon. The mother had to leave in half an hour for England. The father was going to the front. Next day he spent searching unsuccessfully through the several widely separated military hospitals for his son. On the second day they had an accidental and extraordinary meeting. But that is another story, and not for publication. (M. Ross, 1915e, p. 13)

The despatch reads very strangely at this point with Malcolm Ross talking about himself in the third person. Perhaps he was trying to avoid the use of the personal pronoun, for which he was well known for doing. Before Noel left Egypt for England, his father made use of his son's journalistic expertise by largely giving over his second despatch to his account of the landing.<sup>95</sup> *The Observer* and *Truth* both roundly derided Malcolm Ross's focus on his son. *The Observer*:

Amazing but characteristic of Mr Malcolm Ross, the official Government correspondent with the New Zealand troops, that the first words of his first letter to New Zealand should be the name of his own son. Malcolm had no time, of course, to dispose the forces, and so himself is not mentioned. However sorry one may feel that a fine breezy youngster like Noel should have sustained injury, one is amazed that an official correspondent should use the job for which he is handsomely paid to obtain a family advertisement. It is possibly a thing no other journalist in Australia or New Zealand would have done. For weeks prior to this letter, which is heavily paid for by the people of New Zealand, the daily papers teemed with letters from ordinary, everyday soldiers (some since dead, poor fellows) of greater merit and excellence, more intimate and quite as human. Apparently the New Zealand forces as far as the official correspondent is concerned is a small family affair and its name is Ross. ("Untitled", 1915i, p. 17)

*Truth*, writing in September 1915, said it hadn't been long before its dire "prognostications" about Ross began to be fulfilled with his early despatches. "Among the very first of these he had the bad taste to write most fulsomely about himself and a member of his own family, his son, Corporal Noel Ross" ("Our war correspondent", 1915).

It is unclear whether Ross sought his son first or reported to GHQ, but report he did and applied for leave to join the New Zealand forces on the Gallipoli peninsula. In a letter to

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<sup>95</sup> A full copy of this report is held in the Australian War Memorial Museum (AWM 38 3DRL 8042 item 3)

the acting Prime Minister, F. H. D. Bell, Ross said he was “cordially received” by General John Grenfell Maxwell, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) the forces in Egypt, who explained that in the present state of affairs he could not give Ross permission to go to the Dardanelles without first communicating with General Hamilton. Maxwell did so at once and Ross left copies of his credentials with him.

I am hoping to get to the scene of action at an early date. In the meantime from the point of view of the people of New Zealand it is probably better that I should be here as the wounded are continually arriving and one is able to gather and send away interesting material that could not be so well obtained and despatched from the locality where the New Zealanders are fighting. (M. Ross, 1915b)

It seems inexplicable that as a journalist he did not demonstrate more of a sense of urgency about getting to Gallipoli. He could surely see from his interviews with injured soldiers that significant operations were underway which he should be covering. Other correspondents had found ways around military stonewalling. Of his enforced stay at Alexandria he was inclined to see this as “advantageous” and he could get “more news away” than if he had gone straight to the front. It would be a wait of 26 days before he finally set off for Lemnos, the base for operations against the Ottoman Turks on the peninsula, and another eight days before he would finally set foot on the peninsula itself. He missed covering some of the most important battles of the Gallipoli campaign, not only the landing on April 25, but the Battle of Sari Bair on May 2, and a few days later the raid on Gaba Tepe and the second battle of Krithia, including the attack on the Daisy Patch when 800 New Zealand soldiers died. This was followed by a Turkish attack against the Anzacs on May 19 to be followed by a concerted attack against Quinn’s Post on May 28-29. On June 4 the New Zealanders were again involved in an assault on the Turks near Gaba Tepe with a raid on trenches near Quinn’s Post, now commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Malone, of the Wellingtons. (Pugsley, 1998; Pugsley & Lockyer, 1999). Ross appeared to show little initiative in trying to get to the Dardanelles sooner and seemed content to wait for the military to give him the green light. A sense of urgency was missing.

All this time Ross was cooling his heels in Egypt waiting for confirmation of his credentials and permission to go to the Dardanelles. It makes it almost impossible for him to have contributed to an Anzac legend, especially around the landing at Anzac Cove, when he was not present at the occasions that gave rise to it. If any journalist was

to help in creating a myth or legend around Gallipoli it would surely be the journalists who were there to record the events - Charles Bean, Lester Lawrence or Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. Lawrence didn't seem to have the necessary credentials for successful war correspondence so it is rather to the Australian or Ashmead-Bartlett we should look for any perpetuation of legend or myth. Writing second hand about such momentous events would not be quite the same as being there when they occurred; however, it did not mean Ross was unaware of the significance to New Zealand of what had transpired on that lonely little beach so many miles from home. In one of his first despatches he acknowledged that New Zealanders would have read the early descriptions of the fight and would "already know something of the splendid heroism and marvellous endurance of their troops".

But there are many lines to be added yet, and even a twice-told tale of such a glowing epic will send the blood tingling through the veins again. It is an epic that will be handed down to succeeding generations in Australia and New Zealand, and that will survive as long as the British people remain on the face of the earth. It is scarce too much to say that nothing finer has ever occurred in warfare. It is a feat before which the achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans pale into insignificance... (M. Ross, 1915e, p. 13)

The language might be extravagant but the prediction has been proven correct. Certainly editorials back home were not laggard in attributing mythic actions to the New Zealand forces. "Our men of the immortal Anzacs division" trumpeted the *New Zealand Times* in January after the evacuation from the peninsula ("Progress of the war", 1916). In fact that word "immortal" in reference to New Zealand troops appears a few times in Ross's own accounts.

Ross spent his time while he waited for permission to go to the peninsula interviewing wounded soldiers and visiting the Zeitoun camp. On May 20 he wrote up two lengthy despatches having interviewed soldiers and others in the daytime, and writing up during the greater part of the night. On the landing he wrote to Bell: "You will regret to learn of the heavy losses in the field, but our troops have accomplished a military feat unique in war and have won immortal renown" (M. Ross, 1915b). Those first despatches were published in New Zealand newspapers on July 3, exactly 44 days, or just over seven weeks, later. And herein lay the seeds of some of Ross's difficulties at Gallipoli. He was not permitted to cable his reports back to New Zealand. They were to go by mail

steamer from Egypt by way of Australia to New Zealand, with a copy going to the High Commissioner in London. This proved to be an almost insurmountable problem for Ross, but he was forced to abide by the dictates of his conditions of appointment. Nevertheless, neither the New Zealand Government nor the Press Association would have countenanced cabling Ross's extremely long despatches. The cost would have been prohibitive. They cavilled at the expense of having to paying Ross a salary and any extra cost was grounds for further protests, especially from members of the parliamentary Opposition. One of Ross's first reports was around 5000 words and none of the newspapers printed it in its entirety. They just" did not have the space. For example, the *New Zealand Herald* ran only a column (M. Ross, 1915d) and the *Auckland Star* just over a column (M. Ross, 1915g). At the most, papers devoted one or two columns to the reports, or around 2000 words. The irony was that while Ross was waxing eloquent about "the wounded at Cairo – cheerful and grateful" the columns of the papers back home were filling with columns of the dead and wounded from battles that had occurred between May and July, and the only news had come from the other journalists based at Gallipoli. It was a dreadful handicap for Ross and he was never really able to overcome it. He knew it was an issue very early on. Bean's despatches were telegraphed from Fremantle as soon as the mail steamer arrived there. This gave them several days start over Ross's which meant they arrived in New Zealand before Ross's arrived by mail. As noted in the previous chapter, he was not permitted the same facility, so he had to resign himself to the ponderous system set up by the Government and the Press Association.

The only way Ross could redeem the situation, if he was not permitted to cable his accounts, which he wasn't, was by exceptional, concise writing that overcame the exigencies of the lack of timeliness. And unfortunately, that sort of writing was not Malcolm Ross's fort  . He had neither the nose nor the eye for a news style story, nor did he have a felicitous pen. His writing was rather laboured and over endowed with superlatives and panegyrics. An example:

To the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, acting in conjunction with English, French, and Indian troops, has been allotted what up to the present is undoubtedly the most picturesque, as it is the most hazardous, undertaking of the war. In that undertaking our men have already earned immortal glory, and have added to Imperial history a glowing page of heroism and self -sacrifice.(M. Ross, 1915e, p. 13)

This tells the readers back home nothing about what actually happened. The language is imbued with what Fussell (1975) has called “the hearty idiom of boys’ own adventures” – the high diction of “gentility and optimism” which was often “mired in clichés” (p.171). The response to those first despatches back in New Zealand was mixed. As mentioned, because of their length many newspapers published only brief extracts, if at all, and very soon the Press Association was receiving letters from provincial editors asking to be removed from the list of those who were prepared to take the despatches. One of the first was the editor of the *Bay of Plenty Times*, M. Gifford. After receiving the first of Ross’s “letters” he found he would not “be able to handle them” and asked for them to be discontinued (Gifford, 1915). A. Reese of the *Waikato Independent* in Cambridge also asked for the Ross despatches to be discontinued. “The stuff so far received has been ‘piffle’”. Apparently the newspaper press have once more bought a pig in a poke,” he scoffed in a letter to the Press Association (Reese, 1915). *The North Otago Times* also cancelled its subscription saying that because of the embargo placed on the despatches it received its copy too late for the paper to set it in time for the following day’s issue. The despatches were therefore “blue pencilled” (Editor, 1915a). *The Westport Times* cancelled the despatches because of lack of space (Editor, 1915c). A December 10 letter from P. Freeth (1915) of Palmerston North to UPA stated: “I don’t require war cables sent out by Malcolm Ross to the New Zealand Government”. W. C. Whitlock (1915) of the *Hawkes Bay Tribune* cancelled Ross’s letters because of their age when he finally received them.

Not only was Ross in a predicament regarding timeliness because of the directive to mail rather than cable his despatches but there were also considerable problems facing his despatches once they reached New Zealand. They went first to the Department of Internal Affairs, were then sent off to the New Zealand Censor, who had another pick at them, then they were typed up and transmitted to the Press Association. This organisation then judiciously sent these off with various embargos for publication to the evening and morning newspapers. Often, because of the length of despatches, parts of the despatch would arrive in newsrooms at different times. Subs would be sitting in the newsroom with part 2 and 3 but no part 1, or part 1 and 3 and no part 2. It is no wonder that in the end some newspapers decided to have nothing to do with them. The *Rangitikei Times* complained to the Press Association about this problem of long despatches arriving in sections out of sequence and asked the association “to secure some reform in this matter” (Editor, 1915d). The lengthy despatches from Ross kept

coming. Ross had never learned tight, succinct writing and continued to send off his trademark prolix epistles with little understanding that something different was required.

While waiting in Egypt Ross wrote several despatches based on interviews with wounded soldiers and felt confident enough to predict the fighting would not last long.

The struggle for mastery in the Dardanelles is by no means an easy one, and it may take some time yet; but of the ultimate victory of our arms there no one except the enemy has any doubt, and even the enemy is beginning to rub his eyes in bewilderment. A man who has just come back from important work there is quite optimistic. He says another six weeks will see the back of the Turkish resistance broken. (M. Ross, 1915i, p.10)

Two days later he has changed his tune.

History will tell whether or not the Dardanelles campaign should ever have been commenced, and whether having been commenced, it was commenced in the right way: but this is neither the time nor the place for such a discussion. The one thing is that having got into it we must see it through to a successful issue, whatever the cost may be. It is just as well as the overseas Dominions so intimately concerned in it should realise that, and should realise also that there is tough work ahead. Probably by this time they already realise it. The Turks under German guidance and advice have made the great stronghold of the Dardanelles doubly strong and the glowing press telegrams we used to get about the probable success of the Navy in forcing the passage have not been borne out by the facts. The Navy could not have successfully forced the passage without an adequate landing force. Even with that adequate landing force the Dardanelles must still be a hard nut to crack. (M. Ross, 1915j, p. 2)

Early on in his war correspondence Charles Bean had warned of the dangers of listening to stories recounted by “civilian refugees or desperately tired and wounded soldiers”.

Troops at the best of times get a very partial view of a fight and anything outside their own actual horizon has to be supplied from the yarns passed along the trenches. These yarns are often very detailed – but the men themselves place little reliance on them; they will retail them for what they’re worth but they are not in the least surprised if they find there is not an ounce of truth in them. “Oh, it’s just a bally latrinogram,” they say. (Bean, 1915g, p. 13)

Bean's answer to getting the correct facts was to do "what a good roundsman would do" - see the events for yourself if you could and get your information as soon as possible after the event.

The account that reaches even the headquarters on the beach will often be lacking in all sorts of details that you want to know and the current rumour on the beach here is no indication at all of what has been going on – merely of the fact that something has been going on. (Bean, 1915g, p. 13)

On June 1, and published in New Zealand on July 21, Ross wrote a narrative about Major Bernard "Tiny" Freyberg's swim to light flares on Bulair beach, so as to draw the fire of the enemy in the Bulair lines, and engage their attention while marines landed at Cape Helles. He swam about two miles which took an hour and a half, lit the flares

**Figure 37 Bernard Freyberg was an excellent swimmer. This is an early photo of him at baths in Wellington.**

and then waited in the water for an hour to be picked up (M. Ross, 1915k, 1915l).<sup>96</sup> A week later he wrote, based on wounded soldiers' accounts, about the actions of some New Zealand soldiers at Krithia (M. Ross, 1915m) but nothing about what the New Zealand troops were doing there and the terrible toll the fighting at the Daisy patch took – 800 dead New Zealand soldiers. The *Auckland Star* ran a Charles Bean report "The deadly daisy patch at Krithia" in slightly more detail and this was published on July 31 (Bean, 1915f).

## **6:5 The reaction in New Zealand to Ross's early reports**

Back home none of the practical difficulties Ross faced as a war correspondent on Gallipoli would have mollified readers. As *The Observer* commented:

What the people of these blessed isles want is a simple account of life in the trenches and camps of the New Zealanders and their comrades in arms, a simple story like that told by Captain Bean - Australia's war writer, of the sinking of the *Triumph*. ("Untitled", 1915j, p.5)

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<sup>96</sup> Freyberg, although born in England, had lived in New Zealand since he was two. He became the New Zealand 100 yards champion in 1906 and 1910. At the time of the swim to Bulair he was serving in the Royal Navy and eventually received a DSO for his efforts (McGibbon, pp. 181-182).

They just wanted to read about the New Zealand soldiers and how they were faring on the Mediterranean battlefield. With the “marrow” removed from Ross’s despatches and the despatches arriving so late the New Zealand war correspondent had his job cut out for him to write something of value. Some war correspondents did manage to produce writings of literary worth, even if they might have been meagre as to specific military facts. The question is, was Malcolm Ross one of these? The answer has to be no. *The Observer*, as always, excoriated his efforts. The self-referential quality of Ross’s writing had always particularly galled *The Observer*, but it did notice an improvement after the initial despatches. “Malcolm Ross, the New Zealand war scribe is improving. He has dropped the ‘I’ out of every third line and makes it ‘we’ now. Emperors always talk that way” (“Untitled”, 1915I, p. 5). Here is an example.

There can be no doubt now that we have the Turk at bay on his own Peninsula. For some time past he has been very quiet and a threatened attack from a reinforced Turkish Army has not so far materialised. We were told that Enver Pasha was getting together another army of 100,000 men to drive us into the sea. We may have doubts as to whether his new army has arrived in anything like the numbers mentioned but we know we have not been driven into the sea and that we are not likely to be.(M. Ross, 1915C, p.6)

*The Observer* labelled Ross’s diaries as “dreary”. He had not been noted for his riveting writing style back in New Zealand. Ross had spent many years in the parliamentary Press Gallery in Wellington and that would not have been conducive to creative or literary writing, let alone the hard news writing required of a war reporter. His style of writing, developed over the last 30 years of his career, was unsuited to the requirements of his new job. His writing seemed remote and detached from the horrors of what he was hearing from his soldier witnesses. And he seemed to have a poor understanding of what it was his audience back home required of him. Up until now, also, he had been relaying on second-hand accounts of what was happening on Gallipoli from soldiers who probably had little idea of the bigger picture.

Here is an example of his writing to illustrate.

Life at Anzac Cove is worth a brief description. It is very exciting but very simple. There is a beach that is from thirty to fifty feet wide. Above that the hills rise abruptly. On this beach, at the foot of the cliff, the Field Ambulance has its home and most of the men have dug into the side of the hill. At night-time they crawl into these burrows. There is not room enough to stand up in them. The hospital, which is really a clearing station, is right

on the beach and is protected by sandbags overhead and at the sides, but the operating tent is a tent pure and simple. The men also have their little dugouts in the face of the cliff. It is like some huge rabbit warren. These are used when they come down from the trenches for a spell. (M. Ross, 1915j, p. 2)

The problem with this report is that Ross had not yet been to Anzac Cove...and it showed. As *The Observer* sourly noted after Malcolm used Noel's Ross's account of the landing:

From the younger Ross, the special correspondent extracted a take of terrible fighting 'neath the shadow of Sari Bair - it was not bad, but dozens of soldiers' letters were better and, anyhow, what would Ross expect Members of Parliament, even Reform members, to say if he wrote pen pictures of them at work in Wellington from the comfortable haven of a chair in a pub at Invercargill supposing there were pubs in Invercargill. ("Untitled", 1915j, p. 5.)

When compared to the work of Ashmead Bartlett, for example, Ross's writing lacked the creative, even emotional spark, needed when so much factual military material had to be omitted. *The Observer* agreed.

Ashmead-Bartlett's writing about the colonial troops is the only stuff up to the present (apart from the letters of soldiers) worth reading. He is worth reading, both as a serious contribution to history ... Malcolm Ross could do no better than this sitting in the Heliopolis Hotel in Cairo with a bottle of Burgundy and his favourite fountain pen. ("The superman - cornstalk and fernleaf", 1915, p. 2)

(See Appendix C for the Ashmead-Bartlett account of the Battle of Sari Bair.)

In another paragraph *The Observer* again praised Ashmead-Bartlett: "For vividness and vigour his stuff about the landing was as good as any stuff the pen-giants of the past have put up" ("Untitled", 1915k). To those back in New Zealand it appeared as if Ross was missing all the action of the campaign. It must have been incongruous to see column after column of the dead, missing and wounded in the New Zealand newspapers' Rolls of Honour and then to read Ross's innocuous accounts of what was going on in Cairo. Not only were New Zealanders reading timely reports from other correspondents able to cable their news but they were also reading soldiers' letters that were being published extensively as well.

## 6:6 Ross finally gains permission to go to Gallipoli

On June 4 Ross was informed by the Cairo authorities “and everyone who had returned from the Gallipoli peninsula” that he would have no chance of getting out there. Apparently newspaper correspondents were not particularly welcome. Ross noted that some English officers who had landed at Imbros had asked the Government to ban all journalists. Despite these gloomy prognostications Ross finally received permission to go to the front from Hamilton on June 12 and he set about “doing his best to get there promptly”. His chance came four days later when he left on the transport *Annaberg*, but a fire in the bunker forced the boat to return to port. Next he set off on the transport *Andania* but little more than half the journey was accomplished when the captain was instructed to return immediately to Alexandria. The third attempt was successful, and on board the *Scotian* Ross set off at night for Lemnos. There he had to wait for transport to Imbros. He told the story in a despatch written on June 24 and published on August 13 in the *Evening Post* (M. Ross, 1915o). Again, the story was about Ross, with very little about the war or the New Zealand soldiers’ part in it.

Ross eventually arrived at the Dardanelles on June 24, 1915, two months after the land war on the peninsula had commenced (Fewster, 1983, p. 206)). He went immediately to the correspondents’ tent camp recently established at K Beach, Imbros among the elms and vines and two miles or a donkey or horse ride away from military HQ on the opposite beach. He had started his assignment on the back foot by arriving late to the battlefield so he was always going to have to work hard to make up the ground he had lost to the other journalists. This was reminiscent of his late arrival in Samoa in 1899 to cover the struggle over the kingship. While at Gallipoli Ross abided by the conditions of his appointment, getting as close as possible to the New Zealand forces at the seat of war and if the forces were divided into several sections travelling from section to section so that general information about the New Zealand forces were obtained. He did try to get as close to the firing line as he was permitted. However, the question was did he fulfil the other condition of employment: “to write regularly detailed accounts of the events in which the New Zealand forces are engaged and of matters of especial interest to New Zealand and the New Zealand forces”? (“War correspondent - conditions of the appointment”, 1915).

## 6:7 Malcolm Ross at the front

On June 26, Ross finally set foot on the Gallipoli peninsula and penned his first despatch from Anzac Cove. This was published 49 days later in the *New Zealand Herald*, *Evening Post* and the *New Zealand Times* (M. Ross, 1915d; 1915e; 1915f). On June 29 Ross went to Quinn's Post, an important strategic position, indeed "a spot that will live forever in colonial history as the scene of great deeds" as Ross foretold. It was from Quinn's Post that many of the New Zealand sorties were made after the initial fighting. "The Australians who observed one of these charges from a neighbouring position said it was a fine sight to see the New Zealanders silhouetted against the dawn with bayonets fixed and going 'at top'." This story appeared in *The Press* on September 3, 66 days after it was written (M. Ross, 1915u). The reason why it was held over for so long was probably because it was not a report of a battle, but merely a backgrounder or scene setter. On July 6 Ross sat down to pen another despatch, another backgrounder because "since the big battle at Helles a few days ago there have been no movements of importance — none, certainly, that concern the New Zealanders".

Sir Charles Eliot, in his sketch of Byzantine history, states that in the composition of the Turkish Empire "there is little which has character or permanence except Constantinople herself, round whom, century after century, the subject territories expand and contract with an almost rhythmic movement." In olden times no sooner was one enemy disposed of than another appeared. And so now. The Turk in Europe for centuries has been able to stave off final defeat, and Constantinople has been saved. But to-day the Turk realises that he is fighting a foe more powerful than any he has hitherto encountered, and that his beloved city is in danger. Under these circumstances it is scarce to be wondered at that he is putting up a great fight. Our antipodean friends, who write to us here, generally wind up their letters by expressing the opinion "by the time this reaches you, no doubt, you will be in Constantinople." These good people cannot realise the tremendous difficulties that lie between us and Constantinople. It is well that the public should recognise these difficulties. Undoubtedly they were misled in the first instance by the optimistic accounts that were published about the naval operations. The Navy, however, could not have got through to Constantinople unaided by the Army, and the fact that they tried to do so has made Sir Ian Hamilton's task all the harder. But that the Allies will win through to Constantinople, if necessary, no one doubts. That they have been able to effect two such landings — unique in warfare — speaks volumes for the resources of the Empire and the valour of its men. That they have been able to advance so far in the south and that the colonials have held their ground so well at Anzac, also speaks well for the future of the campaign. In a former letter I mentioned that the complexion of the operations was in a measure changed by the presence of enemy submarines in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless we have made progress, and shall continue to make progress. Though the Australians and New

Zealanders could no doubt now push through the Turkish lines, they must for the time being possess their souls in patience. (M. Ross, 1915t, p. 10)

That same day, July 6, Ross wrote about the arrival of the Maori contingent, those “bronzed warriors” as Ross called them, being welcomed by “The General”, i.e. General Godley. Upon hearing the “rhythmic beating” of Maori feet on Turkish soil during their haka, he then waxed lyrical recalling the Greek warriors of old, reminding us once again about this generation’s reverence for the classics, as described by Fussell. “The mind ranged back a few thousand years and conjured up visions of the Armadas that have sailed these seas and the armies that have traversed these lands”. He managed to mention Xerxes, Alexander, Hector, Helen, Achilles, Lysander and Homer in his musings and rounded it off as follows:

Here in the shallows one saw for the first time the wine-coloured sea of Homer, as if tinted with the blood of the victims of war, and in the midst of all the New Zealand General, like some Trojan leader, igniting his Antipodean soldier to heroic deeds. As the final cadences of the haka were echoed back from the fantastic cliffs, one pondered over this strange coming of the Maori and wondered whether his deeds would be worthy of the new Iliad. (M. Ross, 1915v, p. 13)

On July 14 Ross headed for Helles where an attack was due to be made...

either that evening or next day to straighten up a bit of the line in the centre so that it may come up with the advance of the French on the right and the British on the left made during the last two days. (M. Ross, 1915x, p. 3)

Ross “proceeded further towards the firing line” until he got a “splendid view” of the battle field. “We were well within the zone of fire but judged that the Turks even if they saw us, would not waste their shells upon so insignificant a target”. This story was published on September 11 in *The Press* (M. Ross, 1915x, p. 3).

In mid July parties of journalists including Ross, Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett and Nevinson variously all visited Quinn’s Post and talked with Lieutenant-Colonel William Malone, now the officer commanding the post (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915, p. 142). Malone remembers Ross as “nondescript”, Bean seemed “Australian or 1/2 so” and he liked Nevinson. Ashmead-Bartlett “seemed a bit swollen-headed and full of his own

importance” (Crawford, 2005, p. 239). Ross’s account of his visit was published in the *Evening Post* on September 18.

**Figure 38 Quinn's Post, Gallipoli, 1915.**

The operations at Quinn's and Courtney's continue to be the most interesting. Indeed, they are fascinating, for, as has already been stated, they are really unique in warfare. As you walk through trench after trench and sap after sap at Quinn's or creep doubled up along the dark mining galleries, your interest is quickened, and though you never quite know when a bomb will come hurtling over the parapet or when a mine may be exploded above or below or at the side, you become so interested that fear vanishes. The genial Colonel who is in charge and who shows you round was a well-known Taranaki barrister, and his motto is that the art of war lies in the cultivation of the domestic virtues. Therefore, he is transforming Quinn's into a model workshop and dwelling place wherein you can even drink a cup of tea in peace! Seriously speaking, he has worked wonders at Quinn's, and the Quinn's of to-day is safer and more habitable than was the post of earlier days. It is only when the gallant Colonel gets one of his men to throw a bomb across the very few yards of intervening space between you and the Turkish firing line, and there is a loud explosion, the while you wait expectantly for a like favour from the Turks, that you realise you are “up against it”. (M. Ross, 1915z, p. 5)

Malone himself wrote home on July 23 an amusing letter about these visits, which was published in *The Press* in September. (Malone had been killed in the August assault on Chunuk Bair.) “We now get a good few visitors,” he said, “as the post is an object of interest and curiosity.” He obviously enjoyed giving his guest “thrills”. “When it is all safely over, which hitherto has been the case, they feel very pleased with themselves and their adventures. They will remember and recount them all their lives”(Malone, 1915).

Ross covered the ill fated attempt in early August by the New Zealanders to take and hold Chunuk Bair. His account, around 2000 words, was published in *The Press* on October 14 (over two months later) with the following comment:

The following are extracts from a despatch of Mr Malcolm Ross describing the New Zealanders part in the operations early in August. The despatch has been heavily censored and further reduced by us. It is dated from No 3 Outpost August 7 & 8. (M. Ross, 1915D, p. 9)

(This despatch and a further one on the fighting at Chunuk Bair are included in Appendix D and E)

In the meantime New Zealand newspapers had carried the accounts of the other journalists not long after the operation, in particular Ashmead-Bartlett's. The *New Zealand Herald* ran his lengthy cable of the New Zealand advance on August 7-8 under the headline "New Zealanders' feat" (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915d). Malcolm Ross took credit for supplying the English journalist with "some particulars" of the part played by the New Zealand troops in this attack in a letter to James Allen. He was the only correspondent watching the New Zealanders "at close quarters", he said, and if he hadn't told Ashmead-Bartlett there would have been "little or no mention in the London press of the successful attack made by the New Zealanders on the heights of Chunuk Bair" (M. Ross, 1915s). Ashmead-Bartlett went with Ross to look at the route the New Zealanders had taken to get to Chunuk Bair the day after the battle and sent his report back to England which was then published in the *Evening Post* of September 3 (Ashmead-Bartlett, 1915d).

## **6:8 The reaction to Ross's despatches in New Zealand**

Triggs, of the *Press*, writing to Allen in early September commented how much disappointment there was in New Zealand newspaper offices with the correspondence received so far from Ross.

Most of it had been so far anticipated that the leading newspapers have contented themselves with publishing brief extracts from Mr Ross's letters. This is not due to any fault on his part but to the fact that he has not been given proper facilities to do his work. The delay which took place before the military authorities allowed him to go to the front seems to me quite inexplicable in view of the fact that not only was the Australian official correspondent allowed on the Peninsula from the first, but at least one Australian newspaper, the *Argus*, was allowed to have its own special representative on the field of operations. The result, is, as I think General Godley mentioned in a letter to you, that whilst the Australian public are kept fully posted up in the doings of the Australian troops, the New Zealand public would have known little or nothing of what our men did in the earlier operations apart from the despatches of Sir Ian Hamilton and if it had not been for the letters from the troopers which *The Press* and other newspapers were enabled to publish. (Triggs, 1915a)

Ross attracted considerable opprobrium because of this and it even lead to Members of Parliament demanding his return. By late August one member was moved to ask the Minister of Defence if Ross had been killed or interned as little or no news has been received from him ("New Zealand war correspondent", 1915). Questions were now being asked in Parliament about Ross's salary, allowance and expenses, which had

reached £1000 (“Supply - Department of Internal Affairs”, 1915). (The original salary was £450 plus allowances.) There was a feeling that Ross’s appointment “had not been productive of very good results”. Massey defended Ross saying he “had a very hard row to hoe” and that all sorts of difficulties had been placed in his way. Not only had Ross told Massey that he had had serious difficulty getting to the front at all but he had also had difficulty in getting news and his articles had been censored more than those of other correspondents. W. A. Veitch said Ross’s articles were “quite useless” when they got to New Zealand. The best thing would be to bring Ross back as soon as possible as it was “very unfair both to his reputation as a journalist and to the people of the country to keep him there”. Another MP said he hoped something would be done to put Ross on an equal footing with the other correspondents. The Grey Lynn MP Payne said to keep paying £1000 to the war correspondent was “merely a farce and an expensive one at that” and Ross should be recalled. This discussion in Parliament was covered by both *The Press* (“New Zealand's war correspondent - explanations in the House”, 1915) and the *Evening Post* (“War letters - the New Zealand war correspondent”, 1915). It was about this time that the *New Zealand Truth* weighed in against Ross, recapping its original arguments against him getting the job of official correspondent. Its “prognostications” had been fulfilled, the paper said, with letter after letter of Ross’s “but a less or more generally more, belated paraphrase of reports sent by other correspondents” (“Our war correspondent”, 1915).

The niggardly policy regarding the transmission of his despatches had serious ramifications for New Zealand and Ross himself, as *Truth* was fair enough to acknowledge. New Zealand readers missed out on up-to-date news of the New Zealand forces and Ross’s personal reputation suffered serious damage. Triggs was one who pressed the Government, “that if only as a matter of fair play to Mr Malcolm Ross, the Government ought to allow him to send occasional cables on matters of importance and should take steps to expedite the publication of his letters”.

The manner in which everything he sends is held back until it has practically been anticipated in three or four other quarters is most damaging to his reputation as a journalist and is creating a widespread feeling in the public mind that the expenditure on the New Zealand official correspondence is a waste of money. (Triggs, 1915b)

Ross was deeply hurt by the criticism. In a letter to F. H. D. Bell he put the criticism down to “ignorance of the facts regarding his work as official war correspondent” (M. Ross, 1915F). In September *The Observer* also weighed into the matter of the war correspondence, by comparing the cost of Charles Bean’s despatches with those of Ross’s.

The Australian newspapers which print Bean's letters pay the Commonwealth Intelligence Department somewhere in the vicinity of three pounds a column for them and evidently think they are worth it. But the New Zealand Government is so accursed with wealth or so overridden by press bogies that it has not the heart to charge more than 1s each for Ross's letters, which is absorbed by the Press Association to defray the costs of transmitting the priceless messages from the trenches. Even Malcolm Ross's dreary diaries have been worth more than a bob a time. (“Untitled”, 1915I, p. 5)

And in September, MPs were begging the Prime Minister to at least permit Ross to cable his news home (“Supply - Department of Internal Affairs”, 1915). Massey had initially refused this as being too costly, probably influenced by the attitude of the Press Association against the idea. However, according to Triggs the consultative committee of editors of whom Triggs was one, thought it “very desirable” that the New Zealand correspondent should be allowed to send cables. “I took the liberty of writing to Sir Francis Bell again suggesting that this course was advisable. I was glad to learn from a statement made by Mr Massey that the Government are now disposed to instruct Mr Ross to send some of his most important news by cable”. He noted that Charles Bean sent

...tolerably full cable messages to Australia after any engagement of importance and I know that the relatives of New Zealanders at the front feel rather keenly the meagreness of details of their doings as compared with the full information regarding the Australians which appear in the Australian newspapers. In conclusion, to be quite frank, I should say that in my opinion there is an impression abroad that the New Zealand official correspondent from the front is not worth the expense it has cost, but I am confident that this impression will be entirely removed if Mr Ross were allowed to do the excellent work of which he is undoubtedly capable in the way of sending occasional cables on matters of importance. (Triggs, 1915a)

Triggs obviously still had confidence in his old protégée. He was among the few who did.

Eventually, towards the end of the year G. W. Russell, who succeeded F. H. D. Bell as Minister of Internal Affairs, allowed Ross to cable “a certain quantity of matters of interest to New Zealand” (Atack, 1916). The Prime Minister telegraphed the good news to Ross himself. “Cable weekly 500 words. Good news required not criticism. Short, spicy items special interest Dominion. Post matter to Alexandria to cable authorities. Start immediately” (Massey, 1915b). These shorter messages were offered to papers willing to pay for them. “A fair number accepted but not enough to cover the cost” (Atack, 1916). Tom Mills, the editor of *The Feilding Star*, had a pointed response to the offer of weekly news cables. “Who cares anything about the Ross messages anyway? The *Star* does not want to subscribe to the weekly war cables” (Mills, 1915). This appeared to be a common response. An internal Department of Internal Affairs memo said that of 157 papers written to, only 33 agreed to take the cables, 19 declined and 105 had not bothered to reply (“Department of Internal Affairs memo”, 1915). Of course, by the time the Government sanctioned these cables any serious fighting at Gallipoli was over. It was all too little, too late. One of Ross’s first cables, carried on November 26 and sent the day before said that it had been quiet at the front for several weeks and no fighting of importance has taken place (M. Ross, 1915G) . This is scarcely a “short, spicy item” of war news. He was still sending off despatches that were going by mail and these kept appearing six to eight weeks later in the New Zealand press. They were usually not time sensitive accounts such as the New Zealand troops going for a rest at Imbros (M. Ross, 1915H) or how the casualty lists were compiled (M. Ross, 1916I). The final major event on Gallipoli was the evacuation of the troops in December and Ross missed the final day of evacuation because of illness. He had been fighting off sickness for about three weeks but eventually was invalided to a hospital ship on December 18, according to Bean’s diary (Fewster, 2007, p. 250).

In a letter to G. W. Russell, Ross explained what happened to him. He had dysentery and an “extraordinary kind of jaundice from which we have all more or less been suffering”.

It was a hard struggle for me to keep going, but by dodging the doctors and hospitals I just managed to stick it out to the end and to get Bean to hand in my cablegrams to the press censor at Army HQ on Imbros. Then a warship doctor insisted on pushing me off on a hospital ship and I have arrived in Egypt before my own cable messages. For six months I had not been a day off duty which I think is just about a record for Anzac and even on the hospital ship I was able to do some work. (M. Ross, 1915J)

He arrived in Egypt with what he stood up in, having had to abandon some kit on the peninsula. All his notes, records, photographs and clothes were still on Imbros. "I hope my man will be able to get them through without being torpedoed." Bean reported in his diary that Ross's batman, Griffin, did return to Egypt; whether Ross's kit also arrived is unrecorded (Bean, 1915d). Ross was admitted to a Cairo hospital on December 23 and then sent to Luxor for recuperation on January 13, 1916 ("Ross, Malcolm - WWI 59978 - Army, 1914-1918a"). News of Ross's illness had reached New Zealand and his widowed mother, Mary, now aged 79 and living in Milton with her daughter Ina Brooks. Norman Grant, Forrest and Isabella's brother, who was a surveyor or engineer with the Wellington City Council, had written to James Allen, the Minister of Defence on January 12, 1916 asking for him and his mother to be informed if any news came through as to Malcolm's health. Separately Ina's husband, Robert Brooks, the Milton town clerk, had already telegraphed asking for news. Allen cabled General Godley in Cairo who responded that as of January 10 Ross was convalescent and working between Cairo, the Western frontier and the Suez Canal. This information was then conveyed to the Ross and Grant families (Allen, 1916b). Malcolm was very sore and defensive over the publicity given back home about his illness and obviously it still rankled because late in 1916 he commented to James Allen:

I see they make rather a song about my illness during the last week or two of the Peninsula, but really there was never a day that I was not able to work and I did work even when I was at my worst coming down on the hospital ship. (M. Ross, 1916q)<sup>97</sup>

**Figure 39 James Allen, Minister of Defence 1912-20**

Malcolm Ross was to spend until March 30, 1916 in Egypt during which time he agitated for and was granted an honorary captaincy. He believed this honorary military rank, similar to Bean's, would assist him in his work. One of Ross's final stories on the Gallipoli campaign was a brief one about the saving of the New Zealand guns during the evacuation. It was published in the *Evening Post* on January 13, 1916 (M. Ross, 1916d). However a few more of Ross's Gallipoli despatches were still being published in New Zealand papers well into January. For example the *New Zealand Times* of January 8 carried a Ross account of the visit of Colonel R. H. Rhodes to Egypt and the

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<sup>97</sup> This was corroborated by Bean some time later.

Dardanelles. He wrote it on November 2 (M. Ross, 1916c). Another four and a half column report from Gallipoli dated November 23 was published in the *New Zealand Times* on February 8 (M. Ross, 1916f).

### **6:9 A brief survey of Ross's published stories**

While there appeared to be considerable debate among certain circles in New Zealand about Ross's performance the only real way of judging his output is to examine what of his work was published. There is no way of knowing how much he wrote that was not used, although it seems clear that very few publications used his work without cutting it drastically. A study of three of New Zealand's leading papers of the time, the *New Zealand Herald*, *The Press* and *The Evening Post* was made in an effort to gain a clearer idea of how successful Ross was in gaining space in the nation's newspapers.

There were 397 stories written in the three papers concerning the Dardanelles campaign from July 3, 1915 to January 13, 1916. These were collated and special note taken of the amount of material written specifically by Malcolm Ross and other correspondents about the campaign. Official despatches and communiqués were not considered. July 3 was chosen as the starting date for the research because that was when Ross's first despatch was printed in any New Zealand paper, and January 13, because it was the date of his last published story from those three papers on the Gallipoli campaign (M. Ross, 1916f). It was not always clear who the other correspondents were, as bylines were not always used, but as far as could be ascertained the total number of correspondents who contributed material was just under 40. A reasonably clear picture emerged of who was getting published and how much of their work reached the columns of the three papers. The most published correspondent in all papers was Charles Bean with 90 stories. In fact, 46% of the Gallipoli coverage in the three New Zealand papers was by the Australian correspondents. This would have included Charlie Smith and Peter Schuler. However, the second most published journalist was Malcolm Ross with 74 stories.

*The Evening Post* published the most material from Ross compared with *The Herald* and *The Press* – a total of 42 columns or 50% of all coverage. No other correspondent had anywhere near that amount of material published in that paper. The next closest to Ross was Bean with 13 columns, Ashmead-Bartlett with 11.5 columns and the Melbourne *Argus* and *Age* correspondents together with about 10 columns. A variety of

other war correspondents such as George Ward Price (*Daily Mail*), George Renwick (*Daily Chronicle*) and Lester Lawrence (*Reuters*) had about seven columns between them. Of all the correspondents published in the selected time period in *The Press*, the Australians held sway, particularly Charles Bean. He had 50 columns of published material compared to Ross's 20, or 20% of the coverage. The other two Australian correspondents also managed to outpublish Ross in *The Press* with Phillip Schuler (*The Age*) 24 columns and Charlie Smith, (*The Argus*) 22 columns respectively. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett came in after Ross with 16 columns of material. Work was also published from other journalists including Lawrence, Ward Price, Nevinson and Moseley but not to the extent of those already mentioned.

In the *New Zealand Herald*, Bean level pegged with Ashmead-Bartlett on 33 columns. Ross followed with 23 or 14% of all the coverage. Lawrence had 11 columns. As with *The Press* and *The Evening Post* other correspondents' work was used but not to the same extent as those already mentioned. In terms of numbers of reports, Ross had 30 published in *The Evening Post*, 25 in the *New Zealand Herald* and 19 in *The Press* in the selected time period. There is no way of ascertaining just how many despatches he sent back from the Dardanelles or how much of each original despatch was published. If we analyse the number of stories that Ross had published in the selected period by month, he averaged three stories published for each of the first three months in *The Press* and two a month thereafter with nothing in December. The *New Zealand Herald* published slightly more material and averaged four published stories a month. *The Evening Post* did the best of all publishing an average of at least four Ross articles a month. Unlike Bean, Ross tended to only write about the New Zealand forces, which could be one explanation for his rather more limited output. And while he was the second most published journalist his work was often severely pruned and buried in lesser parts of the paper. It was also run much later than the other journalists' accounts. In fact it was generally old news by the time it was published in the New Zealand papers, except towards the end of the year when Ross was permitted to send cabled items. (See Table 2)

## 6:10 Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that New Zealand readers were not well served by their first official war correspondent at Gallipoli for a variety of reasons. This experiment of

sending Government-sanctioned journalists to the battlefield did not bode well for future such appointments. Malcolm Ross may not have been the first choice for many and others considered it was his obvious bias towards Massey and his Government which had helped get him appointed rather than any writing ability he might have had. It was not his fault that the appointment process took so long and so delayed his departure for the Dardanelles. However, there doesn't seem to be any good reason why Ross was so dilatory in getting to Gallipoli once he had reached Egypt from New Zealand. He had a dilemma with his son being wounded but four weeks spent in Egypt when the Dardanelles campaign had been underway for two months does seem wasteful of a war correspondent's valuable time. He was blameless when it came to the time it took for his messages to reach New Zealand. It was the Government's (and the Press Association's) parsimonious attitude, which saw the despatches mailed rather than cabled and therefore published many weeks after the events they described. Triggs was correct when he said this would damage Ross's reputation. It did. Newspapers found the cumbersome system of distributing his reports once they reached New Zealand did not help either. Many gave up the struggle to cope with them and cancelled their subscriptions.

All the journalists at Gallipoli suffered from the vagaries of a badly directed and often-capricious censorship. Ross complained often about the censoring of his work but there was nothing to indicate he was treated any worse than the other journalists at the Dardanelles. Ways around the censorship could be achieved through diligence, imagination and excellent writing, as demonstrated by Ashmead-Bartlett and Bean. The former in particular managed to write memorable pieces that were long remembered after the events described. It seems this was beyond Ross's capabilities. His writing was generally long winded and was often second hand. Much of what he reported was told to him by others and so lacked the spark of the eye witness. As to whether Malcolm Ross contributed to any myth or legend about Gallipoli the answer is clearly no, or if he did it was only in a very peripheral way, supporting comments made by the other journalists involved in covering the campaign. He did seem aware of the significance of some of the major operations the New Zealanders took part in but certainly he did not impart this significance in his writing to any great extent. He was not present at the landing, claimed by Bean and Ashmead-Bartlett as a defining moment for the Australians and New Zealanders and he was not present on the final day of the evacuation, considered another defining moment by Bean, in particular.

With the latitude allowed both Ross and Bean to follow their country's troops on the peninsula it is hard to understand why Ross's accounts did not describe more battles or actual fighting. Few obstacles seemed to have been put in the way of him getting to the firing line by the military authorities; in fact Hamilton appeared remarkably accommodating. There is no way of knowing how much of Ross's despatches was not used. Much could have been "blue pencilled" because it was so late it was irrelevant. That could have been why so many of his published stories were not time sensitive – life in the trenches, how casualties were recorded, a day at Anzac Cove, for example. Nevertheless a lot of his work was published in the main newspapers even if it was very late. He also received a regular byline, as did Bean and Ashmead-Bartlett, in particular.

It is clear that life at Anzac was arduous for the journalists, if not quite so bad as for the soldiers. At least the journalists had the correspondents' camp at Imbros to flee to for a rest. So it was probably not surprising that Ross fell ill while at Gallipoli – the heat, the terrain and general circumstances were something that would not have been easy to endure for a man of 52 and past his prime, even one who had been a noted alpine climber in his youth.

Opposition politicians, perhaps reflecting some public opinion in New Zealand, hammered the Government over Ross's performance and demanded he be recalled. The amount of money being spent on the war correspondent seemed to far outweigh the value of his despatches. However, the Government stood firm, defended its man but finally accepted the good sense of allowing him to cable some material direct to New Zealand. Now the question was, could he adapt his writing to the different style required in cabled news?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Malcolm Ross on the Western Front

#### 7:1 Introduction

Malcolm Ross spent about 25 weeks at the Dardanelles before his evacuation because of sickness to Egypt by hospital ship. The next three months saw him recuperating and then covering skirmishes in the Egyptian desert before embarking, with Charles Bean, on an Atlantic cruise liner for France (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, pp. 150-157). Armed with his captaincy, a writing brief and six months of Gallipoli correspondence behind him, Ross probably felt himself well equipped for the next phase of his journalistic assignment, following the New Zealand forces on the Western Front. He arrived in France in April 1916 and was to remain on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, returning to New Zealand in late 1919. In a mirror of his experience at Gallipoli Ross was permitted to accompany the New Zealand troops, as Bean was permitted to accompany the Australians. This was in contrast to the British journalists who were kept together under the watchful eye of the intelligence service and designated Press Officers. Ross wrote about all of the major operations in which the New Zealanders were involved – the Somme, Messines, Passchendaele, The Ypres Salient, the Somme again and the Hindenburg Line, which included the relief of the walled town of Le Quesnoy. When he wasn't describing battles he wrote about a myriad other things from inter-force wood chopping to sports meetings, concerts and freemasonry. He also managed to publish two books, one with his son Noel about their experience of the war prior to the Western Front, and the other with his wife Forrest, as a memorial to Noel after his sudden death in December 1917. In a reprise of what happened at the evacuation of Gallipoli when he fell ill before the operation was concluded, Ross was invalided to a hospital with influenza or bronchitis after the armistice and so did not accompany the New Zealand forces into Germany. The next few months saw a protracted debate over whether Ross was to write any part of the official history of the war, as had been suggested in his original terms of employment. Finally Ross was ordered to hand over all his material to the Army and the task was given to others. His contract was then

terminated in June 1919. He returned to New Zealand in September accompanied by his wife.

## **7:2 Arrival in France - 1916**

As described in his book *Light and shade in war*, (1916) Ross embarked from Alexandria on March 30, 1916 to Marseilles and then to Paris and Boulogne by train and car to 1<sup>st</sup> Anzac HQ under the command of General Birdwood. GHQ was a day's journey away from this place. Ross finally arrived at the front "for the 54th day of the Battle of Verdun" (p. 151). In a letter home to his sister Ina, Ross said the fight there was "a very bloody one" and that "under all the circumstances the French are 'sticking' it very well"(M. Ross, 1916j). With the New Zealand Division still arriving from Egypt Ross and Bean made a "hurried" visit to London to report to the War Office and High Commission.

Both Bean and myself were very cordially received - we stand on the best of terms with the Press Officers at GHQ and also with the War Office authorities who expressed high appreciation of the attitude we have preserved and the manner in which we have done our work. (M. Ross, 1916h)

This comment reinforces the view that Ross, and probably Bean, were compliant correspondents quite ready to fall in with any restrictions or caveats the Army might place on them. This was not unusual. Most of the British journalists were of a similar mind. Ross, however, has been recorded as being fully supportive of the military regulations barring war correspondents from revealing any vital information, despite complaints back in New Zealand about the lack of "meat" in his despatches. "The more one sees of the show the more one realises that things are very interesting here, but one mustn't give the show away," he wrote to Allen (M. Ross, 1916e).

And while he might have been unhappy with the reception his work received back in New Zealand he was clearly delighted with the interest shown in England. He gloated that his despatches to the newspapers there had been "eminently successful" with 200 papers using them. They had been "most favourably commented upon, both by press and public," he told Allen, in one of the many letters Ross exchanged with him during the war (M. Ross, 1916h). While in London, Ross also visited his wife and son. The latter had been discharged as medically unfit for duty the previous September after

being seriously wounded at Gallipoli. It was probably at this time that the family hatched the plan for a book on the two men's war experiences, which was to be published later that year. In a letter to Alexander Turnbull in August Ross said he had spent a few days in London "but I was so busy with a book Noel and I are doing that I scarcely left my hotel day or night" (M. Ross, 1916o). Forrest and Noel were settled at 25 Ferncroft Ave, Camden, near Hampstead, lovingly described in *Noel Ross and his work*, published by Malcolm and Forrest as a commemoration of their son's life (M. Ross & F. Ross, 1919).

On returning to France after the visit to London in April, Ross and Bean discovered that they would be permitted to reside at 1<sup>st</sup> Anzac HQ instead of with other war correspondents at GHQ. "We shall thus be at least 15 miles nearer the firing line and with out own people, which will be more convenient for us and much better for the interests we represent," Ross told his old friend and High Commissioner, now Sir Thomas Mackenzie, on April 21 (M. Ross 1916g). The New Zealanders at this time were not yet in the trenches but Ross and Bean paid several visits to the British firing line. They went out with the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade and got as close as 70 yards away from German positions. A few days later they went out with 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade. Together the two men toasted the health of all Anzacs as they reminisced about their Gallipoli experiences (McCarthy, 1983, p.217-218). In the meantime the New Zealand Division had arrived in France and in May prepared itself for a "quiet" orientation into trench warfare around Armentières, in northern France near the border with Belgium. In the three months the New Zealanders spent in this sector they made "11 major raids (against four German ones) and countless patrols on its eight-mile front and when relieved in mid-August had lost 2,500 men, nearly 400 of them dead" (McLintock, 1966b; Wright, 2005, pp. 68-78). Ross wrote about some of these raids. The two men were also present at the opening salvoes of what was to become the Battle of the Somme on July 1. One of Ross's earliest despatches from France concerned the beginning of the Somme offensive when on the first day the British army suffered more than 60,000 casualties (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 215). "Day and night we watched the bombardment from a vantage point that overlooked the battlefield between the Somme and the Ancre" (p.215).

...we are now the masters of the vaunted German legions. On this day our brave soldiers feared neither man nor machine. They went into action with a

glorious courage unexcelled in any war. .... As on the earth and on the sea, so in the air did we obtain mastery and the initiative. (M. Ross, 1916, p. 220)

This brief paragraph showed just how out of touch with the realities of what he was experiencing Ross was. He is writing in the idiom of G. A. Henty, full of positive clichés and exalted language. There was no recognition of the horrors of that first day and the impact it would have on those at home waiting to hear news of their sons or fathers or the implications for the New Zealand troops once they entered this battle. In one sense it sounded as if Ross was recording an Otago rugby match for his old Dunedin paper. Or as *The Observer* was to note the following year: “Brigadier Malcolm Ross, or whatever rank he holds, writes as if he were reporting a Sunday school picnic for a tri-weekly one sheet” (“Untitled”, 1917f).

At Fricourt and La Boisselle Ross and Bean watched from an adjacent slope within close range and right out in the open. “It was a unique position from which a non combatant could watch the progress of a fierce fight,” Ross said (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p.222). He could “follow almost every movement of our troops, in places even with the unaided eye”. “For superb gallantry in the face of great odds, I had seen nothing to equal the storming of this position since the attack on Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli” (p. 223). He called it a “wonderful battle spectacle”. According to Martin Farrar (1998), the other officially accredited British journalists were also at the vantage point to watch the battle (p.103). Bean wrote to Captain Collins, the official secretary to the Australian Commonwealth, about returning from the Somme battlefield. “Ross and I were in the best position for watching the second day's fighting that any correspondent reached and had a wonderfully absorbing view of it all” (Bean, 1916b). He was concerned that by the time his despatch about the days’ operations was published in the Australian papers “it will be absolutely dead for the English ones”.

Although there is little information about what Ross thought about the war and the New Zealand effort, in the few letters that are extant he does express some views. In the June letter to his sister Ina he commented:

The war goes steadily on, and shews [sic] no sign of ending. We were rather sad about the news of the fleet losses, but hope they will only make the British nation all the more determined. Our own men are doing fairly well, but they have a good deal to learn, and some of the new officers are

not quite up to the mark. However, we cannot expect to make first-class officers in a few months. (M. Ross, 1916j)

He thought what the British had done was “really marvellous”.

The organization is simply huge and most marvellous. We are but a drop in the bucket. Our men, however, have the physique and only want the experience and the training. They are getting better every day. (M. Ross, 1916j)

At this stage he was saying that “no one knows when the war will be over”. In August he noted: “The Boche is certainly getting it in the neck just now all round, but he will fight on for a good while yet. His moral [sic] is considerably shaken, while ours was never better”. He praised the Australians who were doing “fine work”. “They are certainly great fighters.”

Everyone has great confidence in Haig, and the organization behind the lines is wonderful. It is also vast. The Austrians will be the first to crumple, but the German is still going to take a lot of beating. If we stick to it he will be beaten in time.

It is not many months later that he is predicting the war will last for another two years or more.

The war goes on slowly and I do not expect to see you good people before about another two years or more. If we are to win we must next year make sacrifices transcending any that we have yet made. (M. Ross, 1916M)

### **7:3 Despatch despair**

Bean was not the only correspondent to despair over the fate of his despatches once they had left his hands. Ross also needed to secure the arrangements for the transmission of his accounts. Despite Ross being able to cable stories back to New Zealand his longer despatches were still going by steamer from England. As late as April the High Commissioner, Sir Thomas Mackenzie, was asking New Zealand what the set up was for sending the despatches. Originally Ross was to have sent letters to him in London. Even Mackenzie seemed unsure as to the arrangements. In a letter dated April 28, 1916 he asked Wellington if the agreement with Ross regarding cabling direct to New Zealand applied to the Western Front. He also wanted to know whether he was authorised to continue publication of Ross’s articles in England (Mackenzie, 1916b). He was told that the cables were not to exceed 500 words on “matters of direct interest to New Zealand” referring to the country’s troops and not dealing with matters of general

interest “certain to reach the Dominion through ordinary channels”. Duplicates of articles could be sent for publication in England at the High Commissioner's discretion” (“Department of Internal Affairs”, 1916).

**Figure 40 Sir Thomas Mackenzie and Malcolm Ross 1917.**

There were still some problems with delays in getting stories published, to the extent that often a paper sent out from England with one of Ross's stories published in it, arrived before his official despatch. For example on June 20 Ross's despatch “*The raiders*” appeared in the *New Zealand Times*. It had been copied from a London periodical, which had reached New Zealand before the original despatch. Mackenzie was ordered to send out the Ross articles within the UK one week after the steamers conveying the despatch to New Zealand had left (Hislop, 1916). One would have supposed that the criticism from home of the delay in publishing Ross's despatches that arose during the Dardanelles campaign would have had more effect. While the despatches were no longer weeks late as in 1915, even the cabled messages were still being published up to a week later in some cases. According to documents held in Archives New Zealand, once Mackenzie had sent the despatch to the Department of Internal Affairs it then went to the New Zealand Censor, Colonel Gibbons, who then passed it on to an underling to type up and send to the Press Association. It was no wonder the despatches were so late getting published. Ross's explanation for this seemed to suggest his support for the delay. “Our letters and telegrams are held up to prevent the enemy from gaining information that would be valuable to them.” From May until September when the New Zealand forces were engaged in their first major battle at the Somme, Internal Affairs' records show that Ross wrote 22 cables of a total of 5525 words. Until September when the New Zealand forces were engaged at the Somme, Ross often complained of having nothing to do. In a letter to Turnbull in August he said:

I am very well again, and enjoying the life here, though of late there has been far too little for me to do. However, that may soon be remedied. This afternoon we are holding aquatic sports almost under the nose of the Boche, and well within the reach of his Guns! (M. Ross, 1916o)

From September onwards Ross would be heavily involved in covering the 23 days continuous fighting in which the New Zealand Division was involved in its attempt to capture Flers as part of the Battle of the Somme. Once the New Zealand troops had been

withdrawn from the trenches, Ross wrote to his friends back in Wellington that for “some considerable time” they would not see much in the way of cables from him “for the simple reason that there will be little or nothing to cable”.

You might make this matter clear to any of my critical “friends” that you chance to meet. Of course I don’t mind their sneers because I know what the authorities and the English press think of my work. (M. Ross, 1916M)

## **7:4 Transport woes**

While he was following battles Ross was also trying to sort out his transport arrangements. As he admitted, even on their first journalistic foray in France, he and Bean were a long way from the front and whereas the English correspondents had four or five cars at their disposal by their proprietors, Bean and Ross had no adequate means of getting about. They were beholden to Army Corps for cars that could take them to the front – “so that in the day we have in order to see anything of our men in the trenches, to travel 30 miles by car and 10-12 miles on foot” (M. Ross, 1916g). The two men decided to press their respective governments to provide a car with the cost being shared (M. Ross, 1916g). Mackenzie took up the cudgels on Ross’s behalf. In a cable to the Department of Internal Affairs he suggested the two governments go halves in a vehicle clinching the argument with the rider that General Richardson, the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Division in the UK, thought it would be advisable (Mackenzie, 1916). Internal Affairs asked for the likely weekly costs of a car (Department of Internal Affairs, 1916). Ross calculated that for joint use of a car by he and Bean the cost would be £11 a week for each correspondent (M. Ross, 1916k). Cabinet refused to pay for a car initially but after repeated requests from Ross looked at the matter again in July but took no action. Bean seemed to have had more luck with the Australian Government because in June a four-seater Wolseley car was sent to 1st Anzac for the use of the two correspondents. The arrangement fell apart when two weeks later the men separated with Ross being attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> Anzac. Bean complained to his superiors that the lack of a car was an “intolerable handicap” and if the situation was not resolved he would be compelled to resign (Bean, 1916c). Eventually a Vauxhall was delivered to the correspondents but broke down immediately and had to be replaced. The problems of transport seemed to continue to plague Ross during the war years. He wrote to Neville Lytton, the British Army press officer, in June 1918 about his transport woes.

As you know I live so close up to the Front that I seldom need to use a car. For instance from the majority of our Headquarters it has been quite easy for me to walk to the front line and here one rides up a mile or two on horseback and then walks. It is not as if I have to cover a big front like the other correspondents, taking a Press Officer along also. It is not even as if it were with the Canadians or with the Australians whose correspondents have had to deal with five divisions and where in the case of the latter, two correspondents are employed. At the same time it is necessary for me to have a car on occasions, such as when recently we had troops in the northern and southern battle at the same time.(M. Ross, 1918a)

He asked that he be provided with “a small car not a big one” and suggested that maybe the Division should purchase a Ford car which he could then use. A car arrived in September and was promptly shelled (M. Ross, 1918c). This must have been replaced at Ross’s expense because after the war he was writing to the Army asking for reimbursement. General Richardson had arranged for the Ford car to be jointly used by Ross and the War Trophies Officer. Ross said he paid £150 for it in July 1918 with the understanding that as he had paid for it, the car would become his property at the end of the war. But the car had been used “on the trek to Germany” by the New Zealand Division and written off (M. Ross, 1920). Ross got his £150 eventually.

## 7:5 The British journalist corps

As mentioned earlier Army authorities permitted Ross and Bean to reside at 1<sup>st</sup> Anzac HQ instead of with other war correspondents at GHQ. “It is a great concession to us to be allowed to live with the Army Corps instead of with the other war correspondents in the Chateau near GHQ.” War correspondents were not allowed to visit the British front lines or even near their vicinity except in the company of a press officer and they were forbidden to take photographs. Bean expressed his annoyance at this restriction. “I may not visit the line without an officer and an officer is not on all days available,” he complained (Bean, 1916d). While Bean and Ross were attached to their own country’s forces, they did visit the other war correspondents at Amiens.

**Figure 41 Allied war correspondents. Left to right, back row: Unidentified press officer; Capt Cadge, press censor; William Beach Thomas; unidentified press officer. Centre row: Capt Roberts, press censor; Malcolm Ross; Frederick Palmer; Capt Faunthorpe, press censor. Front row; Perry Robinson; Philip Gibbs; Lieutenant Colonel Hutton Wilson, (chief press censor); Herbert Russell; Charles Bean.**

They live in luxury in a big house in the city of Amiens 25 miles behind the front and have five motor cars in which they make daily trips near the line and interview officers and wounded. In addition they get all the news

from GHQ as they have a colonel and four other press officers and censors living in the same house with them. I of course only deal with our own men...(M. Ross, 1916M)

The first group of British accredited correspondents had been finally allowed to join the Army in the field in time to observe the opening salvoes of the Battle of the Somme in July. The group included John Buchan, the novelist, Philip Gibbs, Percival Phillips, Valentine Williams and an old friend from Gallipoli days, Herbert Russell (Farrar, 1998, p. 71). Bean and Ross occasionally visited their British counterparts when not required at the front. Ross noted in one of his letters home to his friends that he was “in a backwater of the fighting in which there is little or nothing to report” when the New Zealand troops were not in action. “The British correspondents are there all the time” (M. Ross, 1916M). Annoyed with the lack of publicity the New Zealand troops were receiving in the British press, Ross made a point of introducing Gibbs and Russell to the New Zealand staff who provided them with information about the New Zealand operations.

The London papers published this in extenso, and no doubt it would also be cabled out to N.Z. I did it with that object, but no doubt my enemies in N.Z. will say ‘Why did Ross not send this?’ Of course none of them saw anything of the N.Z. fighting, and their accounts are somewhat imaginative. (M. Ross, 1916M)

In July 1918 Henry Nevinson replaced Gibbs for three or four weeks and took the opportunity to meet up with Bean and “his other Gallipoli friends” (Bean, 1918). When they were not required to cover the operations of their own soldiers, Bean and Ross took advantage of invitations to visit the French and US fields of operations and invited reciprocal visits from French and American pressmen. The two men were also invited to visit the British Fleet at Scapa Flow (McCarthy, 1983, p.248). Ross was also on hand when Massey and Joseph Ward toured the Western Front and visited the New Zealand troops in late 1916. A party of New Zealand MPs, including C. J. Parr (Auckland), E. P. Lee (Otago) and Sir James Carroll (Maori) visited as did a group of New Zealand pressmen later in the war (M. Ross, 1918e; 1918g). Ross was often deputed to show these visitors around.

## **7:6 Family time and other diversions**

Until September of 1916 when the New Zealand forces were engaged in the Battle of the Somme Ross was able to spend more time in England with his family. As he said in a letter to his friend Turnbull, “of late there has been too little for me to do”. (M. Ross,

1916o). This was reflective of the realities of warfare for the soldiers as well, periods of intense activity followed by periods of rest and recuperation, and probably boredom. Ross covered many of the efforts to relieve the long periods of waiting between battles, wood chopping contests, military tournaments, swimming competitions, concerts and the like. When time and battles permitted Ross took himself to England to see his family and most of his letters home are paens to the journalistic successes of his son Noel. The latter was discharged from the army in October 1915 as permanently unfit for further duty. He had re-enlisted in the British Army, securing a commission in the Royal Field Artillery but was discharged after further illness. According to Noel's *Times* obituary, he was dissuaded from further enlisting in some other part of the country where his disability was unknown. Malcolm's delight and pride in his son seemed to have been warranted. According to *The Times* in the young man "were joined the gift of graceful writing and the gift of a joyous heart".

His enthusiasm, his gaiety, his unconcealed and almost boyish enjoyment of the lighter side of life, his freshness of outlook, and his natural charm of speech and manner will not easily be forgotten by those among whom he lived and moved. ("Tribute of The Times", 1918, p. 4)

Malcolm was thrilled with his son's success in England. After Malcolm introduced Noel to the editor of *The Times*, the young man was employed by that paper at £5 a week. As well Noel was published in *Punch* and *Land and Water*. Family and friends were warned not to divulge any of the information about Noel to the New Zealand newspapers.

I don't want any boasting about Noel's success in the N.Z. papers, many of which are distinctly jealous of the Ross family. The *Post* people thought Noel good enough only for the Police court and the *N.Z. Herald* took him off literary work and set him to canvas ads! It shows what their judgement was worth. However, their loss is his gain. (M. Ross, 1916j)

After telling Turnbull all about Noel's London successes and his friendship with Rudyard Kipling, Ross concluded with this proviso (the underlining is Ross's own):

And mind, I am only telling you this because you are my friend and a friend of Noel's and I don't want any "skite" about it, and not a single word in the newspapers. It is only for our personal friends that we talk about it at all. (M. Ross, 1916o)



**Figure 42** The house in Hampstead where Forrest and Noel lived while Malcolm was in France. Photograph taken by Lyn Ross.

Even Noel appeared to have adopted his father's attitude towards the criticism from people in New Zealand. On *The Times*, he said, there was "no jealousy or pettiness here such as there is in New Zealand and everyone is pleased to see a fellow journalist who succeeds" (N. Ross, 1916c). Noel was chosen by his editor for a week's trip around the British naval bases, to the cruiser fleet and the Grand Fleet as a guest, with other correspondents, of the Commander in Chief (M. Ross, 1916j). In November Ross was writing to his friends in New Zealand saying Noel was still doing "fine work" for *The Times* "and if Lloyd George or any especially important person has to be seen it is always Noel that is sent to see him" (M. Ross, 1916M). The two men spent some time compiling their book *Light and shade in war* in those early months of 1916, which, according to the introduction dated August 4, Malcolm was busy correcting proofs of "on the battle field of the Somme in a tent over which British and German shells were passing at the time" (M. Ross, 1916, p. vii). *Punch* reviewed the book, published by Arnold, the publisher of Ross's *Climber in New Zealand*, in early 1917.

So many battle books have been pouring from the press lately that it is difficult to keep pace with them, and harder still to find something fresh to say of each; but *quot homines tot* points of individual interest, and for those whose concern lies more especially with the New Zealand Forces and their campaigns I can very safely recommend a volume which the

official war correspondent to that contingent and his son have jointly published under the title of *Light and Shade in War* (ARNOLD). Whether it is Mr. MALCOLM ROSS who supplies the light, and Mr. NOEL ROSS the shade, or vice versa, we are given no means of ascertaining. Between them they have certainly put together an agreeable patchwork of small and easily read pieces, most of which have already appeared in journalistic form. It is perhaps parental prejudice that makes Mr. Punch consider the best of the bunch to be "Abdul," one of three slight sketches that originally saw the light in his own pages. Abdul is a joy, also a thief, a society entertainer, and a Cairo hospital orderly. I can only hope that the story of how he displayed his patient's sun-browned knees as a raree show to the convulsed G.O.C. and lady, who were visiting the hospital, is at least founded on fact. The publishers are entirely justified in saying that these impressions, made often under actual fire, have both colour and intimacy. So I wish them good luck in the campaign for popular favour. ("Untitled", 1917a)

Ross seemed quite uncharacteristically gleeful about the reception his book received in England but was rather more dubious about how it would be received in New Zealand. To his sister Ina he said in January 1917:

I hope mother got our book all right. It has been splendidly reviewed in all the English papers and is selling well. The squeakers in New Zealand will be very sick when they hear what the best London critics think of us. (M. Ross, 1917a)

He had reason to be wary as *The Observer* predictably noted the publication of the book with its usual lampooning of the Ross *pater et fils*.

Per Rossigram there came to New Zealand the glorious news that a stalwart New Zealander with the savoir faire and general appearance of a "Russian Prince" has been in London. This was Noel. Noel's various activities were faithfully chronicled. To-day he had been begged by a pleading monarch to take a commission in the Royal Field Artillery. Tomorrow he was a member of the staff of the London 'Times'. The day after Thursday he collaborated with the official New Zealand correspondent in the production of a book which, vide current Rossigram, the London 'Times' had received with ecstasy. It seems almost too much for New Zealanders to expect that we may again be permitted to bask in the sunshine of £1000 a year correspondent who has actually written a book and an interview with Noel, and politicians will please get leather knees in their pants in expectancy of the home-coming. Why his white dress waistcoat with the round brass buttons is an epic in itself. BRASS buttons! ("Untitled", 1917b, p. 5)

Noel and Forrest were not the only relatives present in England or in France. Malcolm recounted a visit to his brother-in-law in Sussex, perhaps one of the Brooke relations, as

in *Light and shade in war* he mentions “my sister, Lady Beverley Brooke” (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 118). Ina Ross was married to the Milton town clerk Robert Margrie Brooke(s) so maybe this was a relative by marriage. As mentioned in a previous chapter one of Malcolm’s nephews, George Muir Grant, the son of Forrest’s brother, Thomas, was killed at Gallipoli. Several more of Malcolm’s nephews also enlisted. One was Kenneth Ross, (Returned Serviceman No 5/813 1st Field Ambulance ASC) the second eldest son of Malcolm’s brother David, who enlisted in October 1915 and was in camp in Egypt before going to France. A rabbitier employed by the East Coast Rabbit Board at Gisborne, Kenneth had a rather chequered career in France. His personnel records show a soldier carpeted for going “absent from duty” on several occasions and suffering various lengths of field punishment as a result. A driver of a horse ambulance Kenneth was eventually sent back to New Zealand suffering from “defective vision” in February 1919. Kenneth’s younger brother, Malcolm, a 20-year-old hardware clerk in Hamilton, enlisted and was sent to Sling Camp on the Salisbury Plain for training and embarked for France on February 14, 1918. As a member of the 18th Platoon “E” Company, Wellington Regiment Malcolm was awarded the Military Medal for an act of gallantry in the field in November 1918. In his personnel files is a letter from Malcolm to the Officer in Charge of the Medals and Decorations Department of the Defence Department dated August 17, 1926 saying that during November 1918 while serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wellington Regiment, as a company runner, he was recommended for the Military Medal which he duly received but without the citation. “My uncle, Malcolm Ross, after whom I was named, forwarded me particulars of the award which he had evidently copied from an Army list or Gazette”. Whether he ever received his citation is unknown. David Ross’s eldest son, Alexander, possibly served in the Australian Army, according to present day relative, Lyn Ross.

## **7:7 Old friends and colleagues in London**

Also in London, of course, were several colleagues that Malcolm Ross knew well, not the least being his original rival for the position of official war correspondent, Guy Scholefield. The latter had been the London correspondent for the syndicate of the *Otago Daily Times, Press, Evening Post* and *New Zealand Herald*, the New Zealand Associated Press, since 1908. When war broke out he had been one of the first to seek accreditation as a war correspondent with the War Office. Despite losing out to Ross as the official correspondent he kept his accreditation and did spend time in France on several occasions meeting up with Ross who served as his “guide, philosopher and

friend” (Scholefield, n. d.). In early 1917 Scholefield took on the editorship of *The New Zealander—Home News for New Zealand Troops on active Service*.

Guy H. Scholefield is doing a good work in caring for “The New Zealander”. It is to be published every fourteen days, and is a précis of the last papers received by Sir Thomas Mackenzie - news that will he likely to appear to the New Zealander in London with but the “Times” “Morning Post”, “Daily Mail”, “Chronicle” and other minor prints to read. “The New Zealander” it of the highest excellence for it gives two columns of New Zealand racing, the soldier in London during December getting the winners of the Masterton October meeting. The leader mentions all the New Zealand gentlemen who are worth mentioning in London. A column is awarded to Ministers on Tour, there are plenty of good, meaty personals, New Zealand sketches, and much other matter not to be found in London papers. Mr Guy Scholefield, the editor, is entitled to the admiration of all loyal New Zealanders for his production of an admirable four-page précis of the latest New Zealand papers. (“Untitled”, 1917c, p. 4.)

After the war *The Observer* noted that the publication was “a good meaty little paper for New Zealanders during the war” and added that Scholefield was “one of the best friends the Fernleaf has in England” (“Pars about people”, 1919b). This attitude of *The Observer* towards Scholefield was in sharp contrast to its view of Malcolm Ross. It was quite clear the paper held the former in very high regard calling him, affectionately, that “small, alert pressman” and “admirable little man”. Speaking of his appointment to London *The Observer* noted that while initially he may have not performed as he might, in short order, he had overcome these hiccups.

Guy, who had expressed the juice of life from the grape of Lumsden or some other village in the South (perhaps it was Mosgiel), gave old England what oh when he got there. He was angry with England for being behind the times. He was cured of his complaint in a month, and has never taught his maternal grandmother to extract the maximum nutriment from the ova of the common hen since. (“Untitled”, 1917c, p. 4)

(The paper rarely, if ever, gave Ross such fond comments.) While in England Scholefield enrolled at the London School of Economics and graduated with a BSc in economics and political science in 1915 and DSc in 1919 (Pars about people, 1919a; Porter, 2007).

Also in London was Fred Doidge, one of the finalists for the position of official war correspondent. As he was unsuccessful he joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force

early in 1916 and went overseas later in the year, serving first in the NZEF Headquarters in London and later in Divisional Headquarters in France. It seems unlikely that Ross did not meet up with him. Doidge went on to have an illustrious career as a journalist and later as a parliamentarian reaching Cabinet level. He eventually became High Commissioner to London in 1951 and was knighted in 1953. He outlived Malcolm Ross by 24 years (Waterson, 2004).

Another colleague in London was T. E. Donne, who Ross knew when Donne was superintendent of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts. In 1909 he was appointed as Trade and Immigration Commissioner to London and was well ensconced by the time war broke out. In August 1917 he was writing to the Secretary of the War Office asking if Malcolm Ross could continue to use the honorary title of Captain and wear badges of his rank while serving as official war correspondent with the NZEF (Donne, 1917). The War Office's reply was that accredited war correspondents of overseas Dominions were not authorised to use their titles or wear badges of military rank while acting as war correspondents. A similar question had arisen over Charles Bean's entitlement to wear badges or use his Captain's title while acting as a correspondent. Bean had been refused and so lost his honorary rank ("Untitled", 1916d). But in August 1917 Ross was permitted to keep his captaincy. A memo to G. W. Russell from James Allen on December 12, 1917 explained why the matter had been settled so satisfactorily for Ross. The Army Council granted this concession on the special grounds raised by the High Commissioner that Ross was not a private correspondent but was employed in his official capacity by the New Zealand Government (Allen, 1917b).<sup>98</sup> Donne was one of the mourners at the funeral of Ross's son Noel in 1918. ("Tribute of *The Times*", 1918). And in 1919 when Ross's contract as war correspondent was finally terminated it was to Donne that Ross wrote to explain that he had in fact told the Government of his willingness to relinquish the position. "...for I long ago pointed out to General Richardson that as the work of the Division was practically finished with its entry into Germany territory there was no longer any use for my services as war correspondent" (M. Ross, 1919b).

A further journalistic colleague in London and one who also vied for the position of official war correspondent was Bertie Drew. After failing to get the job Drew enlisted and went to France in 1916 as an infantry officer, but was gassed at Bellevue Spur in

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<sup>98</sup> However, Bean was also paid by his Government.

1917, he told Charles Bean in a letter after the war was over (Drew, 1919). In the latter months of the war he was seconded “as a sort of belated publicity officer” for the Military Publicity Department established in London in September 1918. He wrote numerous stories for both the English and New Zealand papers and was eventually appointed to write one of the popular histories of the war *The war effort of New Zealand* (Drew, 1923). He told Bean in the letter that he had been considered for the position of war correspondent in Palestine “but owing to some hitch in Palestine, and our Government's dread of stepping on the sacred Imperial toes, it did not come off and we had no one there”.<sup>99</sup>

Also in England was Captain James Shand, erstwhile war correspondent of the South African War, who enlisted after his two sons were wounded and invalided to England. He himself fell ill in 1917 and was refused permission to rejoin his regiment in France but was detained to work in England where he was assistant Provost Marshall and also attached to the Military Intelligence Department at HQ (“Untitled”, 1917g).

## **7:8 Impressions of the New Zealand soldier**

Just before September when the New Zealand Division was to enter the trenches for their part in the Somme operations, Ross wrote to James Allen, who was acting Prime Minister while Massey was in Europe.<sup>100</sup> Marked private and confidential, the letter passed judgement on the New Zealand troops.

We notice here that amongst recent drafts there are some rather elderly men who are not much use, but at this stage I suppose it is a little difficult to avoid this. But there is little use sending men who are not quite fit for very strenuous work. They are only a handicap and an expense. (M. Ross, 1916q)

Ross said the force was now “very well equipped – better than it ever was – and the men seem very fit after their spell and training”. He then went on to criticise the latter, saying it was “not so good as you imagine it to be”. He suggested that the sooner Allen

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<sup>99</sup> A relative, Robert Henry Lambie of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles, was killed in action on August 9, 1916 at the battle of Bir el Abd in Egypt. He is buried in the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery.

<sup>100</sup> James Allen was acting Prime Minister until June 24, 1917.

got men away to England the better it would be as the training there was “first class”. Ross moved on then to praise the Australians and said he saw little of General Godley

**Figure 43 A cellar in the ruins of a Belgian house used as HQ by the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company in late 1917. Captain F G Phippard on the left and Malcolm Ross on the right.**

“and there seems a very general impression that the administration should be in the hands of General Russell”. “His is one of the well-earned reputations of the war.” Ross noted in passing that discipline among the New Zealand soldiers was “rather slack” and that there had been “a good deal of court-martialing”. “One man was shot the other day – the first I believe in the Australasian Force. Unfortunately he was a New Zealander.”<sup>101</sup> Ross added that he couldn’t cable any news as to where he was and what the next New Zealand mission was but in a post script said he had just seen “the newest and most wonderful things in the war. They are still a secret”. He was referring to the latest military development, the tank, which was about to be unleashed on the Germans at the battles of Flers-Courcelette on September 15, the third and last major offensive on the Somme that year. Allen was quick to respond to Ross’s letter and was defensive about the fitness of the men being sent to France and their training.

It is a very difficult job indeed to make sure that only men quite fit for strenuous work are sent to the front. The local medical examination has always been a difficult problem. When the men come into camp they are again examined and weeded out. I do not therefore understand you when you say that we are sending men who are not fit for strenuous work. (Allen, 1916e)

Allen also disagreed with Ross’s perception of the training.

You must recollect that we have to take the material in many instances quite raw and in 4 months have to fashion it into some shape and get the men accustomed to some sort of discipline. We do not pretend to make them war experts, at least so far as modern warfare is concerned, but they go from here fairly well equipped as regards discipline and musketry and other things. (Allen, 1916e)

In a later letter to General Godley, Allen noted Ross’s comments about training. “The training here is going on satisfactorily. Malcolm Ross has written to say that our New

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<sup>101</sup> Probably Private Frank Hughes, Canterbury, who was executed for desertion and “evading service” on August 25, 1916 by members of the Pioneer Battalion ( “On the Western Front - Maori and the First World War”, 2008).

Zealand training is not as good as we think it is and I think Malcolm Ross does not understand the situation” (Allen, 1916d). Referring to Ross’s comments about Godley, Allen responded to the correspondent that he knew Godley was unpopular, but said that at the same time from the accounts he had received “from those competent to judge” Godley seemed to be “a first class soldier” and under such circumstances it didn’t seem to him proper to make any attempt to remove him from the command of the NZEF. Allen concluded his letter by expressing his profound shock over the Australian referendum which voted against conscription on October 28. “It is the biggest blow that we have had and makes Imperial consolidation for the future very difficult in realisation”. Writing to General Godley on December 12 Allen noted: “We shall have to do our best to pull through and there is no doubt we should have pulled through all right had it not been for the very bad example that has been set by Australia” (Allen, 1916f).<sup>102</sup>

### **7:9 Battles– the New Zealand effort**

On September 15, 1916 the New Zealand Division went into battle in the third Somme offensive, the so-called Battle of Flers-Courcelette and by midnight, of the 6000 New Zealanders who took part, just over a third were dead, wounded or missing. The troops reached all four objectives they were set but were able to hold only three (Macdonald, 2006, pp. 109-110). In a letter to Allen dated September 18 Godley said he had visited the NZ Division and found it “in great heart” although casualties had been “fairly heavy”. On October 7 Allen wrote about his concern over the casualty reports.

There is one thing troubling us very much here and that is the report of the casualties. At the present time, namely October 7, we are receiving the casualty lists of September 15-16. Of course we cannot explain the reason for the delay except by saying that there is such a mass of work to be done at the front that it cannot be otherwise. You can well understand how we have received the big casualty lists that have been coming in for the past fortnight. There is always consolation to our people in the knowledge that our men have done their duty and made a name for themselves and their country. (Allen, 1916c)

Allen told Godley again on October 31 that “the chief grievance in New Zealand was with regards to casualty reports”. “There is grave dissatisfaction in the country about getting reports and delay in getting progress reports. The offensive at the Somme has its

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<sup>102</sup> New Zealand had introduced conscription in June that year (McGibbon, pp. 117-118 ).

sad side for us in the large number of casualties”(Allen, 1916d).<sup>103</sup>

Tanks were used for the first time in this battle but after initial success proved of doubtful worth. By the unofficial end of the battle the Allied forces had not succeeded objectives of capturing the towns of Gueudecourt, Lesbœufs, Morval, Thiepval and Comblès had been achieved but with more casualties for the New Zealanders. After 23 days of constant fighting, and with casualties of about 7,000 men, 1,560 of them killed, the New Zealanders were withdrawn from the line and were marched up to the Albert

**Figure 44 Disabled tank called Edward, February 1918. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

area where they were inspected by Godley (Macdonald, 2006, pp. 224-241). In a letter of November 28, from NZ Division HQ in France to his friends Ross said no message could be sent about the New Zealanders “until the enemy knew we were fighting against them”.

I pulled through all right on the Somme - very interesting and very exciting at times, but you will read all about it. I seem to have written reams about it. Unfortunately the papers in N.Z. will not pay for more than 300 words a week in cables, but in the first week I exceeded my limit by well over several thousand words. (M Ross, 1916M)

The winter of 1916–17 passed “coldly but quietly” at Fleurbaix, near Armentières before the troops headed for Messines (McLintock, 1966b). On June 7 1917 the New Zealand troops were involved in an attack to capture the town of Messines. Described as a “striking success” nevertheless the casualties were high – 3,700 men by June 10, including 700 killed. This action was a preliminary for the Third Battle of Ypres, began on July 31 1917 with Passchendaele the initial objective. The New Zealanders part in this offensive began on October 4, with their task to take Gravenstafel Spur which they did with a total of 1853 casualties, 330 dead and 200 missing. On October 12, they moved on to the next objective, Bellevue Spur. Glyn Harper, (2000) in *Massacre at Passchendaele* stated bluntly of that day, that it was “an unmitigated disaster” with

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<sup>103</sup> One of the casualties at the Somme was my uncle Rifleman Reg Ranby who was wounded and evacuated to England. He returned to France in time to be wounded again on October 12, 1917 as his brigade moved up Bellevue Spur towards Passchendaele. Another relative who died of wounds during the action on September 24, was Samuel James Beart Foss. He is buried at the Dernancourt Communal Cemetery Extension.

1190 killed and was the first major defeat experienced by the New Zealanders in France (p. 90).

New Zealand losses for the morning's action were catastrophic: 117 officers and 3,179 men within a few hours... More than 1,000 bodies lay in swathes about the wire, buried in the marsh and along the road. The ratio of killed to wounded was unusually high if those listed as missing are added to the number killed. Most of those listed as missing had in fact been killed, but their bodies were never located. (Harper, 2000, p. 76)

On October 18 the New Zealanders were relieved and the town of Passchendaele was finally occupied on November 6.

By this time, the offensive had long since failed in its strategic purpose. The capture of Passchendaele no longer represented any significant gain. With winter approaching, Haig closed down the battle on 20 November. Apart from pushing the enemy back about 8 kilometres, the offensive had achieved nothing. ("The Passchendaele offensive", 2008)

Having covered this grim battle on behalf of New Zealand Ross would have been delighted to get back to England to celebrate his son's 27th birthday on December 4 and his wedding 10 days later to Sydney woman Eileen Buchanan. His joy was short lived. Noel died of typhoid fever two days before the wedding with his parents at his bedside ("Obituary - Mr Noel Ross", 1917; "Personal pars" 1917; "Untitled", 1918a). Among those present at his funeral were Brigadier General Richardson, T. E. Donne, Henry Nevinston, and the editor and staff of *The Times*. Noel was buried at Hampstead cemetery Finchley Rd, England. Malcolm and Forrest published *Noel Ross and his work* in 1918 in memory of their son (M. Ross, 1918l).

### **7:9:1 The affairs and affrays of 1918**

Withdrawn from the offensive the New Zealand troops wintered over in the Polygon Wood sector of the Ypres salient not being relieved until February 1918. Those "quiet months" cost 3000 men, with nearly 500 killed (McLintock, 1966b). In March the German Army threw a major offensive in the Somme area and the New Zealanders were sent to Amiens to stem a possible breakthrough which they achieved with some small advances. In July they took part in a steady advance which began to push the Germans back towards the Hindenburg Line, taking Rossignol Wood, Puisieux, Grevillers, and then Bapaume on August 29. A day after Bapaume Malcolm Ross was writing to General Richardson in London in an upbeat mood over the progress of the New Zealand

troops. “Our fellows are still marching on and they appear to have taken another village for breakfast and I hope will have a second for dinner or perhaps luncheon” (M. Ross, 1918b).

The New Zealand Government was finally waking up to the fact that New Zealand’s participation in the war was largely unrecognised outside the country and this was brought home to the Prime Minister while in England. There was a New Zealand War Records Section which was in charge of the official war photographer, a Captain Sanders, and the war artists and collating war records (Gambrill, 1918). However this was clearly not sufficient and on August 29 – the day Bapaume was captured from the Germans - Massey sent a memo to the High Commissioner saying that it had occurred to him “that the measure of publicity afforded to the doings of the NZEF in the newspaper press of the UK is capable of improvement”.

I have authorised the establishment of a Military Publicity Department at HQ NZEF in England to deal with the matter of Military Publicity generally and also the articles contributed by our Official War Correspondent in France. This department will also be responsible for furnishing NZ with regular articles concerning the forces stationed in England and for generally supplementing the official correspondence reports of information which reaches Military HQ from various sources. The Military Publicity Department at HQ in London has been authorised to make full use of the New Zealand Official War Correspondent's material immediately on its arrival in England and to this end I am arranging to remove the embargo which apparently at present is in existence. (Massey, 1918)

This took the control of the war photographers, correspondent and war artists out of the hands of the High Commissioner and into the hands of Lieutenant Bertie Drew and Corporal Fraser. In that same letter after Bapaume Ross echoed the Prime Minister’s sentiments regarding the lack of recognition.

We are getting very little publicity considering what we are doing, in the London press. I have not seen one of my messages reproduced, though the Australians and Canadians get much notice. They are, of course, bigger “shows” but I think something better ought to be done for our fellows. We have been the leading hound in the pack in all this fighting and we have the toughest country on the whole line to attack. The Boche fought well all over Bapaume. I have written to the Prime Minister, the High Commissioner and the Editor of *The Times* on the publicity question and may write to you later on the subject in case the others can do nothing. (M. Ross, 1918b)

Maybe it was Ross's letters which finally convinced the New Zealand Government to take action. It turned out to be too late, even though Ross was predicting to Lytton as late as June 2 that "at the present rate of our progress" two more years of war seemed possible (M. Ross, 1918a). On September 5 the work of the Publicity Department began as a branch of the War Records Section. Its brief was to provide New Zealand newspapers with full information concerning the NZEF in Europe and England and to endeavour to obtain better publicity for the NZEF and New Zealand generally in England and elsewhere. In a report to the Minister of Defence dated September 6, it said that no interference would be made with the war correspondent's matter in any way, and its despatch to New Zealand would be facilitated "as hitherto" ("Publicity", 1918). "The War Correspondent will get full credit for all matter published in England for his reports." Although the author of the report is not apparent it would appear from its tone to be that of a soldier, and the most likely person is General Richardson, the GOC of the New Zealand Division in the UK.

Hitherto I have never recognised publicity as part of a soldier's duty but this war has resulted in the use of many weapons not usually found in a soldier's armoury, and publicity and propaganda are just now playing no mean part in the conduct of the war. ("Publicity", 1918)

On hand to see some early examples of the Publicity Branch's work were the five New Zealand pressmen who were picked to go to England and France as guests of the British Government. They included Charles Earle, the editor of *The Dominion*, W J Geddis, proprietor of *The Observer*, Sandy Hackett, the editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, Fred Pirani, ex MP and proprietor of the *Feilding Star* and Martin Luther Reading, the editor of the *Lyttelton Times* ("Pressmen at the Front", 1918; "The press delegation", 1918). The pressmen were apparently "keenly interested" in the new department and saw specimen letters and approved their style and contents. The report acknowledged that New Zealand was "three to four years behind the other Dominions" and was working without the financial assistance which was "plentifully forthcoming to them". In a letter

**Figure 45 New Zealand journalists inspect a German dugout at Haplincourt, September 4, 1918.**

to General Richardson on September 8 Ross was trying to clear up why his cables were arriving in England four or five days late. "It was rather a shame, and not fair to N.Z. or to me the way they were bottled up. I was blamed for the want of publicity in England" (M. Ross, 1918c). He also added that James Allen had cabled asking him to cut down

his cables. “Funny people our defence department, with scarcely the imagination of a cat!”

Not much is known of what Ross’s life was like during 1918 apart from what could be gleaned from his despatches as there are few letters or official documents recording his activities. Two events he would undoubtedly have been most grieved to hear about would have been the death of his mother, Mary, who died on April 17 and then his friend Alexander Turnbull who died on June 28 after an operation on his sinuses (Traue, 2006). There is the letter he wrote in June to Neville Lytton, the Press Officer in charge of the war correspondents, mentioned earlier in this chapter, where he made his repeated requests for a car, talked about taking visiting pressmen around the New Zealand section and helping to organise a horse show and military tournament (M. Ross, 1918a). He also seemed to be part of the organising of the artists and photographers at the front. There was a curious incident in which Ross was arrested at Boulogne in either late September or early October. Apparently there was a contretemps over whether he was to be allowed passage on a ship to London. Ross had an official pass but was denied a berth on the packet. He protested and was arrested, unfairly in his view (M. Ross, 1918d; 1918e). In October he again wrote to General Richardson about a proposal by Cassells to publish a book which he could write during the winter months and which he thought would be a good idea and welcome publicity for the New Zealand forces. “There is however nothing in it from the author’s point of view, beyond extra work, as Cassells is willing to take the risk if the New Zealand Government will take 500 copies” (M. Ross, 1918f). This request must have gone to the New Zealand Government because Richardson received a very terse reply that publications by private individuals should be discouraged and assistance given to the author of the Government history when he had been selected (“Government cable to Vanquisher”, 1918).

**Figure 46 Visiting New Zealand journalists on the battlefield at Haplincourt, September 4, 1918. Malcolm Ross is on the left.**

### **7:9:2 The relief of Le Quesnoy**

In September the Germans were being harried back to the Hindenburg Line with the New Zealand troops doing their share passing through Bapaume to the Gouzeaucourt Wood “capturing villages in swathe as they passed along” (“On the Western Front - a series of great battles”, 1918). In the vicinity of the New Zealand Division was the party of New Zealand pressmen who were visiting the front having just passed through the

derelict town of Albert (“Pressmen at the front”, 1918). They found General Russell and his staff at Grevillers just over a mile west of Bapaume in a tiny hut which had been the German HQ a few days previously. Haplincourt had only just been taken the morning of the pressmen’s arrival. Malcolm Ross accompanied the journalists to Bapaume where they found the town in ruins. Ross took them on a tour of the battlefield beyond, visiting Haplincourt where they saw wounded and dead Germans who lay where the battle had been fought. “It was an interesting, even a gruesome sight,” said the writer of the account – possibly Reading of the *Lyttelton Times* (“The press delegation”, 1918). The line of the New Zealanders advance began to curve a little north and they crossed the Escaut canal at Crevecour and moved in the direction of Solesmes and Le Quesnoy, the fortified town that had been captured and occupied by the Germans in 1914. New Zealanders were alerted to the eventual relief of this town on November 4 by the New Zealand forces by an article published on November 7 (“Enemy retreating”, 1918).

**Figure 47 New Zealand troops marching through the bombed town of Le Quesnoy, France November 10, 1918.**

This was to be the last major engagement for the troops before the armistice on November 11. Malcolm Ross’s account of the action did not appear in a New Zealand paper until November 20, 16 days after it occurred (M. Ross, 1918j; 1918k) and nine days after the armistice was signed to end the war. Follow up accounts of the taking of the town were published over the next few days. On December 20, 1918, the 2nd Brigade crossed the Rhine River into Cologne as part of the Allied Army of Occupation. Malcolm Ross was not there to see it or to hear Sir Douglas Haig address the war correspondents on one of the Rhine bridges and state that the relations between the Army and the press had never been better than during the war (“Press and Army”, 1918). Ross had been admitted to a French hospital on December 9 after falling ill on November 11. He had caught a chill while in Paris which developed into bronchitis, according to his personnel records. He was then sent back to the New Zealand General Hospital at Brockenhurst in the UK on December 14. As with Gallipoli, he missed the final stages of the military operations on account of sickness.

## 7:10 The war histories

To make matters worse it appeared he was also to suffer a misfortune of another sort – missing out on the authorship of the history of the New Zealand forces’ part in the war. While he was busy covering the retaking of Le Quesnoy readers back home had learned

via leaders in their local papers that the Government intended to publish three war histories – one for Gallipoli, one for Palestine and one for France (“History of the war”, 1918). According to the *Otago Daily Times* part of the first volume has already been written by an officer who served at Gallipoli and it met with the approval of James Allen. Apparently Fred Waite (1919) had already started on *The New Zealanders at Gallipoli*. The leader thought the rest of the volumes would probably be entrusted to the same hand. Cables had been sent to Generals Godley and Chaytor asking them to recommend writers for the other volumes, said the paper. An *Evening Post* leader said there was an excellent story to be told in the proposed history “provided that it was not interfered with by politics and officialdom” (“Historians wanted”, 1918). Alas, faint hope. Malcolm Ross certainly expected to be the author of any war history. In its wisdom the Government decided not to embark on an official history of the part played by New Zealand in the war, as the Australians did led by Charles Bean, but instead plumped for a popular history “that would be concise and interesting, not expensive, and available at once” (Waite, 1919, p. v). On January 2, 1919 a telegram from the Government to General Richardson said Ross would not be getting the job of writing the war history (“Government cable to Vanquisher”, 1919). Two days later Ross was enquiring whether the Government wished him to write the official history. As he pointed out it was originally contemplated that the official correspondent should do this, but no formal agreement had been made.<sup>104</sup> His intention at that date was to return to New Zealand as early as possible but it depended on the Government’s intentions regarding the history (M. Ross, 1919a). Ross had a staunch supporter in General Richardson. “There is no other officer here suitable except Malcolm Ross whose experience and facilities give him special advantages for the work,” Richardson replied to the earlier Government telegram on January 7. Ross must have started calling on his contacts to get the job because he wrote to the Prime Minister about it. In a letter to Allen, Massey said Ross desired to know whether the Government required him to write the official war history as his duties as a correspondent were practically finished. Ross said he had seen every battle and was strongly recommended. He had all the records on both Gallipoli and France. “My opinion is he is the only man who can make a success,” said Massey (Massey, 1919). The Government then obtained an opinion from John Salmond of the Crown Law Office about who held the copyright on Ross’s despatches.

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<sup>104</sup> Condition 11 said that material in his despatches was to be used ultimately for a history of the part taken by the New Zealand troops in the war (“War correspondent - conditions of the appointment issued”, 1915). It did not guarantee that Ross would be the author.

The decision was that copyright belonged to the Government (Salmond, 1919). It seemed clear that Allen was not in favour of Ross for the histories. He declared his opposition to Ross, to Massey, saying it was “doubtful” if Ross had sufficient technical knowledge for the purpose of writing the official history which would deal with mostly tactical and strategic questions (Allen, 1919a). The Defence Department then cabled General Richardson on February 17 that Ross was bound by his conditions of employment to place at the disposal of the Government all material collected by him in respect of the New Zealand forces which the Government could then use as it saw fit. This did not preclude Ross from writing or publishing anything independent of Government but said he must not infringe Government's copyright on his despatches. However Ross could use his despatches and material otherwise for his own purposes (“Defence Department cable to Vanquisher”, 1919). Allen then canvassed Godley's opinion as to the writer of the official history, the decision having already been made or in the process of being made as to the writers of the popular histories.

I am advised and believe advice sound that official history can only be written by a trained soldier with war experience. Massey asks me to ascertain if you think Malcolm Ross could satisfactorily write official history. I am anxious best person should be appointed and invite you to suggest name (Allen, 1919b).

In June a decision still had not been made regarding the authorship of an official history as was clear from a cable sent from Allen as acting Prime Minister to Massey who was in Paris for the peace conference. Allen said he had consulted Godley and Richardson about Ross. Godley said Ross was qualified but advice given to Allen was that Colonel H. Stewart who was writing one of the volumes of the popular history was best qualified to also write the official history. “This I believe to be sound and purpose to ask Colonel Stewart accordingly,” said Allen to Massey (Allen, 1919c). Perhaps the constant criticism that Ross had been a Government pet had finally told on Allen, and so he was distancing himself from further censure. Therefore on June 26 Allen contacted the High Commissioner in London to terminate Ross's employment as of one month from receipt of that notice (Allen, 1919d). On July 10 Ross was instructed to hand over all official documents and other records in his possession to Colonel Stewart, which Ross did. With his wife he then left London for New Zealand on the *Corinthic* arriving on September 23. Drew, who had been seconded to Wellington to establish a War Historical Records Department after the closure of the London Publicity

Department in late 1918,<sup>105</sup> had plenty to say to Charles Bean on the subject of the war histories, whether popular or official.

My great trouble here is the lack of public interest in the whole matter of historical compilation. General Richardson has been a valued backer. He has a vision but Sir James Allen is really crueLLing the whole thing by allowing incompetents, who can get his ear, to guide him and by his desire to keep the matter in his own hands. The result is that there is a scheme half completed for the publication of three battle volumes, Gallipoli, France and Palestine, and a fourth containing supplementary articles on our training camps, War Finance, naval polity etc a sort of washing-up volume. I have stipulated that my volume is NOT to be official and have an agreement on that point. I fancy that though they have a two years start on me I shall be out first now. As a matter of fact with the exception of the French volume the writers have had virtually no records to work from; no one bothered about such things till I came back; so you see the probable muddle our historical efforts are likely to land us in. I want to have one more try to straighten things up a bit. The General Staff, who are really deeply concerned equally with me about the matters, are impotent in view of the Minister's attitude and the deadly apathy of our small-visioned people. (Drew, 1919)

Drew told Bean that up to the present Allen had completely ignored journalists in all this historical work and “gone for the man of high military rank, irrespective of his literary qualifications”.

One major, in fact, who is doing a battle volume, for which he is earning a salary of £13 sterling a week, before the war was a compositor and a country correspondent for the Otago Daily Times at £3 a week! Something must be done to improve this state of things. (Drew, 1919)

In that same letter to Charles Bean after the war Drew told Bean that Ross was out of the running as an author for the official history.

He has not hit things with the public, press or officialdom; somehow, though I am one who says it is not altogether his fault. We are a small, and in some ways, a peculiar people. We have, very largely, developed one of the traits of the Nazarines. (Drew, 1919)

The meaning behind that comment about the Nazarines is rather hard to understand but could refer to the church of that name established in the US in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century among whose major tenets was an emphasis on humility and egalitarianism (MacMillan,

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<sup>105</sup> The Publicity Branch of the New Zealand War Records Section was closed on January 1, 1919 (New Zealand War Records Section, 1918).

2002; Bennett & Bennett, 2002). Perhaps Drew was implying that New Zealanders were themselves emphasising the virtue of humility to excess or moralising too much about it, as the Nazarines were said to do.

Ross was also writing to Bean as late as November 9, 1919 saying that Allen had not yet been able to make up his mind who should write the official history. "All I know is that he would not like me to do it, but he is confronted with the advice of all the generals and several others that I ought to do it" (M. Ross, 1919c). Five days later in another letter to Bean, Ross enclosed the prospectus for the New Zealand popular history.

They have not yet settled about an official historian! A file is now passing through the defence office (in which I have been recommended by all the generals) but I think I must now decline, even if Allen asked me to do it, as it is too late and I have settled down in the old journalistic groove again. (M. Ross, 1919d)

As noted by Ian McGibbon, (2003) Ross "fell victim to a military hierarchy in Wellington whose approach was heavily influenced by a narrow conception of official history". McGibbon laid a good deal of the blame for the limited vision of war history on Colonel A. W. Robin, the Commandant of the New Zealand forces.

In Robin's opinion, Ross had several major drawbacks as an official historian: he would need a high remuneration (bound to be a negative influence on a cost-conscious minister), his journalist style would not be appropriate for this form of publication, and he lacked technical knowledge of military routines and tactics. (McGibbon, 2003).

## **7:11 Conclusion**

Acting as a correspondent on the Western Front was a completely different situation from what it was to be a correspondent at the Dardanelles. Malcolm Ross and the other journalists at Gallipoli were tightly controlled by the military hierarchy and geographically the journalists were very isolated as a corps. On the Western Front, while Ross was assigned to cover only the New Zealand forces, he was also free to move about France and go to England to see his family. He and Bean had the same latitude to follow their own countries' troops and were not sequestered in distant chateaux as their British colleagues were. They may not have enjoyed the delights of chateaux cuisine and comfortable beds but they had had more opportunity to see first hand the military operations at the various battle sites. The problem with this approach

was that Ross then had a very narrow view of the war, focussed as he was, at the Government's behest, solely on the doings of the New Zealanders.

Initially Ross was convinced, as were many, that the war would be over relatively quickly. It slowly dawned on him that this was to be a long drawn out affair and he was destined to follow the New Zealand troops for two and a half years whether they were in major operations such as the battles of the Somme and Passchendaele or holding the line in Armentières or Ypres. While the major engagements provided plenty of opportunities for "copy" the more difficult task was to keep providing readable stories in the quieter times. And Ross was still bedevilled with problems over the transmission of his despatches. While the turnaround was much quicker than at Gallipoli where the time from writing to publication was often six to eight weeks or more, even with the ability to cable some news, delays were still common. Although this was through no fault of Ross's he continued to attract criticism back home. The Government refused to alter the transmission arrangements, so it was the English papers which carried Ross's despatches before the New Zealand ones. Getting about in France proved to be a difficult task at times as well, and Ross had to make constant requests for a car. In the end he bought one himself. To compound his ill luck, this was destroyed at the end of the war and it took him some considerable time to convince the Government he should be reimbursed for it.

Like the soldiers, the journalists interspersed times of high drama and tragedy with times of rest and often boredom. In those down times Ross visited his family and in 1916 co-operated with his son to write *Light and shade in war*. Ross rejoiced in the positive reception his and his son's war writings received in England. He was particularly proud of his son's achievements and most of Ross's documented letters to friends and family constantly mentioned Noel and his literary and social successes. This delight turned to sorrow when Noel died suddenly in December 1917. This must have hit Forrest and Malcolm extremely hard but the habitually reserved father revealed little of his personal distress in his letters.

Ross had some old acquaintances in London who must have provided much relief for him when on furlough. Scholefield, Drew, Donne all knew him well. Scholefield in particular was performing his task as London correspondent creditably, having taken on the editorship of a new soldiers' publication to much acclaim. This no doubt contributed

to his being awarded the OBE at the conclusion of the war, and would undoubtedly have given Malcolm Ross an even greater sense of grievance because of the criticism of his own work. Despite the efforts of the New Zealand journalists based in London, the New Zealand forces received little publicity about their efforts. Ross tried to keep his British counterparts informed about the operations the New Zealanders were involved in, by alerting such correspondents as Gibbs and Russell to their activities. He also petitioned the New Zealand Government to be more proactive in publicising the New Zealanders' actions and Massey apparently listened to him but too late to have any real effect. The Publicity Department was established in London a mere two months before the armistice.

A man with whom Ross had the longest acquaintance was the High Commissioner, Sir Thomas Mackenzie, his one-time colleague on the Otago Rugby Union and fellow adventurer. The two men must have worked closely together throughout the war but Ross never gave any indication of his dealings with him or how the two men viewed each other. Ross got the chance to meet up with another old acquaintance, the Prime Minister when he visited England and France during the course of the war. Again it is frustrating to have so little idea of just what these two men meant to each other, apart from the fact that Massey remained a supporter throughout the war. Ross appeared to have developed a close relationship with the GOC in London, General Richardson. The general was another staunch supporter of Ross and spoke on his behalf when it came to discussions over the writing of the war histories. Another supporter was General Godley, although Ross said he did not have as much to do with him as he did with General Russell, who he obviously admired. The Europe-based generals' support availed him nothing when it came to who would write the histories. It was James Allen and the generals back home who stymied his chances of writing any histories.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Malcolm Ross's writing from the Western Front

#### 8:1 Introduction

Malcolm Ross had set sail for Europe on March 30, 1916. The converted cruise liner was bound for Marseilles, and Ross and the troops for the Western Front. This battlefield was far removed from the dry, rugged hills and ravines of the Dardanelles. Would this change in locale see any change in Ross's work? After much criticism of his writing, Ross's despatches had been pared back to 500 words, later to be pared back even further, which he could now cable and he was also on strict instructions to report back only information of "direct interest" to New Zealand on matters concerning the country's troops. There were to be no digressions into fanciful asides for which he had previously attracted some derision. Despite the censure he received from some quarters for his coverage of the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Ross still had the staunch support of his employer – the New Zealand Government, and the military. To show his commitment he had asked for and received an honorary captaincy. He was firmly supportive of the military's demand that war correspondents not "give the show away" as were most of the journalists covering the war. Philip Gibbs (1923) said the five official British correspondents identified themselves "absolutely with the armies in the field".

We wiped out of our minds all thought of personal "scoops" and all temptation to write one word, which would make the task of officers and men more difficult or dangerous. There was no need of censorship of our despatches. We were our own censors. (Gibbs, 1923, pp. 366-367)

Ross had also bought into the military frame of mind – the Allies had not been defeated at Gallipoli, on the contrary "the enemy had been outwitted" at the landing on Gallipoli and at Suvla and at the evacuation (M. Ross & N. Ross, 1916, p. 264). While he may have been exemplary in meeting his masters' demands, his efforts on behalf of his audience were proving more jejune. This chapter will examine Ross's coverage of the New Zealand troop's actions at various major "stunts" that the New Zealand troops were engaged in over the next 32 months, in particular engagements at the Somme,

Passchendaele and Le Quesnoy, to see whether he had learned from his experiences at Gallipoli and answered his critics.

## **8:2 Malcolm Ross on the Western Front – 1916**

In the latter stages of his stay in Egypt Ross appeared much happier with the censorship of his articles, having complained earlier to anyone who would listen about how unfairly he had been treated, especially at the hands of the Commander in Chief Ian Hamilton's staff. He fully supported the military regulations barring war correspondents from revealing any vital information, despite complaints back in New Zealand about the lack of "meat" in his despatches. Ross, nevertheless, was very sensitive to criticism and had to be reassured by his friend Massey, that it was "pretty well dead now". Even George Russell, the Minister of Internal Affairs, tried to mollify Ross early in February, 1916. "I think the new scheme of forwarding the 500 word cables weekly or as often as possible, is acting satisfactorily and if this can be kept up it will have the effect of steadying criticism and fully justifying your appointment" (G. W. Russell, 1916). He was still able to post his longer despatches by mail steamer, however. Nevertheless the criticism obviously continued to rankle because in late April Ross was still commenting on it to James Allen. "The criticism about myself does not worry me much, but it has been beastly mean and unfair, not to say untrue" (M. Ross, 1916i). Unfortunately for Ross the criticism continued to flow from some quarters throughout his assignment in France. This chapter will consider Ross's written work while he was on the Western Front, necessarily focusing on major engagements in particular, to determine whether the criticism was justified.

## **8:3 General criticism of news from the front**

Malcolm Ross was not the only journalist to suffer criticism. For example, New Zealand parliamentarians had plenty to say about the number and quality of the war reports being published in New Zealand newspapers. Liberal Party MP Thomas Wilford asked the Prime Minister whether he would "on behalf of New Zealand, convey to those responsible an intimation that the nauseating 'piffle' that had been cabled out and appeared in the morning papers regarding the Anzacs was not the kind of stuff that New Zealand wanted" ("War news", 1916, p. 302). When it was suggested by another MP that he meant Malcolm Ross, Wilford replied that it had nothing to do with Malcolm Ross at all.

It was the typical kind of stuff that Mr Philip Gibbs wrote for the *Daily Chronicle* and a great deal of it was contained in his book *The soul of the war*, which had been published and was circulating throughout New Zealand. It was nauseating to New Zealanders and he could not help thinking that the kind of stuff that was served up to the people here with their breakfast was the kind of stuff that Mr Philip Gibbs must think we liked. In view of this he wanted a dignified protest from the Prime Minister of the country against such “piffle” being sent out to us as news. (“War news”, 1916, p. 302)

Massey replied that he would be “glad to look into the subject”.

He knew perfectly well that a very great deal of the so-called news in regard to our troops and the war which was sent out to this country from Britain was unworthy of appearing in print. To send it out was a waste of time and money. Five out of every six telegrams that came to him were not worth opening and a great saving might be effected. He will look into the matter and see if it was possible to take any action. (“War news”, 1916, p.302)

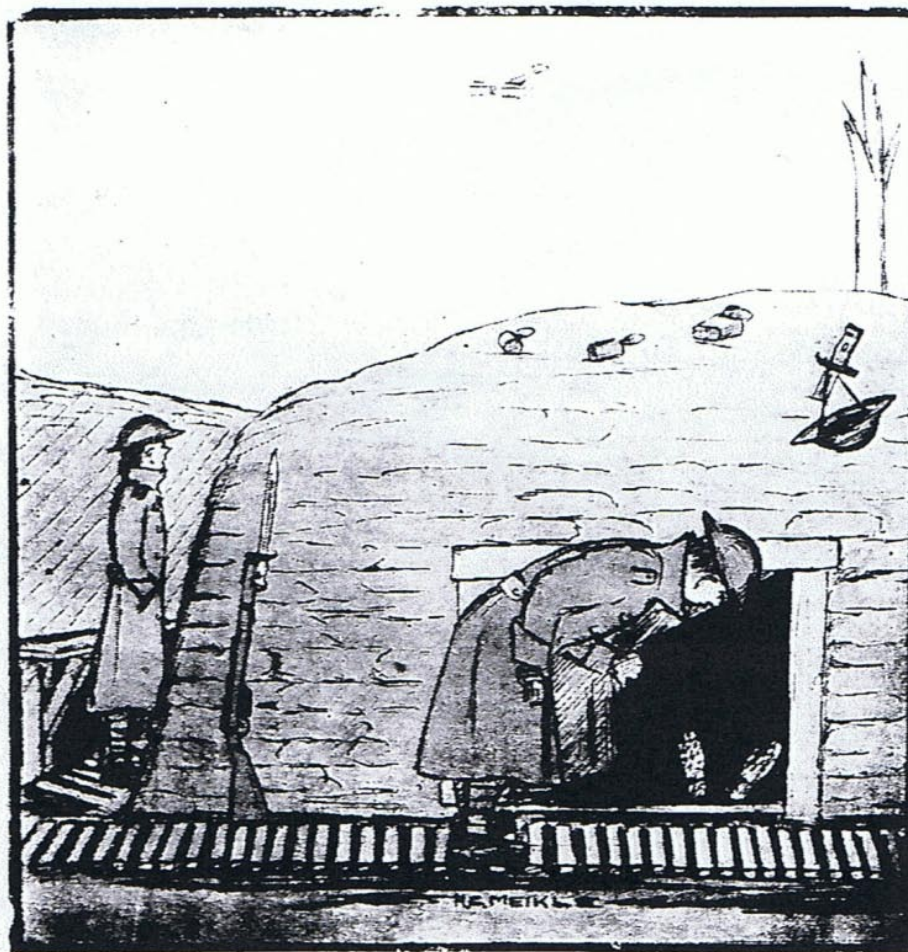
These exchanges were published in many of the New Zealand papers, for example, the *Grey River Argus* (“Nauseating piffle”, 1916).

This view of overseas despatches was corroborated by the manager of the Press Association’s Sydney, Jos Bradley. He wrote in a report to the association that “one of the most prolific sources of trouble and work and one that lays us open to criticism is the quantity of matter sent by the various war correspondents at the fronts”(Bradley, 1918). He said much of the material “extensively duplicated” the work of other correspondents and was of “varying merit”, and others were “often merely wordy reproductions of official reports”. “Some of the correspondents clearly show their want of military judgment and though their matter may supply good enough reading it is palpably worse than valueless.” So it was not just Ross who came in for criticism for his work.

Hindsight has seen even more extensive criticism of the work of the war’s correspondents. Obfuscation, exaggeration and fabrication are just some of the words that could be used to describe the writings of these men.

The introduction of journalists to the Western Front could have helped the Home Front in their search for the truth. What was created, however, was a group of correspondents who conformed to the great conspiracy, the deliberate lies and the suppression of the truth.(Farrar, 1998, p. 73)

Farrar discussed how infuriated soldiers often became with the stories that were published by the correspondents. The journalists were often lampooned in the trench newspapers and elsewhere as a result. He cited, as an example, an article written in the *BEF Times* which was disparaging of William Beach Thomas's exaggerations of the tank (p. 133). Fussell (1975) called him the *Daily Mail's* "notoriously fatuous war correspondent" (p.28). New Zealand's *The Observer*, as already demonstrated in previous chapters, often excoriated Ross and his efforts at the front. The paper ran a cartoon in June 1917 pillorying Ross for not getting near the firing line (Meikle, 1917).



### A NATURAL MISTAKE.

Rifleman Jones (on seeing the New Zealand war correspondent in the trenches—to his mate within the dugout: Come on. Bill: get yer gear—the war's over.

Figure 48 "A natural mistake" by M. C. Meikle and published in *The Observer* June 9, 1917, p.17.

After the war Beach Thomas (1925) wrote about his report on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in his book, *A traveller in news*. "I was thoroughly and deeply ashamed of what I had written, for the good reason that it was untrue. The vulgarity of enormous

headlines and the enormity of one's own name did not lessen the shame” (Simkin, 2008).

Siegfried Sassoon (1930), the soldier poet who won the Military Cross in June 1916, wrote in *Memoirs of an infantry officer* about the Somme battle.

A London editor driving along the road in a Staff car would have remarked that the spirit of the troops was amazing. And so it was. But somehow the newspaper men always kept the horrifying realities of the War out of their articles, for it was unpatriotic to be bitter, and the dead were assumed to be gloriously happy. (Sassoon, 1930, p. 86)

The official censor with the British journalists, C. E. Montague (1924), previously the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, was heartily disillusioned with the war and had much to say about the role of the war correspondent in it.

The average war correspondent - there were golden exceptions - insensibly acquired a cheerfulness in face of vicarious torment and danger. In his work it came out at times in a certain jauntiness of tone that roused the fighting troops to fury against the writer. Through his despatches there ran a brisk implication that the regimental officers and men enjoyed nothing better than "going over the top"; that a battle was just a rough, jovial picnic; that a fight never went on long enough for the men; that their only fear was lest the war should end this side of the Rhine. This, the men reflected in helpless anger, was what people at home were offered as faithful accounts of what their friends in the field were thinking and suffering. (Montague, 1924, pp. 101-102)

A correspondent whose despatches were used extensively by New Zealand newspapers, Philip Gibbs (1923), said in his book *Adventures in journalism* that

the cheerful way in which one or two of the correspondents wrote, as though a battle was a kind of glorified football match, exasperated the troops who knew their own losses, and the public who agonized over that great sum of death and mutilation. (Gibbs, 1923, p. 264)

Gibbs said he could not convict himself of over cheerfulness or the minimising of the tragic side of war:

**Figure 49 Philip Gibbs**

for, by temperament as well as by intellectual conviction, I wrote always with heavy stress on the suffering and tragedy of warfare, though I coerced my soul to maintain the spiritual courage of the nation and the fighting men - sometimes when my own spirit was dark with despair. (Gibbs, 1923, p. 264)

There was some criticism of Ross that he suffered something like the “over cheerfulness” that Gibbs spoke of, as we have seen from previous examples of his work, and which we shall see with some examples from the Western Front.

Unlike his British counterparts, whose expenses were shared by the Newspapers Proprietors Association (Gibbs, 1923, p. 263), Ross was employed by the New Zealand Government, so he was even more circumscribed as a journalist. His superiors were his military masters and the politicians and it was to them he had to answer first, and to the readers back home second. This burden together with an inability to write what he was allowed to write with any sort of flair or style is what led to so much censure. One such criticism was expressed in Parliament in May 1916 as the New Zealand troops were arriving in France. Mr J. Payne (Grey Lynn) asked the Prime Minister in Parliament whether...

considering that we are being exhorted to practise thrift, it is not time that Mr Malcolm Ross was recalled and his salary of £1000 a year saved to the taxpayers of this Dominion, seeing that all the information which Mr Ross has furnished so far has been that Mr Wilding<sup>106</sup> was killed on Gallipoli, when as a matter of fact Mr Wilding was killed on the western frontier several months before the time that Mr Ross cabled the valuable information that Mr Wilding had been killed at Gallipoli: and if, in any case, £1000 is not too much to ask the taxpayers to pay? (“Salary of Mr. Malcolm Ross”, 1916, p.710)

Massey replied that Ross’s salary was £450 per annum and that the Government considered he was doing good work and giving general satisfaction. But this criticism was being repeated in *The Australasian Journalist* as well and compared with the work of Charles Bean to Ross’s detriment (“Untitled”, 1916c). The Australian war correspondent came to his colleague’s defence and parts of this were published in at least two New Zealand publications (Bean, 1916e; 1916f) before being published in *The Australasian Journalist* in August (“Maoriland notes”, 1916).

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<sup>106</sup> Captain Frederick Anthony Wilding, one of the country’s most famous and successful tennis players, killed at Ypres in May 1915 (Foster, 1966).

I am sorry that Malcolm Ross's own papers have not always been fair to him. At a time when he was living well in the field of fire of the particularly nasty and attentive gun which we used to ascribe to Anafarta, I read comments in the Maoriland press of which the only possible intention was to raise doubts as to whether he was going under fire at all. Ross got to Anzac as straight as ever he could and spent his first night there sleeping on the beach, which I will undertake, was a hotter corner than any of his critics have ever dreamed of making up their beds in. During the Hill 60 fight Ross and the YMCA delegate who went out to see it, in trying to reach a good viewpoint, got into an old trench which had a Turk in the other end of it<sup>107</sup> - and you don't want to get much closer than that unless you are privileged to pick up a rifle and shoot with it: which war correspondents are not. (Bean, 1916e)

Bean came out as a firm supporter of Ross, especially over the time his fellow antipodean was ill during the evacuation of Gallipoli and for which Ross received a lot of criticism.

Ross hung on until the end of Gallipoli, although he was very ill - I think with a form of typhoid, really, although it was never satisfactorily diagnosed and the last day I was round at Maoriland Headquarters before the evacuation, there he was on a camp bed in a dug-out in that most Unhappy Valley, with no sort of overhead protection from shrapnel or dropping bullets except a tarpaulin. The M.L. Headquarters was constantly shelled with six or eight inch high-explosive howitzer stuff, and in the worst bombardments most of the staff used to retire very properly to the deep tunnels which had been cut out as offices and signal stations etc for use at such times. But Ross in his feverish condition found the safe places too cold or insupportable for one reason or another, and went off back to his dugout to lie there listening to the "crumps" coming slowly down from the sky on to the valley side. You can hear each of these things for about six seconds before it arrives, and to know that every one of them will come to earth somewhere within a hundred yards (but quite impartially as to the exact point) is not the best condition for a sick man. Ross managed to get up Rhododendron Spur (which was something like climbing Mt Cook) a day or two before the end, to see his own chaps. And when he collapsed on the cruiser from which we were both watching the evacuation, the message which he had struggled to write for his press, and which he handed to me, was a graphic one; and it was only unsent because the Censor when we remaining correspondents had a talk with him, laid down certain lines which clearly ruled the whole of it out. (Bean, 1916e)

Bean's defence of Ross seemed to have little effect because the complaints and criticisms continued unabated. This was seen in the number of papers which cancelled their subscription to Ross's despatches. Generally the smaller papers did not see the worth of continuing to take his work either because of the cost (Scott, 1916), their

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<sup>107</sup> Ross wrote about this incident in one of his Gallipoli despatches (M. Ross, 1915E ).

lateness (Dunn, 1916) or the lack of quality. The manager of the *Wairarapa Daily Times*, D. M. Graham, terminated his contributions to the weekly cables as “an expense which is not justified by the results achieved”. “The so called ‘news’ supplied is the veriest rubbish” (Graham, 1917). Originally of the 157 publications invited to take the cables only 22 agreed to. Most did not reply (Department of Internal Affairs, 1915). In fact the number of papers who had agreed to take Ross’s cables was only 29 by March 1917 according to an Internal Affairs memo (Department of Internal Affairs, 1917a). Two more papers had dropped from the list by August 1918 and it was costing the Government a loss of revenue of £223.0.71/2 (Department of Internal Affairs, 1918a).

#### **8:4 The battle of the Somme 1916**

Probably Ross’s first big test of his work on the Western Front occurred when the New Zealand Division went into action on the Somme on September 15, 1916. The troops had spent their first three months in the “nursery” at Armentières learning the ropes of European trench warfare – a far cry from the dry and dusty environs of the Dardanelles. They were pulled out in August and marched to Albert reaching the town on September 8 (Macdonald, 2006, p. 62). During this time Ross had sent back messages about the work of the New Zealand troops (M. Ross, 1916l; 1916n), about the patrols and raids carried out across no man’s land (M. Ross, 1916m; 1916r; 1916s; 1916t; 1916u) and the visit of some parliamentarians such as Sir James Carroll (M. Ross, 1916m). Almost all were several weeks old by the time they were published. It was not until the New Zealanders entered the battle of the Somme that Ross’s cables started to appear only a few days after the action. Bean and Ross, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had been present to watch the opening salvoes of the battle of the Somme when British troops were thrown against the Germans in July (M. Ross, 1916p). Now it was the turn of Ross to watch his own country’s troops enter the field in the renewed attack on September 15. This offensive used tanks for the first time and deployed 15 divisions of men, but by the end of the action had gained less than a kilometre of ground (Macdonald, 2006). On that day there appeared in the *New Zealand Herald* an article from Ross “*The New Zealand Front – the daily heroism*” dated July 18 (M. Ross, 1916t). This was largely a piece about raids made by the New Zealanders “gallantly” and “bravely” but seemed largely to be an official report with no obvious signs that Ross himself saw any of these raids.

The first the New Zealand reading public knew of any new offensive in which their soldiers were involved was five days later on September 20 when on page six of the *New Zealand Herald*, an editorial told of the New Zealanders going into action (“New Zealanders in action”, 1916) .

**Figure 50 New Zealand soldiers erecting a commemorative cross to those who died in the Somme Battle, 1916. Photograph by Malcolm Ross.**

This was followed on the next page with a communiqué from Douglas Haig, commander in chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), mentioning the part New Zealand had paid in the battle of Flers-Courcelette (“Untitled”, 1916e). Ross’s first cable appeared on September 22 and was published in at least the *New Zealand Herald* and *Evening Post* (M. Ross, 1916v; 1916w). As well, on that date in *The Press* was an item by Philip Gibbs, gleaned from the *Daily Chronicle*, which told how Gibbs had spent four days among the men who had broken the Flers line and praised the Londoners, the Canadians and the New Zealanders.

The New Zealanders, clean-cut, handsome fellows, following the great example of the Australians, were set to fight around Pozieres. The New Zealanders' gallant charge at dawn on Friday will long be remembered. They crossed no man's land went over the German trenches and out into the blue in pursuit of the retreating enemy.(Gibbs, 1916a, p. 7)

Ross sent two cables. The first was dated September 15 the day of the beginning of the offensive and covered the initial bombardment and the use of tanks for the first time. Both *The Press* and *Evening Post* used this cable, together with the second cable dated the following day.

...With this dawn the Boche saw for the first time approaching across his trenches our newest and most wondrous war invention, slowly creeping like some Saurian across deep trenches and shell craters as if they did not exist. They were monsters that spat fire and lead, yet turned the enemy's lead from their own hard skins. The sight of them must have been a nightmare to the first Boches that saw them. At the time of despatching this message from the battlefield all is going well. (M. Ross, 1916u, p. 7; 1916v, p.7)

In a neighbouring column in the *Evening Post* Gibbs also wrote about the tanks.

One ambled within 400yards of Combles, far in advance of the infantry, and sat for five hours fighting the enemy alone, shooting down German

bombing parties until it was severely damaged. Another 'tank' reached Morval, and finding that it had left the infantry behind, went back to enquire. It found that the German bombers had held up the infantry in the trenches. The 'tank' backed over a trench, crushing the bombers into the earth before falling into a deep crater and toppling over...Three 'tanks' marched into Flers and lolloped around the town in a free-and-easy manner, compelling the garrison hiding in the dugouts, to surrender in small, scared groups. (Gibbs, 1916b)

The difference in the description of the tanks is in the detail which Gibbs supplied and his more expressive language. However, neither account conveyed the fact that on the whole the tanks were not terribly successful, especially the four which were allotted to the New Zealand Division. Three of them got stuck and never saw any action ("Fighting on the Somme", 1916).

The *New Zealand Herald* chose to use only the second cable, which described the moving forward of the New Zealanders towards the village of Flers (M. Ross, 1916w). Again it is pretty dry stuff from Ross, giving little indication of what it was like for the men fighting in this battle and what the cost was to them – 1273 killed, wounded or missing in those first three days of the offensive.

Leaving their assembly trench in the early morning, the Otago and Auckland Infantry went over the parapet and took the first weakly-held German trenches in their stride. Then, pushing on behind a creeping barrage, they went gallantly through the German shrapnel, high explosives and machine-gun fire, and captured the switch trench... This trench having been taken, the New Zealand Rifle Brigade passed over it, and advanced close behind a further creeping barrage. The leading waves assailed and took a trench 1000yds beyond the switch trench. Here one of the armoured land cruisers did good work. In one place it charged through uncut German wire. All this time, the Rifle Brigade was moving steadily inward. The leading waves found two lines of trenches and a long communication trench. These trenches they also took. One armoured car charged slowly right into the village in front of the cheering infantry, a scene unparalleled in war...All night the Rifle Brigade bravely held on and even occupied a bit of ground beyond their own area on the right. At the moment of writing, our supports, which have come up, are taking part in a further advance. The chances of further success seem satisfactory. (M. Ross, 1916w)

This reads like the bald sort of military account one would expect from those having to write a report of the action for their daily diaries but with probably even less detail in it. It is certainly not the sort of information people back home were keen to hear about. In a

letter from Ross to his Wellington friends thanking them for a cutting from the *New Zealand Times*, he said:

The poor *New Zealand Times* fell in rather badly about my not sending any message about the Somme. It was rather amusing to read their complaint and the message in the same issue. Of course the Censor was not to blame either. We all know that no message could be sent about the New Zealanders until the enemy knew we were fighting against them. We spend thousands of pounds to find out who is opposite us, and many lives as well. The enemy does the same. If I did what *The Times* wanted it might have cost the New Zealanders many more lives, and the fathers and mothers would not thank the *Times* for advocating such a silly procedure. (M. Ross, 1916O)

On September 23, the *Evening Post* ran a short cable from Ross dated September 18 describing the actions of the New Zealand artillery in the battle.

This for them was the supreme moment. For the first time in the war they experienced the glorious sensation of fulfilling the true functions of field artillery. Their shooting had been splendid. The switch trench, which the infantry had captured so brilliantly, was in many places obliterated. (M. Ross, 1916y, p. 5)

On September 25, the three papers ran several more of Ross's cables with the *Evening Post* running a column-long account on the New Zealanders by Gibbs which covered the first week of the fighting (Gibbs, 1916b). The *New Zealand Herald* ran this same lengthy despatch on September 26 (Gibbs, 1916c).

In the fighting since the 1st July there has been nothing fiercer or bloodier than the hand-to-hand struggles on the left of Flers, where the New Zealanders increased their fame gained on Gallipoli as soldiers who had to give up what they gained, and who could hold on to their ground with grim obstinacy against the heaviest odds. This is the judgment of a British officer, who watched them fighting during the last few days and who speaks with a thrill of admiration as he recalls the stoicism with which they endured the heaviest shellfire, the spirit with which they attacked in spite of intense fatigue and their rally, though discouraged by the loss of their officers, which swept back the Germans in a panic-stricken flight. (Gibbs, 1916c, p. 7)

*The Press* and the *New Zealand Herald* used the September 18 despatch from Ross, already published by the *Evening Post* on September 23. Highlighted by a large headline, the *New Zealand Herald* story trumpeted Ross's statement that New Zealand losses, though severe, were not as heavy as expected (M. Ross, 1916A). These losses started

appearing in the Rolls of Honour in the various newspapers that day and continued appearing in increasing numbers well into October.<sup>108</sup> According to Andrew Macdonald (2006) by September 17 the NZ Division had suffered 3000 casualties since arriving at the Somme, and this included 992 men killed since August 31. Ross, in looking back on the Somme battle from November 10, but only published in the *Grey River Argus* in January 1917, had this to say about the casualties:

New Zealanders will now know that the casualties in this fighting were considerable. They might, however, very well have been heavier than they were. As a matter of fact, our men had been sparingly used. The great test of a successful operation is the number of troops left at the end of the day. We had no fewer than five fresh battalions ready to go on. (M. Ross, 1917b, p. 5)

Families of those killed, missing or wounded would not have read that with any sort of equanimity.

From a September 26 cable from Ross, the *New Zealand Herald* published another short piece on September 28 about an advance made by the Rifle Brigade.

The New Zealand Rifle Brigade, making a splendid effort in the offensive, succeeded in penetrating 3200yds into enemy territory. The Wellingtons, coming up, held during the night the whole of the line in front of Flers, thus greatly helping the division on their right. A New Zealand Rifle Brigade captain, who was afterwards killed, greatly distinguished himself. The Canterbury's have continued fighting with dash and great gallantry. (M. Ross, 1916F, p. 7)

On Friday September 29, the three papers all published a September 25 despatch from Ross about the renewal of the offensive on September 15, the so-called battle of Morval, after a period of consolidation.

The veteran brigade of the New Zealand Force had its chance in today's renewal of the offensive, which commenced on the 15<sup>th</sup> inst. The men advanced as if they were on parade, on a front of 1800yds, taking a line of trenches and penetrating to a depth of 800yds. Owing largely to the excellent work of the artillery, the resistance was not great, but the brigade killed and took prisoner a considerable number of the enemy, and

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<sup>108</sup> My uncle Reg Ranby was wounded in the right leg on September 30 just before the attack on Eaucourt l'Abbaye and admitted to hospital. Notification did not appear in the New Zealand newspapers until November 15.

captured the important strong point north of Flers known as “factory corner”. The casualties were slight. Tonight the brigade is digging in on the new line. Up to the present the New Zealand troops have reached their objectives on every occasion, doing all they were asked to and something more. (M. Ross, 1916G, p. 7; 1916H, p. 7; 1916I, p. 7).

A week after the opening offensive of the battle of Transloy Ridge the *New Zealand Herald* published the New Zealanders’ engagements as described by Ross (M. Ross, 1916J). There is no need to study this in full as it was a typical Ross despatch where the such and such regiment attacked the Germans. They held their positions. There was a “leaping” barrage. The New Zealanders gained their objectives, and so forth. This is reminiscent of Ross’s style noted by *The Observer* back at the time Ross was appointed official correspondent.

It was not until October 4 that Ross allowed himself any emotion when describing what he had seen over the last 23 days when the New Zealand troops were finally withdrawn from the Somme. This was published in the *Grey River Argus* on October 14.

On the authority of competent judges outside our own force, it may be stated that no troops have done better in the Somme fighting than the New Zealanders. Their valour, dash, initiative and endurance have been unexcelled. Under depressing weather conditions, in critical situations, they more than fulfilled expectations. Much was asked of them – they did more. As one watched them, tired and sleepy in their worn and mud-caked clothing, coming out of the trenches into sodden bivouacs one could not but wonder at their undaunted spirit. The acknowledgement by the high command of their undoubted achievements has given the greatest satisfaction to all ranks. A volume might be written about great deeds bravely done. There are scores of such that must for ever remain unrecorded – deeds unexcelled in any previous fighting. There are instances of men cheerfully giving their lives to save others – of sergeants and even privates, taking command and leading their men with initiative and devotion to duty when very officer in their company or platoon was killed or wounded. Some, though wounded and wounded again, continued to lead their men under furious shell, machine gun and rifle fire. One officer with his hand almost shot away stayed with his men till killed in a charge. His body was found in a shell crater. ...The slopes leading down from the crest of the ridge between Delville and High Wood into and beyond Flers are strewn with the graves of heroes. These hillsides will for ever be sacred to the memory of the great and successful advance. It is a bit of France to which present and future generations may make a pilgrimage to pay homage at the shrine of New Zealand’s honoured dead. (Ross, 1916L, p. 3)

There were many graves to be wept over. Between August 31 and October 4 the New Zealanders had suffered around 8000 casualties or 53% of those who went into action. Nearly 2000 men had been killed (Macdonald, 2006). In the final sentences of this extract Ross does manage to evoke a sense of history, as did on occasion at Gallipoli, in predicting that these events would be long remembered. Fussell has pinpointed the problems faced by writers when trying to describe the utter incredibility of industrialised mass trench warfare. “Logically there is no reason why the English language could not perfectly render the actuality of trench warfare,” he said, but writers fell back on trying to describe the indescribable by using traditional literary motifs and language, which were entirely inappropriate and unsuitable.

Inhibited by scruples of decency and believing in the historical continuity of styles, writers about the war had to appeal to the sympathy of readers by invoking the familiar and suggesting its resemblance to what many of them suspected was an unprecedented and (in their terms) an all-but-incommunicable reality. (Fussell, 1975, p. 174)

Romanticised high diction prevailed with its clichés and romantic images and motifs derived from the literature that all knew so well. “It proceeded in an atmosphere of euphemism as rigorous and impenetrable as language and literature skilfully used could make it”.

This system of “high” diction was not the least of the ultimate casualties of the war. But its staying power was astonishing. As late as 1918 it was still possible for some men who had actually fought to sustain the old rhetoric. (Fussell, 1975, p. 22)

Ross was one of those who continued to write in this style. He failed to give much of a picture of the conditions under which the New Zealanders fought and rarely allowed emotion or compassion to tinge his writing. He could not have failed to be moved by the scenes he was watching. A charitable view might be that his matter-of-fact reporting was the only way he could deal with what he was seeing. Fussell has described this as “utter *sang froid* or British Phlegm” where one appears “entirely unflappable” and where one acted or spoke about the war “as if it were entirely normal and matter-of-fact”. Ross’s comment to his friends back home about the Somme battle that he had “pulled through all right” and that it had been “interesting and very exciting at times” is an exemplar of what Fussell meant. This is so toned down that it equates to the “unique style of almost unvarying formulaic understatement” (Fussell, 1975, p.181). It was not until Ross reviewed the battle when the New Zealanders were withdrawn after 23 consecutive days in the trenches that he allowed himself to use more descriptive

language in his accounts. Perhaps this was because he was using his own words and not military communiqués. However, this 2500-word despatch was not published until mid December, for example, in the *Grey River Argus* (M. Ross, 1916N). A further 2000-word summary of the Flers action appeared in the *Grey River Argus* on January 16, 1917 (M. Ross, 1917b).

Gibbs (1923) wrote compellingly of his four and a half years as a correspondent during the war.

Our life as war correspondents was not to be compared for a moment in hardness and danger and discomfort to that of the fighting men in the trenches. Yet it was not easy nor soft, and it put a tremendous, and sometimes almost intolerable, strain upon our nerves and strength, especially if we were sensitive, as most of us were, to the constant sight of wounded and dying men, to the never-ending slaughter of our country's youth, to the grim horror of preparations for battle which we knew would cause another river of blood to flow, and to the desolation of that world of ruin through which we passed day by day, on the battlefields and in the rubbish heaps which had once been towns and villages. (Gibbs, 1923, p. 260)

**Figure 51 Major E N Mulligan, 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company (standing) and Malcolm Ross, outside the camouflaged entrance of a tunnel, August 1917.**

As he noted: “The effect of such a vision, year in, year out, can hardly be calculated in psychological effect, unless a man has a mind like a sieve and a soul like a sink” (p.261). Despite his misgivings he, like the other war correspondents, abided by the rhetoric established early in the war however inappropriate where the harsh realities of the war were glossed over and truth obfuscated.

## **8:5 Criticism continues unabated in 1917**

*The Observer* started off the New Year with a renewed satirising of the hapless Ross.

Captain (ahem!) Malcolm Ross et fils (the first £1000 a year official New Zealand war correspondent and the last Noel) are really rather quaint folk. The captain began his terrific career as a correspondent by interviewing Ross fils at great length, and has since described plum puddings and how he longed to be in the trenches. He has not neglected to assure the anxious people of the unstable isles of the rank of the persons with whom he has trodden the field of battle, and this immediately reminds one of Malcolm in Wellington. On afternoon occasions when the M.P. fishmonger and bookmaker gilded the glad scene in “frockers” and silk ties, and the

ordinary pressman rolled along in a deer-stalker cap to do his job, the irresistible Malcolm enriched the atmosphere with immaculate bell topper, new “frocker”, white cummerbund, spats, and a glorious cane. Neither did he vouchsafe his exalted patronage to the newspaper canaille in daily togs. (“Untitled”, 1917b, p. 5)

The paper pounced again some weeks later, after a Ross description of a raid against enemy trenches.

From careful perusal of the infantile wash dished up for grown people in Monday’s paper it seems at least probable that the Auckland battalion raids German trenches without arms. Note that the German prisoner “went willingly.” Disarmed men between the fires of two opposing forces, whatever breed they may be, go willingly. Barrage fire spluttering shells in a solid line along a whole front is a good starting pistol for any race. “Others were frightened to go through their own, barrage” although the New Zealanders “went through it unconcernedly some with their hands in their pockets,” that, of course, being the most comfortable way for a quiet stroll in a mere storm of brass, steel, lead and high explosives. They wandered pleasantly through this funny little shower with their hands in their pockets because our troops don’t have to carry rifles in their hands. Rifles aren’t much good anyhow. Any soldier would swap his firestick for a bit of chewing gum or a box of matches. The vivid descriptive touch! One of the wounded was a Pole who strongly objected to being called a German. In short, all prisoners of war immediately write to the colonel of the capturing regiment strongly objecting to things, and prisoners’ objections are listened to with great politeness. The tired but merry troops “cheered headquarters” when they returned with their hands in their pockets. If they were for reasons of devilish coolness carrying their rifles between their teeth, presumably they took them out to cheer. They evidently spotted the correspondent. “The wounded were remarkably cheerful.” They always are. Reaction and getting out of it makes most men laugh. It is a feature in every army. It is a curious thing that “brigade headquarters” didn’t “wheel” the men who returned with their hands in their pockets as brigade head-quarters would possibly expect troops to proceed both ways carrying rifles. Guff, Malcolm, guff! (“Untitled”, 1917e, p. 16)

This public denigration was starting to affect the Government, in particular James Allen. In a memo to Massey a few days later, Allen noted that there had been a good deal of talk about Ross’s letters. “The general opinion is that they are unsatisfactory,” said Allen. A deputation from the Press Association visited Allen on February 26 and expressed a similar opinion and asked that the despatches be discontinued. Cabinet took no action on the matter (Allen, 1917a). The Government must have been giving it some serious thought because a report on the number of papers taking the Ross cables showed that for the year ended March 31, 1917 the 43 cables of a total of 9219 words had cost

£288.1.101/2 with the Government having to carry the shortfall in revenue from papers of £100.4.41/2 (Department of Internal Affairs, 1917b). The gap between revenue and cost increased throughout the war until by the end of 1918 the shortfall for 85 cables of 36,824 words was £869.7.6 (Department of Internal Affairs, 1918a). It was not long before *The Observer* launched another broadside against Ross.

When New Zealand papers announcing the appointment of an official war correspondent reached Gallipoli a dug out of rather grimy, rather lousy, rather weary men rejoiced. They thought it was up to "Pig Island" to see that their travail and glory was recorded. Also, they felt secretly elated and "up sides" with the Australians. But alas for their hopes of historical fame and alas for New Zealand's glory. Brigadier Malcolm Ross, or whatever rank he holds, writes as if he were reporting a Sunday school picnic for a tri-weekly one sheet. Recently he wrote voluminously of football matches, chronicling for our information that he had not been able to go to Paris for a certain match. He talks of anti-aircraft guns first peppering and then sprinkling the heavens, and describes a sausage observation balloon as sometimes like a pig and sometimes like an elephant and sometimes like nothing on earth. Poor Malcolm! It would be very humorous but for the sheer hard red fact that New Zealanders are facing bloody war every day, every hour, every minute, and sometimes the minutes seem like eternity. Has he no imagination? Does he not see that this land wants not guff and flam, which anyone could write but stuff that will bring home to us all what our sons and brothers are doing. Some time ago the Aucklanders made a brilliant raid. Our correspondent, judging by his story, seemed to regard it as a little picnic arranged to vary the monotony of trench life. For the love of Mike, use your chances Malcolm! ("Untitled", 1917f, p. 16)

On that same day the paper ran the cartoon described earlier in the chapter.

Some MPs became really irate when they discovered Ross had acted as censor on at least one occasion. J. Payne, MP for Grey Lynn, lambasted the Government over Ross's supposed actions.

I have on many occasions in this House mentioned the name of Captain Malcolm Ross. I do not know why he is Captain. He seems to be a good friend of certain people in power. I understand this gentleman, this political partisan, has the censorship over the letters of our boys - the letters actually coming to the country are marked "Censored by Captain Malcolm Ross".

It is a disgrace that we should have a man appointed because he was a friend of one of our people in power, at the cost of £1000 a year to the country, and that that man should be censoring the letters of our soldier boys at the front. ("Address in reply", 1917, pp. 308-309)

The politicians didn't seem able to leave the topic alone. The subject of Ross censoring soldiers' letters came up again when Vigor Brown asked the Prime Minister if he knew about it. Massey said he did not believe "for a moment" that Ross had been appointed censor. ("Captain Malcolm Ross: Military censorship", 1917, p. 462; p. 736; p. 812)

It sometimes appeared as if Massey was Ross's only backer in the House.

"Did you see Malcolm Ross?" enquired a member in the House, when Mr. Massey was describing the visit of Sir Joseph Ward and himself to France. The question provoked a roar of laughter. Mr. Massey said he had, and he had been told by three generals that Mr. Malcolm Ross was one of the best war correspondents at the front. This statement produced renewed laughter, whilst one member exclaimed: "We are not getting much for our money anyway." Mr. Massey pointed out that very often, particularly in the winter time, there was no operation requiring news. ("Parliament – Mr Malcolm Ross", 1917, p. 3)

This censorship question was carried in some papers, among them the *Grey River Argus* ("House of representatives – our war correspondent", 1917). Eventually Allen said the question of Ross censoring letters of New Zealand soldiers posted at the front had been answered by General Godley. Malcolm Ross had acted as censor upon one occasion when no one else was available. He had never acted as censor otherwise. Liberal MP for Riccarton, George Witty said he thought Ross was "a useless expense as far as the country is concerned, considering what we get from him by way of news" ("Address in reply", 1917). He also noted that Harry Gullett, a well-known Sydney journalist, who was a private in the artillery, was going to France to assist Captain Bean as official correspondent for Australia for three months. Afterwards he was going to Egypt as official correspondent for the Light Horse and did he not think that an assistant should be sent Home to assist Malcolm Ross? Massey did not agree ("Assistant war correspondent", 1917).<sup>109</sup>

## **8:6 The Battle of Third Ypres - Passchendaele**

After the battle of the Somme the New Zealand troops were withdrawn to the Armentières region once more and this is where they spent the winter. In June and July

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<sup>109</sup> In early 1918 General Godley suggested sending a war correspondent to cover the New Zealand troops' actions in Palestine and Egypt and asked for recommendations for the position. Nobody was ever appointed.

1917 they were engaged in the Flanders battle of Messines and La Basseville, relieved, then prepared to take part in Third Ypres, or what is often more generally known as the Battle of Passchendaele (Harper, 2000, pp. 321-367; Lucas, 1924, pp. 321-367). The New Zealand Division arrived at its battle position facing two spurs of the main Passchendaele Ridge – Gravenstafel and Bellevue. The former was the first objective for the New Zealanders. The offensive opened on October 4. The first New Zealand knew about a renewed offensive was on October 5 in the afternoon papers and on October 6 in the morning papers when it was announced that on Thursday morning an attack had been launched in Flanders in the Zonnebeke region east of Ypres. Haig said troops were making “satisfactory progress” in one of the “greatest battle of the war” and were “quickly overcoming all difficulties” with a “smashing blow” being dealt to the Germans (“British advance”, 1917). It was not until the 6<sup>th</sup> that it became clear that New Zealand troops had taken part in the action and that they had been successful. *The Auckland Star* in the next few days ran glowing commentaries from nearly every war correspondent except Malcolm Ross. The paper used the British journalists Gibbs, Beach Thomas, Philips and Robinson and the Australian correspondents Gordon Gilmour<sup>110</sup> and Keith Murdoch. *The Evening Post* and the *New Zealand Herald* also made use of these journalists’ despatches at this time. A notable omission was Charles Bean. Few New Zealand papers were now using Bean’s work. It was not until October 31 that the *Auckland Star* ran a Bean despatch but it was dated August 5 (Bean, 1917). The New Zealand troops had been relieved on October 6 but the fulsome headlines continued for another week. The New Zealanders had been involved in a “smashing victory”, “a success to be proud of” on a “great and glorious day”. Glyn Harper (2000) said the New Zealand attack had been highly successful but not without cost – 1853 casualties, among them 530 killed or missing (p. 42).

What of Ross’s accounts? On October 8 portions of Ross’s three-day account ran in the *Evening Post* (M. Ross, 1917c) and in the *New Zealand Herald* the following day (M. Ross, 1917d). Unsurprisingly Ross took his usual upbeat view of the action. “This morning I saw the men who attacked on the left. All were tired and sleepy after their strenuous exertions, but cheerful and elated at their success”. The observant reader will recall he used just the same terms about the soldiers at Gravenstafel – “tired and sleepy”

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<sup>110</sup> Gordon Gilmour (sometimes called Duncan Gilmour by the papers) had left Dunedin for Australia about 1910 and was to be one of few journalists to have covered both world wars. He was writing for the Australian Press Association during World War 1 (McDonald, 1998, p. 39; p. 47).

– as he did of them after the Somme battle. It was a “thrilling spectacle”, “officers and other ranks fought as usual with the greatest gallantry” or with “dash and gallantry”. He

**Figure 52 Gun crew in mud at Passchendaele, 1917.**

also mentioned the participation of two Members of the New Zealand Parliament. This last observation set off *The Observer* once more.

In Captain Malcolm Ross's latest stuff about New Zealanders there is nothing that is entirely typical of Malcolm but this: ‘Two members of the New Zealand Parliament, who are serving on this front as junior officers, took part in the battle, going forward with their men.’ You learn from this that Malcolm discriminates between the politicians and all other officers, that he names them as there are only two politicians on that particular front; and you are called to admire these officers, especially first for being politicians and next for having the hardihood to go where these men went. Ordinarily, a war correspondent is forbidden to name officers, but these two officers are exactly and clearly indicated. It is up to them to see that Malcolm gets some recognition from the Government for giving them an advertisement no other man got in his second hand stuff. (“Untitled”, 1917h, p. 5)

The New Zealand troops had a week’s respite before they were marched back to the front line for the next push against the Germans, which for them was to take place on October 12. This was to be a much more difficult battle and one that Harper (2000) has called the country’s “worst ever military disaster”(p. 49). It had been raining steadily and the front lines were a quagmire over which the troops had to struggle to attain their objective of Bellevue Spur and then the village of Passchendaele itself. The signs were ominous before the attack even began. While New Zealanders were reading about the success of Gravenstafel, their men were about to die in their hundreds at Bellevue. “Lull on all fronts” pronounced the *New Zealand Herald* on October 10 together with a lengthy despatch from Philip Gibbs extolling the “brilliant work” of the New Zealanders in the previous advance on Abraham Heights. On Monday October 15, on pages 5 and 6, the *New Zealand Herald* notified the public that another attack had been launched on the previous Friday – the fifth attack in Flanders since the offensive resumed on September 20. General Haig was quoted as saying that the fighting had been especially severe on the slopes of the main ridge itself. Percival Philips said there had been a “great amount of bayonet work”. Keith Murdoch wrote that the rain had reduced the land to a “perfect quagmire” “but the British and Anzacs navigated the mud seas and mud mountains like miracle men”. Perry Robinson, writing for Reuters, said

the army was “in the best of spirits and enormously contented with the results of the fighting”. It wasn’t until the next few days that New Zealand learned that the picture was not quite as rosy as some of the correspondents made it appear. Now the Anzac troops were “labouring” through difficulties (Gibbs) and fighting “under appalling difficulties” (Murdoch). Malcolm Ross’s cable dated October 12 was published on October 16 in the *New Zealand Herald*. It read:

The New Zealand Division with other units took part in the renewed attack on Passchendaele Ridge at dawn. After a day of sunshine, the weather again changed in the night, and the attack started under difficulties in rain and deep, sticky mud. Under the circumstances progress was necessarily slow especially as the position attacked was strongly defended with machine gunners in the "pill boxes" behind uncut wire. The stretcher bearers never worked more heroically than they did today, their difficulties being increased owing to the mud and the long distance over which the wounded had to be carried. (M. Ross, 1917f, p. 5)

This does little to inform readers of the severity of the conditions and the heavy resistance the troops met when trying to reach the objective set for October 12. Ross elaborated in another message the next day which was published by the *New Zealand Herald*, *Evening Post*, and *Auckland Star*.

The weather has been simply appalling. The battlefield has been such a sea of mud and of water-logged shell holes that the continued success of our last attack was an utter impossibility. In addition, our men found themselves confronted with machine guns in strong concrete positions, fronted with barbed wire uncut by the artillery. Under the circumstances we had to be content with a very small advance. (M. Ross, 1917d, p.7; 1917e, p.7; 1917f, p.7)

Later reports of all the correspondents praised the work of the medical services in particular the stretcher bearers in getting wounded men off the battlefield. Harper (2000) called October 12 an “unmitigated disaster” which was never accurately reported in New Zealand newspapers. “The attack was portrayed as a limited success rather than the absolute disaster it really was”(p. 90). The toll was frightful. More than 2700 New Zealanders were casualties, of whom nearly 850 men were either dead or missing. “In terms of lives lost in a single day, this remains the blackest day in New Zealand’s post-1840 existence” (“The Passchendaele offensive”, 2008). The New Zealanders were eventually relieved by the Canadians on October 18. It was not until October 20 that the columns and columns of casualty lists started appearing in the New Zealand newspapers. On that day all three papers ran more stories on the battle for Bellevue Spur. Among

them was another report from Ross under the headline *Superb heroism under trying conditions*.

All accounts prove the superb heroism of the New Zealand troops in the most recent phase of the Flanders battle under the most trying conditions. The attack was launched at formidable positions, and wave after wave of infantry went forward in an attempt to storm dominating concrete machine-gun positions, the only shelter from which was in waterlogged shell holes. Owing to unpropitious weather great difficulty had been experienced in getting the guns up to the forward position and when they commenced shooting some guns, especially the heavier piece, shifted upon their foundations, so that the usual effectiveness of the barrage was interfered with. (M. Ross, 1917k, p. 5)

As Harper (2000) said in *Massacre at Passchendaele* the newspaper reports did not mention the death toll of those trying to reach their objective, the weather was seen as the main cause of the problems, and it was seen as a limited success rather than a complete failure. "The New Zealand attack of 12 October 1917 was an intensely emotional and bitter experience for those who survived" (pp. 90-91). None of that was obvious in Ross's reports.

Back in New Zealand editorials praised the sacrifice of the country's soldiers ("New Zealand and the war", 1917; "British aims in Flanders", 1917) but in Parliament the criticism of Ross's efforts continued with the debate carrying over into the newspapers ("Our war writer - criticised in House", 1917; "War correspondent - expenditure and work criticised", 1917). The lengthy debate in Parliament canvassed many of the issues raised since 1914 over Ross and the position of official war correspondent, and much of it is reproduced here in this debate which ran to many pages of coverage by Hansard ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917). These included his appointment by the Reform Government, the amount he was paid, the delay in receiving his despatches, his effectiveness as a correspondent and the quality of his work. "Some lively discussion occurred this afternoon when the Committee of Supply reached the item of £1000 for salary, allowance, and expense of the official war correspondent," began the article in *The Auckland Star* on November 1.

Mr Fletcher opened the attack by expressing the opinion that the position was a farce, and that it was about time the House put its food down on the sort of thing going on. The member declare that he felt so strongly on the subject that he would move to reduce the amount by £600 as indicated and

that the officer should be recalled. ("Our war writer - criticised in House", 1917, p.7)

Malcolm Ross, he said, was having a good time, wandering about at the expense of the country. The Prime Minister came to Ross's rescue again, saying that when he was in England, James Allen, then acting Prime Minister, had cabled asking whether the Generals thought the position of war correspondent should be done away with. General Richardson, said Massey, had been strongly in favour of retaining Ross and he read an extract of a letter from the general.

I am told that there is some chance of the official war correspondent with the Expeditionary Force being withdrawn. I hope this is not true. I think that Malcolm Ross has done very good work in collecting useful information about the troops with the division. I have seen practically all he has written, both of our doings on the Somme, and also of the general life in the different branches of the service over here. They are very correct and give a vivid account of our life in the trenches. Were he to be withdrawn or even replaced by someone else, the New Zealand public would, I am sure, be the loser thereby. A new man would take a long time to get to know what to look for and where to find it. Ross now known personally by all the commanding officers and a great many of the others, and thoroughly understands how to find his way about. I believe his relations with Corps HQ are equally satisfactory. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, pp. 704-705)

However, General Richardson was based in London so did not have first hand knowledge of Ross's actions and was probably relying on hearsay from staff in France.

Massey also read to Parliament a letter from General Godley in which he said:

I think in the interests of the Dominion it is desirable that you should have a war correspondent. Australia, I know has one, and I am quite sure would not give him up. Canada I believe has one, but of that I am not certain.<sup>111</sup> As regards the individual, Captain Ross is very satisfactory from our point of view. He is hardworking, courageous, tactful and dependable. He gets on well with the censor and other staffs at GHQ and Corps HQ, which is a great desideratum and as far as I can judge, his reports are good and give a fair indication of what our troops and men are doing. At this stage of the war I think it would be undesirable to make a change, supposing this was contemplated. Ross knows the ropes, knows how to get the information and how to deal with everybody concerned with his work and should there be any idea of replacing him by another correspondent, the latter would

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<sup>111</sup> There seems to be still some uncertainty about whether there was ever an official correspondent for Canada similar to Australia and New Zealand.

have everything to learn and I think our interests would suffer in the process. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 705)

Massey mentioned as well that Sir Charles Lucas had told him that he had undertaken to write an official history of the war and that he intended to utilise Ross's work in that connection: he regarded his experience and reports as invaluable. However, J. Payne, MP for Grey Lynn, said it was easily understood that the Generals were bound to back up the man who had been appointed by the Government which had appointed them and to which they were indebted for promotion. The Prime Minister said many of the English newspapers were using Ross's despatches, which were invaluable in giving publicity to New Zealand. George Witty had a reply to that.

If there was anybody advertising New Zealand it was our soldiers and certainly not the war correspondent. If he had his way he would strike out the £600 and leave it at £1. To his mind, Mr Ross should not have been sent at all. They did not want news from the General, but from the war correspondent. The Prime Minister was very lucky if he had seen the correspondent's reports once a month, but generally they were two months late. The correspondent had written a book, but the book contained a big catalogue of the ailments of the Ross family. If that was going down in history and was going to be used by the people who were writing the world's history of the war, they were very badly off for something to publish. The sum of £1600 was too much to pay for the news that was coming from our special correspondent. No matter what Government appointed him, the people of the Dominion ought to get the news they were entitled to - as a matter of fact, they had to depend on the Australian and English correspondents for news. The news that came from our correspondent was stale and people had no interest in reading the details of events of two or three months ago. People looked for news daily. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 706)

The Prime Minister was then forced to defend the Government's policy regarding the transmission of the news from the front to New Zealand. As he explained it was very expensive to cable news out from France. Witty would not have a bar of that excuse.

...the people of the Dominion ought to get more news for the money they paid. He was told that Ross lived in a dug out some distance from the front while other correspondents were just behind the firing line and saw all that went on. Then after the event Mr Ross signalled to them and over a glass of whisky and a cigar they told him the news and he took all the credit and the pay. Why did Godley stick up for Ross and why did Ross stick up for Godley? Godley would not know whether Ross was a good correspondent. New Zealand should have a correspondent at the front who would give up to date news as far as possible. He recognised that the

censor was an issue. Why did New Zealand have a correspondent at the front who did nothing, Mr Witty could not make out, because we get good news from other correspondents who were there. The news that came from his pen was too late and people would not read what happened two or three months ago. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 706)

Massey said Ross's news was not up to date because it was not cabled. Last year his colleagues and he had deemed it necessary to cut down the expenses in connection with cable services to New Zealand by over £100,000 a year. Those were the cables coming to the Government. Another MP, Mr Young, (Waikato) said New Zealand received telegrams from other correspondents through the Press Association, for example Bean, Murdoch and Gordon Gilmour representing the Australasian press and Ward Price, Beach Thomas, Phillips, Gibbs and Ashmead-Bartlett but nothing from Ross.

If we had a correspondent of our own, specially subsidized and recognised, at £32 a week, how was it we did not get some of his information telegraphed out to us, as information supplied by the correspondents of other countries was sent? The absence of such messages led one to draw the conclusion that Ross was not in the running - that he was not of the standing which he was entitled to maintain and, if that were so, the sooner the arrangement was ended the better. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 708)

Another MP then joined in the debate. Dr H. T. J. Thacker, MP for Christchurch East, said the worth of Ross as a war correspondent was revealed in the fact that he reported the late Anthony Wilding as having been blown up at Gallipoli whereas he met his death on the western front.

What the soldiers thought of him was shown in a paper which depicted some New Zealand soldiers coming out of the trenches and being greeted by their mates with the news the war was over. "How do you know? they asked. "Because Mr Malcolm Ross has arrived at the front."<sup>112</sup> ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 707)

Cabinet Minister R. Heaton Rhodes came to Ross's defence saying that from his own knowledge on Gallipoli that Ross was "as plucky and as enterprising as any other correspondent – and that he went wherever correspondents could go". As he pointed out "a correspondent could not be in every place, and correspondents swapped information". Ross had another supporter in the House in Thomas Wilford, if a rather grudging one.

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<sup>112</sup> The writer was probably referring to the *Observer* cartoon run on June 9, 1917 and reproduced on page 257.

...New Zealand should have a war correspondent at the front. He did not agree with the statements that had been made in regard to Malcolm Ross's inability as a writer, though he did not come up to the standard of the greatest war correspondents. The account of the Gallipoli landing credited to Ross was not particularly convincing...but some were full of merit. What New Zealand would need when the war was over would be some connected account of the intimate relations and doings of our boys. The only man who could give that was the man who had been with the forces from the start and it would be a mistake to send some new man out to learn the game. They could not expect to get the best war correspondent in the world to represent our forces in the small sector in which they were fighting. A replacement could be a good deal worse than Ross. One ought to do justice to some very good work done by Ross and to remember that he was not favoured, like Marcel Hutin<sup>113</sup>, with the ear of the highest command. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 707)

The information received from Ross was not worth anything like what the country was paying for it, said another MP, McCallum of Wairau. Ross had outlived his days of usefulness and should be recalled. There were plenty of young men connected with the Press who would be delighted to go to the front any one of whom would be able to render very good service as war correspondent. The Government should proceed to select a fresh man and send him to do the work. There was a widespread feeling of disappointment with regard to the letters sent out by Mr Ross and also with regard to the continuance of his appointment, said McCallum. Leonard Isitt (Christchurch North) said

**Figure 53 A general view of Bapaume after capture by New Zealand troops, August 29, 1918.**

it would be a wise thing to tell Ross that it would be better if he could find time to send out to New Zealand a "few sketchy articles, such as delighted our people, concerning the conduct and experiences of our boys".

Massey was forced to deny that strings had been pulled when Ross was appointed. He denied that he had anything to do with the Cabinet decision to choose Ross. Aubrey Fletcher suggested the Prime Minister put to the leading journalists of New Zealand the question of whether Ross had filled the bill as the official war correspondent. McCallum then said he had heard that representatives of the Press Association had called upon James Allen, as Minister of Defence, to ask him to withdraw Ross as war correspondent.

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<sup>113</sup> A prominent French journalist of the time.

Allen said that some press representatives had called on him to say that the information which was being received from Ross was not what they required. That was communicated to England and he understood that since then the matter had been more up to requirements.

The trouble was that as we do not get cabled information, the information was not considered up to date. The original arrangement was that Ross should write and not cable as a great deal of the cabled matter was then coming through from other sources. ("Supply: Department of Internal Affairs", 1917, p. 709)

In the end, after this lengthy debate, the motion to reduce Ross's salary, allowances and expenses of £1600 by £1 was lost.

The next group of people to become infuriated by Ross were soldiers in New Zealand's artillery, as reported in *The Observer* in early 1918. According to a correspondent who wrote to the paper, Ross had some articles in *The Times* and in *Chronicles of the NZEF* which said that the failure of the infantry was because of the inefficiency of the artillery. As a result the artillery officers, "non-coms and men were "exceedingly angry". *The Observer* published the letter sent by "Gunner" to the editor of the *Chronicles of the NZEF* which accused Ross of "impertinence" for calling the artillery inefficient.

He does not know what he is talking about and the sooner he apologises for his statement the better he will be appreciated by the two thousand odd artillerymen he has so grossly insulted, and whom he has never seen in action since he toured the batteries while they were holding the line in a very quiet sector in July 1916. ("Pars about people", 1918a, p. 5)

"Gunner" went on to question whether Ross, in his account of the battle of October 12 from Hill 37 could possibly have been able to distinguish the New Zealand artillery barrage from anybody's else's, and further, would not have been able to judge whether the barrage was thick or thin. The New Zealand artillery had carried out its orders and was not inefficient. "Gunner" also questioned Ross's understanding of artillery methods.

To sum up I think Mr Ross would do more justice to the position which he fills, and to the fighting forces whose work he is (presumably) paid by the New Zealand Government to report upon at first hand if he were himself on the scene of action and kept in touch with the leaders of the various units instead of giving credence to and basing his official reports on haphazard chats with those unfortunate soldiers whom he seeks out. We out here have many a hearty laugh over much of Malcolm Ross's "tripe"

as we call it. To us he and his work are a huge joke, but a joke which at times has its limit. That limit is reached when it takes the form of such piffle as has appeared in your publication and I voice the universal opinion when I state that it shall not pass unchallenged. Yours “Gunner”. (“Pars about people”, 1918a, p. 5)

*Truth* also waded into this discussion and ran the letter from “Gunner”. The *Truth* writer ended a lengthy article on the subject with the following:

... the statement to which our correspondent draws attention ought to receive the urgent attention of the Government and its truth or falsehood fully and finally fixed. It certainly cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged by the paymasters of Our Official Correspondent at the front. If Captain Ross has deliberately, or wilfully, made a false charge of so serious a nature against an arm of New Zealand's army on active service — a statement which is tantamount to an assertion that BECAUSE OF THEIR INEFFICIENCY, the officers and men of our Field Artillery were responsible for the deaths of several hundred of our boys — surely there is but one thing for the Government to do. Malcolm Ross must be recalled forthwith. A man who is receiving £1000 a year, plus some £600 in expenses, etc., for doing a job after the manner of a junior reporter, is surely sufficiently well paid to make it worth his while to verify the truth of his information before he passes it on? If he can prove that his allegations are true, then the Defence Department must be held responsible in that it sent to the front, men incapable and inefficient, men who were to be entrusted with the important duty of covering the advance of our brave infantry, a duty which if carried out faithfully and efficiently means not only the saving of many lives in an attack, but on which depends in great measure the very success of the operation. (“Accusations of inefficiency”, 1918, p. 5)

While the New Zealand Division was wintering over Ross wrote a piece about a football match between Welsh and New Zealand teams chosen in the war zone. The New Zealanders were victorious by 14 - 3, “this being the third victory they have scored over their famous opponents since coming to the Western front”. (“Football”, 1918). *The Observer* could not let this pass without another diatribe against Ross.

Bayonet writes that much discussed war correspondent Malcolm Ross sent a startling contribution to our daily news the other day. He gave us a delightful description of a football match, wealthy in detail and in length, several hundred words. At the end there was a tiny sentence announcing that the New Zealanders are holding their own in the front lines. Am I to understand that some of them are really fighting? Mr Ross gives a small volume to the football match and a few lines to the war. It is evident therefore that to relieve the monotony of football, the boys engage themselves in a little fighting. Of course it is much rougher than football, and evidently very unpopular in the eyes of Mr Ross. He dismisses the

war in three lines and gives all the glory to the football match. I believe the Auckland Star sporting scribe is away in Australia at present. It is careless of him to leave his job vacant with such a budding sporting writer as Malcolm Ross prowling about Europe. ("Pars about people", 1918b, p. 17)

Lest it be seen that it was only *The Observer* who criticised Ross's work, *The Te Aroha News* in April 1918 was describing his despatches as "piffle" ("Untitled", 1918b). But it was only *The Observer* that kept hammering away at its perception of Ross's incompetency. "Considering all the uncomplimentary things that have been said and written about Captain Malcolm Ross's despatches, surely it is time that a change was made" ("Untitled", 1918c). But occasionally the paper did give the embattled journalist a pat on the back, even if there was a sting in the tail.

Old Contemptible writes: May I congratulate Captain Malcolm Ross, New Zealand official war correspondent on his good yarn about that great American-New Zealand soldier the late Sergeant Richard C. Travis<sup>114</sup> "the raider". It's a good yarn, bar the four-line verse sandwiched in at the bottom - and that's rotten. ("Untitled", 1918e, p. 5)

## 8:7 The relief of Le Quesnoy

After the bloody battle for Bellevue Spur the New Zealand troops withdrew to the Polygon Wood sector east of Ypres where they became involved in the failed attempt to take Polderhoek Chateau in December before being relieved in late February and withdrawn to Staple (McGibbon, 2000, pp. 605-606). In the meantime the Germans were preparing for another big offensive which began in March 1918. The New Zealand Division was hurriedly sent off to the Somme to help hold the line with the Allies launching a counter offensive in July. In August an attack on a 15km front was made with New Zealand troops taking Gréville and then Bapaume on August 29. Over the period of the next few months the New Zealanders were alternately in the trenches and then spelled as the Germans were slowly pushed back until the New Zealanders found themselves at Beaudignies and approaching the village of Le Quesnoy captured by the Germans early in the war (Lucas, 1924, pp. 366-367).

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<sup>114</sup> Travis won the Victoria Cross for an action on July 24, 1918 at Rossignol Wood, north of Hebuterne. He was killed the next day ("The full list of 22 Kiwi VC winners", 2007).

The *New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* on November 7 alerted readers in New Zealand that something unusual had taken place at this little fortified French village on November 4. The *New Zealand Herald* ran two stories, one reporting that the New Zealand troops were near Le Quesnoy (“On New Zealand Front – fighting near Le Quesnoy”, 1918) and then another brief that the town had been taken by New Zealand forces (“Great stronghold taken”, 1918). *The Press* ran a November 5 cable from the Australian and New Zealand Cable Association saying fighting was continuing at Le Quesnoy “where the position is obscure” (“A general advance”, 1918). As well *The Press* ran an official German message saying the town had been

**Figure 54 Crowd around a New Zealand regimental band playing in Le Quesnoy, the day after its capture, November 5, 1918.**

evacuated (“German official message”, 1918) along with a Reuters cable describing the taking of the village by the New Zealanders. “The skill and valour with which the stronghold was carried are beyond praise,” said the correspondent (Reuters, 1918b). Another story said the New Zealanders’ capture of Le Quesnoy was “a most dramatic feature of Monday's battle”.

They broke in gun positions eastward of the fortress and captured 100 guns, many limbered in readiness for retreat. The New Zealanders penetrated the wagon [sic] lines and rounded up the transport. The garrison refused three invitations to surrender. The New Zealanders by the evening had forced the ramparts and wiped out the machine gun nests. The remainder of the garrison laid down their arms. (“Enemy retreating”, 1918, p. 7)

(This story was also run in the *Grey River Argus* a day later (“Taking of Le Quesnoy”, 1918). On page seven of the *Evening Post* of November 7 there were three stories about Le Quesnoy. Philip Gibbs proclaimed the storming of Le Quesnoy in a double column tribute to the New Zealanders ranking their action in the taking of the village as “one of their most heroic”(Gibbs, 1918a). The Reuters correspondent’s comment were repeated and on the same page was a report from Ross, dated October 29, citing the possibility of New Zealanders playing “a conspicuous part in the fall of Le Quesnoy” (M. Ross, 1918g). Once again Ross had been scooped with important news by the British journalists. The *Grey River Argus* also carried the Reuters despatch on November 7 (Reuters, 1918a).

**Figure 55 *Capture of the walls of Le Quesnoy*, by George Edmund Butler.**

The next day more news was published, and the day saw the papers full of correspondents' praise for "one of the most outstanding single feats of the whole war" ("New Zealanders' heroic achievement", 1918) and leading articles also proclaiming the momentous feat. Beach Thomas ("The New Zealanders' brilliant feat", 1918), Phillips (Phillips, 1918a; 1918b) and Gibbs (Gibbs, 1918b) were all quoted.

Though the New Zealanders have been fighting without a break for three months, their spirit is still high. Yesterday's achievements will rank as one of their most heroic deeds. They stormed the outer ramparts of Le Quesnoy in old fashioned style with scaling ladders and made breaches in the walls. Only the new fashioned machine guns prevented them from storming the keep of the fortress. The first invitation to surrender said: "You are surrounded, you will be treated as honourable prisoners of war." Later invitations were given by entering through the breach in the wall, the New Zealanders shouting "We promise honourable treatment". ("The New Zealanders' brilliant feat", 1918, p. 7)

The only stories on that day from Ross in any of the papers mentioned were obituaries for various soldiers. One was for Sergeant Henry James Nicholas, VC dated October 25 (M. Ross, 1918i). He was killed in action on October 23 at Beaudignies. Another obituary by Ross published that day was one for Major J. M. Richmond of the Royal New Zealand Artillery killed in action on October and buried at Solesmes (M. Ross, 1918h). It was not until November 20 that Ross's despatches about the taking of Le Quesnoy began to be published at any length. By then the war was over and New Zealand had turned from the sufferings of war to the sufferings caused by the deadly influenza epidemic which was raging through the country and which had already claimed many lives. On November 20 *The Press* (M. Ross, 1918m) and *Evening Post* (M. Ross, 1918l) published a November 6 despatch where Ross described the actions of the Otago and Canterbury battalions as they pushed forward towards the Sambre. It did not really address the capture of Le Quesnoy at all except to refute suggestions by the British press that the New Zealanders had been compelled to draw back from the first attempt to storm Le Quesnoy frontally

This is not the case. Not such attempt was either contemplated or made. The plan was to secure the capitulation of the garrison by means of surrounding movements and hold it, while other troops went on to their objectives far ahead. The plan worked exactly as arranged, and the enemy

in and about the Mormal Forest, never dreaming that our troops would push on while such a strong position remained unconquered, was taken by surprise and severely punished.(M. Ross, 1918m, p. 8)

Ross had two other stories published, one in the *Weekly Press*, (M. Ross, 1918k) but dated October 23-24 and the other in the *Otago Daily Times* and dated November 19 (M. Ross, 1918j). *The Press* ran another Ross article on November 21 called *The New Zealanders - The final battle - Canterbury battalions' part* (M. Ross, 1918n). It was written seven days after the action at the town and on the day the armistice was signed. It was not until November 22 that New Zealand readers finally got the Malcolm Ross version of what happened at Le Quesnoy 18 days earlier. This account was written on the day the action took place. It is quite clear from his writing that Ross viewed much of the action at Le Quesnoy and this gives his account a much greater sense of immediacy and conviction.

There were some daring incidents. A sergeant who wore the ribands of DCM and MM scaled the ramparts, shot down the crew of a machine-gun and proceeded to investigate the position inside the town, when he was shot at from some houses, wounded in the arm, and forced to retire. One of the first, if not the first up the ramparts was a Maori from the Pioneer battalion, and his rifle was thrown up after him by a salvage officer. Neither had any business in the fight, but no doubt the sporting instincts of the latter and the feats of the ancestors of the former in storming similar slopes in tribal warfare, impelled them forward in this venture. The Maori was met with bombs, and the salvage officer might have been seen later riding back with a wounded arm in a sling and beaming with delight. (M. Ross, 1918o, p. 2)

This despatch was also used by *The Press* a day later (M. Ross, 1918p). It is interesting to note another theme noted by Fussell (1975) in his consideration of the language used in writing about the war, especially in the early years of the war, and that was the “universal commitment to the sporting spirit” (p. 25). War was strenuous but great fun and there was much importance on “playing the game”. On November 26 the *Evening Post* carried further Ross despatches dating from November 8 - 11 about the capture of the town and the end of the war. Ross described soldiers entering Le Quesnoy to the cheers of the French population.

The frenzied delight of these Frenchmen and Frenchwomen was unbounded. Later into one of the vaulted chambers lately occupied by the enemy, went the battalion commander and another officer. Thither the Boche had conveyed much French furniture – beds, mattresses, pillows,

mirrors, - and some of the poorer people rushed in anxious to get their own back. Near the door was a piano stolen by the Boche. In a moment of inspiration a Frenchman sat down at it and commenced to play the Marseillaise. The effect was electrical. Men, women, children and soldiers joined in the stirring strains of the splendid hymn, the echoes of which resounded from the vaulted roof. The thin faces and the poorly-clad forms of the liberated civilians in the light of two candles held by the battalion commander and one of the men made an unforgettable scene that only a Rembrandt could do justice to. (M. Ross, 1918r, p. 3)

He also wrote about one of the last scenes of the war enacted in the square of the old town when the president of the French Republic attended the celebration of the town's liberation from the Germans. Poincaré told the town's citizens that they owed their liberty to the actions of the Allied armies "and notably to the New Zealand troops who are assembled here today" (M. Ross, 1918r). One of Ross's last despatches before he fell ill and returned to England was dated November 20 and gave details of how between August 21 and November 4 the Division had captured 8700 prisoners, 145 guns, 1300 machine guns and a miscellany of other equipment (M. Ross, 1918s).

## 8:8 Conclusion

When Ross arrived in France in early 1916 he was faced with a difficult task. He had been requested to write in a style with which he was unfamiliar – short, concise, snappy pieces suitable for transmitting by cable. As demonstrated in previous chapters this was not the style of writing to which he was accustomed. He had been noted for lengthy narratives often interspersed with literary allusions and colourful expressions. At Gallipoli he continued to write in this style but to increasing criticism. Despite this, much of his work was published, even well after it had been written. This was because many of his despatches were not time sensitive. But when Ross was instructed to cable reports it was clear he needed to radically change his writing style. The question would be, was he capable of making the transition to this more modern style of reporting?

Because New Zealand's participation in the war on the Western Front extended beyond two years only Ross's coverage of three significant military engagements in which the New Zealanders were involved was considered. These engagements were the Battle of the Somme of September 1916, Passchendaele of October 1917 and the capture from the Germans of the town of Le Quesnoy in November 1918. Coverage in the *New Zealand Herald*, the *Press*, *Evening Post* and *Auckland Star* was examined to discover

how well Ross had been able to change his style to suit the new publishing conditions of shorter, snappier reports.

During the war there was much general criticism of news from the Front, and so it is important to remember that much of the criticism of Ross could also be levelled at other correspondents. As noted by the UPA manager in Sydney, many of the correspondents' despatches that passed through his office were repetitive and often just versions of military communiqués. Much of it was "gung ho" writing which avoided mention of military disasters, casualties, army ineptitude or the appalling conditions under which the soldiers fought. Ross was one of this cadre. It was a case of literary sins of omission rather than commission. Strict censorship helped keep the journalists in line. If they dared to break the rules laid down by the military authorities they would have been shipped home, as some were in the early stages of the war. It is curious that unlike at Gallipoli, Ross rarely mentioned the censorship while on the Western Front. Perhaps he had become so compliant he no longer thought to complain. This may explain why he would offer to censor soldiers' letter as he apparently did on at least one occasion. That he had become so entrenched into the military system that he could contemplate acting as censor himself, shows how embedded Ross really was into the military way of thinking and operating. Even though he could cable his news the papers chose to use the reports of British correspondents before his. As Ashmead-Bartlett had dominated much of the Gallipoli coverage so Philip Gibbs was to do the same for the conflict on the Western Front. Charles Bean had almost disappeared completely from view to be replaced by news from other Australian-accredited journalists Keith Murdoch and Gordon Gilmour. While Ross's despatches were used, belatedly, pride of place was largely given to the other correspondents. In the months examined, Ross's published output was greatly diminished compared with what was published during the Dardanelles campaign.

Ross seemed unable to modify his style to suit the new conditions. His cables were often dry, prosaic pieces with little flair and precious little information to satisfy the reading public back in New Zealand. His longer pieces reflected the traditional rhetoric of an older era before mass warfare. And after more than four years of war and countless columns of casualties the old romanticised version of war reporting was no longer relevant or appropriate. A new language to describe war was going to be necessary if the world was ever to face such a conflict again. It was probably too much

to expect a man in his 50s and with Ross's personality to so radically alter his style. The military may have been satisfied with his work but journalistically it failed to deliver what the audience obviously wanted.

One aspect of Ross's writings which has not been addressed is how well he covered and understood the military aspects of the various operations which the New Zealanders were involved in. The fact that Ross had the support of the generals suggests he was proficient enough to satisfy them. However, when it appears that much of his knowledge came from military communiqués this is not particularly surprising. Any criticism by Ross of the military would obviously have brought immediate censure, if the contretemps with the gunners published in *The Observer* was anything to go by.

Back in New Zealand the opposition politicians and newspapers had a field day criticising Ross's work, believing it unworthy of the large salary he was drawing. Despite the continued criticism and calls to have Ross removed from his position the Government stood firm and refused to withdraw him. He had the support of the generals in France and of his friend the Prime Minister. When the complaints became even more strident, Australian correspondent Charles Bean went to his colleague's defence. This move did little to mitigate the chorus of disapproval. Critics were especially scornful of Ross's writings during the periods when the New Zealand forces were not in the front line. This seems rather harsh, as it must have been a difficult task to keep writing for more than two years on different topics while always keeping in mind that a war was still in progress.

## Epilogue: Malcolm Ross's final years

Very little is known about Malcolm Ross once he returned to “New” Zealand with his wife and other service personnel on the *Corinthic* in late September 1919 (“Passenger list of Corinthic”, 1919; “Untitled”, 1919). He and Forrest settled back into their 12 Hill St home which had presumably been let while they were away overseas.<sup>115</sup> What is known is that he took up the reins of his political journalism again, returning to the Press Gallery as the representative for the *Otago Daily Times* and *The Press*. He is a sombre figure in many of the photographs lining the walls of the Press Gallery. *The Press* history written by R. B. O'Neill (1963) has two conflicting dates for Ross as a representative for the paper. On one page (p. 203) he said Ross had been in the Press Gallery for 32 years from 1896/97. But on a later page (p. 282) he said Ross retired from Parliamentary correspondent for *The Press and Otago Daily Times* on September 28 1926 after 29 years. Ross was appointed in June 1896. It appears he may have represented the *Hawkes Bay Herald* until 1929 according to the photographs in the Press Gallery, which means he was working almost up until his death in 1930.

His relationship with things military continued for some time after his return. Letters to Charles Bean imply that Ross still thought he might have a chance as a writer of any official history, even though it is clear from correspondence within the Government and the military that this was not the case. However, at some point during or just after the war ended, he and Bean arranged with Sir George Lucas to collaborate on a history of the Australasians' participation in the war. This was published on behalf of the Royal Colonial Institute by the Oxford University Press in 1924 as Volume 3 in the series *The Empire at war* (Lucas, 1924). In the preface to the volume dated March 1924 Lucas said: “In the fighting story of Australia and New Zealand respectively, I was most fortunate in securing the collaboration of Mr C. E. W. Bean and Mr Malcolm Ross, on whose qualifications I need not enlarge”. Ross's 115-page contribution appears as “Section II: The New Zealand forces in war, by Malcolm Ross” (pp. 267-382). A review of the volume said:

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<sup>115</sup> This house was demolished in 1950, according to Lyn Ross .

Mr C.E.W. Bean and a group of anonymous associates tell of the activities of the Australian expeditionary forces, and Mr Malcolm Ross does the same for those of New Zealand. It is evident that the writers have taken pains to secure full and accurate information, but the value of their work, for reference purposes, would be greater if the plan of the series permitted them to give their authorities. ("Short notices", 1925)

Ross had a few more dealings with the military authorities on his return home. One of them was pressing for and receiving compensation for the car he had paid for in July 1918 and which was written off after an accident on the way into Germany. Ross was also the recipient of the British War Medal, Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star (L. Ross, 2007). He must have been crushed when his old colleague, Guy Scholefield, received an OBE in 1919 for his services as a war correspondent (Porter, 2007). This must have been a telling blow for a man who clearly felt much aggrieved at the unrelenting censure he had received from some quarters throughout his career and which he also clearly believed he did not deserve.

Besides continuing his parliamentary work Ross returned to writing about his first great love – the outdoors. For example, he wrote a series for his old paper the *Otago Witness* including one on salmon fishing and exploring the Eglinton Valley (M. Ross, 1924). He contributed an article to the first issue of *Wanderlust* in 1930 calling it "the finest piece of descriptive writing" he had ever done ("Untitled", 1930). In 1929 he was made an honorary member of the New Zealand Alpine Club. Ross also recommenced his association with the Wellington Camera Club and was president from 1925 until his death on April 15, 1930 aged 67.

According to his death certificate Ross died of exhaustion after suffering from "paralysis agitans", known more commonly now as Parkinson's disease, for two years before he died. This was hinted at in a *Wanderlust* tribute to him on his death. Under a photo with the caption "scholar, athlete, mountaineer, journalist, war correspondent, author, photographer, gentleman and friend", the journal said it "knew for a year before his passing the end could only be a matter of months" ("Untitled", 1930). He died at his residence in Hill St, Wellington and was cremated at the Karori cemetery. At least three New Zealand papers carried his obituary, the *Otago Daily Times*, the *New Zealand Herald*, and the *Evening Post*, as did the *London Times* ("Obituary - Malcolm Ross", 1930; "Death of a journalist", 1930; "Mr Malcolm Ross - writer and climber", 1930; "Mr Malcolm Ross", 1930). The *New Zealand Herald* obituary said Ross was

“numbered among the foremost journalists of the Dominion” and then listed his sporting activities, mountaineering feats, travel and the death of his son, Noel. It mentioned in one sentence only that Ross had been sent as official correspondent to Europe during World War I. While all the obituaries mentioned his achievements, which have already been noted in previous chapters, very few commented on his character or personality, except for a brief comment in *The Times*. Malcolm Ross, said *the Times*, was a “naturally quiet and reserved man” who spoke little of himself, and especially little about his war experience. “He did not quite belong to his generation, and most of his friends were younger men”. This seems a rather sad epitaph for a man, who up to 1915 had been a very significant figure in New Zealand. His wife, Forrest, died six years later on March 30, 1936.

What about the other significant figures in Ross’s life? Ross was to outlive three of them. In May 1925 Ross saw one of his greatest friends, William Massey, die at 69 after a lingering illness (Gardner, 1966). Another old friend, Thomas Mackenzie, died in February 1930 just weeks before his 77<sup>th</sup> birthday and a few short months before Ross’s own death (McLintock, 1966). His old mentor George Fenwick’s death at 82 occurred just seven months before Ross’s (Strathern, 1966). Other political and military friends to outlive Ross by many years were James Allen, who died in 1942 aged 87 (Wilson, 1966) and Alexander Godley, who died in 1957 aged 90 (Wards, 1966). Scholefield died in 1963 aged 86 (Porter, 2007).

## Conclusion

Unlike Richard Holmes who believes one must “fall in love” with one’s biographical subject, I did not initially become enamoured of Malcolm Ross and then decide to write a biography about him. The biography was an afterthought when it became quite clear that an attempt to examine all New Zealand war correspondents would be too great a task for one person and too broad a scope for a thesis. Being a journalist, the appellation “first official war correspondent” took my eye and aroused my curiosity. Anything that claimed to be a “first” of anything was bound to offer up something significant was the immediate thought. Like many others, I had never heard of Malcolm Ross. He occasioned only slight mention in any books on World War I, so appeared a ripe target for investigation. It was not long after research began that I started to gain an inkling why Ross’s name had been forgotten. Much of the information surrounding his appointment to the position of official war correspondent was negative. However, as the research progressed, a fuller, more comprehensive picture emerged as Malcolm Ross came alive with all his strengths and weaknesses exposed. I firmly believe, as Holmes does, that every life is extraordinary. However, it is a quirk of fate whose life is recorded and whose life is forgotten. Malcolm Ross’s life deserves to be remembered, but perhaps as much for the decades before he became the first official war correspondent as after. The latter encompassed 15 years; the 52 years preceding his appointment were rich with successes which the latter years were not.

Malcolm Ross’s story follows the classic dramatic narrative with a clearly defined beginning, middle and end. The story begins with the exposition – the chronicling of Ross’s early life, followed by the introduction of the various characters that impact on that life and the actions and events which shape his character and his career as a journalist. The high point or climax was his appointment as the first official war correspondent. He had conquered the physical peaks of New Zealand now he had attained the peak of his profession. Unfortunately the position of official correspondent was to be a poisoned chalice for Ross. His efforts in that position evinced a very mixed response back home and his reputation suffered a blow from which it never really recovered. He survived barely a decade after his return to New Zealand. He experienced and wrote about mountains and then descended to write about trench warfare. He was never to reach the peaks again.

As Holmes has recounted, biography has two main elements or “closely entwined strands”. The gathering of the factual material and its assembly in chronological order of a person’s journey and then the creation of the fictional relationship between the biographer and the subject as that subject’s life is explored. In the case of Malcolm Ross the first element was a pleasure as research built slowly but inexorably upon the little information that had been collated about his life to date. The latter element was more difficult because there were very few personal documents of Ross’s extant – barely a handful of letters, no diaries, and few photographs of him. The glimpses of the inner man were rare, and in that respect it was difficult to build up a relationship with him. Nevertheless, Ross became at least an acquaintance. A picture does emerge, if rather blurred around the edges. Future research may sharpen that image.

Up to the age of 52 Malcolm Ross was arguably the most successful journalist in New Zealand. He was certainly one of the best known. His rise to such prominence followed a steady upward trajectory from his late teens and reflected the pioneer belief that no matter what the station in life the opportunities were available for betterment. But there was a caveat – don’t presume to rise too high. It was especially evident in early Otago where the Scottish colonists encouraged both learning and hard work. A working class background, such as Ross’s, was no hindrance to social mobility, as he was to prove. As the eldest child Ross was the conscientious, conservative but competitive son of Scottish immigrant parents, who as a teenager successfully entered newspaper competitions, obviously read widely and was confident enough to perform recitations and songs before local audiences. His rural upbringing was clearly instrumental in his love of the bush and also provided the springboard for a fit and active life that encompassed many of the sporting passions of the day. He made a name for himself in rugby, tennis, athletics, golf and in the field of exploration and mountaineering. He was not only actively participating; he also played his part in the administration of his various sports. He was certainly not timid but adventurous, strong and tenacious, what would be called today “a typical Kiwi bloke”! Indeed he evinced many of the male characteristics Jock Phillips claimed were mythologised after the South African war - physical superiority, adaptability, stoicism, natural talent, inner discipline and modesty. That latter virtue has been the stumbling block for many a successful New Zealander, not the least Malcolm Ross, as has been demonstrated.

We do not know what propelled Ross into journalism; perhaps it was his love of reading. However, as many saw journalism as a rather romantic, adventurous profession, that possibly attracted him as well. He was one of the increasing band of New Zealand-born men lured to journalism, and one of the few who joined almost straight from school. Many of his colleagues were either born far from New Zealand or had entered journalism via other professions. While Ross was content to remain and pursue his career in his birth country, other journalists saw more opportunities in Australia and beyond. Most did it for more pay and a more liberal newspaper environment but these were obviously not of interest to Ross. He earned well above the average journalist's salary and was quite content to write for the more conservative papers of the day. He clearly did not find the sort of journalism he was doing stifling or retarding him in his career in any way.

He spent eight years in the *Otago Daily Times* newsroom gaining his credentials as a reporter to the acclaim of his proprietor George Fenwick, one of the leading newspapermen of his day. This was no small accomplishment. Ross made a name for himself around the country for his coverage of the disappearance of Professor Mainwaring Brown. It helped that he had his by-line attached to much of his work, something that was not common in late 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand newspapers. It meant he was more recognisable compared to those who used the nom-de-plumes that were popular at the time or whose work was unattributed. It was fortunate for Ross's future that he was a journalist in Dunedin at a time when that city was a strong political force and he could mix with prominent men, some of whom would become significant figures in his later life; such people as Thomas Mackenzie and James Allen, for example. His position in Otago society was cemented by his marriage to Forrest Grant, the daughter of an influential Dunedin accountant. She was a well educated, artistic woman who also became a successful journalist and who shared her husband's passion for mountaineering. A stable, happy marriage, which this seemed to be, would have provided a psychological and social buttress for Malcolm Ross in the years ahead. She became an extremely competent journalist and author in her own right, sometimes collaborating with her husband on writing projects. Her writing shows more humour than her husband's. Although some of his early writing was praised for its humour this was not evident in his later work. Photographs of him in adult life show him as a rather morose, melancholy looking figure.

One issue that is unresolved is whether Ross attended university as was claimed in all his obituaries. Extensive investigation of educational records at New Zealand Archives has not substantiated this claim. There is no record of him either attending university or matriculating. If it is true that he had no university qualifications, how did the idea arise that he had? Was this something he perpetuated about himself? If this was the case, and there is no evidence to suggest it was, it would be ammunition for those who believed he was trying to be better than he was.

Ross left newsroom journalism to become personal secretary to an upcoming and entrepreneurial local identity, James Mills, but kept his journalism hand in by acting as a free lance on the side. He never returned to working in a newsroom so this left him free to pursue other opportunities, like travelling or writing articles about the New Zealand Exhibition, or tourist guides or accounts of his climbing expeditions or developing his love of photography. He combined the latter two pursuits when he gave public lectures of his adventures in the mountains. By the time he moved to Wellington Ross was an able photographer, having started using a camera as early as 1891. By 1896 his expertise was being called upon as a judge at photographic exhibitions. It would not be long before photography moved from being purely an artistic pursuit to being an integral element of newspaper production. Malcolm Ross was arguably the country's first press photographer as his work began to be published in the daily newspapers. Ross travelled extensively throughout New Zealand as secretary to James Mills as well as to the Pacific Islands and Australia. He was slowly acquiring the hall marks of gentility that later would become the object of ridicule in some quarters of the journalistic fraternity. He became over fond of his top hat, frock coat, spats and cane, according to *The Observer*, not the garb of a hard working daily newsman and this added to the impression he considered himself a rung above the ordinary journalist.

Before he moved to Wellington Ross had been a very busy man. He had become a father in December 1890, had been an instigator of the formation of the New Zealand Alpine Club and an early editor of its journal. He was climbing most of the notable peaks in the South Islands, photographing and writing about them. It was not surprising that when Fenwick and his Christchurch colleague at Christchurch *Press*, W. H. Triggs, were scouting about for someone to be their parliamentary reporter in May 1896, Ross was considered.

He was about to turn 34 and had proven himself as a newsroom reporter, but he had also proven that he could be a responsible free lance able to work independently. The two southern newspapermen would have congratulated themselves on persuading Ross to act for them in Wellington. Ross would have seen the move as another opportunity for advancement and been happy that he could maintain his free lance status and therefore able to keep pursuing his myriad interests.

Another chapter in Ross's life began when he moved to the capital to take up his position as parliamentary reporter, probably only overtaken by Ian Templeton<sup>116</sup>, as the longest ever serving press gallery journalist. With a hiatus during the war, Ross was in the gallery from 1896 until 1929, the year before his death. In his time Ross took his turn as chairman of the gallery reporters, demonstrating his commitment to the organisation as he had done for his sporting organisations. It must have been around this time he became an active member of the Wellington branch of the Institute of Journalists. However, there is no evidence of him ever holding an executive position. Records show that Ross was also involved in the organisation of New Zealand journalists into a union although not in any leading way. The impetus for unionisation came from Wellington, and one of the instigators was Fred Doidge, who later was a finalist for official war correspondent and who went on to become a parliamentarian and a knight.

Ross's journalism was based very much on the style of his Mainwaring Brown reports – lengthy, chronological narratives interspersed with literary allusions from English literature. His style was appreciated and was commented upon favourably when he was an inaugural contributor to the new Dunedin magazine *Zealandia* in July 1889. Later, there was a hint in reviews that his style had become rather too euphuistic, for example in his first published book *A climber in New Zealand*. Paul Fussell sees the use of this “high diction” arising from the 19<sup>th</sup> century love affair with the classics and English literature. It was to prove an obstacle when it came to trying to depict the terrible reality of industrialised warfare. Ross was an early exponent of the interview, said by Schudson to be a journalistic scoop in its own right. Ross certainly made his readers aware of this and it demonstrated his “intimacy with powerful people”, for example

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<sup>116</sup> According to Dr Nikki Hessell, of Massey University, Charles E. Wheeler, the *Auckland Star's* parliamentary reporter, was the longest serving parliamentary journalist before Ian Templeton. Wheeler was a contemporary of Ross's, serving in the gallery from 1906-1950 (Hessell, N., personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Mark Twain and Ignace Paderewski. Journalists, said Schudson, were thus judged professionally by the sources they kept. In Ross's case, and in the social climate of New Zealand at the time, this was seen by some as conceit. Added to that, there was Ross's proclivity for using the personal pronoun in his writing. He was not alone in its use, however as he was easily identifiable because of his by-line it was easy to single him out for criticism. Because he was often writing about his own exploits, it was probably understandable he used the pronouns, but less acceptable when writing about other people or events. He was also inclined on occasion to exaggerate his own mountaineering achievements.

Ross's move to Wellington coincided with the elevation of Lord Ranfurly to the Governorship of New Zealand and so began a lasting friendship between the Governor and his family and the Rosses. Ranfurly was responsible for recommending Ross as New Zealand's London *Times* correspondent. It was just one of the friendships that Ross developed between himself and prominent society, political and military figures. It was not long after moving to the capital that he became firm friends with William Massey, an independent Auckland conservative, who eventually became the leader of the Reform Party in opposition to the Liberal Government. He already knew Dunedinite James Allen well, another independent conservative who became Massey's deputy and eventually joined the Massey Government as a Cabinet Minister. With these friendships, Ross's colours were firmly nailed to the political mast. While newspapers no longer openly supported individual politicians, it was recognised that they had clear-cut political leanings. It was well known that the papers that Ross wrote for supported a conservative political position. It was not unexpected that Ross had similar leanings. It did, however, leave him open to criticisms of bias, as it did for Massey when it came to the Government appointing the official war correspondent. The seeds of Ross's fall from grace were beginning to appear with his close alignment to the conservatives, a situation which could have been avoided if he had been less partisan. It is unclear just how partial he was in his reporting from the gallery as he generally did not receive a by-line. He was "our own correspondent". As it was never conclusive that it was he who was writing under that nom de plume, no attempt has been made to examine his parliamentary writings. *The Observer* noted that he delighted in pen portraits of Reform MPs which perhaps gives a slight intimation of the tenor of his work.

As Ross was reporting Parliament only during the sessions he had ample time to pursue his manifold interests. He continued his mountaineering exploits in both the North and South islands culminating in his historic “colling” of Mt Cook in January 1906 with Tom Fyfe. In recognition of his mountaineering and exploration of the South Island, in particular, Ross was created a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and made a member of the British Alpine Club. He continued his tourist and publicity writing, accepted Government jobs, accompanied the Governor on his trip through the Ureweras, wrote as a free lance about many different topics and everywhere took his camera to record all the events. Not only did he travel around the country but he made several trips abroad in the Pacific and eventually went to Europe arriving home just before war broke out in August 1914. His first full length book was published that same year. At the same time his wife was accompanying him on many of his historic climbs, writing her own published stories, writing her own book and making her own overseas trip. As well their son, Noel, was making his own promising way in the journalistic world.

By 1914 the Rosses had become the country’s first family of journalism. They were all very successful, socially, financially and occupationally. There is no doubt that this gave rise to some envy among their peers, with *the Observer* and *Truth* leading the way with censure and criticism. Much of it seemed unfair. There seemed to be an idea that as a newly egalitarian society nobody was to show themselves as “better” than others whether it was in dress or speech or in action. The idea that New Zealanders should cultivate a modest or humble demeanour had obviously gained great traction by 1914, and in fact this notion has been a remarkably pervasive one. Even today modesty or humility has been the hallmark of our most popular heroes. Being a “skite” was (and is) a sign of severe approbation in New Zealand society. Ross was not a skite. Maybe he could have toned down his sartorial proclivities, but he was hobnobbing with the social elite of the day which required a certain standard of dress. He was also inclined to name drop his famous friends, something which would have also been frowned on and he occasionally overstated his climbing exploits. He did have genuine achievements but these tended to be forgotten when his personal foibles were focussed on and especially when it came to his appointment as the official war correspondent.

This was to be the first time an official war correspondent would be appointed in New Zealand to cover a war. However, war correspondent was not a new occupation for New

Zealand journalists. They had been sent to cover the New Zealand Wars, the South African War, the Boxer rebellion and the Samoan “troubles” of 1899. The most memorable journalists had been James Shand and Claude Jewell in South Africa and their work was seen as laying down a tradition in war reporting. Ross added to the tradition with his reporting from Samoa in 1899 during the disturbances arising from the death of Laupepa. He was sent and paid for by his newspapers, as was the custom. New Zealand readers were also enthralled by the work and antics of famous British war correspondents. They were seen as romantic, adventurous individuals in the grand tradition of late 19<sup>th</sup> century heroes - dashing, gallant, modest, plucky individuals reminiscent of G. A. Henty characters. Whoever was to be appointed to this new post of war correspondent would have a lot to live up to.

When war broke out in August 1914 and New Zealand was asked by the British War Office to capture the German radio station in Samoa, Ross was aboard one of the transport ships. He gained a berth through a combination of initiative and knowing the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand forces, Alexander Godley, very well. This second trip to Samoa was also with the approval of his employers but to get to Samoa he had to also have the approval of the military. It was this latter approval that was to create a real problem. The Opposition, seizing on the fact Ross was a close friend of the Prime Minister claimed cronyism had allowed Ross to go to Samoa. At the same time it had been announced the country could send one journalist to cover the war. The Opposition wanted the person chosen to be independent of political bias, rather difficult when most of the biggest papers in the Dominion supported either the Reformists or the Liberals. No journalist would be totally free of bias. Guy Scholefield, who was an early applicant for the position of official correspondent, was rejected because he represented the conservative press. However, he continued to write about the war from his London base and was eventually rewarded for his work with an OBE after the war. After months of bickering among themselves the newspaper proprietors eventually handed over the problem to the Government to resolve. None of the papers were prepared to follow earlier precedents and send their own reporters. Unlike Australia, which ignored the command to appoint only one correspondent and sent several, New Zealand was an obedient daughter and only ever considered doing as it was told by Mother England and sent one. Previous experience indicated the cost would have been very expensive for individual papers to support a correspondent but in the end the papers were happy to leave the problem over to the Government to sort out. Having done so, it seemed very

churlish of them to complain so much when difficulties arose around Ross and his despatches. It meant if things did not go as planned the Government would get the blame not the papers. It became a highly politicised process.

Nobody was surprised that in the eventual derby of contenders, Malcolm Ross was the winner. However, he was selected by a Cabinet of men, many of whom Ross could claim as friends. He would always be open to claims that it was his friendships that gained him the coveted role and his largely successful career ignored. But besides the questionable ethics of being selected by Government friends there was also a question mark over Ross's writing ability. *The Observer* and *Truth* led the concern about whether Ross was up to the mark of being the war correspondent. One of the main concerns appeared to be whether Ross would be able to write effectively about the war. He certainly had a solid journalism career behind him including war correspondence, more so than most other journalists of the time. But he had not worked in the competitive environment of a newsroom for many years, where his news writing skills would have been well honed. He was also 52 when he was appointed and his wordy, high flown style of writing did not appear to be the sort of journalism that would be required in this war. Fears were also expressed that he would continue to overuse the personal pronoun which gave the impression he was placing himself at the centre of the action. This was acceptable when he was writing about his own exploits but not so admissible when it came to writing about the actions of the New Zealand forces. But was there another journalist who would have been a better choice? Guy Scholefield at 37 was highly regarded and among the finalists so was Fred Doidge, 31. That is hard to answer, but certainly because of his standing, Ross had the most to lose if he was not successful. Guy Scholefield missed out on the official war correspondent job but that turned out to be a blessing in disguise because he was free to follow his own dictates about how to cover the war while in England and he was free of the restrictive Government conditions placed on Ross as official correspondent.

From the time Ross was appointed he became answerable to both the Government and the military authorities. From the Government's point of view Ross was a safe bet and most unlikely to rock any boats, politically or militarily. However, the 12 conditions of employment imposed on him showed how little the Government understood about journalism, in particular the decision that Ross was not to cable his news but send it by steamer. That was arguably the single decision that counted against Ross being able to

carry out his appointment with any chance of success. Much would have been forgiven him if he had been allowed to cable his despatches directly to New Zealand when they could then be published almost immediately. The South African War had created the audience's expectation of immediate news and readers were no longer prepared to wait for weeks to hear about events. So in 1915 when Ross appeared at the height of his career with his appointment as official correspondent, circumstances and his own nature were conspiring to undermine all his achievements so far.

Ross's difficulties were compounded at Gallipoli because he arrived there so late, almost two months exactly since the landing on April 25. Instead of doing his utmost to reach the Dardanelles he spent a month in Egypt seemingly perfectly satisfied that recording soldiers' reflections was as good as being at the scene of the fighting. Any war correspondent worth his salt, one would have thought, would have moved heaven and earth to get to Gallipoli. How much of this was because of Noel Ross being injured is difficult to say. Ross's reason was that the military authorities would not allow him to leave. Once given permission to reach the peninsula Ross joined the band of British and Australian pressmen at the island of Imbros where they had been banished because of Ashmead-Bartlett's supposed indiscretions. There were some outstanding individuals among them, not the least being Ashmead-Bartlett himself. Ross did not appear to have made much of an impression on any of his press or military colleagues; few mentioned him in their memoirs or diaries. The only comment in any depth about him was from Charles Bean who painted a rather enigmatic picture of his fellow antipodean. Malone called Ross nondescript, a dictionary definition of that word being "lacking distinctive characteristics". Ross certainly did not have the charismatic personality of a Ashmead-Bartlett or a Nevinson. He was a follower not a leader and one suspects there was something of the cultural cringe of the colonial in his dealings with his famous brethren. Bean made a name for himself with his scrupulous, thorough recording of events. In his diaries he showed himself to be a thoughtful, perspicacious observer of the war and while he might have toed the censorship line he did not stint revealing his opinions in his private words and thoughts. Because no diaries of Ross have ever been produced we can only glean Ross's state of mind from his actions and from the few letters that have survived. These do not reveal a deep thinker or observer of life. He was generally compliant with the military restrictions and rarely showed any independence of thought or action in his war journalism. Asking for and receiving his honorary captaincy was

evidence of his total absorption into the military mind. As he was a partisan politically, so he turned out to be a partisan militarily.

Once Ross arrived at Gallipoli few obstacles were put in his way by Ian Hamilton as far as getting about the battlefield. It seemed was only good sense and self preservation which dictated where the journalists could and could not go. The fly in the ointment for all the journalists was the censorship which contrived to leave despatches largely devoid of pertinent facts. The better journalists such as Bean and Ashmead-Bartlett still managed to convey something of the rigours and vicissitudes of battle. Ross's efforts were much less successful, as the readers back home were very quick to point out. He was hampered, quite unfairly, by not being able to cable his despatches home. Readers were unhappy waiting six to eight weeks to receive news from their correspondent when they could read the cables from the British and Australian ones. But not only that, they were tiring of the older style of writing that Ross was still using. He had not adapted to the changed circumstances and was still writing reams of copy that said very little of interest in very fancy language. The audience was unhappy and they showed it by pulling out of the agreement to take his work arranged by the Press Association in partnership with the Government. The big papers continued to run Ross's accounts but tended to favour the Australian journalists' accounts.

Two incidents arose at Gallipoli which have tainted recollections of Ross's work. The first is the suspicion that Ross might have been the person to have told Hamilton about Keith Murdoch taking Ashmead-Bartlett's letter back to Britain against regulations. While there is no hard evidence Ross did snitch on Ashmead-Bartlett, one can't help remembering Bean's words about him almost "toadying" up to the British correspondent but at the same time talking about him behind his back. One could imagine Ross wanting to be in the good graces of the military authorities by telling them of the incendiary letter. Until more evidence is uncovered the question mark will always hover over Ross. Ratting on one's friends would have been seen as an unforgiveable sin to men of that era. It did not mesh with the noble, manly virtues praised in all the popular literature of the day. The second incident concerned the publication of the evacuation story under Ross's name when in fact it had been written by Bean. Readers in New Zealand clearly found it a stirring read and some like *Truth* felt Ross had finally written something of value. When it was discovered Bean was the author, there was again a suspicion that Ross had somehow been party to a deception. The goodwill of his

readers back home was dwindling fast. Despite a growing groundswell of censure the Government and the military appeared perfectly satisfied with their employee's work. However, the Government did bow to pressure and permit Ross to cable news home as well as send it by steamer. This was not totally successful as he seemed incapable of using the word limitation in an effective way. This required tight, concise, spare writing which was not Ross's style at all. His years away from being a general newsroom reporter were to become glaringly obvious as he struggled to meet the demands of this new medium.

In France the correspondents were not as restricted as they had been at Gallipoli and Ross manifestly welcomed the chance to spend time with his wife and son as often as he could get furlough. He revelled in Noel's success and was an extremely proud father. Allowing this pride to be made public through his writing had earned him severe censure but he seemed incapable of reining it in. He did ask his friends to keep quiet about Noel's successes but somehow they still got into the papers back home. This would have been seen as Ross senior doing his usual family grandstanding. It all came to a tragic end, however, with Noel's early death. Contending with that and the constant criticism must have been a heavy burden for a man seemingly unable to show his true feelings. The few letters home to his family reveal little of his devastation.

Ross was to spend another two and a half years covering the New Zealand troops' engagements on the Western Front. While Paul Fussell said there was no reason why the English language could not have adapted to the new type of mass, trench warfare, it did not. The correspondents', Ross among them, continued to depict the war in the idiom and terms of an older age where war was romantic, men were gallant, loyal, and devil-may-care, playing the game of war with courage and dash. It was no wonder there was an increasing divide between the soldiers mired in the war and the civilians who were being fed a sanitised, romanticised version of the reality. Back in New Zealand dissatisfaction grew because the Ross accounts were juxtaposed beside columns and columns of the dead, missing or wounded. Readers could see the full picture was not being painted for them. Attempts made by those most aggrieved by Ross's work to get him removed from his position failed and he stayed until the end of the war and beyond. He missed out on the writing of an official history and returned home to a lukewarm welcome and then slipped with his wife into relative obscurity ending in his death a decade later.

An unfortunate precedent for war correspondence had been set when the Government chose to employ a journalist to cover the war. It was an unhappy outcome for Malcolm Ross whose largely stellar career until 1915 was largely blighted by his efforts during the war. Does this mean he should be forgotten? No. He was a very successful man – famous mountaineer, sportsman, author, photographer and journalist. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if he had declined the gift of the official war correspondent's position – and most observers saw it as a gift to Malcolm. Did he ever pause to think that he might not have been suited to the job? One suspects he was as convinced as everyone else that the post was his, and rightly so. He was certainly able to leave in a day, which suggests he was packed and ready to go once the decision was announced. At 52 a wiser man might have passed up this opportunity for someone younger and with experience of daily newsroom journalism. But Ross was not wise, nor was he particularly self aware. His self belief remained, despite much criticism throughout his appointment. He seemed unable to understand why his work was unappreciated back home.

Many of the failings around the issue of the official war correspondence were not all Ross's however. Others also needed to carry the blame. The big daily newspapers, especially the Liberal press, could have chosen to send their own correspondents, as did their Australian counterparts. The conservative press must have been congratulating itself on Scholefield's successes in London. (Research has not uncovered if there was a Liberal correspondent in London). The Press Association must also share some blame for colluding with the Government to manage the flow of war news. It kept a monopolistic control of the dissemination of the official despatches and the fault for many of the delays could be sheeted home to the system it set up. The Government was culpable for insisting that Ross send his news by steamer instead of allowing him to cable news directly to New Zealand. When it finally did allow him to use the more speedy system it was too late, the damage had been done and Ross's reputation suffered. The military authorities and their arcane censorship played a part in ensuring readers received a partial picture of the war.

All that aside, Malcolm Ross was unable to satisfy his audience because his writing or journalistic skills were just not good enough. He never seemed to heed or even understand the criticism of his despatches. And that was possibly the fatal flaw that contributed to his loss of reputation. He accepted the gift but it was a poisoned one. The

*Times* epitaph said it all. He could not speak about the war because he did not have the words. And because he did not have the words he could neither speak them nor write them. His detractors saw him as lacking in modesty but this was not the most serious criticism one could make of Ross. New Zealanders generally could do with a larger dose of self belief. It was that other character trait that Jock Phillips identified that was more crucial to an understanding of Malcolm Ross, and that is stoicism. That implies an implacable determination to face adversity and difficulties without emotion, to bury finer feelings, the horrors and the hurts and to appear untouched. Such extreme stoicism showed in Ross's despatches. They certainly were not honest or accurate, the bywords of good journalism of all ages.

Many of the significant figures in Ross's life had long and illustrious careers and were honoured in their lifetimes. Until the outbreak of World War I it appeared that Ross would be numbered among those long remembered for their contributions to New Zealand society, and to New Zealand journalism in particular. It is a fact that since the war he has been forgotten and it was one of the tasks of this project to discover why. This thesis has attempted an answer.

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## Appendix A

### Conditions of employment

(Published in *The New Zealand Times*, March 2, 1915.)

1. The selection in New Zealand of a correspondent is subject to confirmation by the Imperial Government, and until such confirmation the provisional appointment will not take effect.
2. The correspondent, after confirmation of his appointment, will be required to leave New Zealand for either Egypt or England as the Government may direct. A return saloon passage to and from either Egypt or England will be provided at the cost of the Government, in the event of the first passage being to Egypt, the cost of the subsequent voyage to and from England will also be provided.
3. The correspondent is in all matters to be subject to the direction of the New Zealand Government and of the High Commissioner for New Zealand, and must comply with any specific directions received.
4. His principal duties will be to remain as near as possible to the New Zealand forces at the seat of war, and to write regularly detailed accounts of the events in which the New Zealand forces are engaged, and of matters of especial interest to New Zealand and the New Zealand forces. If the New Zealand forces are divided into several sections he will be expected to travel, if permitted by the war authorities, from section to section, so that general information as to all the New Zealand forces may be obtained.
5. He must in all matters strictly submit to such limitations and restrictions as the Imperial military authorities impose. Subject to such strict compliance, he is expected to keep as near to the firing line as war correspondents of the press are usually permitted to approach.
6. He is not in any case to send news or information by cable to New Zealand. He is to send his despatches as frequently as possible by course of post to the High Commissioner in London, and he may, whenever he desires to send news of special and

urgent importance, send such news by telegram to the High Commissioner. The despatches sent to the High Commissioner by post or telegraph will be transmitted by the High Commissioner to New Zealand. The reasonable cost of such telegrams will be allowed. This condition applies only when the correspondent is with the forces on the Continent of Europe, Great Britain or Ireland. When in Egypt the correspondent is to send his despatches regularly by post to the Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, New Zealand. In this case he will not use either cable or telegraph.

7. He will be paid a salary at the rate of £450 per annum from date of his appointment until date of his return to New Zealand.

8. He will receive allowances at the rate of - 15/-per day except when with the forces on the Continent of Europe or when actually in Egypt. In Egypt he will receive allowances of £1per diem. When at the seat of war in any part of the Continent of Europe the allowances will be £2 -10-00 per diem.

9. No further allowances will be made for transit or living expenses. The correspondent is expected, out of the respective allowances to make provision for his transit and locomotion and all other expenses.

10. The Government reserves the right to terminate the appointment at any time upon one month's notice to the correspondent, who, in that event, must return to New Zealand, and will be paid his salary until a reasonable approximate date for his arrival in New Zealand.

11. The correspondent is expected in his despatches and otherwise, to provide material to be used ultimately for a history of the part taken by the New Zealand troops in the war. He is therefore expected to make himself acquainted generally with the disposition of all Imperial forces and also of the enemy at the points where the New Zealand forces are associated.

12. It is impossible to define, with complete accuracy in advance, all the duties of the correspondent, and it is, therefore, a necessary condition that the Government has power to add other conditions and directions to those above stated. Generally, the correspondent is to supply news from the seat of war of special interest to New Zealand

of the nature generally supplied by press correspondents at the war; and also to supply material ultimately for a history of the part taken by the New Zealand troops, and is to be subject to the orders and directions of the New Zealand Government and of the High Commissioner.

## APPENDIX B

### Me!

(Published in *The Observer*, April 10, 1915, p. 4)

I leave New Zealand to her fate.

I go without a qualm

I go my pen to agitate.

I go the Turks to calm.

I-e'en Myself, yea -truly Me!

I who have Massey led;

I leave to let the whole earth know

I did it "on my head."

I leave to counsel Johnny French.

I, Kitchener's right hand!

I teach Duke Nick to dig a trench;

I lead the bally band!

My orders to My Cabinet;

My crested seals conceal.

My understudies brow not yet

My gauntlet's made of steel.

My useful scholar Liverpool

My fiat has in hand.

My genial, gentle over-rule

My man will understand.

I leave the Church, the Press, the State;

I take my brains with Me.

I fear to save them is too late;

I, who am I - d'ye see?

My photograph is on the shelf;

My alphabet close by.

My single letter by itself,

My universal "I."

My Doidge, My Waters and My Hall

My little strivers who

My job attempted to forestall,

My Massey tried to woo -

My ear in which to pour a tale;

My earmarked little perk;

My boarder William shall prevail,

My oracle to work!

-149

## APPENDIX C

### **The Battle of Sari Bair**

**by Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett**

**1915**

The great battle, the greatest fought on the Gallipoli Peninsula, closed on the evening of August 10th.

Both armies then busily engaged in consolidating their new positions, in taking stock of gains and losses, replenishing their ammunition and munitions, and reorganizing the divisions, brigades, and battalions which of necessity became intermingled in this rugged, mountainous country.

I have visited the ground over which the Anzac corps advanced in its desperate efforts, extending over four consecutive days, to reach the crest of Sari Bair, commanding the ridge overlooking the Dardanelles.

The New Zealand infantry, the Gurkhas, and some other battalions almost reached the objective, but were unable, through no fault of their own, to hold their position. A battalion of Gurkhas actually reached the crest of the plateau, but the Turks, taking advantage of the confusion, counter-attacked in great force, and the gallant men from the hills were driven from the crest to the lower spurs beneath.

It was a bitter disappointment to have to relinquish the crest when it almost seemed to be within their grasp after so many months, but there was no alternative. The Anzac corps fought like lions and accomplished a feat of arms in climbing these heights almost without a parallel. All through, however, they were handicapped by the failure of the corps to make good its positions on the Anafarta hills, further north, and thus check the enemy's shell fire.

When all the details of these complicated arrangements are collected and sifted, they will form one of the most fascinating pages of the history of the whole war. It was a combat of giants in a giant country, and if one point stands out more than another it is the marvellous hardihood, tenacity, and reckless courage shown by the Australians and New Zealanders.

The main force debouched from the Anzac position in Lone Pine - a position situated on a plateau 400 feet high, southeast of the Anzac lines. The Australians rushed forward to the assault with the fury of fanatics, taking little heed of the tremendous shrapnel fire and enfilading rifle fire.

On reaching the trenches the great difficulty was to force a way in, for the cover was so strong and heavy it had to be torn away by main force. Groups of men effected entrances at various points and jumped in on top of the Turks, who fought furiously, caught as they were, in a trap.

Some surrendered, but the majority chose to die fighting. In every trench and sap and dugout desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place, four lines of trenches being captured in succession, and fresh infantry being poured in as the advancing lines were thinned by losses.

In this fighting bombs played the most important role, and it was only by keeping up and increasing the supply that the Australians were able to hold the position after it had been won. The Turks massed their force, and for three nights and days made desperate counter-attacks, frequently retaking sections of the line, only to be driven out again.

In this extraordinary struggle, which took place almost under ground, both sides fought with utter disregard of life. The wounded and dead choked the trenches almost to the top, but the survivors carried on the fight over heaps of bodies. In spite of immense reinforcements, with most determined courage the Australians held the ground thus won, and finally the Turks wearied of the struggle.

The trenches were now merely battered shambles, and the task of removing the dead and wounded took days to accomplish. The bodies of 1,000 Turks and Colonials were removed from the trenches alone, while hundreds of others lie outside. The total Turkish losses in this section alone are estimated at 5,000, chiefly incurred in furious counterattacks, among which each bomb burst with fearful effect.

The capture of Lone Pine is the most desperate hand-to-hand fight that has taken place on the peninsula, but this was but a diversion and preliminary to the main movement northward, which began the same evening under cover of darkness.

No finer feat has been accomplished in the course of the war than the manner in which the troops destined for the main movement against Sari Bair Ridge were deployed for the attack. Millions of rounds of ammunition and thousands of shells were successfully concentrated at advanced posts without the enemy becoming aware of the movement. Neither did he know of the strong reinforcements which had reached the Australian corps. All this required the utmost skill, and was successfully kept a profound secret.

It was at 9 p.m., August 6th, when the force crept forward from the outposts. For nights past the navy had thrown searchlights on this and other lower positions and had bombarded them at frequent intervals. This procedure was not departed from on the 6th, and the Turks had no suspicion of the coming attack. When the lights were switched on to another position the Australians dashed forward and speedily captured the positions in succession, and throughout the night Bauchop's Hill and Big and Little Table Tops were occupied.

By the morning of the 7th our whole force was holding the front and slowly moving toward the main Sari Bair position in face of great difficulties, harassed by the enemy's snipers and checked by the difficulties of the ground and the scarcity of water. It was decided to postpone a further advance until nightfall. The forces were reorganized into three columns.

For the final assault on Chunuk Bair, which was timed to begin at dawn on August 9th, large reserves from another division were thrown into the firing line to assist the New Zealand and Indian infantry, and the men, as far as possible, rested through the day and the early part of the night.

The advance on the morning of the 9th was preceded by a heavy bombardment of Chunuk Bair and Q Hill by the naval and land guns. The advance of No. 3 column was delayed by the broken nature of the ground and the enemy's resistance.

Meanwhile the Gurkhas charged gallantly up the slope of Sari Bair, and actually succeeded in reaching the heights on the neck between Chunuk Bair and Q Hill. It was from here that they looked down on the Dardanelles, but were unfortunately unable to hold the position in face of violent counter-attacks and heavy shell fire.

During this time the Turks counter-attacked the left column in great strength, and the column was compelled to withdraw to the lower slopes of Sari Bair.

Meantime throughout the day and night the New Zealanders succeeded in maintaining their hold on Chunuk Bair, although the men were thoroughly exhausted. During the night of the 9th the exhausted New Zealanders were relieved by two other regiments. At dawn the Tenth Regiment of the Turks, which had been strongly reinforced, made a desperate assault on our lines from Q Hill and Chunuk Bair.

To the strength of a division, in successive lines, they hurled themselves, quite regardless of their lives, on the two regiments which, after desperate resistance, were driven from their position by artillery fire and sheer weight of numbers further down the slopes of Chunuk Bair.

Following up their success, the Turks charged right over the crest and endeavoured to gain the great gully south of Rhododendron Ridge, evidently with the intention of forcing their way between our lines and the Anzac position. But they had reckoned without our artillery and ships' guns. This great charge of four successive lines of infantry in close formation was plainly visible to our warships and all our batteries on land.

In this section the Turks were caught in a trap. The momentum of their charge down hill prevented them from recoiling in time, and they were swept away by hundreds in a terrific storm of high explosive shrapnel, and common shells from the ships' guns and our howitzers and field pieces.

As the shells from the ships exploded, huge chunks of soil were thrown into the air, amid which you saw human bodies hurled aloft and then chucked to earth or thrown bodily into deep ravines. But even this concentrated artillery fire might not have checked the Turkish advance, unless it had been assisted by the concentrated fire of ten machine guns at short range. For half an hour they maintained a rapid fire until the guns smoked with heat.

During the whole of this time the Turks were pouring across the front in dense columns, attempting to attack our men. Hardly a Turk got back to the hill. Their lines got mixed up in a wedge as those in front tried to retire while others pressed them from the rear. Some fled back over the crest, seeking to regain their trenches; others dashed downward to the ravines. In a few minutes the entire division had been broken up and the survivors scattered everywhere.

If they succeeded in driving us from the crest of Chunuk Bair, the Turks paid a terrible price for their success. Thus closed, amid these bloodstained hills, the most ferocious and sustained "soldiers' battle" since Inkerman.

Source: *Source Records of the Great War, Vol. III*, ed. Charles F. Horne, *National Alumni* 1923

URL: [http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/saribair\\_bartlett.htm](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/saribair_bartlett.htm)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **WAR NEWS**

#### **THE FIGHT FOR CHUNUK BAIR**

#### **NEW ZEALANDERS STORM THE HEIGHTS**

#### **FIERCE FIGHTING ON THE RIDGE**

#### **ONSLAUGHTS BY BRAVE TURKS**

(From Malcolm Ross, Official Correspondent with the New Zealand Forces.)

No, 3 Outpost, 8th August.

By 5.45 a.m. on Saturday, the 7th August, the Otago, Wellington, and Auckland Regiments had joined up on Rhododendron Ridge, and were about to attack their objective, Chunuk Bair, the curving outline of which we could see clear out against the eastern sky, some distance back, and several hundred feet above.

A slight diversion was caused by the appearance of two aeroplanes, one a Taube and one an English machine. For a time we were thrilled with the expectation of a duel in the air overhead, but the speedy German machine made off in a great hurry, with a thin bluish line of vapour streaming from his exhaust.

The English pilot followed him for a while, and then turned and went on with his observations. Off shore the balloon was up above its mother ship, and a vessel was shelling in the direction of Anafarta, searching, no doubt, for a four-gun battery that had come into action against the landing.

Our wounded were being brought into a dressing station not far from the beach. Turkish wounded were also being carried in and attended to, and by this time there were 200 prisoners within our lines. The Turkish prisoners were given food and water. Three hospital ship stood out in the offing.

About 9 a.m. there was a lull in the firing, and sometimes a full second would pass without a rifle shot being fired. The ships' guns were silent. Half an hour later, however, the bombardment was resumed with an ear-straining noise. By this time the New Zealand Infantry Brigade had advanced well up the slope of the hill, but, as they had to run the gauntlet of fire from the Turkish trenches, and also from a mountain gun, they were held up for the time being. They were being enfiladed from Battleship Hill on their right.

Meantime, the Turks had appeared on the crest of the hill, and we could see them quite plainly against the skyline. One big man came bravely out into the open and waved his men on. Some of them came over the crest of the ridge and down the slope for about 100 yards towards our troops; but they were met with bursts of shrapnel from our howitzers, and we saw several drop.

The officer bravely urged them on again and again, but finally they gave it up, and retreated over the ridge top. The ships were signalled, and they soon were searching the ridge with shrapnel and high explosive. We saw some Turks drop, but once they had retreated over the skyline and on to the reverse slopes they were comparatively safe. In a saucer-shaped hollow on the shoulder of Chunuk Bair we could see our reserves clustered.

They remained there all that day, the next night, and most of them also during the following night, and seemed fairly safe from the enemy's fire. A second bombardment by the navy hit all along the ridge, but the Turks had got into safety, so it was decided to discontinue the gunfire till nightfall, such of our own guns as could reach the position registering upon it in the meantime.

For the present the New Zealanders had failed to reach their objective. That evening a long line of Kitchener's Army, as it is called, headed by the "East Lancs.," poured out of the communication trench, filled their bottles at the water depot, and proceeded under cover of the night to take up their position in the firing line on the left. They seemed a likely looking lot, well disciplined, and well trained.

They had had a few days in the trenches at Helles, but this was something different even from Helles, and very different from England. They were to be tested under very strange conditions, and in very unfamiliar surroundings.

In the "Rest" valley in which they had spent the night quietly waiting, they had had quite a number of casualties. They were, however, in very good spirits, and made inquiries if there was any "foitin' " to be found about here. We assured them that there was — just a little.

*Grey River Argus*, October 23, 1915, p. 6.

## APPENDIX E

### On Gallipoli - the attack in August - what the New Zealanders did

The following are extracts from a despatch of Mr Malcolm Ross describing the New Zealanders part in the operations early in August. The despatch has been heavily censored and further reduced by us. It is dated from No 3 Outpost August 7 & 8.

By Malcolm Ross

Dated August 7 & 8

Published *The Press*, October 14, 1915.

It was the afternoon of Friday 6th August and we had ascertained that a big attack was contemplated on the northern Turkish position. There were also rumours of another landing on a large scale just to the north of our farthest position on the extreme left – No 3 outpost held by the Otago Mounted Rifles – who had been for some time in the trenches – and a number of the Maori Contingent.

As the New Zealanders were on the left wing and that corner of the field promised to be specially interesting, I left Anzac in company with a general and one of his staff and walked through the long communication trench to the outpost.

Punctually at 5pm a howitzer fired the first shot in the general bombardment that was to precede the attack.

At the outpost the Otago colonel was preparing to lead his men into battle as soon as the shades of night fell. He was, as ever, cheery and brave. In the dusk outside his dugout we sat and chatted of the prospects for the night attack. The men, he said, were eager and in high spirits, although they knew there was stiff work ahead. We listened to two of them soberly discussing with a strong Scottish accent, the question of whether one the eve of a battle whether a man should shake hands with his chum or not.

With the old Covenantan spirit, they decided that there should be no such good-byes. With these words, the gallant colonel buckled on his armour and went off with his regiment and a platoon of Maoris into the darkness. He succeeded in accomplishing the task that had been set him that night and more. Sad to tell, he was shot through the head and spine after a dashing charge at the head of 150 of his men into a Turkish trench.

All night long the bombardment and the crackle of the Turkish fire continued. The staff worked throughout the night and scarcely anyone got to sleep. At 4pm the guns of the navy were firing rapidly on the Turkish positions. I had been asleep for two hours and woke to find a figure apparently dead in front of my bivouac.

Presently he moved, sat up and rubbed his eyes and I saw that he was wounded. "My word, that's quick firing," he said, "they are rocking it in, aren't they?" As dawn came I saw that it was his arm that was injured. He was in some pain and was very grimy, with blood on his bare knees, between the puttees and the shorts; but he was cheerful and talkative.

He had been out on the left with three squadrons of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles.

They marched along the flat for 500 yards and then inland for another 300 yards when the Turks opened fire.

The Canterbury men drove off the enemy at this point, but on reaching a scrubby knoll about 150 yards further on a Turkish machine-gun opened fire on their right flank. The New Zealanders charged and took the gun, though the Turks met them with the bayonet. Finally the Canterbury "Mounteds" got into the Turkish trenches at the point of the bayonet.

It was here that my newly-found acquaintance was wounded. "That", he said, "was where I finished. I got a Turk in the throat with the first thrust just as he got me in the arm.". This man also was loud in his praise of the Maoris, who after the work of bayoneting the Turkish trenches was finished, went plugging on through the scrubby slopes searching the enemy bivouacs for further victims.

Their losses in comparison to their numbers were considerable. To put the Turks off on a wrong tack, there had been for some time previously indications of another landing at Gaba Tepe, just south of the Australian position, and the Turks, utterly misled, had been furiously digging and strengthening this position. Secretly and silently large numbers of new troops had been landed in places and terraces where they could not be observed from the air. They were packed in like sardines.

While the fight at Lonesome Pine was going on these troops were moved out in the darkness to our left flank. There were thousands of them and the operation was a difficult one, because they had to go along a single road on the beach. This road had been made under cover of the darkness and was cunningly constructed so that it could not be recognised as a road by the hostile aeroplanes. A comprehensive plan of action had apparently been carefully thought out in connection with the operations on the left flank.

The first thing to be done was to send a covering force from Nos 2 and 3 outposts, our extreme left, to take certain hills that would have prevented the main body of the attacking force from getting out. These positions are what are known to us as the old No 3 post, Table Top, Little Table Top and Bauchop's Hill. This attack, which was to be a night one, with the bayonet only, was assigned to the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade and the Maoris.

Another covering force was sent out to take Damat Selik Bair on the extreme left just over the Aghyl Dere, now a dry watercourse. The troops commenced to form up for this attack about 7.30pm Others began to pour out of the end of our long communication trench and with the assistance of guides, to march slowly and silently to the various points of attack assigned them.

On the left the Turks, as at other points, were at close quarters and strongly entrenched on a series of rugged, scrub-covered hills intersected with deep water-worn ravines extending from a little flat near the centre of Ocean Beach to the long curving ridge of Chunuk Bair about 850 feet high and 2200 yards inland. The whole country is most difficult and puzzling from the military point of view to anyone who has not been over it and studied it thoroughly.

Under cover of darkness the Otago and Canterbury Mounted Infantry went out to attack Bauchop's Hill. This was likely to prove a hard nut to crack. The position once gained

would protect the advance of the Indian Brigade led by the Ghurkhas on the left, while on the other side it would protect the left flank of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade. In the meantime the objective of the Otago men was a scrub-covered spur below the higher ridge of Chunuk Bair named Rhododendron Spur, the Ghurkhas would eventually have to fight up the steep brush-wood slopes – ideal fighting country for them.

The Auckland Regiment left from No 2 Outpost a little to the south of No 1 and marched up a valley past the Fisherman's Hut Ridge. They then turned sharp left in front of the old No 3 post, which we once held for two or three days. It had been occupied for some time past by a body of Turks who were well entrenched and the attack had to be made up a precipitous face.

The Wellington regiment had to gain a footing on Destroyer Hill and then up another precipitous cliff on to a little bit of level ground known as "Table Top" and which is attached to Rhododendron Spur. The Maoris were distributed amongst the force – one platoon with the Otago men attacking Bauchop's Hill, one platoon with the New Zealand Infantry attacking Table Top, the rest of the contingent being held in reserve. The men were told not to load their magazines for this was to be a night attack and the bayonet only had to be used.

Both officers and men had broad bands of white calico sewn on their coat sleeves and a big square patch of the same material sewn on the backs of their coats – a necessary precaution in an attack on a dark night, so that in the general melee in the scrub and the trenches friend should not be bayoneting friend but only the enemy.

The regiment going out on the left soon met with rifle fire from Turks concentrated in the scrub and the Maoris soon dashed on to the front. One or two of the other parties had a little difficulty in following the exact line of route. Apart from these incidents the plan laid down worked out well and the New Zealanders did all that was asked of them. Punctually at 9pm a destroyer standing close in flashed a strong searchlight on the land and began to fire on the Turkish trenches for ten minutes.

Her guns were silent for another ten minutes. Then there was another ten minutes bombardment. The firing was so close that the pungent smell of the propelling powder was wafted on shore by the light sea breeze. Our men charged into the Turkish trenches with great élan, bayoneting right and left. Trench after trench was cleared and many of the Turks broke and ran. Of these a number were bayoneted and when daylight came others were either shot or taken prisoner. Few escaped.

One could only follow the fight from the flash and rattle of the Turkish rifles, the cheering of our men and the wild shouts of the Maoris. Once their blood was up the Maoris fought magnificently. Charging into the Turkish trenches they were more than a match for even the hefty Turk, who, for the first time in history, listened to the wild war cries of the Ngapuhi and other famous tribes resounding among the hills and dales of Sari Bair.

By dawn the position sought for had been won and at a moderate sacrifice, considering the difficulty of the operation. But there was still sterner work ahead. The force which the New Zealand general had at his disposal for the operations on the left wing was a strong one and one that was largely representative of the Empire.

While the initial attack was going on, the assaulting columns of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade moved partly along the communication trench and partly along the new beach road – and entered the three ravines. The Wellington regiment on the right went up the Sazli Bait Dere and the remainder of this force moved up the Chalik Dere, the objective of this column being the Rhododendron Ridge, a predominant feature of the Sari Bair Ranges.

The left assaulting column moved further to the north and entered the Arghyl Dere. The advance of the assaulting column commenced at 10pm on Friday and the heads of the columns soon met with opposition, which necessitated picketing the heights. It meant putting men on every little spur they reached. The ground over which these operations had to be conducted was bristling with difficulties and complicated contours. During the whole of the night the fighting was continuous. Our troops were forbidden to fire. The bayonet only was used.

This plan had the great advantage that there was no danger of our troops firing into one another. It also had this advantage: that the Turkish fire soon disclosed the positions of the enemy. Frequent cheers and the warlike cries of the Maoris resounded through the glens. Many Turks were killed and a large number of prisoners were taken. Our casualties also were large but up to the present there has been no opportunity of making any reliable estimate.

Before this letter reaches New Zealand the full take will be told. It says a great deal for the care taken and the secrecy observed that both the concentration and the attack came as a great surprise to the enemy. Many Turks were found asleep in their dugouts and in many cases they were undressed. Prisoners, of whom many were taken, afterwards admitted that they had no previous warning of our attack. Dawn was rapidly breaking and the long column was still stretched out in comparatively open country.

Had it been caught in this position when daylight came it must inevitably have suffered much, both from rifle, machine-gun and shell fire. The columns however, were hurriedly ensconced in the numerous valleys and hollows that abound and when the light grew strong enough for the guns to shoot there was no target at which they could fire.

Table 1 : War correspondents at Gallipoli in 1915

Dates	Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett	Lester Lawrence	Charles Bean	Compton Mackenzie	Malcolm Ross	Henry Newnson	Herbert Russell	Sydney Moseley	Charlie Smith	Peter Schuler	George Ward Price	Keith Murdoch	Ernest Brooks
1/04/1915													
1/05/1915													
1/06/1915													
1/07/1915													
1/08/1915													
1/09/1915													
1/10/1915													
1/11/1915													
1/12/1915													
31/12/1915													

Table 2

Reportage by Publication

