

B
Name

Subject Margaret Best Pye
Barbara McComb.

Address

40 Esmond Road, Takapuna,
Auckland, N.Z., New Zealand.

School Attended

Takapuna Grammar School, Lake Road,
Takapuna, Auckland, N.Z., New Zealand.

Date of Birth

The Effects of the 1939-1945 War
on

New Zealand

The extreme distance that separates New Zealand from the main centres of the world was the main cause of our escaping most of the trials connected with war, but we did not escape the after effects that inevitably follow every war. Although not as bad as those suffered by European countries, the effects on New Zealand are many and varied.

Of the thousands who sailed from New Zealand, several hundred returned injured, both physically and mentally. The physically disabled are employed under the Returned Servicemen's Rehabilitation Scheme, a recent innovation where the men are taught to make various articles. This organisation also gives financial assistance to returned servicemen who wish to establish themselves

in business. The mentally sick were committed to mental hospitals on their return. There they receive treatment and will eventually prove an asset to their community through the articles made under the expert guidance of an Occupational Therapy Instructor. The Returned Servicemen's Association also caters for those who returned fit and well. Functions and reunions are organised, at which ex-servicemen can maintain contact with wartime pals, and exchange yarns with others who were also overseas during the war.

New Zealand remembers with pride those of her sons who gave their lives that succeeding generations might enjoy the free life they enjoyed. Nearly every school and town in New Zealand honours those members of its community who did not return, by erecting beautiful and lasting memorials. The money required for the completion of these projects is subscribed by grateful citizens who wish to repay part of their debt to those brave men.

An almost universal effect of the war was rationing which was shared by New Zealand too.

Although she could supply most of the necessary food, clothing, with furniture and bedding was very scarce because of the danger to ships travelling any distance.

Books and films based on war experiences

have enlightened many people as to the revolting facilities in prison camps, and the dreadful tortures inflicted upon prisoners by the ruthless Germans.

Human stories of escapades in occupied countries and of escapes planned in prison camps never fail to arouse heart-felt sympathy and at the same time sincere admiration for the courage shown under such adverse conditions.

With the treatment of Allied prisoners of war made public, New Zealanders grew to hate the German sadists. Later on however, when it was realised that the majority of ordinary German peasants did not understand about the war at all but were snared by propaganda, the hate soon turned to pity for the unfortunate folk.

The importance of a well organised and disciplined army was seen clearly by all New Zealanders.

As several regiments moved in accordance with one another, harassing the enemy, the people waiting at home could see that the manoeuvres would have failed utterly were it not for the quick action of the troops participating. This has made the young -year-olds resolve to do their utmost at all times.

The friendship between New Zealand and the United States of America was deepened

considerably when the United States Navy came so promptly to our aid when invasion by the Japanese seemed inevitable. Staying in New Zealand until the danger had passed, the United States Navy earned for the American people the undying gratitude of all New Zealanders. Had it not been for that timely check on the progress of the Japanese army, New Zealanders would perhaps lead a very different life to that which is enjoyed today.

It was through this encounter with the Americans brief though it was, that New Zealanders picked up most of the slang expressions that punctuate their speech.

The effect the last war had on the country side of New Zealand is readily observed. Although not nearly as bad as the devastations caused by bombs in other lands, large tracts of land have been rendered useless. On some of the more secluded beaches, the tangled barbed-wire defences still dangle aimlessly down the cliffs. Often the small barbs are interposed with the sand, which is very dangerous to the bare feet of New Zealanders.

Scattered along New Zealand's irregular coastline at vantage points near the tops of old machine-gun emplacements. Thankfully, they were never called to action, so, unwittingly the terrible war has just provided another hideout for

young boys. The pungent odour of the neglected shelter does not deter the young boys from coming back each day and continuing the game.

Placed along the coast at strategic points are old military defences. These huts are slowly falling down and only a few remain standing. The stout fences reinforced with barbed wire have resisted all attempts to destroy them and still effectively keep out all but the most persistent boys. To see these strong fences enclosing dilapidated huts is certainly a comic sight, and one that provokes a good many comments.

Rusting tin helmets and mugs, as well as other relics of the anxious times spent in the huts, are easily discernible through the wire. These almost seem to have been left on purpose to remind all who gaze at them what a terrible thing war is. When war breaks out people lose all they hold dear. Happiness, relations and possessions are all destroyed, and replaced only by misery and pain. This deplorable state is often brought on by man's lust for power and glory; an insatiable lust which costs many innocent people their lives.

Miners have been found anchored close to New Zealand's shores, showing how far south the Japanese

penetrated. Several mines were washed ashore and now command a prominent position in nearby towns.

Hundreds more mines remained secure and exploded ships ignorant of the mines' proximity. These mines were laid in alarming profusion and destroyed several ships carrying valuable cargoes. Recent salvage operations have recovered all the unperishable valuable cargoes, but the remaining freight is at the mercy of the sea.

During the years 1939-1945 New Zealand received and cared for, evacuees. When the war ended they returned home with numerous stories of New Zealand.

Quite a few of the war visitors returned and have made their homes here. As well as immigrants from the British Isles, New Zealand has received "new New Zealanders" from many other European countries; especially those occupied by the Germans. Americans too, have returned and settled here. This influx of new settlers, just after the war, especially from occupied lands, can only be accounted for by the war.

New Zealand, realising the wisdom of being prepared for war at all times, is taking steps to build up her forces. Experienced men are being bought from England to train, and at the same time expand the numbers in, the forces.

New and improved weapons were used for the

first time in World War II, and this has prompted scientists to further their research and produce weapons still more effective. Improved equipment has been issued to Her Majesty's New Zealand Forces, which ensures that New Zealand will again assume a prominent part in a third World War, if it should so come to pass.

In New Zealand, as in other countries, all boys are required by law to enlist at the Army Recruiting Office on their eighteenth birthday. These lads are called up in drafts of three thousand to undergo three months' general training. Camp life is not new to them however, as the Cadet Corps are compulsorily joined by all boys attending Secondary School.

Unless medically unfit, all boys at school are trained in various aspects of life in the forces. If any boys prove exceptionally proficient and reliable, they are trained as officers, and are placed in command of younger boys. Although Compulsory Military Training and the Schools Cadet Corps were originally instituted at the close of the first World War, both lapsed a short time after and were not continued again until directly after the second World War. It was then that the advantage of being prepared for war at short notice was stressed.

Alarmed by the menace created by the Japanese in the Pacific, New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America have signed pacts whereby the remaining two countries rally to the assistance of the third if in danger of war. As well as ensuring the aid of at least two strong countries in times of stress, the pacts promote friendship and goodwill between the people of the three countries; a valuable asset in this turbulent world.

In a determined effort to avoid another show of bloodshed like that of 1939-1945, several Peace Conferences have been held. These talks, held by the United Nations Organisation, have almost every land in the world represented, and each has a chance to put forward motions. The object of these vital talks is to try to reach a plane of universal understanding whereby former antagonists can live peacefully with each other. It is here that New Zealand proves herself capable, although still very young, of assuming an active part in world affairs. Several of her delegates have put forward suggestions which have proved a great help. No mean achievement, this, for such a young but vigorous, land.

During the years of World War II, the yield of New Zealand's fertile countryside was ample to

satisfy the needs of her people, and still have some food remaining. This surplus was made up into food parcels which were distributed throughout the United Kingdom.

This gesture was warmly appreciated by the severely rationed Britons, and it was a gesture that founded hundreds of friendships. These are lasting friendships which have been proved over and over again. The generous hospitality shown to New Zealanders visiting the British Isles has more than repaid the debt owing, if, indeed, such debts ever exist between two countries with such close associations.

The love and respect held for our beloved Royal Family was kindled anew when the members of the British Empire realised that King George VI and his queen consort, Elizabeth, were not servants of their people in name only. They showed their love for their subjects when they shared the ordeal of war with them. That was a noble and unselfish action, especially when they could so easily have escaped to Canada.

That one decision did more to unite the British Empire than anything else could have.

It is now perhaps obvious how the effects of the last war are many and varied. We have lost friends and relations who died for us, but we have won the friendship and admiration of the peoples of

distant lands. Precious land has been laid waste for
defences, but we have cared and provided for the men
who ensured our safety and happiness. I feel justified
in quoting New Zealand's motto: 'Onward!', and proudly
claiming that she has lived up to it in every
respect.

References: None.