

# New Zealand Rifle Brigade, 1915-1916

## Introduction

This article can be read in the context of the Senussi Uprising, and as background information for the units that participated in the suppression of the Senussi Uprising in 1915-16.

## New Zealand Rifle Brigade

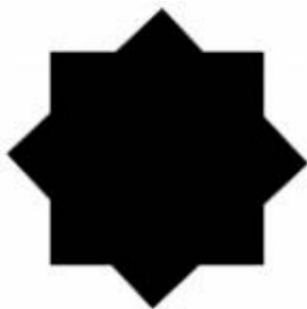


*Arthur Foljambe, Earl of Liverpool.*  
From The Governor-General of New Zealand.

One of the units that makes a brief appearance during the fighting in Egypt is the wartime regiment, the New Zealand Rifle Brigade.

The then New Zealand Governor, Arthur Foljambe [1](#)), Earl of Liverpool, was a former officer in The Rifle Brigade, and as such gave the regiment its name and traditions.

After a short time as The Trentham Regiment, from May to October 1915, the regiment became the New Zealand Rifle Brigade and adopted the same horizontal gun alignment and rapid rate of march (140 paces per minute, as opposed to the infantry's normal 120 paces) as the parent regiment. Similarly, black uniform buttons were worn, also a hunting tradition.



*Shoulder badge [2](#))* \_\_  
*New Zealand Rifle Brigade.*  
From Source 1.

1915: The Trentham Regiment (Earl of Liverpool's Own)

1915: The New Zealand Rifle Brigade (Earl of Liverpool's Own)

1916: The regiment's battalions form the 3rd Brigade of the New Zealand Infantry Division

1919: The regiment is disbanded.



*New Zealand Infantry, c. 1918.*

Drawn by Harry Payne.

Contemporary postcard from  
the "Colonial badges and their Wearers"  
series, No. 3160,  
published by Raphael Tuck & Sons "Oilette".

The regiment's traditions are carried on today by 7th Wellington (City of Wellington's Own) and Hawke's Bay Battalion Group [3](#).

The back of the card contains the following information:

*"By many brave and heroic deeds has the motto of the New Zealand fighting man "Onward", been upheld by these smart and soldierly troops.*

*Proudly they will be able to tell their sons and grandsons how they helped the Mother Country in her hour of need in the Great War.*

*Their hats are distinguished by the bands, red for infantry and green for Light Cavalry. The cap badge formerly was one plain fern leaf, but the one here shown is now universally used."*

The available sources do not state whether the New Zealand Rifle Brigade wore a special colored cap band, and probably carried the infantry's red coat of arms. See the article [New Zealand Army Corps Puggarees \(Digger History\)](#) for information on weapon colors and cap bands.

The above-mentioned fern leaf was worn as a collar badge by some of the soldiers who later joined as personnel compensation. On the label were the letters ELO - Earl of Liverpool's Own [4](#)). —



*New Zealand.*

Card No. 15 in the Colonial & Indian Army Badges series, John Player & Sons, 1917.

The back of the card contains the following information:

*"This badge was first worn by the original NZ Expeditionary Force on their well-known "slouch" hats. It illustrates a fern leaf - the emblematic leaf of New Zealand - and the same design on a smaller scale is worn by the NZ Staff Officers as a collar badge."*



*Soldiers from New Zealand going to the Front.*

From a simultaneous postcard.

The characteristic *lemon squeezer* shape of the cap was introduced to the 11th Taranaki Rifles [5](#)) in 1911, and later became [a](#) model for other regiments. The style was introduced generally to the New Zealand Army in September 1916.

A black and white reproduction of the same motif in [Source 5](#) mentions that the building in the background is *The Law Courts* in London.

[Source 4](#) mentions that the New Zealand Rifle Brigade wore their caps in the lemon squeezer style, as

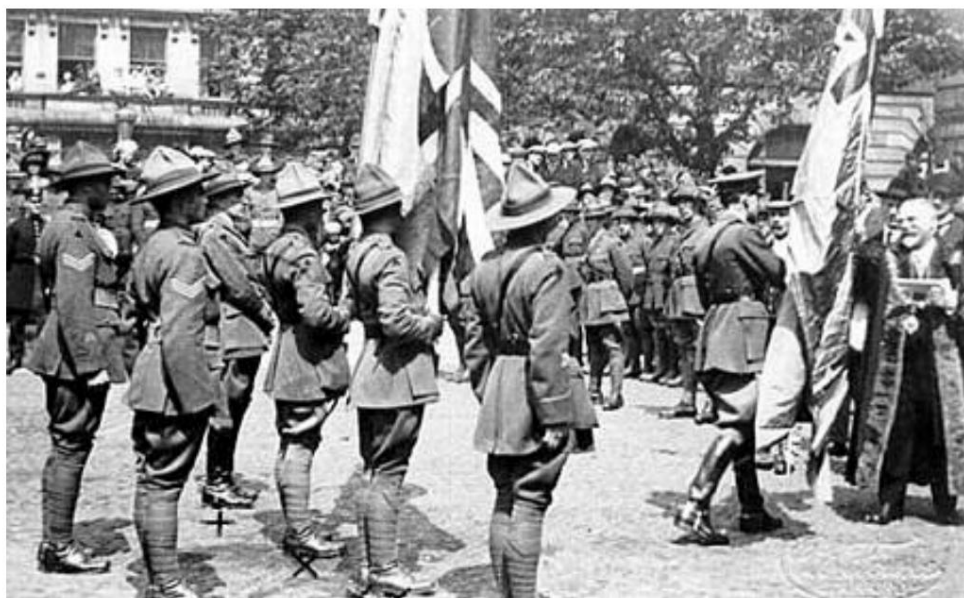
hunting unit did not shoulder rifles, but carried them horizontally. As a result, there was no need to hug the hat shade up, avoiding it colliding with the rifle. The four bumps also gave the advantage that no rainwater collected on the top of the hat!

**Table 1: Battalions of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Arrived in Egypt</b>
1st Battalion	April 1915	14 November 1915
2nd Battalion		
3rd Battalion	September 1915	March 13, 1916
4th Battalion		March 15, 1916

The four battalions were in March 1916 multiplied as the 3rd Brigade, New Zealand Division. The brigade left Alexandria on 7 April 1916, bound for France, where it served for the remainder of the war.

The book *Three Years with the New Zealanders* by Lieutenant Colonel CH Weston, Skeffington & Son, London 1918 (Project Gutenberg) gives an insight into the history of the New Zealand Infantry Division. See also a strength chart for the division in 1916 and 1918 (New Zealand Armed Forces Memorial Project).



*New Zealand Rifle Brigade leaving Stafford, 10 May 1919.*

From Staffordshire Past Track (Saving Sutherland for Staffordshire).

A 5th (Reserve) Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade, was created later. While the 3rd Brigade was deployed on the Western Front, the 5th Battalion acted as a replacement depot, garrisoned at Brocton (Staffordshire, England).

The source contains two more photographs from the farewell parade.

The commander of the 5th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel D. Prideaux-Brune, described the parade in a letter to the regiment's honorary colonel, Sir Leopold Swaine. The letter is reproduced in Source 3.

## Skirmishes in Egypt

1st Battalion (*Lieutenant-Colonel HT Fulton*) took part in two minor skirmishes against the Senussi west of Mersa Matruh:

- 25 December 1915 at Wadi Senab 23
- January 1916 at Wadi Majid

The 2nd Battalion was briefly deployed to guard the supply lines between Mersa Matruh and Daba.

The battalions then became part of the 3rd (New Zealand) Brigade, which was stationed at Moascar by the Suez Canal.

## Closing

The history of the regiment is described in:

*The official history of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade (The Earl of Liverpool's own) - Covering the period of service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Great War from 1915 to 1919* by Lieutenant Colonel William Semmers Austin, LT Watkins, Wellington/ New Zealand, 1924.

The extent of the book's mention of the effort against the Senussi is not known. The book is available as a reprint from Navel & Military Press.

## Sources

1. The New Zealand Rifle Brigade (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth).  
2nd New Zealand Rifle Brigade (Wikipedia).
3. Posts about, among other things New Zealand Rifle Brigade in the Great War Forum.
4. History - The Wellington Regiment (Wellington Scottish Pipes and Drums).
5. New Zealand's famous "Lemon Squeezer" slouch hats (Digger History)
6. *History of the Great War, Military Operations Egypt & Palestine, Volume I, From the outbreak of war with Germany to June 1917* by Lieutenant General Sir George Macmunn and Captain Cyril Falls, HSMO, London 1927. Available for loan from the Royal Garrison Library, catalog number 426261 .
7. Sir John Maxwell's Egypt Despatch (The Long, Long Trail).
8. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli (Te ara - An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand).
9. New Zealanders in France 1917-1918 (the origin cannot be traced; the page is available as a copy at Google).

Per Finsted

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### Notes:

- 1) See Arthur William de Brito Savile Foljambe, 2nd Earl of Liverpool (1870-1941) (Wikipedia).
- 2) Source 4 states that the mark in the field was also worn as a cap mark.
- 3) See 7th Wellington (City of Wellington's Own) and Hawke's Bay Battalion Group (New Zealand Army)
- 4) From NZ Rifle Brigade Reinforcements (Digger History).

5) At the same time, the shape of the hat reminded me of the peak of Mount Egmont (Mount Taranaki); see Mount Taranaki/Egmont (Wikipedia). The originator of the tradition was Lieutenant Colonel William George Malone (1859-1915), who continued the hat's shape in the *Wellington Battalion of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force*. See William George Malone (Dictionary of New Zealand Biography).