



**A Rededication Service for
Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland
1st New Zealand Machine Gun Company
Attached to 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade**

**1100 Tuesday 7 July 2025
Passchendaele New British Cemetery,
1's Graevestafelstraat, 8950 Zonnebeke, Belgium**

Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland



Killed in action during the Battle of Pongakamaka on 12 October 1917,
New Zealand's Darkest Day

General Thomas (left)
 Wolford in command (right),
 B. 2.



1926 Pipes - Field Marshall King's Own Pipes and Drums. Family and official party enter the cemetery from the westside, past the Great Cross and New Memorial to the right.

1926 *Walsley* - Captain James James, RN, 1926, New Zealand Infantry attacks the Germans.

Spending/Prayer - General Richard Clement

In gathering this morning to remember the sacrifice of so many during the First World War, as we give thanks to Almighty God especially for the life, service and sacrifice of Sgt Thomas McFarland, we remember that he gave his life for the cause of freedom and liberty, and as we pray that we would have the courage to honour his legacy by working for peace, justice and freedom in our present day, let us share things in the name of our Father, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A message of thanks from the family of Corporal Thomas McFarland

Mr Stephen McFarland for the family

Good morning. I don't want to be acknowledging. Good morning. Thank you for having us.]

We are deeply humbled and honoured to stand here with you today at the dedication of our Great Uncle Corp Thomas Nigel McFarland.

My name is Stephen McFarland, and I am here with my cousin Michael B. Linda McFarland, Linda's husband John, and my son Sebastian.

We are here to pay our respects on behalf of our fathers -- my father Kenneth James McFarland, and Michael's and Linda's father, Thomas Nigel McFarland.

Today is particularly meaningful for Linda and Michael as growing up, they always knew about their father's "father" uncle, the man for whom their father was named after. They would visit the Auckland War Memorial Museum and find his name on the Hall of Remembrance. They would look him up on the Carograph and remember the sacrifice he made.

That remembrance has carried across generations -- from brother to son, from father to children, and now to grandchildren and great-nephews standing here today.

Carpenter Thomas Nigel McFarland's grandparents, Benjamin and Stephen McFarland, were the first of our family to arrive in New Zealand. They travelled from Northern Ireland aboard the *Isle of Light* in 1862, the same year their son Charles William was born.

The family established deep roots in Invercargill, Auckland, particularly through St Andrew's Church, where Charles William later married Anna Hayes in 1884.

Their son, Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland, was born in 1890 in Auckland, the middle child of nine children. He had four older siblings, Charles, Violet, Edith & Robert, and four younger siblings, John, Isabella, Douglas & Olive.

Before enlisting, Thomas was working as an accountant in Lawrence, Otago, in New Zealand's South Island. It is a profession that has continued through our family, with my father and uncle becoming accountants — a quiet but meaningful connection for them across generations.

Thomas's older brother, Robert Stephenson McFarland, would go on to become our grandfather.

The bond between the two brothers was clearly a strong one. When Thomas was lost in war, Robert ensured his brother's memory would live on by naming one of his survivors after him.

Although we do not know as much about Thomas as we wish we did, his memory has always been part of our family's story.

More than one hundred years have passed, and still we remember.

Today's re-evaluation ensures that Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland's sacrifice — and the sacrifice of all those who served — will never be forgotten. Their courage and service helped secure the freedoms we enjoy today.

We would like to sincerely thank the New Zealand Defence Force, the New Zealand Embassy, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the researchers who worked so hard to identify and honour him. We would also like to thank The Paschenbade Volunteers, The Last Post Association, St George's Memorial Church and Field Marshal Haig's Own Pipe and Drum Band everyone here today for helping keep his memory alive.

Good night. May he be in good rest. (Thank you. May he rest in peace.)

Corporal McFarland – an insight into his service and loss

Revised by Captain James Barnes, MA, MCN

Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland died here at Puncunabute in 1945. When he died, he was a member of the 3rd New Zealand Machine Gun Company, part of the New Zealand Infantry Gun Corps. Corporal McFarland enlisted on the 34th of August 1934, he joined the 3rd Infantry Battalion as a private. He was wounded at Gallipoli on the 12th of May 1915 but later returned to his Battalion. In 1936 he transferred to the Machine Gun Corps and was promoted to the rank of Corporal on 28 September 1937. He was killed just 23 days later on 12 October 1937 on the day known as New Zealand's darkest day. He was aged 27.

The circumstances of his death are unclear. It is known that he did not die in the location of the machine guns, rather it appears he died in the vicinity of his Company headquarters and the headquarters of the 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade, to which his Company was attached. One source also mentions a dump. "They were farther rather than at the guns" they will never know but there are many possible reasons he may have been getting up to take orders from or providing location information to his company headquarters, collecting additional ammunition for the guns or simply told to move to the guns which were just a few hundred yards away. He may have been on his way to the frontline to man the guns and it is also possible, but less likely, that he was already mortally wounded and had been evacuated from the front line.

Unit War Stories and L.H. Lushcroft's With the Machine Gunners in France and Flanders indicates that 1st NZMG Coy suffered heavy casualties on 12 October. This Company spent four days and nights in the location that they then took up on the 13th of October 37. Captain Hager, 1st NZMG Coy sent a message that 12 when men were wounded and mending until were killed in action. The Orders and Rewards War Stories do not contain any direct references to Corporal McFarland's location during the battle of 12 October or reference to his death. Nor do the National Machine Gun Company Officer's message book or headquarters files for the 1st New Zealand Infantry Brigade and 1st New Zealand Rifle Brigade contain information regarding Corporal McFarland's location or death.

According to orders issued on 9 October, 10-27 36 guns assigned to 1st NZMG Coy were allocated to C, Group, under the command of Captain Hunter. "This company used in the barrage will be kept close by to replace casualties and help with supply of ammunition." C Group's objective was to move forward to Puncunabute. On 12 October, 1st NZMG Coy moved forward and passed Kerek of 200 yds. 1 hour, at

abandoned, the company was held up by machine gun fire. 1st NZMC Coy remained on the red line for the remainder of 11 October. Although the 1st NZMC Coy was located on the red line for the majority of the battle, Corporal McFarland was reported behind the front line, on the road near Kansas House. Kansas House was a crucial strategic site during the Battle of Fourheadbush. 1st NZMC Coy Headquarters was at Kansas House on 11 and 12 October, but moved forward to Karet in the early stages of the battle on 12 October, returning sometime before 5.00pm, where a "barrage" was prepared and a telephone communication line laid (although confined to 1/2 barrage on 12/10/1917).¹⁷ Captain Hapler noted that he and Captain Chapter (1st NZMC Coy) were at Kansas House and that Captain Cass (2nd NZMC Coy) "was only 100-1 hundred yards away". This demonstrates that personnel from several New Zealand Machine Gun Companies are present around Kansas House at this time. According to the CMHC, Corporal McFarland was reported "just a few hundred yards away" from Kansas House. The road on which Corporal McFarland was reported shunter between 1st NZMC Coy Headquarters at Kansas House and 2nd New Zealand Rifle Brigade Headquarters at Gullpost.

However, one handwritten entry in the 1st NZMC Coy Routine Orders book shows a list of Promotions dated 28 October 1917 and reads "1st NZMC Corporal McFarland to Acting Sergeant." The entry is crossed out but no reason is given. This promotion is not recorded in McFarland's personnel file. My suspicion is that the entry was crossed out after the news of his death.

This confused circumstance is brought into England's famous poem, "Memorial Tablet" which says "I died a fool – (They called it Fourheadbush)".

A total of 1766 New Zealand soldiers died during the Fourheadbush offensive in 1917. The vast majority were killed on 10 October 1917, during the Battle of Fourheadbush, a day remembered as New Zealand's "Darkest Day" when up to 1800 young men were killed in a matter of hours.

Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland was one of those men.

Reading – The Goodbye Letter “Tide”

“Wave your hand of the day back!” – A poem by Rudyard Kipling

Start this tide

“Where-farther think that left some back?”

Start with this wind-blowing, and tide-tide.

“Was anyone else had word of time?”

Start this tide

For what is lost and hardly come,

Start with this wind-blowing, and tide-tide.

“Oh, dear, what wonder can I find?”

Start this tide,

For any tide.

Forget he did not share his mind –

And even with that wind-blowing, and that tide.

Wave hand your hand up off the shore,

Sea side,

And wave tide!

Remember was the sea you here,

And gave to that wind-blowing and that tide!

Rudyard Kipling's wife and son, was killed in the Battle of Omer on 17 September 1918, aged 14. After the war Kipling visited the battlefields and war graves in Flanders, but he never saw his son's wife's grave. The body of his son was posthumously found in 1993. It lay in the grave of an unknown Irish Volunteer.

Waves and Blessing of the Goodbye – Reverend Richard (Pastor)

We now welcome this grave as the final resting place of Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland, in the name of Christ who died and rose again! This place stands as a sign of our remembrance, our Thanksgiving and our love. Lord, grant that your mercies through my eyes be known, in the sure knowledge that the new chapter in your story, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Placing of Flowers at the Headstone

Flowers laid by the family

Flowers laid by David (Nephew)

Flowers Cross placed by Mr Freddy Goolbsch MRCM

The Inhabitation – Captain James Barnes

There shall grow not old
In our hands are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them
All the world remembering them

The Last Post (The Last Post Installation)

Read Minute Silence

The Reveille

Refrain: Hymn – Mr Freddy Carter (1992)

'When you go historical there's a lot to see, for great memories, are given out today.'

Presentation of the New Zealand flag to the McFarland Family.

Family and official party move to the War Stone for the playing of 'somewhere'

Saying of Verses

- (1) The family of Corporal Thomas McFarland's widow
- (2) Ambassador (now Sir) Wong and Captain James Barnes
- (3) Representative of the town of Christchurch
- (4) The Belgian Defence Force
- (5) Mr David Peggitt for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

New Zealand & Belgium National Anthems – (unison/chorus)

The Lord's Prayer – All

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen

Family Portrait – Robert Stephenson McFarland

Robert Stephenson McFarland was the elder brother of Thomas Nigel McFarland. Robert survived the war and went on to build a life and family of his own.

In 1934, he married Isabel Margaret Hughes, and together they had two sons, Kenneth James McFarland and Thomas Nigel McFarland. The family first lived in Port Waikato before settling in Manurewa, Auckland. Robert spent much of his working life as a shepherd and later as a farmer. He remained deeply proud of his younger brother Thomas and, in his funeral, named one of his sons after him.

Lately, Robert passed away when his two boys were still very young. Robert and Isabel are both buried in the family plot at St Andrew's Church in Auckland.

Kenneth and Thomas were raised in Auckland, where they each went to university and raise families of their own.

Kenneth James McFarland married Patricia Lee-Lee in 1961. They had one son, Stephen James McFarland. Patricia still resides in East Auckland. Stephen later became the father of two children, Sebastian Jack McFarland and Mia-Louise McFarland.

Thomas Nigel McFarland married Linda Miller in 1968. Together they had two children, Michael Michael McFarland and Linda Diane Hall (née McFarland). Linda now lives in a retirement village in Auckland. Michael has three children: Joshua James, Thomas McFarland (husband Michael McFarland), and Emma Grace McFarland. Linda has one son, Sean Gary Hall.

Today, the descendants of Robert Stephenson McFarland—his grandchildren and great-grandchildren—continue to live in Auckland, New Zealand, carrying forward the family legacy and maintaining the connection to the McFarland name across generations.

The Kiliana Epitaph reads "When ye go home, tell them of us and say, 'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'"

Thomas gave his today for Robert and his family to thrive nearly 140 years later.

R/282 Corporal Thomas Nigel McFarland

1st New Zealand Machine Gun Company

RA 12 October 1917

Last we Forget - Kai Iwarere Titou

