

We shall remember them:¹ Our World War One Chaplains *Elizabeth Charlton*

This article is based on a presentation given by the author and the late Ken Scadden at the joint ARANZ/ASA (Australian Society of Archivists) Conference held in Christchurch, New Zealand in October 2014, with the theme Connecting Past, Present and Future. A version of this paper was originally published in *Archifacts*, the Journal of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) in April 2015.

In 2014, with the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War One and the many projects and commemorations being organised, the New Zealand Province Archives (known locally as Marist Archives Wellington (MAW)) started to gather material in preparation for a display to honour our men. The process described herein underlined the conference's themes of connection as without making contact with other organisations we would not have been able to verify information, correct assumed knowledge and share with the New Zealand (NZ) and now international community.

The Impetus

While some Marists had served during World War One before entering the Society of Mary, we initially limited the scope of the project to priests and then narrowed this selection to those who were appointed as Chaplains to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF), i.e. those who were sent abroad to fight for Great Britain.

Within the Province, it was believed that there were eight Marists who had served as military chaplains during World War One. To confirm this, we checked the newly-released digitised copies from the Military Personnel Files series (18805) available online from Archives New Zealand through its database, Archway. The first online items came from the accession for the military history sheets (AABK 18805 W5553).

- Fr Thomas Segrief sm (1884-1940)

Fr Segrief was the first NZ Roman Catholic Chaplain to serve in World War One and saw service throughout the whole war. He sailed with the Samoan Advance Party, sent to occupy the German colony of Samoa at the request of Great Britain in August 1914, spent time at Trentham² and Featherston³ Camps and ministered on both hospital ships *Maheno* and *Marama*. His time on the *Maheno* coincided with the Gallipoli campaign. He joined the NZEF with the 23rd Reinforcements, serving in England and on the Western Front.

He was awarded the following medals: 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal 1914-1918, Victory Medal 1914-1919, NZ Colonial Auxiliary Forces Decoration, Long and Efficient Service Medal and NZ Territorial Service Medal.

- Fr Alexander F McDonald sm (1879-1957)

Leaving Waimate⁴ with one of Fr Paul Aubry's violins, Fr McDonald accompanied the 8th Reinforcements in November 1915. He was stationed for his entire service in Egypt where he ministered to the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade. On occasion, he also brought succour to the Australians who were also part of the ANZAC Mounted Division. Returning to NZ in January 1919, he was posted to the Territorial Force in March 1919 and finally retired from active duty 16 August 1940.

¹ The first phrase evokes the last line of the fourth stanza of Laurence Binyon's poem, "For the Fallen", first published in *The Times* in September 1914.

² Situated in Upper Hutt, about 30 kilometres north of Wellington on the North Island, this was the first training camp for World War One opened in October 2014 and is still an operational military base.

³ The largest training camp during World War One, 63 kilometres north of Wellington in the Wairarapa region of the North Island.

⁴ Town located 200-odd kilometres south of Christchurch on the South Island. Fr Paul Aubry was Parish Priest there 1908-1917.

He was awarded the following medals: 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal 1914-1918 and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

- Fr Nicholas Moloney sm (1875-1944)

Fr Moloney was commissioned into the NZ Chaplains' Department in April 1914 and was appointed from December 1915 to the position of Roman Catholic Chaplain on the NZ Hospital Ship No. 2 *Marama* for her first charter, second charter second sailing, third charter and fourth and final charter, arriving back in New Zealand in January 1919. He missed the first sailing of the second charter, as he had been posted to Trentham Camp.

He was awarded the following medals: 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal 1914-1918, Victory Medal 1914-1919 and NZ Territorial Service Medal.

- Fr Jean Barra sm (1880-1949)

Initially appointed Honorary Chaplain to the Wanganui Irish Rifles on 23 May 1910, Fr Barra was called up by the French Army in 1916. With the support of Fr James McKenna, Senior Catholic Chaplain, and the approval of the Minister of Defence, Fr Barra was appointed Military Chaplain (Roman Catholic) to the NZEF (18th Reinforcements). Fr Barra saw service in northern France in 1917 and 1918 at the NZ General Hospital at Walton on Thames, England. He was posted to the Retired List in 1921.

He was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1918 and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

- Fr Francis Bartley sm (1881-1959)

Fr Bartley was initially appointed chaplain in the Territorial Force in March 1915 when Curate in the upper South Island parish of Nelson, with him being appointed to Featherston Camp in late 1916. From there he joined the NZEF, leaving with the 21st Reinforcements in 1917. He served in northern France in the second half of 1917. Unfortunately, health issues led to him being invalided back to NZ. However, he continued in the Chaplain's Department, being awarded both the NZ Service Medal and the Long and Efficient Service Medal in 1930 and the Efficiency Decoration in 1935, along with the British War Medal 1914-1918 and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

- Fr Célestin Lacroix sm (1868-1934)

Fr Lacroix became a Chaplain to the 13th Regiment of the Territorial Force⁵ in June 1916. When another chaplain was required for service abroad, Fr Lacroix was nominated thanks to his native proficiency in French; however, at age 49 he was four years past the age limit for chaplains and required the special approval of the Minister of Defence to take up the position. He was Curate in Greymouth⁶ when he left on board the *Tofua* in April 1917 (25th Reinforcements)⁷. Fr Lacroix's service was spent at the NZ Stationary Hospital at Wisques, Pas-de-Calais, France and in Britain, returning to NZ in 1919. He was placed on the Reserve List in 1922.

On route to taking up his post at the Hospital in France, Fr Lacroix's train was involved in an accident. Fr Lacroix assisted in rescuing other passengers, which led to the Army Commander recording his appreciation for gallant conduct in the 2nd Army Routine Orders of 5 November 1917.

He was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1918 and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

- Fr Michael Murphy sm (1884-1955)

Fr Murphy's first religious appointment was to Timaru from where he left in November 1917 for Trentham Camp before embarking with the 33rd Reinforcements, though being commissioned into the NZ Chaplains' Department in June 1912. He was initially stationed in England, leaving

⁵ The Territorial Force was a system of compulsory military training started in 1911, brought about through the passing of *The Defence Act 1909*.

⁶ Town located on the west coast of the South Island.

⁷ "Celestine Lacroix." *Cenotaph Database*. Accessed December 2, 2014.

<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/AdvancedSearch.aspx>.

for the Western Front in June 1918, where he completed his duty. He was given official leave to visit Rome before returning to NZ in September 1919 on the *Remuera*. He was placed on the Retired List in 1948.

He was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1918 and Victory Medal 1914-1919.

- Fr Joseph Cullen sm (1886-1963)

We did not find a military history sheet for Fr Cullen. Why could we not find his? If we could not find his, could there also be others missing?

Finding Fr Cullen

Fr Cullen, along with his brother Frank⁸, had featured in Haigh's book⁹ as being the only brothers to serve as chaplains. But this did not help find his record.

The first connection to make was with other records on Archway, Archives NZ's database. The answer was to be found in series 8653 - Army Lists and Registers of Commissions [record group], Register of Commissions - Medical, Veterinary and Chaplain's Department (R19134038), in use from 1905, last entry in 1926, still entering commission resignations in 1930. There was Fr Cullen on the list, with his official register number, but still no record.

In 2013, Marist Archives staff had visited NZ Defence Force Archives on a Wellington Sole Archivists' Group organised trip. Knowing this is where the original material was kept contact was made with the Registrar, Christine Edney to see if she could shed any light. Fr Cullen's date of birth had been incorrectly input into the database. Christine very kindly sent us a copy of his personnel file and added it to the pile for digitisation.

The file informed us that Fr Cullen had served solely within NZ. He remained with the Territorial Force, being promoted to 2nd Class and was placed on the Retired List in 1948.

We learnt from this that military history sheets were created only for those who had served with the NZEF, i.e. abroad, and later found that his file belonged to another accession (AABK 18805 W5968) of military records, which was released at a later date.

Perusing the Register, answered one of our initial questions, "Were there other Marists who had been chaplains?" In all, another 15 were found; of those nine (with asterix) have Territorial or World War One files on Archway:

*Fr François Delachienne (Delach) sm; Fr Patrick Fay sm; *Fr Bernard Quinn sm; *Fr Augustine Keogh sm; *Fr Thomas Gilbert sm; Fr Alfred Herring sm; *Fr Richard Hoare sm; *Fr William Peoples sm; Fr Charles Venning sm; *Fr Francis Dignan sm; *Fr James Tymons sm; Fr Paul Ginisty sm; *Fr James Eccleton sm – egressus; *Fr Patrick Finnerty sm – egressus; Fr Arthur Burger sm.

While not in New Zealand at the time, Fr Francis Vincent sm (*olim* Sontheimer) (1873-1962) also saw service as a Chaplain in 1918.¹⁰

⁸ Priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington.

⁹ Bryant Haigh, J. *Men of Faith and Courage: The Official History of New Zealand's Army Chaplains*. Auckland, New Zealand: The Word Publishers Ltd, 1983.

¹⁰ Schianchi, C-M. "Encore une question." E-mail message to author. September 3, 2014. Information and photograph in chaplain's uniform received from General Archives, Rome (APM). There is mention of Fr Vincent being Chaplain to Canadian Forces in his obituary in *ACTA Societatis Mariae* 1965, No. 35 T. VII; however, he has not been found in Canadian or British military records. Many British service records were destroyed during the blitz in 1940.



Marists who served as chaplains with the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces

1. Fr Célestin Lacroix sm (cropped from The medical officers of the New Zealand Stationary Hospital, Wisques, France. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association: New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013469-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22722712>)
2. Frs Thomas Segrief sm (L) and Nicholas Moloney sm (R) (MAW)
3. Fr Francis Bartley sm (MAW)
4. Fr Michael Murphy sm (MAW)
5. Fr Alexander F McDonald sm (MAW)
6. Fr Jean Barra sm (APM)

Archdiocesan Archives Wellington

The equivalent of today's Military Ordinariate was run from the Archbishopric in Wellington. For a Marist to be appointed chaplain, support was required from both the Marist Provincial as well as from the Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain, Monsignor John McKenna, Parish Priest of Masterton¹¹.

Archbishop Francis Redwood and Coadjutor Archbishop Thomas O'Shea were both Marists. Many chaplains, including Bishop Henry Cleary of Auckland wrote to them during World War One. We were fortunate to find correspondence from four of the seven Marists who served with the NZEF.

It was in this collection that the next mystery appeared and more connections were needed to be made to solve it.

A tale of two photos

In the Archives of the Archdiocese of Wellington, there is a photo¹² which has a striking likeness to one in our collection, which was known as Fr James Joseph McMenamain's burial

¹¹ Redwood sm, +F. Archbishop Francis Redwood sm to Dean Patrick Smyth sm, September 6, 1915. PHL1/97. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

Smyth sm, P. Dean Patrick Smyth sm to Archbishop Francis Redwood sm, October 2, 1915. PHL1/98-99. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

¹² New Zealand Official Photograph: 371 All Souls' Day. Photograph. Box 381 - Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato Wars. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

service¹³. Fr McMenemy was the Parish Priest at Sacred Heart Church Petone,¹⁴ when he volunteered to serve as chaplain. He was killed by a shell at Messines on 9 June 1917 while attending to the burial of a fallen soldier.



Archdiocese of Wellington Archives (Box 381 - Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato Wars.)



PSC 700 – Marist Archives Wellington

The photos show the same people, but are they at a different event or even location?

Fr Raphael Vandaele, Parish Priest of Niepe, had organised Fr McMenemy's burial in the parish priests' vault¹⁵. Could he be the unidentified priest in the photo?

Fr Barra, in a letter to Archbishop O'Shea, had described the All Souls' Day Mass that he had organised, without specifying the location.

¹³ Known as Fr James Joseph McMenemy's burial service. Photograph. 1917. PSC700. Marist Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

¹⁴ Town located about 13km north of Wellington.

¹⁵ Barra sm, J. Fr Jean Barra sm to Archbishop Thomas O'Shea sm, June 11, 1917. Box 381 - Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato War. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

As the photo from the Archdiocesan Archives had “Official Photograph” affixed to the back, Archway and the online catalogue from Alexander Turnbull Library¹⁶ were scoured with a variety of search terms.

Connecting with France

At the same time, information was sought in France. The parish of Nieppe is within the Diocese of Lille. Did the Diocesan Archives of Lille hold any records of the burial or the Mass? Did they have a photo of Fr Vandaele to confirm whether he was the parish priest in the photo?

Yes to the burial, no to the Mass. Yes to a photo¹⁷; this confirmed that Fr Vandaele was not the priest in the photo. The Archives holds the historic parish register that Fr Vandaele maintained during the war¹⁸. He lists the Roman Catholic chaplains who were in Nieppe in 1917 and documents Fr McMenamín’s burial in the parish priests’ vault.



L'abbé Vandaele, Diocesan Archives of Lille

Further Internet searches identified Niepkerke: Nieppe Historical Society. A local newspaper article had mentioned that this Society had access to the diaries of an inhabitant who detailed life in Nieppe during the war. Was there any mention of Fr McMenamín’s burial or Mass? Attending Mass for the troops was mentioned, but nothing specific¹⁹.

A connection through Niepkerke was made with the town’s archivist, Nathalie Fache, who indicated that the All Souls’ Day photos were not taken in Nieppe²⁰. However, she was very happy to receive information about and a photo of Fr McMenamín, to be included in the town’s information on the fallen²¹.

A photo taken by Henry Armytage Saunders of Fr McMenamín’s resting place was shared with Nathalie, who took this photo from a similar angle 97 years after Saunders.

¹⁶ New Zealand’s national documentary heritage collection, based within the National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

¹⁷ *L'abbé Vandaele*. Photograph. c.1910. Archives Diocésaines de Lille. Lille, France.

¹⁸ Parish of St Martin, Nieppe. Parish history register. c.1903-c.1920. Archives Diocésaines de Lille. Lille, France.

¹⁹ Delpierre, J-C. "Nieppe Pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale." E-mail message to author. May 28, 2014.

²⁰ Fache, N. "Photo." E-mail message to author. May 30, 2014.

²¹ Fache, N. "Bonsoir." E-mail message to author. August 15, 2014.



The grave of New Zealand Army Chaplain James Joseph McMenamin killed in World War I, France. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association :New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-012808-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22806311>



The parish priests' vault at Nieppe, 2014. Photo taken by Nathalie Fache, Archivist of Nieppe

All Souls' Day Service, Monday 5 November 1917

The search of Alexander Turnbull Library's catalogue had identified that the All Souls' Day Mass photos had been taken in the village of Selles, Pas-de-Calais. A request was sent to the Diocesan Archives of Arras as to whether they had a record of the event and a photo of the Parish Priest.

No photo existed of the Parish Priest, but Fr Adolphe Roger had written a report at the request of his Bishop describing events and activities within the parish during the war. In this report, mention was made of the presence of New Zealand troops and the All Souls' Day Mass²².



Church service commemorating All Soul's Day in Selle, France. Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association :New Zealand official negatives, World War 1914-1918. Ref: 1/2-013003-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22780580>

Fr Barra described in vivid detail the service in his letter to Archbishop O'Shea dated 7 November 1917:²³

"The parade came off all right; and on Monday 5th November, at 10 am the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated for the souls of our Heroes. The church was beautifully decorated. Black hangings covered the walls round; a large black cross stood well at the back of the altar; the catafalque was draped with a French flag, the flags of France and Britain posted in mourning at the four corners of it. In front of the sanctuary a large cross made of flowers, with the letters NZ made equally of flowers, gave to all the meaning of the ceremony. Over the sanctuary arch a banderolle was hung with these words upon it, "Eternal Rest Grant to Them, O Lord". Against the four pillars of the nave could be seen in large silver letters the four names of NZ fame in this war: Gallipoli, Somme, Messines, Ypres. The Curé sang the Mass and the parish choir executed the liturgical singing with great sweetness and devotion. All the boys went to Holy Communion, led by their officers who knelt first at the Holy Table. It was a magnificent act of faith which brought tears to the eyes of the French people present. Fathers Bartley and Segrief had come to help me and the work went on quickly and well: I feel sure that God was pleased with the men. After a short sermon the men marched out of the church into the cemetery where the burial service was solemnly read for the dead who in the line have never had the blessing of the Holy Church over their sacred remains. It was most impressive! Four priests stood there at the foot

²² Roger, A. Report to Mgr Julien, Bishop of Arras on the history of the Diocesan parishes during World War One. c.1918. Archives Diocésaines d'Arras. Arras, France.

²³ Barra sm, J. Fr Jean Barra sm to Archbishop Thomas O'Shea sm, November 7, 1917. Box 381 - Military Ordinariate: World War 1 Chaplains / Taranaki-Waikato Wars. Archdiocese of Wellington Archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

of the Cross of Salvation, by the side of the immortal flag of France in the hands of a veteran wounded at Verdun, and all our noble NZ Catholic soldiers around. Angels of heaven, who witnessed the faith and devotion of those men, the religious silence of heroes as the glorious words of the Ritual were read out, write that scene down in the records of God! Carry to the trenches the protecting blessing of Christ and give joy to the bones of those who now sleep there, their last long sleep! “Exultabunt ossa humiliata!”²⁴

Thanks to the material received from archives in France, the photographs available from Alexander Turnbull Library and Fr Barra’s letter, we have been able to provide correct captions to the photographs that were thought to be of Fr McMenamain’s burial service as well as providing fuller descriptions to Alexander Turnbull Library for those showing the All Souls’ Day Mass.

Connecting with the Community

Once we had collated all the material, we created a memorial display in the Archives and published an article in the *Marist Messenger*.²⁵ The link to the online article was shared with the diocesan archives in France, which had contributed information.

Since the five English mother-tongue Marist chaplains were old boys or former teachers of St Patrick’s College, a presentation was delivered in Wellington for the ANZAC Day²⁶ Liturgy assembly in April 2016, when the College acknowledges those on its roll of honour.

Where the records are

In order to create the memorial display of our chaplains, we had contact with the following organisations, either through onsite visits, phone calls, the use of online databases or email:

General Archives Rome (APM); St Patrick’s College Wellington Archives; Archives New Zealand; New Zealand Defence Force Archives; Alexander Turnbull Library; Archdiocese of Wellington Archives; Diocese of Lille Archives; Diocese of Arras Archives; Nieperkerke: Nieppe Historical Society; Auckland Museum; New Zealand Military History Society; Archives départementales des Côtes d’Armor.

²⁴ Humbled bones shall rejoice, Psalm 51:8.

²⁵ Charlton, E. “A Contribution of the New Zealand Chaplains in France”. *Marist Messenger*, September 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.maristmessenger.co.nz/2014/08/31/contribution-new-zealand-chaplains-france/>

²⁶ ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) Day is public holiday in Australia and New Zealand, observed on 25 April to commemorate all those who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations and the contribution and suffering of all those who have served.