



CENTENARY OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE MAIN BODY OF TROOPS AND 1ST REINFORCEMENTS TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE WATERFRONT PROMENADE,
TARANAKI WHARF
6.30 PM 16 OCTOBER 2014

Members of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles join those from the Canterbury Infantry Regiment on board H.M.N.Z. Transport No.4, Tahiti, and H.M.N.Z. Transport No.11, Athenic, at Lyttelton on 23 September 1914. Archives New Zealand, AEGA 18982, PC4/1569 <http://ww100.govt.nz/publicity-images>



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**NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST WORLD WAR
CENTENARY 2014—2019**

THE DEPARTURE OF THE MAIN BODY OF TROOPS AND 1ST REINFORCEMENTS TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

On 6 August, shortly after the First World War broke out, Britain accepted New Zealand's offer of an expeditionary force of approximately 8,000 men. When countrywide recruiting for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force's (NZEF) 'Main Body' began on 8 August 1914, the response was overwhelming. Thousands of men eager to embark on the biggest adventure of their lives rushed to volunteer.

Approximately 8,500 men and almost 4,000 horses departed in the early morning of 16 October 1914. In anticipation, Wellingtonians lined the beaches, coastal roads and ridgelines before dawn, waiting quietly for the procession of ships to appear in the channel leading out of the harbour. Records state that as the bow of the first ship came around the point, cheers rippled across the bays. Each of the ten troopships and four escorts slipped out into Cook Strait single file and set course initially for Australia.

The Main Body (plus the 1st Reinforcements) was the largest single group of New Zealanders ever to leave these shores. They were transported in ten troopships, which the government had requisitioned from commercial shipping lines.

PROGRAMME

To mark the largest single departure of people to ever occur in New Zealand, the centenary of the departure of the first fleet of troopships to the northern hemisphere, Wellington Harbour receives the *Ngā Tapuwae New Zealand First World War Trails* interpretative sign.

Speakers

Neill Atkinson, Chief Historian, Ministry for Culture and Heritage

Senator The Hon Michael Ronaldson, Australian Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Hon Maggie Barry, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

Unveiling the Ngā Tapuwae sign

Hon Maggie Barry, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

Hon Craig Foss, Minister of Veterans' Affairs

