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# All Quiet on the Home Front?

The Impact of the Second World War  
on the Township of Mosgiel.

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## Abstract

The Second World War proved a momentous time for those living in New Zealand. Life for civilians on the home front was affected to a much greater extent than it had been in 1914-18. This heightened 'total war' prompted many changes to the lifestyles and living conditions of New Zealanders. To manage the national demands of this conflict, Peter Fraser's Labour government took firm control of the society and economy. As the War situation required, it implemented various bureaucratic measures such as rationing, industrial manpower regulations, a blackout and other civil defence measures. As well as these rules and regulations, citizens faced the problem of shortages, the uncertainty of loved ones overseas and the alarming progress of the Japanese in the Pacific. The War, then, impacted on people and communities across the country. Even the isolated south of the South Island, far from most of the country's main war efforts, could not escape the effects wrought from this conflict. Little research, however, has been done on this exciting and vibrant period of New Zealand history. Thus, to test the extent of the impact, this thesis focuses on the southern township of Mosgiel.

In 1939, Mosgiel was a town of just over two thousand inhabitants, situated at the northern foothills of the Taieri Plains, a short drive from Dunedin. It felt the pressure of war in the same ways as other towns, yet perhaps because of its small size, close community and southern isolation, it appears to have fared better than many. The chapters follow a logical path, dealing with each of the main aspects of Mosgiel society and economy, assessing each to determine the War's effects. Although it had a nearby military presence, formed both a Home Guard and an Emergency Precautions Organization, endured rationing, shortages, a blackout, manpowering and disruption to its businesses and workforce the community was able to adapt to, or deflect, many of the negative effects of the conflict. In the end, the overall impact of the War proved limited.

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## Abbreviations

### **Military**

EFTS	.	.	Elementary Flying Training School
FAFAI	.	.	Forces Available For Anti-Invasion
GR	.	.	General Reconnaissance
LAFVR	.	.	Light Armoured Fighting Vehicle Regiment
LDV	.	.	Local Defence Volunteers
NMR	.	.	National Military Reserve
OMR	.	.	Otago Mounted Rifles
RNZAF	.	.	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RAF	.	.	Royal Air Force
TAF	.	.	Territorial Air Force
TIT	.	.	Territorial Intensive Training
WAAC	.	.	Women's Auxiliary Army Corps
WAAF	.	.	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
2NZEF	.	.	Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force

### Rank

LAC	.	.	Leading Aircraftsman
Cpl.	.	.	Corporal
Sgt.	.	.	Sergeant
F/Sgt.	.	.	Flight Sergeant
P/O	.	.	Pilot Officer
F/O	.	.	Flying Officer
F/Lt.	.	.	Flight Lieutenant
S/Ldr.	.	.	Squadron Leader
Lt.	.	.	Lieutenant
Cpt.	.	.	Captain
Supt.	.	.	Superintendent

### Decorations

VC	.	.	Victoria Cross
DFC	.	.	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	.	.	Distinguished Flying Medal
DSO	.	.	Distinguished Service Order

### **Civil Defence**

ARP	.	.	Air Raid Precautions
EFS	.	.	Emergency Fire Service / Scheme
EPS	.	.	Emergency Precautions Service / Scheme
ERC	.	.	Emergency Reserve Corps

WWSA . . . Women's War Service Auxiliary

### **Organisations**

DCC . . . Dunedin City Council  
 DJC . . . Dunedin Jockey Club  
 DMFB . . . Dunedin Metropolitan Fire Brigade  
 MBC . . . Mosgiel Borough Council  
 MBMA . . . Mosgiel Businessmen's Association  
 MDPS . . . Mosgiel District Patriotic Society  
 MDPC . . . Mosgiel District Patriotic Council  
 NZR . . . New Zealand Railways  
 NSD . . . National Service Department  
 OPPC . . . Otago Provincial Patriotic Council  
 ORFU . . . Otago Rugby Football Union  
 TCC . . . Taieri County Council  
 TRFC . . . Taieri Rugby Football Club  
 YMCA . . . Young Men's Christian Association  
 YWCA . . . Young Women's Christian Association

### **Publications**

*ES* . . . *Evening Star*  
*ODT* . . . *Otago Daily Times*  
*NZWW* . . . *New Zealand Women's Weekly*

### **Other**

Const. . . Constable  
 Cr. . . Councillor  
 Dn. . . Dunedin  
 Dir. . . Director  
 Dist. . . District  
 Eng. . . Engineer  
 P.M. . . Prime Minister  
 Mos. . . Mosgiel  
 M.P. . . Member of Parliament  
 NZ . . . New Zealand  
 Sec. . . Secretary  
 TC . . . Town Clerk  
 US . . . United States  
 UK . . . United Kingdom

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

This is a war of the unknown warriors . . . The whole of the warring nations are engaged, not only soldiers, but the entire population, men women and children. The fronts are everywhere. The trenches are dug in the towns and streets. Every village is fortified. Every road is barred. The front lines run through the factories. The workmen are soldiers with different weapons but the same courage.<sup>1</sup>

Winston Churchill said this of Britain's War effort in the summer of 1940. Although New Zealand did not endure the physical aspects of warfare, such as air raid or invasion, it did receive much of the impact of a total war effort to which Churchill alludes. The country felt the press of government intervention to a much greater extent than the First World War, as it strained to channel national resources into conducting its part in the largest and most expensive episode of warfare in history. Nancy Taylor notes that perhaps the greatest difference between the impact of the two world wars on New Zealand lay in the degree to which the nation as a whole became involved.<sup>2</sup> Between 1939-1945 the people of New Zealand were called to participate more heavily and suffer deprivations more acutely than in 1914-1918. By March 1942, following the announcement of industrial manpower legislation, the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* could state that the community was engaged in "a people's war".<sup>3</sup> This people's war meant not only the servicemen at the battle front, but the civilians left at home were affected. Modern historian Arthur Marwick notes that any generalisation such as 'People's War' is open to all sorts of qualifications,<sup>4</sup> yet despite the fact that New Zealand did not suffer a Blitz of its own, the participation in all aspects of the national war effort by many ordinary New Zealanders seems to warrant this label.

For many people of New Zealand these were years of social dislocation and increased government involvement in all aspects of their daily lives. Locally, many examples were evident and obvious as the War dragged on six long years. The contemporary press commented on these as various problems and impacts stemming from the conflict raised themselves at home, far from the battle fronts. At the height of the Japanese threat in mid-1942, the *Otago Daily Times'* editor admitted "It has to be recognised that the country is passing through a period of social as well economic upheaval and that a broad adjustment of outlook is required from every section of the community".<sup>5</sup> By 1943, his compatriot at the *Evening Star* bluntly concurred, with the statement that "War throws the normal life of a country out of balance".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. Calder, *The People's War*, p.17.

<sup>2</sup> N. Taylor, *The Home Front*, p.1294.

<sup>3</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 March 1942, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War*, p.180.

<sup>5</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 June 1942, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> *Evening Star*, 6 January 1943, p.2.

At the core of this thesis is the basic question, what impact did the War have on the township of Mosgiel? It is all very well to comment on 'social and economic upheaval' or brush over events as 'disruption', but in which specific ways did the condition of living in a country involved in a modern war affect the town and its people? In answering this question, if there were impacts at all, we might find out how people dealt with them, how they reacted to them. Did they cope, or were they overwhelmed by aspects of this noted upheaval? If they did cope, what measures did they use to strike back? This study also tentatively delves into the links between the Second World War and the two major events of the twentieth century up to that point; the First World War and the Depression. To the people of the town, living through those times, these events did not have neat beginning and end points. They embodied all sorts of feelings and experiences not easily separated by clean chronological dates. The Depression, in particular, continued to be present in the minds of many through the War years. In some ways this is a study of human nature; a study of the people of Mosgiel. The small size of the town allows a more detailed study to be made than the generalised perspective which a larger centre such as Auckland, or even Dunedin would necessitate. Although small, residents obviously did not live in total isolation from the rest of the country, so are a representative sample of New Zealanders; if not city dwellers, then a sample of many similarly sized and situated communities proliferating around the country at that time. The problems and heartache suffered, as well as the ingenuity and pride shown by local people, can be said to give some insight as that felt around the country.

Kate Darian-Smith, writing of Australia, states that the media tend to mythologise the past, reducing the popular understanding of the home front to a series of generalised myths. Such wartime myths stress the co-operative spirit and the levelling of society as all endured rationing and fear of invasion, and over emphasise the use of women in war work and the local presence of American troops. She notes that these myths have some basis in reality, but as generalisations, they gloss over much. She attempts to challenge some of these myths that influence our popular understanding of the War today.<sup>7</sup> This thesis attempts to follow her reasoning, and examine many of these common assumptions of the effect of the Second World War, in the context of Mosgiel. For local people was it really such a terrible or exciting time? Did fear of conscription or manpower dog their waking moments, and did rationing prove to be such a chore? Was the town panicked about possible Japanese invasion? In uncovering the conflict's impact on the town, these assumptions and questions will be answered.

The Second World War has produced hundreds of thousands of books, yet in this largest total war, the home front amounts to only a small portion published compared with the fighting itself. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that war has dominated New Zealander's national experience,<sup>8</sup> the civilian aspect of her War effort has too often been submerged beneath a crowd of works on the various military campaigns and the experiences of those who served in them. More recent, however, following the completion of most of the Internal Affairs Department Official War Histories of the 1950's and 1960's, and numerous battlefield biographies, some historians have turned to the largely untapped subject of the civilian experience in the War. British authors such as Arthur Marwick, in *The Home Front*, and Angus Calder,

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<sup>7</sup> K. Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*, pp.8-10.

<sup>8</sup> M. King, *New Zealanders at War*, p.1.

in *The People's War*, had discussed the general subject of the home front in the late 1960's to the 1980's, and this had dispersed into more specialised analysis on war and social change. With the exception of J. V. T. Baker's official history *War Economy*, little had been written in this country about the living conditions prevalent during 1939-45. The 1980's heralded a change of interest in New Zealand research on the Second World War, roughly coinciding with completion of Nancy Taylor's outstanding official work, *The Home Front*, a mammoth book dealing with the whole country. New analysis on individual aspects of civilian life in wartime increased, with Lauris Edmonds, *Women in Wartime*, Eve Ebbett, *When the Boys Were Away*, and Bracy Gardiner, *It Wasn't Easy: Wartime Memoirs of Wartime Women of the South*, for example focussing on the individual experiences of women. Harry Bioletti, *The Yanks are Coming*, and Jock Phillips and Ellen Ellis, *Brief Encounter*, looked at the impact of visiting American servicemen, while David Grant, *Out in the Cold*, and Ann Beaglehole, *A Small Price to Pay*, have looked at the plights of conscientious objectors and wartime refugees. A number of theses and dissertations concentrate on this most interesting period of New Zealand's history, with Pamela Mason, 'The Redistribution of Woman Power: Women in the Workforce 1940-1945', D. M Brosnahan, 'A Woman's Place: Changing Attitudes to the Role of Women in Society During World War II in New Zealand', and Deborah Montgomerie, 'A Personal Affair Between Me and Hitler?: Public Attitudes to Women's Unpaid Work in New Zealand During World War Two', looking at women in the workforce. Other titles, such as, 'Being Grim and Gay: Dunedin Entertainment and Cultural Life 1938-43', by Mark Lindsay, 'Enemies and Allies: Changing Stereotypes Portrayed in New Zealand During the Second World War', by David Atwood and, 'Southern Sentries: A Brief History of Otago's Home Guard During World War II', by Paul Easton are examples of the diverse interests and opportunities the study of the Second World War home front provides. No-one has concentrated on a single community though.

Some postgraduate study has been completed on New Zealand towns in the First World War, such as Kerry Stratton's "'Doing Their Bit": The Impact of The First World War on the Inhabitants of Tuapeka County', Sonia Inder's 'Middlemarch 1914-18', or Natalie Wright's 'Clutha at War! The Impact of the First World War on the District of Clutha', but their experience is very different to the more restricted home front conditions of 1939-45. Apart from the horrendous casualties, the mainly European War of 1914-18 had only very minor effects on those left at home. Kate Darian-Smith's interesting and similarly motivated book covers the impact of the Second World War on Melbourne, however, the city is so large she is only able to brush lightly over generalised impacts or events. On the other hand, in one of the few local historical studies, Ron Kirk concentrates specifically on Mosgiel, but the weight of a century of the Borough's history allows him only a few pages to the events of the War. The sum of this historiography appears to be that no-one, at this date, has conducted any research into the various impacts of the War on a specific New Zealand community. This thesis aims to address that gap by concentrating on Mosgiel in an exciting and eventful period in its history. Focussing on one small town enables the study to delve into some of the detail and personalities of the area, to see how events which affected the country as a whole manifested themselves in a town typically representative of most in New Zealand.

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Mosgiel township is situated 10 miles (16 k.m.) south west of Dunedin at the foot of the Taieri Plains. Settled by Europeans in the late 1850's and constituted a borough in 1885, it has always been the hub of social and economic activity for the surrounding rich farmlands of the district. At the outbreak of war in September 1939, the borough had slightly over two thousand inhabitants, some of whom commuted daily to work in Dunedin. Much of the business activity in the town was centred around the Mosgiel Woollen Mill, which had celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1933, and was by far the largest employer, especially of women.<sup>9</sup> Retailing proved the other important role of the town, acting as the farming service centre for the surrounding rural land. The town could provide for most of the needs of the Taieri community or, if necessary, it was only a short trip into Dunedin via road or rail links. Regular goods and commuter trains kept the Mosgiel Railway Station a hive of activity during the daytime. A small number of air travellers also visited the outskirts of the town, with Dunedin's airport situated just north down Factory Road, past the Mill, at the Taieri Aerodrome. This was to be the closest flat land to the city for the Union Airways national route, and proved to be the same reason for the larger modern airport being sited at Momona in the 1960's. Its position as the service hub of the Taieri meant that Mosgiel had a varied infrastructure, as would be expected of a town equivalent in population to Te Awamutu or Westport in 1939.<sup>10</sup> It boasted Holy Cross College (a Catholic seminary) and the Mosgiel District High School. Amenities included a swimming pool, two sports grounds, a town hall and the Wingatui Racecourse a few minutes drive to the north. The town had a number of community groups, sports clubs, brass and pipe bands, all the major denominational churches and a volunteer fire brigade. In short, it was a typical town, representative of many in New Zealand. Spirits were lifting after the hard years of the Depression and people were looking to the future when war struck.

Unlike the outbreak of war in 1914 there was little jingoism and less enthusiasm, just a grim determination. Similarly, unlike the First World War, there were more restrictions and a greater governmental influence in all activities and life in general, in Mosgiel. The rigours and restrictions of total war management by the bureaucratic machine came to the town, as in all others across the nation. Overnight, following the declaration of war, New Zealand became, in some senses, a different country. To most people little seemed to have changed, but the parliamentary machine had, and would, pass many important measures to cope with the changing circumstances of war. Most of these were not noticed by the average citizen at the outset, however. Contemporary author Tom Harrison, wrote that the British government of 1940 had "kept the democratic machine going where it affects purely civilian issues, while introducing more authoritative measures wherever the military interest is involved".<sup>11</sup> The same proved true of New Zealand. However, akin to Britain, as the War progressed the 'military issues' gradually increased to involve many more aspects of New Zealand society and economics, as total war took greater amounts of resources and endeavour.

Bureaucracy gradually impinged upon parts of everyday life which had formerly remained the precinct of individuals. Aside from the initial wartime legislative housekeeping of economic stabilisation and assumption of control of resources and distribution links, the government progressed slowly and quietly until May 1940. The

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<sup>9</sup> W.R. Kirk, *Pulse of the Plain: A History of Mosgiel*, p.185.

<sup>10</sup> 1936 Population Census; Vol. 1, p.7. (Hereinafter 1936 Census).

<sup>11</sup> T. Harrison & C. Madge, *War Begins At Home*, p.413.

fall of France proved the catalyst for the country to begin movement towards total war effort. The government introduced armed forces conscription, formed the Emergency Reserve Corps, exhorting all who were able to join New Zealand's own Home Guard or Civil Defence forerunner, the Emergency Precautions Service (EPS). By 1942 these eventually became compulsory for many able bodied adult men. Civil defence measures meant the introduction of a nationwide blackout in April 1941, lasting until 1943. Citizens covered the windows of their shops, houses or headlamps of their motor vehicles to prevent light (or sky glow) showing to potential enemy raiders, and were enforced by a system of wardens and police. The Pacific War tightened these regulations and civil defence organisations planned for the possibilities of an invasion. The subsequent military build up had special implications in those communities, such as Mosgiel, situated close to army or air force bases. The presence of hundreds of servicemen nearby had various effects on individuals, business and the town as a whole.

Workers saw many changes implemented by a government trying desperately to juggle the country's limited labour force with the demands and pressures of total war. Most notably, substantial numbers of women entered the workplace from their traditional role in the home. When this did not prove enough, emergency powers conscripted many men and a number of women into industries deemed essential to the conduct to the War. Taylor notes this proved the War's biggest social innovation, with no real precedent in 1914-18.<sup>12</sup> Some people were thrust into new jobs and new situations which they would not have faced in the pre-war labour market. Many worked substantially longer hours over sustained periods and the government even had the power to tell them when to take holidays.<sup>13</sup> Businesses were also subjugated to the needs of the war effort. Some firms benefited from essential war production or war related efforts, while others suffered due to the disruption brought by the conflict, such as shortages of materials, stock and staff. Some simply suffered because they were not important enough in the pecking order of war efficiency. Added paper work and War taxation rankled many, while motor vehicle impressment affected some.

In the home, shortages of certain goods made themselves felt early during the conflict. Eventually left to delegate certain supplies, the government introduced rationing on a number of items, from some foods and clothing to petrol. It also implemented strict control over scarce items as innocuous as bicycle tubes and tyres.<sup>14</sup> Those left at home also faced the uncertainty of friends and family away on active service, unpredictable war news and, for much of 1942, the spectre of Japanese invasion. The War years also brought concerns about declining morals and standards in the face of the upheaval experienced around the country. Of particular anxiety to the public were youths revelling in the adventure and freedoms which the turbulent conditions offered in comparison to the grey pre-War world. On top of all of this, those on the home front were compelled by paternal government media campaigns to contribute to war savings, to dig for victory, to prevent waste and save scraps, not to indulge in gossip of rumour mongering and any other number of things which it wished to encourage.

Eventually the Labour government had its fingers in many pies. These were mainly necessary as the country directed its efforts to total war, but it is not surprising

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, p.1289.

<sup>13</sup> The Overtime and Holidays Labour Legislation Suspension Order 1941 (Statutory Regulation 1941/241). Hereinafter Stat. Reg.

<sup>14</sup> The Bicycle Tyre and Tube Control Notice 1942 (Stat. Reg. 1942/225)

that Sidney Holland could (rather unfairly) campaign for the 1943 general election on a platform to end Labour's "red tape and regimentation".<sup>15</sup> Today, when the government is anxious to divest itself of many vestiges of responsibility, it is interesting to look back to a time when it had an overt influence on the country and its people.

The home front went through marked changes during wartime. In short, in the words of Prime Minister Peter Fraser, citizens were exhorted to sacrifice and deny themselves, to devote all their effort to "serving the common cause".<sup>16</sup> People had to accept the shortcomings and problems caused by the War and do their best to get on with life. I aim to see if Mosgiel did, and if so, how its residents coped.

We are then, both unearthing new, and using existing, information to place new emphasis on the War's specific impact on Mosgiel. Oral sources provided a rich source, both of information and descriptive content to add flesh to the dry bones of scholarly research. Efforts should be made by other historians to take full advantage of these sources or vibrant areas of the country's history will eventually, but unerringly be lost as the passage of time progresses. I am sad to note that two of the people I interviewed for this work died before its completion. Various Council files offered important pieces of information, if however, buried in the day to day bureaucracy of the period, as did the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star*. The lack of a local Mosgiel/Taieri newspaper did prove a sore point in research, meaning that some aspects tended to be concerned with Dunedin more than I would have wished, simply because that was where the only information, such as letters to the editors, was available.<sup>17</sup> This does not prove a problem, however, with the people in Dunedin, going through most of the same experiences as those in Mosgiel. A few local organisations, such as the Mosgiel Businessmen's Association, have simply lost their wartime records.

Nonetheless, the effort of research remained intriguing and enjoyable up until the day of completion. Not all the descriptive gems discovered could be included, with space a consideration, but hopefully enough exist to give some idea of the strong calibre of people involved; what it was like to live in the town at such a time, and how they coped with it. The chapter subjects and titles are straight forward and logically divided into the specific areas of War effect on the town, as briefly mentioned above, from its most obvious with the military presence and the civil defence measures, through the economic effects to those on households and individuals.

Mosgiel itself, now awaits to present its experience of the impact of the Second World War on the home front.

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<sup>15</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 September 1943, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 7 April, 1942, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> The *Taieri Advocate* closed in 1916, leaving the area without a local newspaper until the *Taieri Herald* began in 1962.



## Chapter 2: The Military Presence.

The outbreak of hostilities almost immediately involved Mosgiel and the surrounding district. The RNZAF established a military presence close to the town on Dukes Rd., when it transformed much of the Dunedin airport into an elementary flying training station. The military relationship with Taieri lasted until 1959 but reached its greatest intensity during the years of the Second World War. Similarly, the intermittent, but gradual development of the Wingatui racecourse as an Army training camp added another dimension to the martial atmosphere. Indeed with Wingatui, first a Territorial summer camp, then in 1942 a permanent site, only a mile or so down the road from the Air Station, the northern tip of the Taieri Plains positively bristled with military installations. The proximity and importance of RNZAF Taieri, the only military aerodrome south of Ashburton, and to a lesser extent Wingatui camp, had the potential to markedly impact upon Mosgiel which was within easy walking distance of both. In similar situations in other countries and other wars, small towns have been overwhelmed by such an influx of men and machines onto their normal routines. In this case, did the establishment of two sizeable bases and their operations change aspects of life in the town? How much did the aircraft flying overhead, military vehicles driving by and presence of servicemen in Mosgiel affect local residents and the town as a whole? Our focus begins with the more important and prestigious Air Station.

Even at the beginning of the War, Mosgiel residents were well accustomed to the operation of the local airfield and the various activities of aeroplanes in the skies above them. They were introduced to the joys of flying in 1931, when the Otago Aero Club, having shifted from its makeshift airfield on the Kaikorai estuary, purchased 99 acres on the Taieri site to begin a relationship which is still thriving today. It must be noted, however, that this remained a happy coincidence. Had a site with a decent expanse of sheltered flat ground been available closer to Dunedin, the aerodrome and latterly the RNZAF Air Station would have been situated there and not beside Mosgiel. A succession of important events, including the visit of Charles Kingsford-Smith and the 'Southern Cross' in 1933 and the opening of a limited Union Airways service three years later, helped keep the aerodrome's profile high amongst residents of the region.<sup>1</sup> Flying, and flyers, as Erik Olssen comments, became the symbols for the 1930's, for they fused the ancient ideal of man as the master of his own destiny with the promise of new technology.<sup>2</sup> This interest, reflected in press reports and by large crowds at displays meant that local people were fairly familiar with the aerodrome, the pilots and their aircraft. They gradually became used to having an airfield within strolling distance of the town. However, the intervention of European political tension would temporarily change the nature of this friendly relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> "Mosgiel Reflects", *Otago Daily Times*, Supplement, 2 April 1985, p.28. (Hereinafter "Mosgiel Reflects").

<sup>2</sup> E. Olssen, *A History of Otago*, p.220.

By 1937, Britain began an intensive rearming programme and swept the Commonwealth along with it. Following the recommendations of a British advisory report, the RNZAF became independent of the Army in April of that year, and set about swiftly expanding aerodrome, aircraft and personnel numbers.<sup>3</sup> In the event of war, the government envisaged the chief function of the RNZAF was training personnel for the RAF, together with sufficient numbers to provide for local defence requirements.<sup>4</sup> With increased money becoming available for defence, it encouraged Aero Clubs to train pilots, and in 1937 the Otago Club began instructing pilots for the Air Force Reserve at Taieri.<sup>5</sup> By September 1939, some buildings for the recently revived Dunedin flight of the Territorial Air Force had been started on the airfield.<sup>6</sup> Upon the declaration of war, a rapid expansion programme converted the civil aerodromes at New Plymouth, Woodbourne and Taieri into Elementary Flying Training Schools (EFTS), as well as rushing the two other large new stations at Ohakea and Whenuapai to completion.<sup>7</sup> The capacity of these aerodromes was further expanded when, after the signing of the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) in December 1939, the RNZAF undertook to produce 880 fully trained pilots, 520 elementary trained pilots, and 936 with initial training, each year from 1941. This proved no comparison to the 80 trained pilots it had turned out in 1938.<sup>8</sup> Thus, New Zealand's commitment became Taieri's commitment and Mosgiel residents felt the first impact of the war on their own doorstep.

Under the Aviation Emergency Regulations of 1939, the aerodrome, Aero Club, aircraft and staff were taken over by the Government following the declaration of war. During the conflict the Aero Club committee held regular meetings, but all flying was prohibited.<sup>9</sup> Union Airways continued to operate a limited airline service on the eastern side of the airfield, however; usually one flight in and out per day. To meet the requirements of the Air Force, the Public Works Department enlarged the airfield by an extra 100 acres from surrounding farmland, which was used to extend the runways up to 1500 yards long to accommodate larger aircraft in April 1941. This forced at least one home owner, a Mr Barklay, to vacate his land and house to provide some of the space required, although he was entitled to government compensation.<sup>10</sup> The expansion also meant that a portion of Wingatui Road (on the eastern perimeter) disappeared and that Dukes Road was cut in half.<sup>11</sup> This proved a minor annoyance to locals who were going to Mosgiel from North Taieri during the war. Mill employee Ray Williams, for example, had to ride from North Taieri the long way around the western side of the airfield up to Five Roads intersection, then into Mosgiel and down Factory Road to get to work.<sup>12</sup> 'Busy Bee' of Mosgiel, writing to the children's page

<sup>3</sup> D.Duxbury et al. , *Aircraft of the R.N.Z.A.F.* , p.8.

<sup>4</sup> *New Zealand Official Yearbook 1946* , p.176. (Hereinafter *Yearbook 1946*.)

<sup>5</sup> Duxbury, et.al. , p.9.

<sup>6</sup> *Yearbook 1946* , p.177.

<sup>7</sup> "Mosgiel Reflects", p.28; Duxbury et al. , p.9. Taieri became No. 1 EFTS, New Plymouth No. 2, and Woodbourne, No. 3.

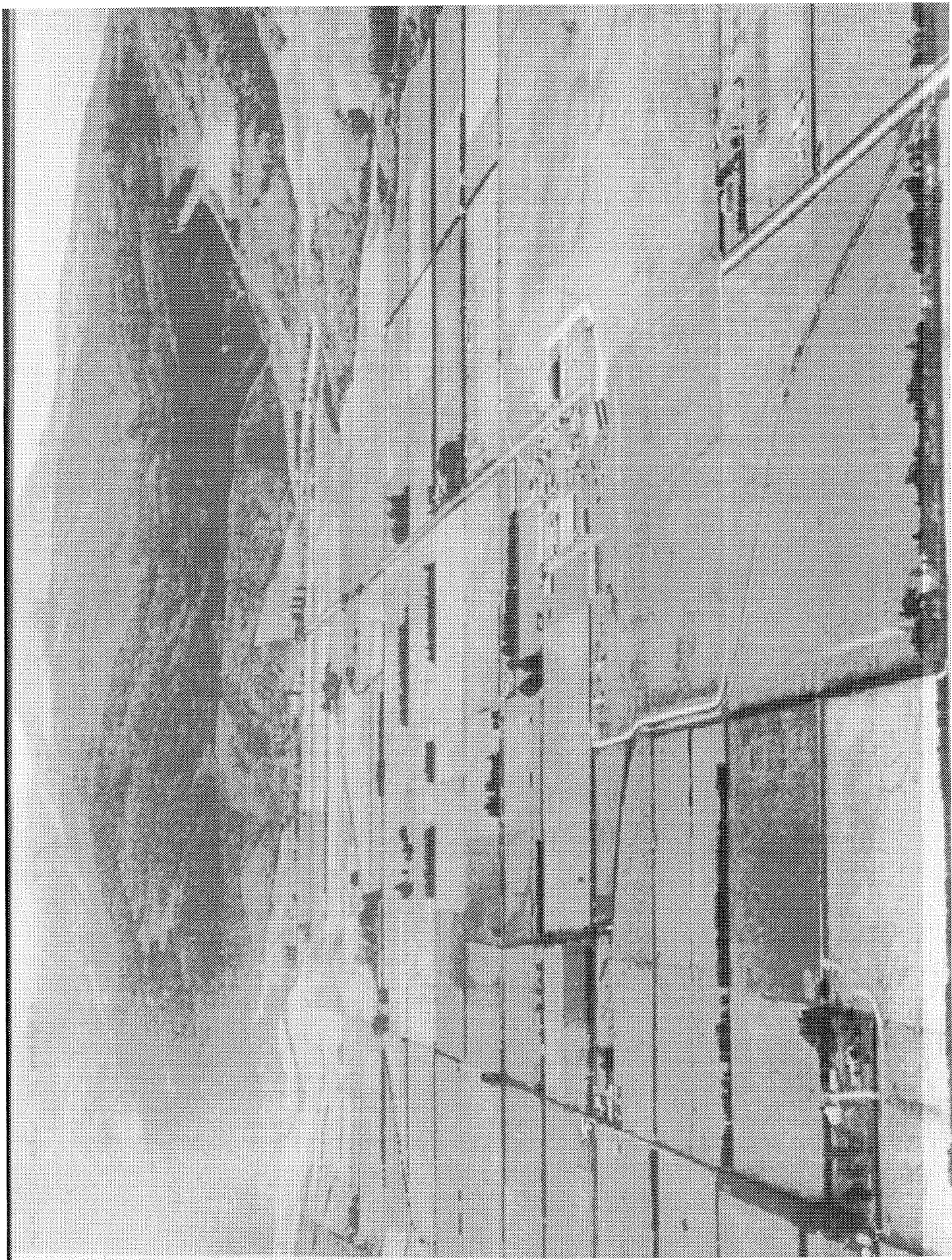
<sup>8</sup> *Yearbook 1946* , p.177. This scheme, later named the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, provided for all but the fully trained pilots to complete their training in Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Statutory Regulations (1939/134): The Aviation Emergency Regulations 1939; "Mosgiel Reflects", p.28. The Aero Club held a final display on 9 December 1939.

<sup>10</sup> Dunedin City Council Electricity Files (Hereinafter DCC/E): Power, Lighting and Heating File, No.16/19: Letter, 19 Feb. 1941, District Engineer, P.W.D. to City Electrical Engineer.

<sup>11</sup> "Mosgiel Reflects", p.28.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, R.Williams.



Dunedin airport (Taieri) in 1944, looking north. The bottom of Three Mile Hill can be seen in the upper right of the picture. the largest building visible is the Union airways hanger. Note that Dukes Road has been cut in two due to the extension of the aerodrome for the Taieri airforce station (No.1. EFTS) to the right (out of picture).

of the *Otago Daily Times*, also stated rather forlornly that “. . . my five friends and I are going for a bicycle ride to Whare Flat, but as we cannot pass the aerodrome I do not think we will reach our destination”.<sup>13</sup> The Dunedin Jockey Club, with its racecourse at Wingatui, also felt the effect. Owing to the closure of the road to the Black Bridge, a new road had to be made to connect with the club’s private road on the north side of its property.<sup>14</sup> These, however, were trivial adjustments to make since the public knew of their necessity for the War effort.

On the aerodrome itself, the building construction programme proceeded with remarkable haste. A host of over 200 Public Works builders and carpenters were bought out from Dunedin by train each day to construct the buildings, assisted by local builders and joiners.<sup>15</sup> From the original plans of April 1939 to accommodate 250 personnel, subsequent alteration after the outbreak of war allowed it to take upwards of 500, and was completed in only six weeks.<sup>16</sup> Ron Kirk notes, that virtually a new township with hangers, workshops, administrative offices and accommodation for personnel was built alongside Dukes Road on the north-western side of the airfield, near the Central Otago railway line.<sup>17</sup> It created an insular community in its own right. With accommodation, mess and hospital facilities, supplies trucked in from Dunedin, organised entertainment and later a library, a chapel, Y.M.C.A. activities hall and a meteorological station, even at this early stage the base had little reliance on Mosgiel township although it was only a few minutes drive away. Once the initial flurry of work was completed, the Station settled into flying training.

It officially opened on 20 October 1939, as No. 1 EFTS under command of Squadron Leader G.L. Stedman, to begin a new phase in the history of the surrounding area, although buildings were still under construction and roads in a muddy state.<sup>18</sup> Training began soon after on the de Havilland Tiger Moth aircraft, which had been impressed from local aeroclubs and allotted to Taieri. The first flying squadron was divided into two flights of eight Tiger Moths each and these gentle 130 horsepower bi-planes, previously used for aero club elementary flying, became very familiar sights in the skies over Mosgiel and the Taieri Plains.<sup>19</sup> The three (later four) Elementary Flying Training Schools were to make an effective and important contribution towards New Zealand’s war effort. In its nearly five years of operation, until October 1944, it handled 65 courses and a total of approximately 2790 pupils, or in other terms, 37 % of the pilots trained to elementary standard in New Zealand during the years 1940-44.<sup>20</sup> Of this number several very well known pilots passed through Taieri on their initial training, including Sgt. J.A. Ward VC; Squadron Ldr. Arthur Umbers DFC and

<sup>13</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 October 1939, p. 11. The column was ‘Dot’s Little Folk’.

<sup>14</sup> Dunedin Jockey Club, Minutes of Meetings : clipping 26 July 1940. (Hereinafter DJC Minutes).

<sup>15</sup> Interview, W.R. Kirk.

<sup>16</sup> “Mosgiel Reflects”, p.28. The main Number 1 Hanger, which measured 255 ft. by 125 ft., is now used as a storehouse for Wilson’s Whisky. The smaller Number 2 Hanger, recently revamped as the Otago Equestrian Centre, was completed in 1941. Jim Manley recounts an interesting sidelight of the construction. The water reservoir build at Taieri, had a pressure of 150 p.s.i. meant for firefighting. Initially this went to all taps around the Station, resulting in a water pressure so strong that one could fill a bath without the plug in!

<sup>17</sup> Kirk, p.145.

<sup>18</sup> R.N.Z.A.F. Station, Taieri, Station History , p.1. (Hereinafter Station History).

<sup>19</sup> G.Bentley, *R.N.Z.A.F. : A Short History* , p.41.They were repainted and given military serial numbers.

<sup>20</sup> Station History, p.41; *Yearbook 1946* , p.178. Author’s calculation. Taieri Station lasted to 10 days short of five years, as an EFTS.

Bar; Wing Cdr. J.F. Barron DSO, DFC, DFM; Wing Cdr. Mick Ensor DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar, AFC and Wing Cdr. Johnny Checketts DSO, DFC, American Silver Star, Polish Cross of Valour.<sup>21</sup> In order to perform any famous exploits however, the pilots and ground crews needed to be trained.

Advertisements for a bewildering array of jobs in the Air Force appeared in the local *Otago Daily Times* by early October 1939. Armourers, instrument makers, mechanics, riggers, metalworkers, fabric workers, medical orderlies and administrative staff, to mention but a few, were required to meet the task of rapid expansion the RNZAF had set itself.<sup>22</sup> This advertisement for 900 ground positions drew more than 2000 applications in five days and those volunteering as aircrew greatly outpaced the selection committees.<sup>23</sup> Some local residents found jobs at the enlarged Air Station. Vera Crozier's father, for example, became a steward in the Sergeant's Mess, though more out of a sense of duty than for the lowly pay rates.<sup>24</sup> Most of the trainee pilots who would pass through Taieri during the war had to wait a number of months before even being accepted for basic training, although all were volunteers. Meeting bureaucratic requirements took time and men were advised not to give up their jobs until actually accepted. Arthur Duff, a farmer near Raes Junction in 1940, waited eighteen months from the time he applied until the time he actually flew.<sup>25</sup> During the period of waiting the applicants were expected to prepare. Another Mosgiel resident, Bill Borrow, recalled being compelled to go to the Dunedin Post Office in his lunch hour (he worked in the city) on a specific day each week to practice morse code. He became an instrument repairer and so was sent to a North Island air station to train.<sup>26</sup> After passing an entrance exam, the trainee pilot faced the extremely strict discipline and long hours of lectures and study at the Ground School in Levin. If they eventually passed their final examinations the pupils were posted (thankfully) to either No. 1. EFTS, at Taieri or the EFTS stations at New Plymouth, Harewood or Whenuapai.<sup>27</sup>

Arthur Duff described it as probably the most thrilling moment of his life when he and his fellow trainees of course 27A were driven onto RNZAF, Taieri for the first time, to begin flying training. Like many others he could not afford to learn to fly in peacetime, but leapt at the chance to do so in the service of his country. During the weeks that they trained at Taieri - 9 February to 4 April 1942 - Station routine was much the same for Course 27A as it was for any other. They lived on base, two men to a room in the accommodation block, with mess, recreation and bar facilities. "Soldiering deluxe" was the expression used by the Minister of Public Works, Bob Semple after an early visit to Woodbourne air station.<sup>28</sup> Former pupil Johnny Checketts found the flying equipment at Taieri to be high quality and the food excellent.<sup>29</sup> After rising early for breakfast, the pupils usually flew for half the day whilst the other half would be devoted to lectures on things such as navigation, the theory of flight and armaments, with some physical training thrown in. In the first weeks of flying, the

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<sup>21</sup> Station History, pp 6, 7, 11; V. Orange, *The Road to Biggin Hill: A Life of Wing Commander Johnny Checketts*, pp.29-30.

<sup>22</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 Oct. 1939, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, p.90.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, V. Crozier.

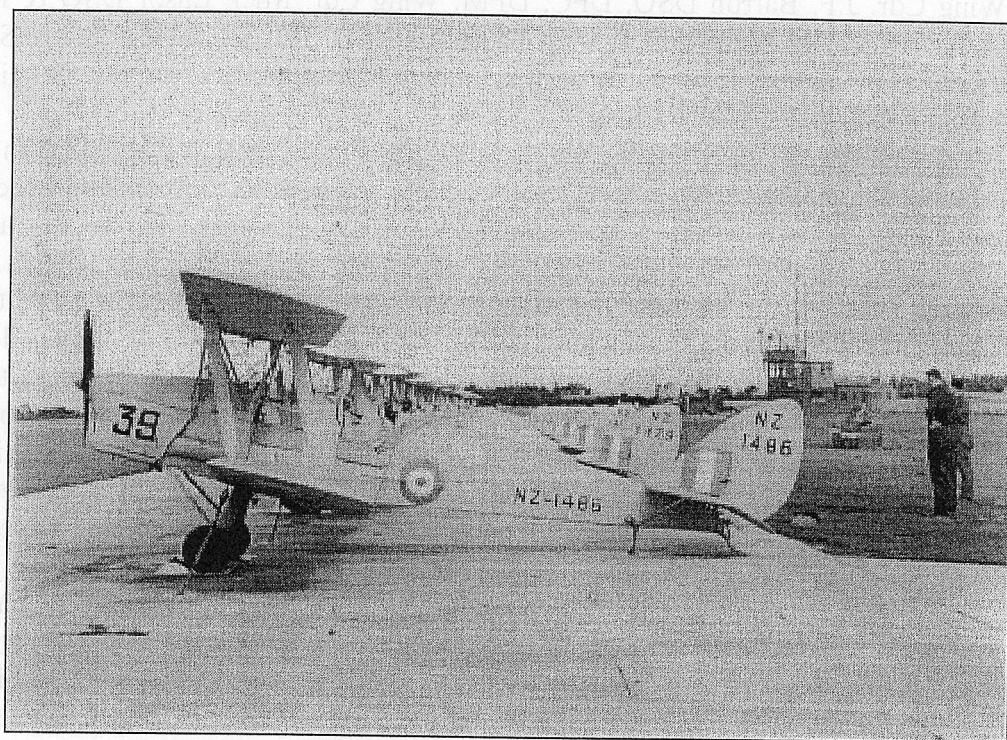
<sup>25</sup> Interview, A. Duff.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, B. Borrow.

<sup>27</sup> Duxbury et al. , p.33.

<sup>28</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 25 Oct. 1939, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> Orange, p.29.



(Above) An impressive lineup. Tiger Moths at No. 1 EFTS, Taieri.

(Below) The Union Airways hanger at Taieri during the war. The Lockheed 10 Electra (in the hanger) was the mainstay of the airline passenger service to Dunedin. The Monospar ST-25 in front of the hanger was visiting, in the process of carrying out an aerial survey of the country for defence purposes.



pupils were called junior pilots and flew in the mornings when the weather at Taieri was more settled. As they progressed to senior trainees in the second half of the course they flew in the more turbulent (usually windy) afternoons. Flying usually continued all afternoon or morning with the occasional landing to have a break or refuel. At night the pupils studied what they had learnt in lectures for more exams. Arthur noted that the pupils were not usually physically tired, but did bear a certain amount of mental strain.<sup>30</sup> It was probably only natural in the circumstances. Maurice Conly, another Taieri pupil, found that they were all thankful to collapse into bed early each evening.<sup>31</sup> This precluded most short evening visits into Mosgiel as will be evidenced later.

Once the pupils were senior pilots they became more proficient at skills such as stunting and forced landings. Eventually they were able to fly solo and practice these manoeuvres as well as cross country navigational tests. Flying solo brought new opportunities to the senior pilots and many took advantage of them. Sometimes, after checking there were no aircraft with instructors in them in the vicinity, one or two senior pupils would get down to zero level and fly down the Taieri Gorge out to the sea, then turn around and come back up.<sup>32</sup> Not only high spirited trainees did this sort of thing, however. Flying Officer J.S. Nelson, struck power wires while doing unauthorised low flying on a cross country flight between Hindon and Taieri in November 1940, for which he was subsequently Court Martialled.<sup>33</sup> Flying Officer J. Court was caught, but gained notoriety by being the first person to fly an aircraft under the Balclutha bridge in May 1942.<sup>34</sup> Punishments did not deter those who were determined enough and cunning enough to avoid detection while bending the rules. Arthur Duff tells of an informal visit he made to his parents when he was a senior pupil at Taieri.

. . . I knew enough to keep well away from all towns, because we had been told, or found out that the police had a duty to report every aircraft they saw and try and identify it, the time, its direction and all the rest of it. So I decided I'd overcome that. I kept practicing stunting [over Lake Waiholo] 'till I was the only plane left and I came down low and sneaked up the Waipori Gorge . . . and out through over the Lammerlaw's, just zero level more or less, avoiding being seen from Lawrence. Our country ran out to the Clutha River, I came down over that and over the homestead . . . My Dad reckoned it just about took the aerial off the trees . . . They must have heard me coming 'cause I can see them yet, standing there, waving their hands off.

He arrived back with the petrol gauge showing empty and although some of the ground staff guessed where he had been, nothing was ever said.

Aircraft did not usually fly low enough for pilots to see people waving at them from Mosgiel or on the Taieri, unless they were practicing forced landings with their instructor. Arthur recalled one occasion when, as a pupil passenger, his instructor 'buzzed' a Home Guard parade, but this was illegal and very much an exception. The simple rule being that the more altitude a pilot had, the safer he was. This seems to typify the connection between the Air Force Station and the neighbouring community. The base and aircraft were seen from afar by the residents of Mosgiel, but that seemed to be the limit for most people. While there was some interaction through Air Force

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<sup>30</sup> Interview, A. Duff.

<sup>31</sup> P. Harrison, "*Send for the Artist . . .*": *Maurice Conly, 54 Years as the Air Force Official Artist*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Station History*, p.6. Nelson was sentenced to six months of seniority.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.16-18. Court was severely reprimanded and sustained a loss of seniority.

personnel going into the town, generally Mosgiel residents had little to do with the base itself. This is understandable when it is remembered that it was a military installation, under military law and regarded as such by residents. Though only a training station, being a military base in wartime, the local RNZAF took their role seriously. Protection of the airfield water supply from Whare Flat via the Silverstream race, for example, was important enough for high barbed wire fences to be strung around the race and storage tank to prevent unauthorised entry. Flagstaff and Whare Flat Roads were also fenced off at three different points to aid in this.<sup>35</sup> Flood lit guard gates greeted visitors to the entrances to Taieri on Dukes and Factory Roads.<sup>36</sup> Arthur Duff recalled:

They were under guard all the time night and day. You could only get in and out with a special leave pass . . . They had special ground defence forces that were on guard. I think that they were older men, I can't remember now. Some of them could be pretty tough too. They like to chuck their weight around, and especially if you came home late. I've known of boys who had a night out . . . and they had to more or less bribe the guard with a bottle or two of beer or whisky, to get past, otherwise they were on the mat.

Most civilians required authorised passes to enter.<sup>37</sup> The armed guards on the gates were probably enough to put off any locals trying to look around. Under the Defence Emergency Regulations of 1940, guards of military areas had the power to arrest people on the grounds of unauthorised access, loitering or suspicious behaviour. In the most extreme circumstances they were entitled to fire upon those who proceeded after disregarding warnings, although there is very little likelihood of this occurrence at Taieri.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, with expensive equipment, weapons, bombs and an Anti-Aircraft unit in residence by the middle of 1942,<sup>39</sup> unless civilians had legitimate business they would not be allowed in there, let alone be able to wander around the airfield sightseeing. The restricted access meant very few local people went onto the base and witnessed its activities, so in this respect it had a rather limited impact on the town. A few local Red Cross members visited the Station hospital each week to deliver flowers for the wards, and gifts of baking and other comforts, but these were not social visits.<sup>40</sup> Occasionally some locals were invited to dances held on the Station, but all they really witnessed was the inside of a dance hall.

Some local school children spent all their time watching flying operations from across the road on the perimeter.<sup>41</sup> Curious adults probably went to have a look as well, but generally the impression gained from the interview of residents was that they never went near it. Bill Borrow, as an example, commented that he had nothing to do with the Station. He saw the aircraft in the skies, but did not go down there poking around since it was off limits. The majority found the presence of the base and its

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<sup>35</sup> DCC City Engineer's File: No. 40; (Hereinafter DCC/CE) Report by City Engineer, dated 4 May 1942.

<sup>36</sup> DCC/E 16/19: Letter, 8 Jan. 1941, P. Keller, P.W.D. Engineer to City Electrical. Engineer (C.E.E.).

<sup>37</sup> DCC/E 15/10: Letters, 10 Apr. 1942, C.E.E. to C.O., RNZAF, Wgtn.; 18 June 1942, J.A. Barrow, Air Secretary, to Mr G. T. Edgar, C.E.E.

<sup>38</sup> Stat. Regs. 1940/285 The Defence Emergency Regulations 1939, Amendment 1; Regs. 5 & 6.

<sup>39</sup> Station History, p.18. This was part of the Aerodrome Defence Unit (A.D.U.).

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Mavis Ewart; Red Cross Society (Otago) Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1944, 1945; pp. 17, 22. (Hereinafter Red Cross Annual Report).

<sup>41</sup> Interview, J. Manley.



activities interesting, but they soon became used to it and, following the attitude of the times, were too busy getting on with their own jobs which they saw as their contribution to the war effort.

Residents were, however, very accustomed to seeing the aircraft flying around at all hours of the day and night. It was such a common sight during the day that people thought little of them. Figures indicate an average of 90.6 daytime flying hours for every day of Taieri's five years capacity as an EFTS, from October 1939 to October 1944.<sup>42</sup> The introduction of night flying in July 1941, however, caused some disturbance and a few comments. "They drove you mad with all the little planes flying", recalled Isobel Williams. "Everyone used to complain about them flying at night 'till 10 o'clock." It was worse for her future husband Ray. "The Tiger Moths were everywhere. We were at North Taieri and we could hardly sleep for them at night", he remembered. This may have been over emphasised however, for a survey of the station's history reveals that night flying hours made up only 4.2 % of daylight flying hours in the months that night flying occurred.<sup>43</sup> Still, it is a fact that in the calm of the late evening even one aeroplane can sound loud if it is preventing one from sleeping. This, however, is little compared to the impact on the residents of some English towns near large airfields. One woman in Oundle, near a USAAF bomber base, recalled that they were awakened at 5 a.m. every morning by the pre-flight warming of the engines of squadrons of giant B-17's.<sup>44</sup> They would, no doubt, have preferred the dulcet buzz of the Tiger's engine.

Sometimes, in the interests of morale or for recruiting purposes, the Air Force would put on specific displays. Jim Manley, who was a boy of nine or ten at the time, remembered one night time display. "They were flying Tigers with lights on them . . . and I remember looking up above the old shop flagpole up there, thinking gosh, they're getting a bit low. Somebody said, 'Oh they're getting down a bit low', but I thought, 'Oh, they're not that low'. But they were doing dog-fights and all that sort of stuff."<sup>45</sup> Aircraft from Taieri assisted the civil defence authorities by checking the area's blackout precautions and assisting in some Emergency Precautions Scheme (EPS) exercises.<sup>46</sup> They also participated in promotions to buy war bonds, dropping leaflets over Dunedin, urging people to invest in Liberty Loans and proving, in the words of the *ODT*, a "spectacular feature" of the campaign.<sup>47</sup> These were the skies over Dunedin, however, where residents did not see so many aircraft. In Mosgiel, Tiger Moths were such a common sight, they did not receive a second glance. Activities such as these and the every day operations of the Air Station meant that Mosgiel residents were very familiar with aircraft in the skies above them; even those which flew low along the Taieri River. The canary yellow Tiger Moths, the displays, the stunting, even the squads of trainees out on runs around local roads, were all well known and common place.

Residents were initially less familiar with the visits of various other types of aircraft. Following the presence of German commerce raiding ships around New

<sup>42</sup> Station History, p.41; Author's calculation: 164,500 total hours divided by 1815 days.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-41. Night flying went from July 1941 until October 1944 at various levels. The largest total was 257 hours, recorded in July 1943. The highest number of day flying hours was also in July 1943, with 4571 hours.

<sup>44</sup> D. Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945*, p.296

<sup>45</sup> Interview, J. Manley.

<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 4.

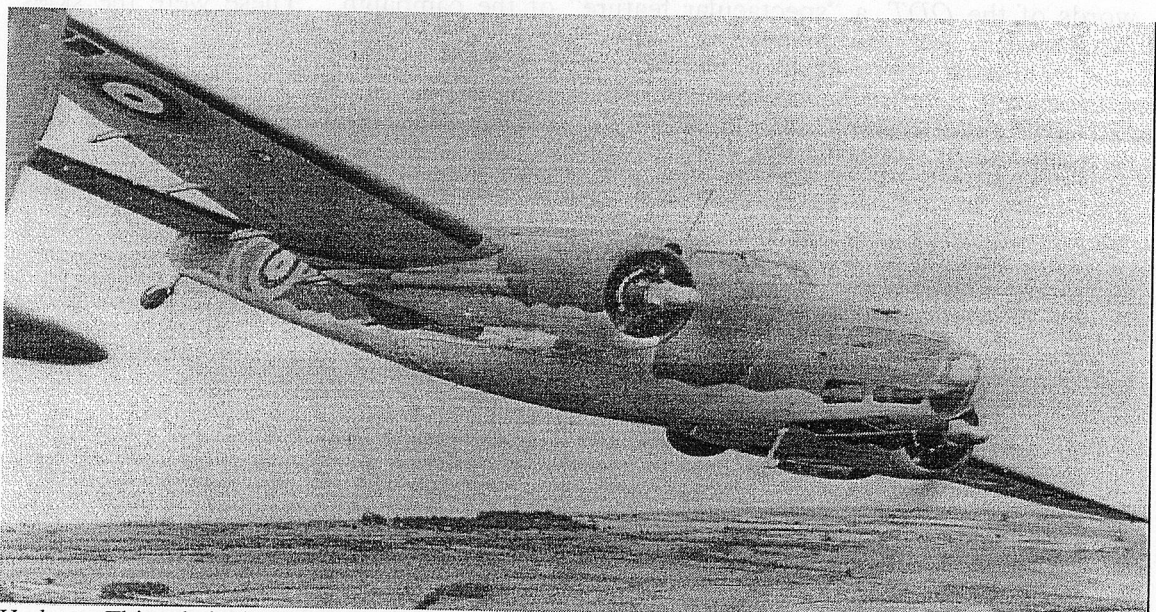
<sup>47</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 3 July 1943, p.4.



Blackburn Baffin. A flight (three) of these obsolete torpedo bombers operated from Taieri from May to September 1941. photo: Bentley & Conly, p.23



Vickers Vincent. More modern, they replaced the Baffin flight in September 1941 and served as short range reconnaissance bombers. They returned to Whenuapai in February 1942. photo: Bentley & Conly, p.73.



Lockheed Hudson. This relatively modern medium bomber first arrived in the country in April 1941 and first visited Taieri in September 1942. photo: Duxbury, p.43.

Zealand's coast in the latter months of 1940 and the growing threat of Japan, the authorities placed more emphasis on coastal defence, rather than almost solely concentrating on EATS training.<sup>48</sup> After the extension of the runway in April 1941 a detached flight of three Blackburn Baffin bombers arrived at the Station in May from No. 3 GR (General Reconnaissance) Squadron, Harewood, to maintain an operational presence in the lower South Island.<sup>49</sup> These obsolete ex-British Fleet Air Arm torpedo bombers would have been easy prey for contemporary Second World War fighters, but were the only operational aircraft available in the country for coastal patrol work from the outbreak of war until April 1941.<sup>50</sup> The Baffins were used in tasks as varied as mock attacks for ARP trials in Dunedin and for a recruiting campaign in Oamaru.<sup>51</sup> They were replaced in the detached flight at Taieri by the more modern Vickers Vincent short range reconnaissance bombers in September 1941. These carried out the first perimeter patrol from Taieri, ominously on 6 December 1941, one day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. The Vincent's carried out a daily dusk patrol involving a two mile trip out to sea, however, with the Pacific situation worsening they did not stay long and left for Harewood on 10 February 1942.<sup>52</sup>

Activities at the Station bore out the apprehension which greeted the sweeping Japanese threat. Though only an EFTS, Taieri still remained a military establishment and as such, efforts were made to prepare for the uncertain future. Gas mask practices were stepped up as well as the establishment of a daily dawn to dusk lookout for hostile aircraft.<sup>53</sup> Word was then received of the F.A.F.A.I. (Forces Available For Anti-Invasion) scheme, highlighting the inadequacy of the country's air defences. Its aim was to make sure every aircraft could be used offensively and to this end, auxiliary squadrons were formed at each RNZAF station with a light bomber squadron of eighteen Tiger Moths at each of the Elementary Flying Training Schools.<sup>54</sup> Thus, in February 1942 as the Vincent flight departed, the 41st Light Bomber Squadron was born at Taieri. Various British modifications were made, including bomb racks, camouflage and 10 gallon auxiliary fuel tank. A pilot at No. 2 EFTS, New Plymouth, explained the drill: "Whenever we flew solo, but not aerobatics we carried four anti-personnel bombs. We were told that if the Japs arrived, we were to drop the bombs on them, fly inland, land somewhere, take our uniforms off, camouflage the aircraft and get the hell out of it!"<sup>55</sup> Arthur Duff was at Taieri during this period. The instructors flew the modified Tigers in dive bombing practice, leading to noticeable strain on the leading edges of the wings, which were not meant for that. When the alarm sounded, the senior pupils had to scramble to their (unmodified) aircraft and fly away inland as far as possible. Arthur commented though, that had a Japanese fighter spotted him "it would be like shooting a duck sitting on the water". Other personnel and ground staff were to take cover in the extensive array of slit trenches dug around the now

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<sup>48</sup> Duxbury et al. , p.10.

<sup>49</sup> Station History , p.9.

<sup>50</sup> Duxbury et.al. , p.10. The Baffins were purchased very cheaply in 1937 to equip the Territorial Air Force and were reduced to scrap before the end of the War. Although they were torpedo bombers, the Baffins were not armed with torpedos, since these were too expensive. Ibid. , p.26.

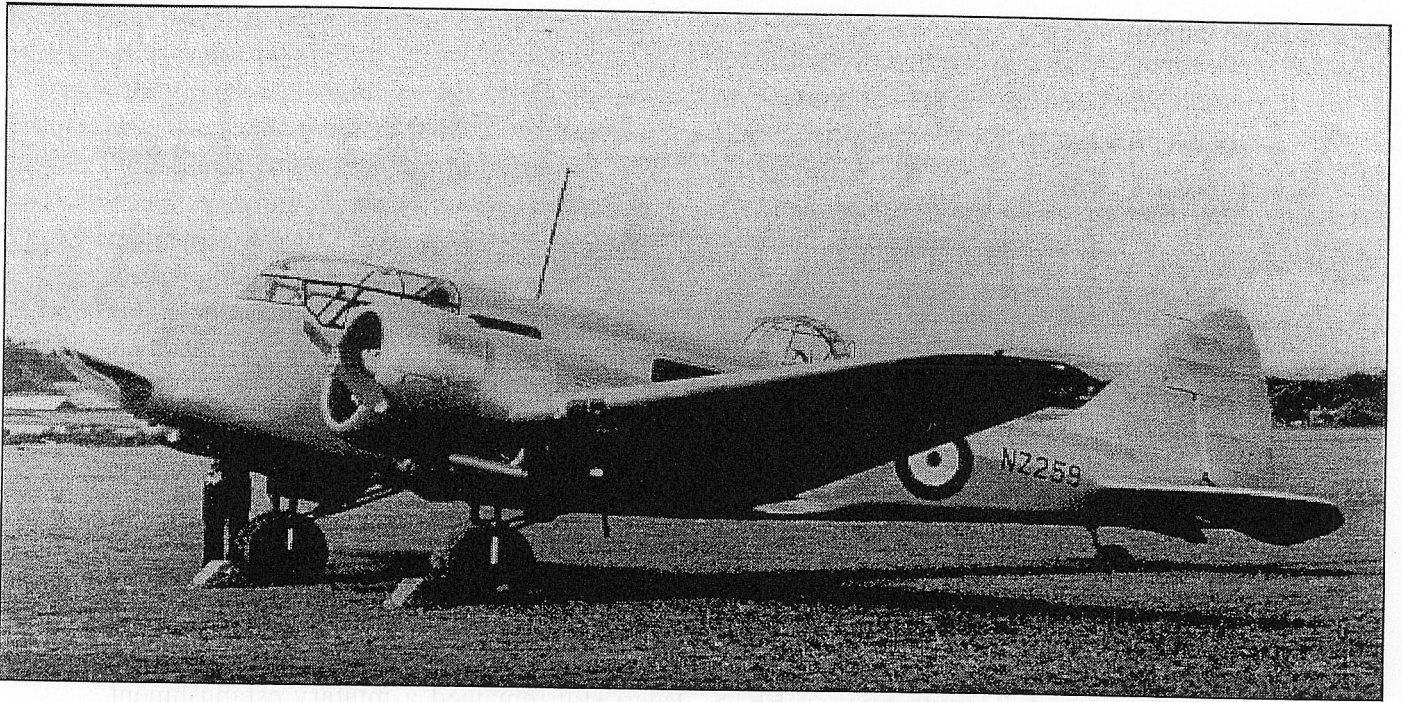
<sup>51</sup> Station History , p.9.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp. 13-14; Duxbury et.al. , pp.26, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Station History, pp. 17, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Bentley, p.92.

<sup>55</sup> J. King , *Vintage Aeroplanes in New Zealand* , p.17.



(Above) Airspeed Oxford. An example of the aircraft which crashed in flames at Taiari while carrying a live 250 lb bomb on 21 June 1940. photo: Duxbury, et al., p.22.

(Below) Down on Flagstaff. Union Airways Lockheed 10 Electra 'Kuaka' looks worse for wear after a forced landing short;y after takeoff from Taiari in February 1943. No passengers or crew were seriously injured and the airliner was back in the air by August.

photo: R.MacPherson, p.22.



camouflaged airfield.<sup>56</sup> In September 1942, following reports of an unidentified vessel off the coast, for the first time on record two armed Tiger Moths set off at dusk on interception duty. They located a well known New Zealand freighter off Cape Saunders. No fire was exchanged and the 'bombers' returned to base.<sup>57</sup> In that month, contemporary military technology in the shape of the twin engined Lockheed Hudson bomber finally visited Taieri for a short stay to carry out coastal patrols. Thirty of these aircraft had arrived in the country by October 1941 but it took until September 1942, before Hudsons from No. 2 GR Squadron, Nelson, could be spared.<sup>58</sup> By the end of the year, the halting of the Japanese in the Solomons and the arrival of squadrons of American built P-40 Kittyhawk fighters in the country led to the abandonment of the F.A.F.A.I. scheme. It is hard to imagine offensive reconnaissance patrols being flown from the Taieri aerodrome, especially as the only aerial protection for Dunedin, but they were and with all seriousness. These dramas and tense situations, however, were behind the cloak of official secrecy, unknown to Mosgiel residents, and as such had no bearing on them. Although many locals could recognise different aircraft with, for example, more powerful engines they were not in a position to know why they were at the Station or what they were doing. On the other hand, to many with limited interest, an aeroplane was simply an aeroplane.

Yet, earlier in the War, most local residents could not help but know about probably the most sensational event to occur at Taieri throughout the conflict. It served to remind both Station personnel and local people of the potential risks undertaken by all aircrews in the service of their country. On 21 June 1940, after German commerce raiders had recently been active in New Zealand waters, three Airspeed Oxford twin engined trainers were visiting the Station from Wigram when they received reports of an unidentified ship off the coast. Since these aircraft had provision to carry bombs, one was scrambled at first light to intercept what would later turn out to be a false alarm. Tragically on that cold mid-winter morning the Oxford, piloted by RAF Squadron Leader John Kitson, and carrying a live 250 lb bomb, crashed in flames on the western boundary of the airfield while taking off. Despite the danger, crash crews quickly extracted the crew of three from the flaming wreck. Kitson died in hospital an hour and a half later, but the other two crewmen survived.<sup>59</sup> An Aircraftsman witness said that the apparent cause of the crash was the wings of the aircraft icing up.<sup>60</sup> Local newspaper reports did not mention this, nor the fact that the aircraft was carrying a live bomb or the reason for it. Local people knew about it, however. A letter to the *Otago Daily Times* from a resident mentions roadblocks with sentries on the roads leading past the scene.<sup>61</sup> The fact that the bomb had not detonated during the crash, necessitated strict security and caution. Ray Williams remembered the event well, because with the usual roads cordoned off, he got to take

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<sup>56</sup> Station History , p.15. Army experts created imaginary roads and hedges crossing the airfield and the bomb stores were made to appear as a farm house and a barn.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.19; Duxbury et.al. , pp. 42-43. Hudsons also made short visits in February and April 1943.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, J. Mason; Station History, p.4; *Otago Daily Times* , 22 June 1940, p.10; Six months later two members of the crash crew, Cpl. Ernest Stratton and Leading Aircraftsman Dennis Herrick, were awarded the George Medal for their bravery. *ODT*, 27 Jan. 1941, p.6.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, J. Mason. Mr Roy Snedden informed him of this. At a Taieri Aeroclub 'dig' in 1990, John Mason found a very burnt engine cowling from the wrecked Oxford buried in the ground. The club also discovered a mounting ring for a Vincent's radial engine which they sent to Wigram Museum.

<sup>61</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 June 1940, p.7.

a shortcut across the aerodrome to get to work at the Woollen Mill for a few days. He recalls:

. . . A bomber crashed taking off and hit a hawthorn hedge over here [near Five Roads intersection] and it had a 250 lb bomb on it which didn't explode, but it split the case. So they dug a big hole over [by] the Silverstream about 15 feet deep, wrapped it up in gun cotton and that and set it away about a week after. Blew it up. Broke a few windows along the Silverstream, the houses along there . . . The pilot of that was the pilot that flew in the bombing of the Kiel Canal . . . and went through all that to be killed here at Taieri.<sup>62</sup>

Fay Nicolson vividly recollected the moment they exploded the bomb.

I always remember I was going around to Reid's for the milk and I come out the gate, and I was passing Ruby Stitchley's, who was our next door neighbour, just as the bomb went off and . . . Ruby's bloody front window fell out. You were warned to open your windows, you see . . . and I was the only one out there and I thought, "I'll get the blame for this", you know. I was sure I'd get the blame for it. But, someone else's windows cracked too . . . But none of us knew that they had bombs over there.

This is probably the closest that Mosgiel came to being under fire during the War. While that is perhaps taking literary licence too far, the incident itself caused only trivial damage. It provided a brief moment of excitement for residents, and something interesting to talk about for a while, but in the end it had little actual impact on the town. After the initial interest, flying training started again, Tiger Moths filled the skies, and people got on with their lives, albeit with a renewed respect for the bravery of the Air Force and its pilots.

Locals also became reasonably familiar with hearing about flying accidents and, to a certain extent, accepted the occasional death or injury of pilots. This is not surprising upon realisation that in its operational life the air base processed approximately 2790 pupils.<sup>63</sup> The pilots themselves adopted this attitude to a fatality. Arthur Duff remembered that "you accepted that with the War on, and you knew jolly well you weren't there for a picnic. And if you allowed that sort of thing to worry you then of course you shouldn't be there. Time was a limiting factor. There was another course waiting to follow you."<sup>64</sup> For the number of aircraft in operation though, the base got through very well. In EFTS operations from 1939-1944, an approximate total of only 36 crashes or destructive forced landings were recorded, at an average of 4722 flying hours per incident.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, it cannot have been an easy thing to get used to, especially as a number of these accidents occurred in view of townships. Jim Rowe, who worked in Mosgiel at the time, clearly recalled the first serious accident which occurred to Pilot Officer A. Suttie in June 1940.

A bloke Suttie, I think was his name, he was the first guy I can remember getting badly hurt, training to fly. He crashed over about Wyllie's Crossing and he got both his legs badly broken . . . I don't think the student got killed or anything, but I mean they were both badly hurt. But luckily that plane didn't go on fire when it skidded to a halt all smashed up . . . For the number of planes though, I reckon they got through that remarkably well.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> The Kiel Canal was raided by the R.A.F. in the early months of the War.

<sup>63</sup> "Mosgiel Reflects", p.28.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, A. Duff.

<sup>65</sup> Station History; Author's calculation.

<sup>66</sup> Interview, J. Rowe; Station History, p.4.

The Oxford crash caused the first death two days later. In this instance the newspaper headlines blared "Bomber Crashes - Fatality at Taieri".<sup>67</sup> Soon after Pearl Harbour, however, references to aerodromes and Air Force operations were restricted.<sup>68</sup> Crashes by solo trainees close to Mosgiel, 3 miles down Bush Road and beside the Silverstream bridge in July and August 1941, must have brought the reality of flying training to the attention of townsfolk. In December of that year a Tiger Moth hit the ground in a vertical dive near the cheese factory at Momona, injuring the pilot.<sup>69</sup> Arthur Duff was on base in February 1942 when the crash tender, the fire engine and the ambulance rushed to the scene of a fatal crash down the end of Bush Road. He also recalled when an aircraft cast its propeller over Mosgiel. The pilot glided into the aerodrome safely, but the propeller landed in a paddock on the outskirts of town, though there was no danger of anyone being hit by it.<sup>70</sup> A spectacular fatality occurred in June 1942, when a Pilot Officer from Taieri died after crashing into the main street of Gore, while participating in E.P.S. exercises. This, however, received no mention in the newspapers.<sup>71</sup>

The increased pressure for pilots for the RNZAF in the latter years of the War led to increased training numbers and, inevitably, more fatalities. A mid air collision in November 1942 near the Outram landing strip resulted in the death of a trainee flying solo. Another pilot and pupil were killed while engaged in dual spinning instruction in January 1943. The pupil froze at the controls and the instructor, Flying Officer J. King, bailed out at too low an altitude for his parachute to open after trying to persuade him to abandon the aircraft.<sup>72</sup> The collision of two Tiger Moths over the Momona airstrip made August 25, 1943 the most disastrous day in Station records, with the deaths of all four pilots involved. A mid-air collision also caused the next fatality in March 1944, when two aircraft went down a mile north-east of the aerodrome and one pupil was killed.<sup>73</sup> Little wonder Arthur Duff said that he needed to have eyes in the back of his head while flying. The last in this list of tragedies occurred in June of that year when Flying Officer L. Irwin and his pupil Cpl. Gillon crashed into the sea a mile off Brighton. Witnesses spotted one of them sitting on the fuselage of the floating Tiger Moth and an aircraft from the Station was over the scene of the crash within 20 minutes, but only an oil slick could be seen. Irwin and Gillon were never found.<sup>74</sup>

The number of aircraft accidents sometimes provoked press comment, especially, in January of 1943, when 15 RNZAF flying fatalities occurred in little over three weeks around the country.<sup>75</sup> The Chief of Air Staff, Air Commodore R.V. Goddard, replied that the rise in the total number of accidents did not imply a rise in the risks of flying nor a fall in efficiency or safety, as some newspapers had implied, and noted that New Zealand training fatalities compared favourably with those of other Allied countries.<sup>76</sup> The press again questioned this in August when, in the space of only

<sup>67</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 June 1940, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, p.921.

<sup>69</sup> Station History, pp. 10-11, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Interview, A. Duff.

<sup>71</sup> Station History, p.17.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. pp. 21 & 23 respectively. *Otago Daily Times*, 11 Mar. 1943, p.4. This is what official reports surmise happened.

<sup>73</sup> Station History, pp.29, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p.38.

<sup>75</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 Jan. 1943, p.2. This total included Flying Officer King and his pupil.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 20 Feb. 1943, p.4.

eleven days, ten lives were lost in three accidents around the country.<sup>77</sup> One of these was the two plane collision over Momona, and this incident gives a small indication as to the effect it may have had on some local residents. The official press release, as reported by the *Otago Daily Times*, named the victims and their next of kin as Flying Officer Robert Campbell, wife Mrs M. Campbell of 12 Green Street, Mosgiel; Flying Officer Frank Weymouth, wife Mrs M. Weymouth of Wingatui; L.A.C. Brian Hall, father Mr E. C. Hall of 108 Chaucer Rd., Napier and L.A.C. Lewis Ireland, mother Mrs B. Ireland of 45 Vincent Ave, Remuera, Auckland.<sup>78</sup> While the trainees came from many parts of the country, instructors and ground staff were more permanent, allowing some of the more senior ones to live off Station with their families in local state rental houses, such as in Green Street.<sup>79</sup> They and their wives no doubt came to know more local people, such as neighbours or shopkeepers perhaps, than would those officers or men living in almost insular security at the airfield. Jim Rowe, for example, worked at Chadwick's garage in Mosgiel in the earlier years of the War. He came to know instructor (F/Lt.) Harry Wigley and the Commanding Officer (S/Ldr.) Gerald Stedman since they lived off Station and were regular customers while there was still petrol about.<sup>80</sup> In this respect, although in total only six instructors (and seven pupils) were killed in the five years of Taieri's operation as an EFTS and some of them did not live off Station, it again brought home the reality of the job to those locals who knew a pilot, or the wife of a pilot who had been killed or injured. Nonetheless, this should not be over emphasised since a much greater majority of townspeople were more likely to be concerned with the well being of their own friends or relatives serving overseas in the armed forces than about the death of some unknown trainee who contrived to crash his aircraft. Again, like the visits of the military aircraft, many people did not see or hear about the dramatic events or close calls which took place during flying training, and they remained aloof from any impact that a crash or injury might cause. For those who did keep track of the accidents, most local residents took the attitude that the Air Force knew what it was doing but they knew very little about it, so were in no position to criticise. In the final analysis, Mosgiel residents had already accepted Air Commodore Goddard's assertion that flying had still to be regarded as a hazardous occupation, especially in wartime, long before he uttered it. They understood that, in the greater context of a world war, the risk and the tragedies were, if not necessary or acceptable, then understandable.

As the War progressed, the size of the RNZAF became ever larger. Where once early in the war it turned men away, by 1943 the need for personnel was high enough to warrant drafting spare men from the Army into the Air Force for work as ground staff.<sup>81</sup> Members of the recently formed Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) had arrived in late 1941 to bolster numbers. WAAF's carried out a variety of duties ranging from cookhouse duties, parachute packing and ambulance driving to manning the flare path. Taieri became the only Station in New Zealand to institute WAAF involvement in night flying exercises. Some of the night flying signallers were women,

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 3 Sept. 1943, p.2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 27 August 1943, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> Mosgiel Borough Council File (Hereinafter MBC File): Housing Scheme File; Schedule of Occupants of State Rental Houses 1940, attached to letter, 9 Apr. 1941, Branch Mgr., State Advances Corp. to Town Clerk (Hereinafter TC); The renting of houses by Station personnel continued throughout most of the War.

<sup>80</sup> Interview, J. Rowe.

<sup>81</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 Aug. 1943, p.2. Aircrew were only selected from volunteers.



and the pilots relied solely on their signal light to direct them in the pitch darkness.<sup>82</sup> Edna Grant, a qualified pilot, was not allowed to fly during her three years at Taieri, but she did become the station's only woman air traffic controller - perhaps the most important job on the ground.<sup>83</sup> However, such expansionism had the effect of falling in on itself, when the changing tide of war became obvious by mid-1944. With the invasion of Europe and the progress of the Allies in the Pacific, it became clear that New Zealand did not need to keep up such a large service commitment. The decision to wind down British Commonwealth Air Training Plan due to an excess of trained Allied air crews, a result of unexpectedly light losses during the Normandy invasion, also contributed.<sup>84</sup> This required a substantial reduction in domestic training facilities, as only a fraction of the multi-engined bomber personnel previously being trained for the RAF could be absorbed in the Pacific.<sup>85</sup>

Following noises made in the press about "scandalous inefficiencies" of men and money,<sup>86</sup> and later accusations in parliament that the air force was top heavy with officers, an armed forces investigation committee recommended shrinking RNZAF operations in New Zealand.<sup>87</sup> Rumours that Taieri would be closed as part of these measures were persistent and provoked comment from the local *Otago Daily Times* and *Evening Star*. They also dominated the meetings of both the Dunedin City Council and Mosgiel Borough Council in late September. As it was, a closing down dance had been held at the base on 20 September on the understanding that Taieri would close the following month.<sup>88</sup> Both councils sent telegrams to their influential M.P. (Dunedin South electorate) , the Minister of Defence, Mr Fred Jones. The letter from the Mosgiel Town Clerk (R. Rodgers) to Mr Jones gives some idea of the local feeling.

... The council hopes that when the matter comes up you will use your influence to have the Taieri Air Station retained, if possible. It is stated that weather conditions are generally more favourable for flying at Taieri than at some other stations, and very few military establishments have been set up in the Province of Otago in comparison with other parts of the Dominion.<sup>89</sup>

The Mayor of Dunedin (Mr D.C. Cameron) telegraphed the government urging that "when the reports were completed the claims of Otago to an Air Station should be very favourably considered, as all citizens were desirous of retaining the Taieri Station, which had done such excellent work in the training of airmen."<sup>90</sup> While the potential economic losses were probably in the forefront of the local politicians' minds, the base generated a sense of pride throughout the Otago region for its contribution to the War effort in training so many pilots to fly. This may be inferred by the widespread interest when the station held an open day on 23 September, in conjunction with a war savings campaign. For the first time the Station and the airfield were thrown open to civilian visitors. A special train and many petrol rations enabled 2500 people from Dunedin,

<sup>82</sup> B. MacKenzie, *The WAAF: A Scrapbook of Wartime Memories* , pp.43-44.

<sup>83</sup> S. Laine, *Silver Wings: New Zealand Women Aviators* , p.36.

<sup>84</sup> Duxbury et al , p.13.

<sup>85</sup> K. Hancock, *New Zealand At War*, p. 154.

<sup>86</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 July 1944, p.2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid* , 11 Aug. 1944, p.2.

<sup>88</sup> *Station History* , p.40.

<sup>89</sup> Mosgiel Borough Council Subject Files: War File; Letter 26 Sept. 44, Town Clerk to F. Jones. (Hereinafter War File.)

<sup>90</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 26 Sept. 1944, p.4; *Evening Star*, 26 Sept. 1944, p.5.

Mosgiel and around the Plains to flock through RNZAF, Taieri in one day.<sup>91</sup> This may have been the first time some residents had even ventured down to the base. No doubt many young and old visitors had a fascinating time. A balancing view, given by the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, that the closing of air stations which were surplus to the needs of the nation would ease the taxpayers' burden, seemed overwhelmed by the defensive reaction of the local politicians and public.<sup>92</sup> A few days later Mayor Hartstonge of Mosgiel received a telegram confirming that Taieri would not be closed down, but retained on a different basis.<sup>93</sup> The RNZAF released 4000 officers, airmen, and WAAF's in the month between August and September 1944, and announced the closure of the Delta, Ashburton, Tauranga and Levin Stations.<sup>94</sup> No. 1 EFTS at Taieri closed down on 14 October 1944, a few days short of five years in operation, reconvening as a much smaller grading school for preliminary trainee aptitude testing and the basic training of recruits.<sup>95</sup> This reprieve proved only temporary, however, and Taieri ceased training in July 1945, closing down soon after the end of the war to become a satellite of Wigram, used to store Tiger Moths.<sup>96</sup>

This was the end for Taieri, despite a minor revival with the Dunedin Squadron of the Territorial Air Force from 1948 to 1955.<sup>97</sup> The very minor effects of night flying aircraft, blocking off roads, or the odd crash seem hardly enough to have overtly impacted upon the lives of more than a few local people.

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Despite the glamour of the RNZAF, the majority of New Zealanders who served their country in the Second World War did so in the Army. Local residents too, were represented in all three services, but predominantly in the Army.<sup>98</sup> This meant, therefore, a much larger number of Army camps and fortresses around New Zealand. Taieri Air Station was the only RNZAF establishment south of Ashburton, so the military presence in the lower South Island was, with that one exception, represented by the Army, plus one or two scattered Naval Volunteer Reserve units. Dunedin's Army garrisons were quartered in camps at Tahuna Park and Forbury Park raceway. The Army also maintained a local presence close to Mosgiel throughout some of the earlier years of the War. The Wingatui racecourse, along Gladstone Road, became used as a training camp at various intervals from late 1940 into 1943. While overshadowed by the Air Station, in terms of prestige and length of time in operation, Wingatui camp had its own special relationship with the community.

Between the wars the popularity of voluntary Territorial Army training had declined as the sickening sacrifices of the First World War stifled the interests of many young men. However, as the tension in Europe grew and rearmament quickened in the latter 1930's, Prime Minister Savage instigated a Territorial Army recruiting campaign

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<sup>91</sup> Station History, p.40.

<sup>92</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 Sept. 1944, p.4. "If it is the effect of an improved war situation then it must be accepted."

<sup>93</sup> War File: Telegram 29 Sept. 1944, F. Jones to Hartstonge.

<sup>94</sup> Hancock, p. 154; *Otago Daily Times*, 29 Sept. 1944, p.4. Delta Station was near Blenheim.

<sup>95</sup> *Station History*, pp. 41-43. Only No.3 EFTS, Harewood and GS, Taieri remained for initial flying training by this time.

<sup>96</sup> "Mosgiel Reflects", p.28.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Kirk, p. 144.

in May 1939, which more than doubled their total number from 8000 to 17,000 by August of that year. After the declaration of War, those Territorial troops who had not volunteered in the 2NZEF continued to train on their low key basis, usually one night per week, two weeks annual camp and a few weekend camps per year. These relaxed measures remained throughout the 'Phoney War' period, with the Army Headquarters fully occupied in training and accommodating the expeditionary force contingents. However, by May 1940, the disasters befalling the Allied armies in France, required more forthright action. On 19 May, new Prime Minister Fraser announced increased training periods of three to five months would be given to all Territorial soldiers.<sup>99</sup> In spite of the lack of equipment in the country, tented camps were prepared for the training to begin in the warmer weather of Spring. By October 1940, the Minister of Defence Fred Jones projected that by the end of March the following year, the country could call on 25,000 Territorials with three months training, 8400 National Military Reserve men (First World War veterans serving on a Territorial basis) and about 10,000 troops training to go overseas with the 2NZEF.<sup>100</sup> By the outbreak of the Pacific war in December 1941, the Territorial Force had 52,000 men under training.<sup>101</sup> This expansion of manpower needed places to live and train. Wingatui helped to fulfil this role intermittently.

Under the Defence Emergency Regulations of 1939 and the earlier Military Manoeuvres Act of 1915, the government had the power to take over any land for the purposes of national security.<sup>102</sup> In the case of Wingatui and probably most other racecourses in the country this did not need to be enforced. The Dunedin Jockey Club, filled with patriotic pride, proved happy to oblige with access to its grounds and facilities after being approached by the Army Department in late 1940.<sup>103</sup> A precedent had been set even before the outbreak of war, when local Territorial units held a camp there over Easter in 1939.<sup>104</sup> Wingatui racecourse proved the most useful place in the area to set up camp. As with other racecourses around the country such as Trentham, Addington and Forbury it provided the large flat ground needed to conduct camp, along with a water and power supply and ready made cooking facilities. This fulfilled the Labour government's attitude of using public facilities for a people's Territorial Army, rather than excess spending on permanent camps for the regular Army. Thus, although future camps would be for greater lengths of time, the experience was not entirely new nor any disruptions to the club unexpected.

Under its official title, the Wingatui Racecourse Military Camp hosted a limited scale Field Artillery camp in October and November 1940.<sup>105</sup> By the New Year of 1941 the first Territorial units picked by ballot under the National Service Emergency Regulations (1940) assembled to begin their three months training.<sup>106</sup> On 6 January, Wingatui became home to the 2nd Battalion, Canterbury Regiment, until the end of

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<sup>99</sup> F. W. Wood, *The People At War*, p. 132.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, p. 450. These targets were reached by May 1941.

<sup>101</sup> Hancock, p. 293.

<sup>102</sup> Stat. Regs. 1939/123. Reg. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Dunedin Jockey Club, 5 Sept. 1940 (Hereinafter DJC Minutes).

<sup>104</sup> MBC minutes, 3 April 1939.

<sup>105</sup> DJC Minutes, 5 Sept. 1940.

<sup>106</sup> Stat. Regs. 1940/117. Reg 14. See Chapter 1.

March.<sup>107</sup> The ballot men from Mosgiel and the greater Dunedin area went to Forbury Park. This visit by a sizeable number of troops from out of the local area meant the first real interaction with the camp and some impact of the Army presence on the community.

While comparable with the Taieri Air Station in that both were training establishments, the similarity ended there. All personnel and staff on the airfield had specific jobs and were relatively settled there, working together to maintain equipment and train a small number of pilots. Only the pilot trainees were itinerant. Wingatui, on the other hand, was a limited term operation to process larger numbers of men in basic skills. With the arrival of the Territorials for only a short period, the community placed its amenities at the Army's disposal. These provided organised activities for the soldiers, most of whom were young and in unfamiliar surroundings, on days when they had some rest time. By the beginning of February 1941 the council and sports clubs had arranged with the C.O. of the camp to allow soldiers to use Mosgiel recreational facilities.<sup>108</sup> The Taieri Cricket Club gave the Territorials full use of the Recreation Ground and playing wicket on any day except Saturday. The Taieri Golf Club's links were open to members of any golf club with the same provisions, while the Taieri Tennis Club made their courts available any afternoons excepting Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Bowling Club was opened and the Mosgiel Municipal Baths were available free of charge to all men in uniform, except at the weekends.<sup>109</sup> This seemed to be quite a operation, with provision made for 26 cricketers, 32 bowlers, 30 tennis players and approximately 100 swimmers (plus an unknown number of golfers) expected each Wednesday. An afternoon tea came from local ladies in the Bowling Club pavilion for the bowlers and tennis players, with the rest at the Coronation Hall to cope with the excessive numbers.<sup>110</sup> After the camp ended the C.O. of the Canterbury Regiment, Lt-Col. Dobson, wrote to the council expressing thanks to the people of Mosgiel for the kindness and hospitality extended towards his men.<sup>111</sup> The men would have been seen around the town, but I suspect that they were mainly there to use the town's facilities, rather than socialise or wander up and down the streets. The aspect of individual soldiers socialising with the townsfolk will be dealt with later in this chapter. It appears that the ladies involved with providing the afternoon tea were only too eager to help. Otherwise, these events involved only a few local residents, and then only to give back keys to the various pavilions. In such formally arranged activities, the Army would have provided personnel - probably N.C.O's - to supervise and make sure that the facilities offered were not abused. On top of this, the fact that the activities were held mainly during mid week afternoons, a time of low usage when most people were at work or school, they did not deprive the local sports people or club members. Basically, there were few disruptions to the usual activities of weekday Mosgiel life. The Mosgiel Church of Christ Sunday School had its application for a picnic on the racecourse property turned down because of the presence of the Canterbury unit, but in the context of the greater effect on the town this was only a trivial matter.<sup>112</sup> Further visits by the Canterbury's in May and November 1941, presumably came to the same

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<sup>107</sup> MBC Minutes, 7 April 1941.

<sup>108</sup> War File : letter 11 Feb. 1941, TC to Officer Commanding Wingatui Camp.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> MBC minutes, 7 April 1941.

<sup>112</sup> DJC minutes, 13 Feb. 1941.

arrangements.<sup>113</sup> So, initially, despite the interest of having the soldier's camp close by, it had only a minor impact on the town.

At this point we might stop for a moment to contemplate the effect of the military presence on the Dunedin Jockey Club itself. Before the camp of May 1941, the club received notification from the Army Department advising that the men would be housed in the public buildings (it being winter) and that the Public Works Department would install heating facilities in the communal rooms and a large electric range in the kitchen.<sup>114</sup> The Club was offered the use of these facilities when they were not in use. In July of that year the Y.M.C.A. were granted permission by the club to erect a Soldier's Recreation and Facilities Room at the racecourse during the periods of military camps there.<sup>115</sup> Under Defence Emergency Regulations the government could erect or alter any building, and at Wingatui it proceeded to do so.<sup>116</sup> Huts were constructed in early 1942 to provide for semi-permanent occupation of the racecourse by the Army for up to 200 men. The erection of huts on the lawn of the racecourse and the conversion of horse stalls into rooms allowed for comfortable accommodation of the soldiers, in contrast to some other camps where Kenneth Hancock notes that large numbers of Territorials lived under very rough conditions.<sup>117</sup> Huts in the Birdcage ring tended to disrupt races obstructing the view of the track, until they were shifted at the insistence of the committee.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, this produced less impact because the number of actual racing days were halved as an emergency war measure in Easter 1942 as the Japanese moved closer.<sup>119</sup> However, the point that the Jockey Club had to ask for permission to hold meetings whenever the ground was occupied by troops, not surprisingly, seemed to grate with the committee after a while.<sup>120</sup> While not happy at the loss of so many race days, the physical changes to the racecourse itself by the authorities were accepted as temporary war measures as by the Club, especially when it was at the Army's expense.

Following Pearl Harbour, Wingatui welcomed a local unit, the former 5th Otago Mounted Rifles, into its grounds in the time of deepest crisis. The 5th OMR had been a local Territorial unit with a proud history, having seen service in the First World War at Gallipoli and in France as part of the Otago Battalion. As the name suggested, it had been a horse mounted unit, even into the first years of the Second World War, however, like many other units over the world, it had changed its identity to adapt to the new warfare. It became known as the 5th Light Armoured Fighting Vehicle Regiment (LAFVR), converting to light armoured vehicles such as the Bren gun carrier. Alan Kenny, a local Mosgiel resident, was called up in the May 1941 ballot and stayed at Wingatui camp from January until July 1942 with the 5th LAFVR. They kept his time there fully occupied with a lot of drill, rifle exercises and truck driving. He did

<sup>113</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9, 16 May 1941, pp. 7,6.

<sup>114</sup> DJC minutes, 1 May 1941. The type of heating facilities were not mentioned. Presumably they would be wood or coal burning stoves.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 3 July 1941.

<sup>116</sup> Stat. Regs. 1939/123. Reg. 6 (1). In January 1942, the secretary reported to Club committee members that the Military Department had advised that any repairs or replacements required would be made at the conclusion of the occupation by the Army, and only then. DJC Minutes, 8 Jan. 1942.

<sup>117</sup> Hancock, p. 293. Alan Kenny noted that tents were the usual in Burnham, the main South Island camp.

<sup>118</sup> DJC Minutes, 4 June 1942.

<sup>119</sup> Baker, pp.474-5; *Otago Daily Times*, 26 March 1942, p.6. The restriction was removed in 1946.

<sup>120</sup> DJC Minutes, (Special Meetings) 22, 28, 29 Jan. 1942.

however, get a fair amount of “unofficial leave”, when he used to sneak out from camp during the evenings and visit his home or friends in Mosgiel.<sup>121</sup> Another local resident, Mavis Ewart, recalled that while her husband Bill was at Wingatui, he would steal out of camp and spend the night at home, rising early in the morning to return to camp before reveille. No doubt other Mosgiel soldiers found this temptation hard to resist. It is unclear, however, whether relatives or friends of the soldiers would be able to visit them in camp, except on days when they had leave. Being in every way as proper a military establishment as the Air Station, guards manned the gates and people could not simply wander in. In any case the soldiers would be occupied until late in the afternoon. Undoubtedly evening leave may have been granted for local people on a regular basis during the week, but under Army rules the lucky recipients had to have returned to camp before lights out.

Mosgiel did however, as part of the greater Dunedin area, feel some impression of the general military presence as the Japanese tide crept inexorably southwards. In January 1942, civilian access to beaches, sandhills and foreshores in the Otago Military Fortress Area, from Waitati to Green Island beach, was forbidden after darkness and interference with military equipment sited there was punishable by arrest.<sup>122</sup> However, this probably did not worry Mosgiel residents much, even though bicycle rides to the various beaches were a common feature of local people’s summer recreation. On top of this, troops on manoeuvres became more prevalent around the Plains and the surrounding areas. Earlier in the previous year, the Automobile Association requested local motorists in country areas (included Mosgiel and Wingatui, for they were not in the automobile lighting restriction area at that time) to dip their headlights on meeting soldiers on the road on night marches.<sup>123</sup> In February 1942, motorists were requested by Army authorities to give consideration to mounted troopers mobilised near Dunedin who, in traditional army style, rode in two files on opposite sides of the roads, to enable quick dispersement in case of attack. Motorists were asked not, as had been the case on occasions, to harass the men and horses to form one line to let their vehicle past.<sup>124</sup> As will be seen in other chapters, though, the majority of Mosgiel people did not own a car, so this did not concern them. The editor of the *Otago Daily Times* urged the local public that whatever inconveniences the build up of the military presence might cause, the ones suffering the most upheaval were the soldiers themselves, who cheerfully accepted it.<sup>125</sup> Despite his appeal, it does not actually appear that the increased Army presence caused local people much inconvenience.

The prolonged LAFVR camp heightened the military presence in and around the town, but this did not result in great disturbances for residents. The number of military vehicles around the town increased dramatically in 1942 in comparison with the first years of the War. Truck numbers increased from 2800 in 1941 to almost

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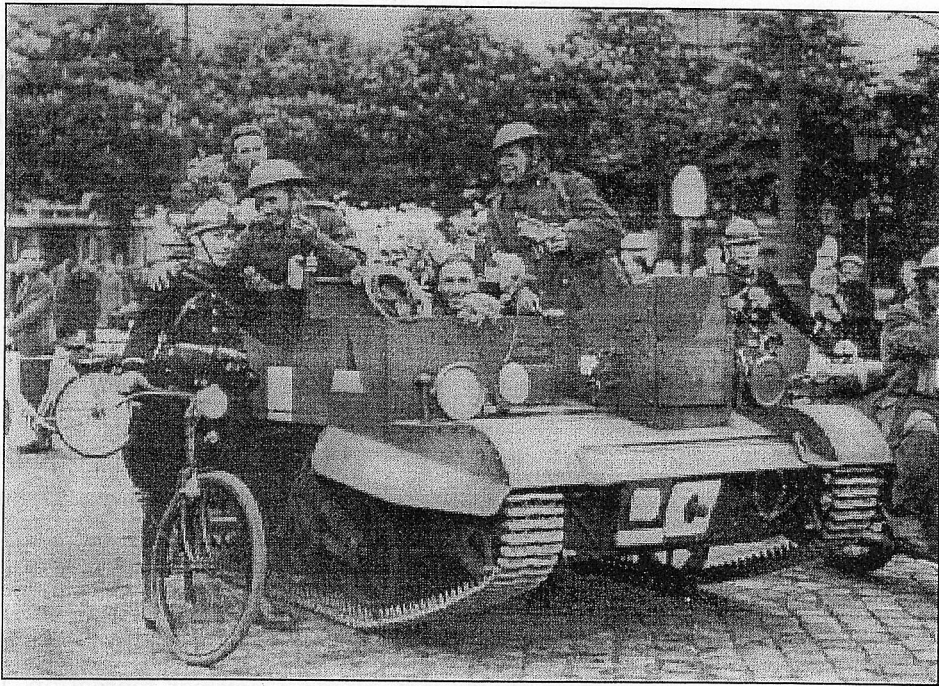
<sup>121</sup> Interview, A. Kenny. According to his paybook, he was called up on 1 May 1941 and served continuously in New Zealand until 5 August 1943, when he embarked for service in Italy with the 2NZEF until the end of hostilities in Europe.

<sup>122</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 12 Jan. 1942, p. 4. Fortress troops, the Home Guard and Territorials were at that time preparing coastal defensive positions to meet the possibility of invasion.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 18, 23 June 1941, pp.4, 8. The restricted area at that stage included only the Dunedin metropolitan city area and the Peninsula

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 26 Feb. 1942, p. 4. The troopers mentioned were the 9th (Taieri) Squadron of Independent Mounted Rifles, formerly of the National Reserve, recruited from the area between Palmerston, Taieri Mouth and Outram. *Ibid*, 29 Mar. 1941, p.7.

<sup>125</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 12 Dec. 1941, p. 4.



Bren gun carriers of the British Expeditionary Force in Belgium (above) and in action in Louvaine, France (below) in 1940. Vehicles of this type were sometimes seen on the local roads, on manoeuvres from Wingatui camp. One called into Chadwick's garage once, to fill up on petrol .

photos: G. Blaxland, p.68.



11,000 by the end of 1942 and armoured vehicles from 179 to 1,122 in the same period.<sup>126</sup> A fraction of these vehicles were at Wingatui camp and seen around the town. By this time Army trucks frequently drove on the outskirts of the town and sometimes up and down the streets, with the numbers being accentuated by the lack of civilian vehicles on the road due to petrol restrictions.<sup>127</sup> The Taieri County Council history, *A Century of Service*, remarks on the heavy traffic flows around Wingatui camp and the Air Station at this time, noting some complaints of inconsiderate driving in this area.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, Bill Borrow recalled that Army vehicles weren't a thing you saw every day. By May 1942, Bren gun carriers had arrived at the camp, making their first public appearance in the area in a Dunedin military parade, manned by the 5th LAFVR, on the 27th of that month.<sup>129</sup> The Regiment's men were trained to operate these vehicles, along with the less glamorous trucks, in all conditions, preparing them for use in New Zealand or for eventual service overseas. The Bren carriers became somewhat familiar sights, although still quite a novelty, to the residents of the town and outlying areas as the drivers practiced taking their charges across country and around the gravel and asphalt roads of the district. A few times they made unscheduled stops by the town, as garage apprentice Jim Rowe explained.

. . . when they had a camp at Wingatui, they had Bren carriers. Well they used to come through Mosgiel, to teach the drivers road work and once or twice when for some reason, perhaps, they might not have set out with enough fuel in them . . . they come (*sic*) [to Chadwick's garage] with a jerrycan and ask to get them home maybe . . . But there was no refuelling as such, they had their own fuel tankers and such like at the camp.<sup>130</sup>

Fay Nicolson recalled that they often saw a convoy of trucks passing through the town via Factory Road, on their way to some manoeuvres. The kids along the streets always used to wave at them and the soldiers would always wave back.

Incidents like these helped residents to identify with the army presence from the camp. Although Wingatui was off limits in the same way that the air base was, the soldiers seemed less isolated, less detached, than the pilot trainees did. Being a local Otago unit with a number of Mosgiel people serving in it also meant the bond was, perhaps, more intimate than that formed with the 2nd Canterbury Battalion in its visits. If, as stated before, the Air Station was a source of pride and glamour to residents, then Wingatui with its more rudimentary army training, was more easily identified with. It was easy to marvel at the technology and thrill of flying, but my impression is that the simpler army life was more recognisable to townsfolk brought up on the stories, or experienced in, the trench warfare of the First World War. With most residents on military duty serving in the Territorials, Home Guard or overseas with the 2NZEF, there seemed an easier affinity with the LAFVR and Wingatui than seemed to be with the Taieri Air Station.

This affinity is emphasised by the special relationship formed between the town band and the military. A brass band, operating under various names, had been resident in Mosgiel since 1882.<sup>131</sup> The Mosgiel Municipal Brass Band, as it was known at the

<sup>126</sup> Hancock, p. 293.

<sup>127</sup> Interview, J. Manley.

<sup>128</sup> E. Farrant, *A Century of Service: The Taieri County and its Council*, p.49.

<sup>129</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 May 1942, p. 4. There were 5 Bren carriers in the parade.

<sup>130</sup> Interview, J. Rowe. A jerrycan is a tin designed for carrying petrol or water in.

<sup>131</sup> Kirk, p. 299.



beginning of the war, fluctuated between about 20 to 30 members. It played at official functions and shows, and some Friday night and Sunday afternoon concerts at the band rotunda in Anzac Park. At some time early in the war and at least by 31 May 1941,<sup>132</sup> it became the official band of the 5th Otago Mounted Rifles (as they were still known). After discussions with local residents, the C.O. of the OMR, Ossie Ferrens, offered this opportunity to the band. The bandmaster, Mr L. B. Borrow accepted Col. Ferren's offer and they became registered as an official auxiliary unit of the OMR, receiving uniforms and government grant in return.<sup>133</sup> This meant the band, practically all of whom were from Mosgiel and the Taieri, accompanied the OMR on its various camps, although they continued in their usual employment and only paraded at Wingatui in weekends when the regiment needed them. They did not participate in weapons training but, if not required to play on parade, they had other duties in the stores or cookhouse to keep them occupied. All members, unless in essential work, went to Burnham with the O.M.R. in late 1941 for the usual three month Territorial Intensive Training Camp, when the regiment became mechanised. Band members could appeal this and men who ran their own businesses, such as L. B. Borrow who owned the local jewellers shop, were exempted. The band members were generally older men in their twenties and thirties and there were a number in this position, who appealed against the training. Following the training, the band became known as the 5th LAFVR Band, but still continued to play concerts for the public whenever possible. Bill Borrow, son of the bandmaster and band member until he joined the RNZAF in 1942, was quite sure that the band members, being an auxiliary of the army, were excluded from having to join the Home Guard or EPS, although it did not preclude general service if called up by conscription as he and others were. He recalled that everyone felt quite good wearing army uniforms. No-one minded even when they went to Burnham, although "there was always the odd grouch or two".<sup>134</sup> They felt that they were doing something positive for the war effort, even if they had to provide their own transport to get to the camps. When the military left Wingatui camp, the band kept their uniforms until the end of the war.

The story of the Mosgiel Municipal band is an excellent example of adapting to meet the challenge of the War situation. Mark Lindsay, in an essay on local entertainment during the War, noted that the memberships of many Dunedin bands became seriously depleted, forcing them to suspend their activities from early on in the conflict.<sup>135</sup> The Mosgiel Brass Band avoided this, due in some part to the presence of the OMR and Wingatui camp. In turn, its service helped Mosgiel people become more familiar, both with the local army presence and Wingatui camp.

The band also featured in military parades which accentuated the army presence in the greater Dunedin area. It attended a number of parades in Dunedin during the dark months of 1942, along with local LAFVR and Taieri RNZAF personnel. Mosgiel hosted a martial parade on United Nations Day, 15 June 1942, in which the 5th LAFVR Band and the Taieri Pipe Band led local units of the Home Guard, Fire

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<sup>132</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 31 May 1941, p. 8. This is the earliest reference found for my research into the band's military service.

<sup>133</sup> Interview, B. Borrow.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* Bill was called up by ballot for the army, but had already volunteered for the RNZAF before this and was waiting to be accepted. Thus, he donned blue instead of khaki for the rest of the war.

<sup>135</sup> M. Lindsay, "Being Grim and Gay: Dunedin Entertainment and Cultural Life 1938-43", p.56.

Brigade and ERC personnel down Gordon Road.<sup>136</sup> Soldiers and airmen from local units also attended the Mosgiel Anzac Day parade that year.<sup>137</sup> Having more troops on show may have provided a degree of comfort for the more nervous section of the population, apprehensive about the threat of the Japanese. It no doubt also created something exciting for young children to talk about. However, these were rare occasions, with both Army and Air Force concentrating on their training schedules much more than on any local public relations.

By the end of the crucial year of 1942 the needs of economic production and the diminishment of the invasion threat began the decline in the military presence in the area. The numbers of Territorials in service nationally had peaked in September at 90,000, dropping to 56,000 in January 1943.<sup>138</sup> With less soldiers to train, the authorities rationalised the remaining numbers into the main centre camps. Thus, Wingatui came to the end of its short and intermittent life as an Army Camp. After some delay by a government probably cautious that the situation in the Pacific did not decline again, the huts were removed from the ground and work began on refitting the stalls for horses again.<sup>139</sup> After feeling the impact of the Army presence most keenly of any in the area, the Dunedin Jockey Club received its grounds back. The town farewelled the camp without the protests that would follow the announcement of Taieri's closure in 1944. It seems local people accepted its temporary nature and did not mourn its passing for long if it was the result of an improved war situation.

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If, it seems, the actual physical presence of both the military installations did not overtly impact upon life in Mosgiel, what of the interaction between their personnel and the township? This social interaction is the main way in which new influences, such as the influxes of airmen pilots or Canterbury soldiers, are accessible to most of the community. It appears only a few locals visited the camps or had relatives in them, so the visits of the servicemen into the town seems the most probable way for any mixing or social impact to occur. Probably one of the best examples of this is that of the American influence on British society in World War Two. About three million American servicemen landed in Britain between 1942-45 and this sheer weight of numbers, especially in the build up to the Normandy invasion, impacted on London and those towns near US bases. Contemporary and modern critics point to the Second World War presence as the beginnings of the "Americanization" of British society. In 1944, British journalist Kingsley Martin called it "one of great social experiments of the war", in view of the influence those troops had in integrating themselves and their culture into parts of England and the hearts of many of its people.<sup>140</sup> While he may have been generalising to a certain extent - because by no means did all G.I's or flyboys even meet English people, let alone invited home to dine with a local family - it was significant enough to be noticed and well commented upon. How then, did Mosgiel fare with its guests from down the road?

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<sup>136</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 June 1942, p. 4. This seems to have been held before the Dunedin parade of that date, because the band was reported as having been in both.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 28 April 1942, p.6. Other examples of the military presence are found in Chapter 8.

<sup>138</sup> Hancock, pp. 306, 293.

<sup>139</sup> DJC Minutes, 19 Sept. 1943.

<sup>140</sup> Reynolds, pp. 197, 431; Chapter 24.

Despite the large military presence at Taieri and periodically at Wingatui, the impact was obviously nowhere near that of places like London, Auckland or even Dunedin. We must realise that the visits of troops into Mosgiel were on a relatively small scale. The town did not become swamped with servicemen of all nationalities, as London did in the months of preparation for D-Day, for example. Nonetheless, servicemen did become noticeable around the town, especially during 1942 when Wingatui came into permanent occupation. Soldiers and airmen were seen around the streets and residents became used to them. Garry Nicolson remembered that as his mother's funeral procession proceeded up Gordon Road, a group of soldiers who were walking along towards it, stopped and stood smartly to attention until it had passed. He felt this was a nice gesture.

A few organised activities were offered to visiting troops. The Dunedin Jockey Club offered passes for local Army officers to attend races at Wingatui,<sup>141</sup> while on Wednesday evenings Ernie Strain, owner of the Mosgiel pictures, extended regular invitations for airmen from Taieri to attend the show free of charge.<sup>142</sup> Many struck out on their own. Fay Nicolson and George Allen both recalled that some Army and Air Force personnel would wander around the town on Friday nights. A number also usually attended local dances in the weekend. These events enabled local people to mix more socially with the visiting servicemen than simply mouthing pleasantries as they passed in the street during the week. They also provided a needed boost to male dance partner numbers. Margaret Kenny explained that regular balls were held in the Coronation Hall, but many of the local boys were absent overseas. When there were camps at Wingatui, some of the visiting troops would arrive over on a Saturday night.<sup>143</sup> This interaction, as Harry Bioletti noted about the influx of Americans in Wellington and Auckland, brought some colour to a drab scene.<sup>144</sup> Fay Nicolson tells of one such incident. "I remember one winter over at the aerodrome, it was quite a joke for the locals. There were a lot of North Island boys over there, and it snowed here this day, and they'd never even touched snow . . . you know, they were tasting it and rolling in it and throwing it at each other. But it wasn't a novelty to us". Local youths and some parents made new acquaintances from other areas, by no means a simple thing to do in an era where people did not travel as much as today, when even their holidays were taken not far from home. Jim Manley remembered that his older step sisters got to know personnel from the Air Station, whom they met at local dances. Vera Crozier described how it felt to go to one of the rather exclusive Air Force dances.

We had lovely times. Sometimes there were a group of ladies in Mosgiel and they organised dances at the Air Force Station for young ladies and the ladies would supply the supper; Amy Wood and Margaret Shaw and Miss Gow and some of those folk . . . Then they would invite young ladies who could go, and it was quite exciting because you got on your bike and went away over. And it was very exciting dancing around with these airmen, and you knew jolly well that they'd be away somewhere else up in the North Island or Canada to finish their training . . .

On other occasions, however, the presence of servicemen at Mosgiel dances antagonised some of the local men, or rather, the young men. When interviewed, Fay

<sup>141</sup> DJC Minutes, 7 December 1939, 13 February 1941, 1 October 1942.

<sup>142</sup> MBC Minutes, 4 Dec. 1939; War File: Letter, 11 Dec. 1939, Adjutant, Taieri Air Station to TC.

<sup>143</sup> Interview, M. Kenny.

<sup>144</sup> H. Bioletti, *The Yanks are Coming: The American Invasion of New Zealand 1942-1944*, p.185.

Nicolson recounted that some airmen went to the Saturday night dances, but weren't all that popular because they took out some of the local girls. She noted with a grin at her husband Gary, that "Some of the local boys had it in for them". Gary, on his part, admitted there were a few fisticuffs around at that time. However, Fay emphasised that there would only be a few incidents, none of which were caused by the Air Force boys themselves. This was probably a common experience for any township near a military base, and one shared by Keith Sinclair when he served in the Army for a period near a similar small town in North Otago. He wrote to his mother, "It's funny to see the local chaps in a bunch by the dance-hall door and to hear them muttering about us as the North Islanders mutter about the Yanks".<sup>145</sup>

Sometimes servicemen were invited into local homes. Many people of the town did their best to receive visiting servicemen, in the spirit of the times, and as some would hope that their own son or husband overseas would find hospitality. Jim Manley, for example, remembered that in his experience, "Quite often there would be Army people or various people with uniforms, either the old man had been to the pub and brung (*sic*) home a couple for tea unexpectedly and that sort of thing". On the other hand, Vera Crozier, whose father worked in the Sergeants' Mess at the Taieri Air Station, said that he never really brought airmen home. She remarked that like many parents, hers preferred to know the parents and families of any potential men friends their daughters knew, thus precluding most of the Taieri personnel. Sometimes relationships between servicemen and local girls did bloom. In 1941, the Otago social correspondent of the *New Zealand Women's Weekly* announced that " 'Air' engagements seem to be all the vogue these days", in reference to the number of Taieri airmen engaged to local girls.<sup>146</sup> In this case, however, the home addresses of the girls they were to marry, and those from announcements in the *ODT* around this time, are from Dunedin,<sup>147</sup> suggesting that Mosgiel, simply by being closer than the city, did not necessarily attract that many eligible men to social occasions. Isobel Williams recalled that two girlfriends she knew, married Air Force fellows from Taieri, but there were not a lot, because many of the local girls already had local boyfriends or fiancés overseas, or in the Army camp at Forbury Park. Although friendships and relationships were struck up, this social impact should not be overrated, just as the presence of Wingatui camp and Taieri Station has not been. Many were fleeting and temporary, as tended to happen in wartime. People did not usually dwell too much on their uniformed dance partners, shop customers or darts opponent in the pub since they might be gone the next day, posted elsewhere by the faceless military bureaucracy.

Indeed, despite the presence at the two local military sites, visits by servicemen to the town appear to have had a rather modest impact, if any. In contrast, some small towns adjacent to military camps were heavily affected. At Warkworth and Paekakariki for example, the American troops from camps nearby literally flooded those towns and their environs, such was their number. With up to 10,000 of them in Warkworth at one stage, the troops outnumbered the locals many times over. Everyone knew the 'Yanks', mixed with them regularly and even took to wearing their clothes and eating their rations which were handed out frivolously.<sup>148</sup> Mosgiel did not undergo any such comparable excitement. The arrival of New Zealand airmen and soldiers did not really

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<sup>145</sup> K. Sinclair, *Halfway Round the Harbour*, p.80.

<sup>146</sup> *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 1 May 1941, p.17.

<sup>147</sup> For example; *Otago Daily Times*, 26 April 1941, 21 March 1942, pp.12, 3.

<sup>148</sup> Bioletti, p.113.

prove a culture shock, as Bioletti claims the Americans were to New Zealanders.<sup>149</sup> Local people felt proud to have the airmen and the soldiers nearby, but they were hardly a novelty after the first few weeks. While the uniforms did provide some interest, they were not exotic beings like the Americans, simply other Kiwis away from home, and not well paid ones either. As it turns out, there were a few Americans in Dunedin; some sailors overseeing ship repair at Port Chalmers late in 1943 and others on extended leave from the Pacific, the same year.<sup>150</sup> Jim Rowe recalled he saw some Americans at an underground gambling session in a basement near the Exchange in Dunedin. On several occasions the much feted small parties of US Marines on leave were taken on drives around the Taieri amongst other places, once to be guests of Mrs E. F. D'Ath of Mosgiel for afternoon tea, but these were the most fleeting of visits.<sup>151</sup> Just like the physical presence of the two bases, people got used to the influx of boys in Army or RNZAF uniforms on their streets. In any case there were not really that many of them.

Mosgiel, being a small semi-rural town, had few entertainments or population to entice servicemen. Only two billiard parlours and the odd fruit or fish and chip shop remained open in the town at nights. Most of the Air Station personnel, it seems, preferred the brighter lights of Dunedin. Ray Williams explained that, "Most of them went to Dunedin. You didn't get many of them coming over here. They used to go away into town [Dunedin], they had an Air Force bus and they used to bus them into town and pick them up at nights . . . You only had the pictures in Mosgiel, there was nothing else to go to. Wasn't many shops or things." Some attended the dances in the weekends, but much larger dances, other entertainment and, more importantly more girls, awaited them in the city. When the pilots training at RNZAF Taieri had time off, they did not spend it in Mosgiel. Arthur Duff, one of those trainees said,

I can't ever recall getting into Mosgiel itself when I was with the Air Force, other than . . . we would catch a train here to go away on leave and I presume, from memory, we'd hire a taxi to come to the airport and drop us off at the [Wingatui] Station out on Gladstone Rd. And then the reverse procedure when we arrived back late at night - a rush for the taxis and straight back to the airport . . . So we didn't see the town itself other than from the air of course.

Fellow Air Force man Ian Murdoch echoed this comment, only passing through Mosgiel on the way to somewhere else. The same thing happened when he and his friends were posted to Wigram, as it did in any other country. They did not stop at the closest small township when they had leave, but went into Christchurch to see the sights and wander around in Cathedral Square. When the future Wing Commander Mick Ensor did his elementary flying training at Taieri in 1940, he spent much of his leave time at Wain's Hotel in "the comparatively huge city of Dunedin". He made no mention of social visits to Mosgiel in his biography.<sup>152</sup> The attraction of the bigger towns was, a naturally common phenomenon. US Marines at Warkworth, for instance, headed to Auckland for their weekend leave, so it is not hard to assume that most airmen or soldiers would catch a bus, the train, or even a taxi into Dunedin, only over

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>150</sup> D. Bevan, *United States Forces in New Zealand 1942-45*, p.160.

<sup>151</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 March, 16, 21 July 1943, pp. 4, 2, 2; *Evening Star*, 1 July 1943, p.4. Mrs D'Ath was the wife of a local doctor (pathologist), so obviously a fitting person of social standing to entertain such exotic guests.

<sup>152</sup> Orange, *Ensor's Endeavour*, pp.19-20.

the hill. The lack of attractions is evident in the 1942-3 moral debate over efforts to introduce Sunday entertainment for servicemen on weekend leave. The churches and conservatives, concerned with preserving the sanctity of the Sabbath, squared off against those who wished to provide out of town troops with activities of more entertainment than aimlessly wandering the streets.<sup>153</sup> One correspondent to the *ODT*, in favour of Sunday activities, claimed that the phrase "Dead as Dunedin on Sunday" was common amongst servicemen.<sup>154</sup> Mosgiel, with even less to offer the troops, did not even rate a mention.

The self sufficient nature of the Air Station also precluded short visits to the town out of boredom. Relaxation, especially for the more permanent members of the station such as the instructors and ground staff was important to combat the strains of duty. As such, a number of activities such as pool and snooker competitions, skeet shooting, bands, recitals and film screenings were organised, on top of the existing library, bar and social room facilities. Sleep was also a precious commodity for many of the hard worked trainees and staff. Airmen could stay for weeks at a time at the Air Station. It was of no consequence to them that Mosgiel happened to be close by. Bill Borrow, for one, did not recall having any contact with Taieri personnel. He knew that some officers lived in Mosgiel, but commented that the time he remembered the most uniformed men being in town was when the furlough drafts brought back local soldiers and sailors on extended leave. This highlights the differences between certain sections of the community. People gained a different perspective of how many servicemen were around or how much they infiltrated into society depending on who they were. Those who were young, who attended the right dances or who travelled into Dunedin on a Saturday night, might think the airmen and soldiers had made more of an impression on the town than an elderly person or those who did not go out in the weekends. On balance it affected some people more than others. The neighbours of the Taieri personnel and their families living off base, for example, probably felt more impact of the military presence and closer to activities at the Air Station, than the majority who knew nobody there.

With only a relatively small portion of the military personnel in the area visiting the town, it continued to be as peaceful and friendly as it had before the War. Eve Ebbett commented that:

Women were . . . a little nervous of our own soldiers who now appeared in droves around the country, and particularly in towns near military camps. Rumours flourished about attacks on women and made women cautious about going out alone at night. Many small country towns suddenly saw the seamy side of life. But strangely, despite the fear of . . . what the soldiery might do under the spell of the demon drink, many people did not lock their doors at night . . .<sup>155</sup>

The majority of people in Mosgiel did not lock their doors at night either.<sup>156</sup> They did not seem flustered about the close proximity of the Army camps or the presence of a few new uniformed faces around the town. With the flood of military manpower channelled mainly into Dunedin, it appeared there were no seedy problems, which larger communities such as Auckland suffered. In general there were no overt

<sup>153</sup> Lindsay, pp. 101-5; *Otago Daily Times*, 16 Apr., 2 June 1942, 13 Apr., 18 May 1943, pp. 6, 2, 4, 2.

<sup>154</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 5 August 1943, p.2.

<sup>155</sup> E. Ebbett, *When the Boys Were Away: New Zealand Women in World War II*, p. 141.

<sup>156</sup> Interviews, I. Williams, F. Nicolson, M. Kenny.

consequences of the neighbouring military presence. There were no riots, no vandalism, no reported assaults on women, and few complaints. The trivial conviction of two Taieri airmen for the conversion of bicycles to attend a dance at Outram, is the only criminal incident involving servicemen in Mosgiel that this author has unearthed.<sup>157</sup> Women felt totally safe to walk the streets at night, even in the gloom of the blackout.<sup>158</sup> In short, no terrifying upsurge of criminal activity or anti-social behaviour occurred because of the influx of service personnel. As will be seen in further chapters, the close knit nature of this small community meant that few things went on without residents knowing about them and so, few unpleasant incidents happened.

In general, the servicemen who ventured into Mosgiel did provide a temporary new dimension to the town, but did not have an overwhelming impact, as in places such as Warkworth, Paekakariki or Auckland. Mosgiel people were welcoming and friendly, but not fawning. The curiosity or interest value of uniforms did not last long. Any interaction between servicemen and locals, in shops, up the street, at dances or in the pub undoubtedly added some interest to the regular routine, but it certainly did not prove to be an overwhelming social tidal wave. The residents of the town were busy with their own lives, with making ends meet and making their own contribution to the war effort. They were more concerned with the welfare of their friends and family in the forces; more concerned with what Churchill had said and the progress of the Americans in the islands than the procession of unknown soldiers and airmen going through Taieri and Wingatui. Even the exception, when a number of Mosgiel men were at Wingatui with the 5th LAFVR, only lasted a relatively short time. The visitors did not produce any local form of 'Americanisation'; both groups mixed and mingled, but simply not enough servicemen visited Mosgiel for long enough for any major changes to the structure or nature of local society to take place.

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Thus, in the end, the local presence of two military establishments did not appear to have had much effect on Mosgiel. It generally remained the same rural town in 1945 that it had in 1938. The presence of Taieri and Wingatui did not substantially change the routine of the town, nor its inhabitants. Local residents, already accustomed to living eight years near an aerodrome, quickly adjusted to the presence of the upgraded Air Station with its military presence. The fact it was an RNZAF establishment, did prove a curiosity value for a while, but the Air Force got down to its tasks, the aeroplanes kept flying and for locals living in its vicinity every day, the novelty of seeing the aircraft and uniformed personnel faded. The sensible people of Mosgiel took the vagaries of war in their stride.

The construction of the aerodrome did produce minor inconveniences due to the alterations to Dukes and Wingatui Roads, but were accepted without question as part of the War effort. Some complaints over night flying were one of the few real intrusions forced onto the town by the Station's proximity. A few local people got jobs there, but generally the Air Station remained off limits and strictly guarded. Residents did not go down there and similarly pilots and personnel did not go into the town that

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<sup>157</sup> Mosgiel Magistrate Court Criminal Record Book, No. 5 1939-1945, 12 Sept. 1941 (Hereinafter Mosgiel Court Book); *Evening Star*, 13 Sept. 1941, p.7

<sup>158</sup> Interview, M. Kenny. See Chapter 4 for more on the blackout and its effects.

much. Pilots saw the town below, locals saw the planes in the skies above, but only sometimes the twain would meet. Pragmatic locals became used to the Tigers flying and the stunting until they hardly deserved another look. They had their own concerns, their own lives to lead, without obsessing over events at the airfield or soldier's camp. In any event they did not know a lot about what went on. Official secrecy cloaked the presence of offensive attack aircraft and most residents were oblivious to what happened in training, the offensive patrols, or F.A.F.A.I measures, apart from the occasion of the Oxford crash. The incident with the downed Oxford and the unexploded bomb provided a talking point for a while although it had practically no physical impact on the town. Despite the relatively hazardous nature of these activities, they had a negligible effect on the local population because nobody knew about them. Air accidents highlighted the danger of flying training once in a while, but locals knew war was a dangerous business and after all, many Mosgiel men were already risking their lives overseas. People were more likely to accept events like this during wartime.

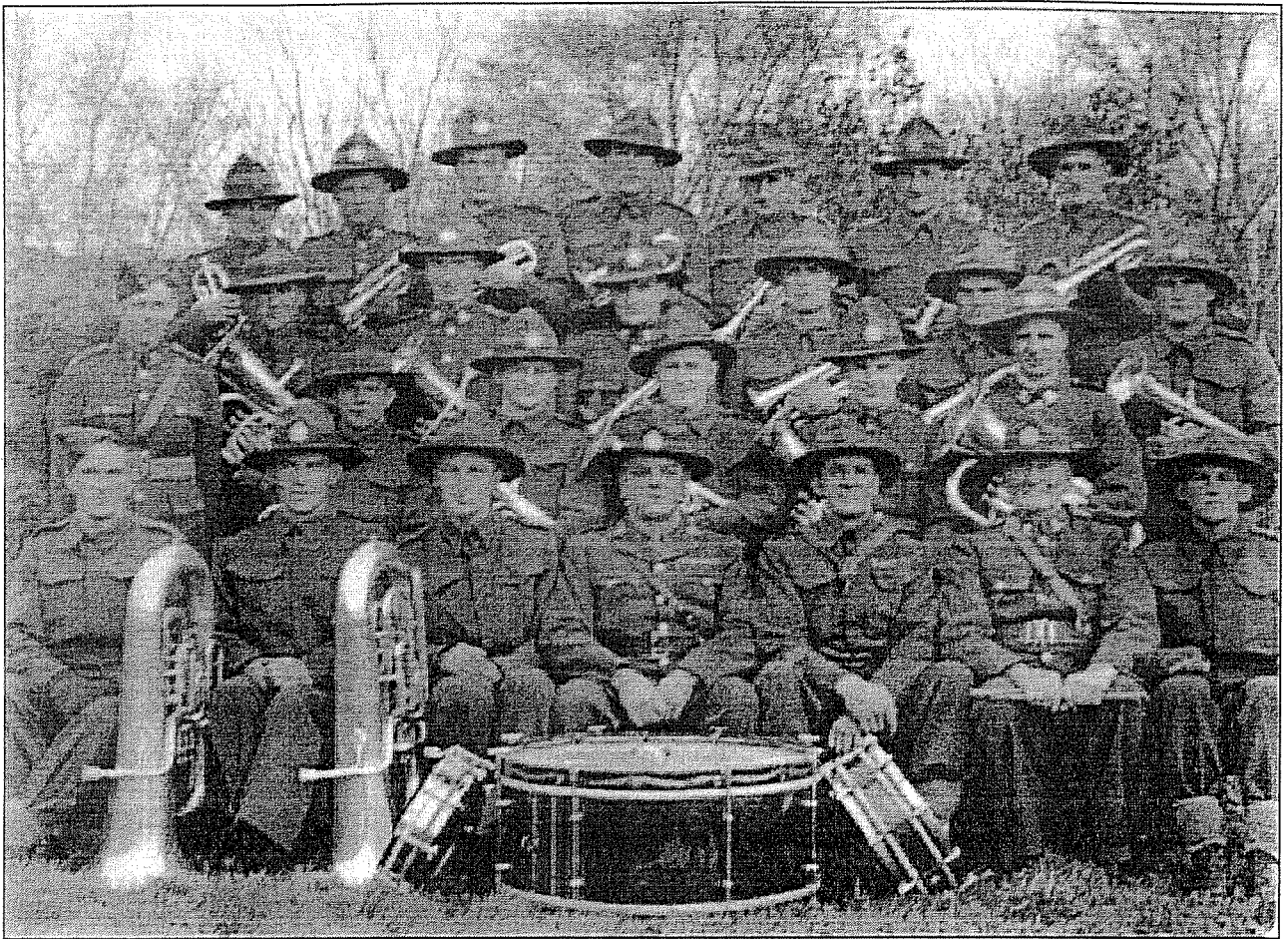
Apart from the aeroplanes overhead, it was even possible, if one avoided the main street, to ignore the minor changes such as the uniforms or trucks and almost pretend there was no War. They did provide a local sense of pride, plus economic benefits as will be discussed in a later chapter,<sup>159</sup> but rarely did overall military presence interfere with the normal activities of the township. Even catering for recreation of the Territorials with the town's sports facilities occurred during week days to ensure no inconvenience to residents. The increased Army build up after Pearl Harbour meant more soldiers around, but little actual impact. As with the flying training, seeing trucks full of soldiers and Bren gun carriers around the area was novel for a while, but again had little or no effect on everyday life. Even when Mosgiel men from the 5th LAFVR were stationed at Wingatui, the routine of life in the town did not really alter. Perhaps the biggest effect of the military presence was the martial conversion of the Municipal Brass Band, which emphasises how little the installations affected the rest of the town.

Even the influx of servicemen, pilots, airmen and soldiers into Mosgiel did not produce great effects on social life, depending on individuals. Some made new acquaintances, mixing with young people especially, at dances, causing some jealousy. A few relationships developed, but the nature of military service meant many of these meetings were temporary and fleeting, plus many Mosgiel girls were waiting for their men serving overseas. Again, the novelty value of uniforms wore off after a while. The lack of entertainment facilities, the insular nature of the Air Station and the brighter lights of Dunedin, meant most servicemen, whether soldier or airmen, did not spend much, if any, time in the town. This prevented Mosgiel from being overwhelmed as had other small towns, near Americans, much to the regret no doubt, of many local small children. However, there was no great change. If the military influx did add a temporary new dimension to the town it did not have an overwhelming impact, in contrast to other war effects which will be discussed. The impact varied according to individuals and their personal experiences, but the great majority hardly noticed any differences. In short, it seems Mosgiel did not become an 'Air Force' nor an 'Army' town, but remained mainly untouched from the effects of its intensive, yet temporary neighbours.

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<sup>159</sup> See Chapter 5 on Business and the Economy.

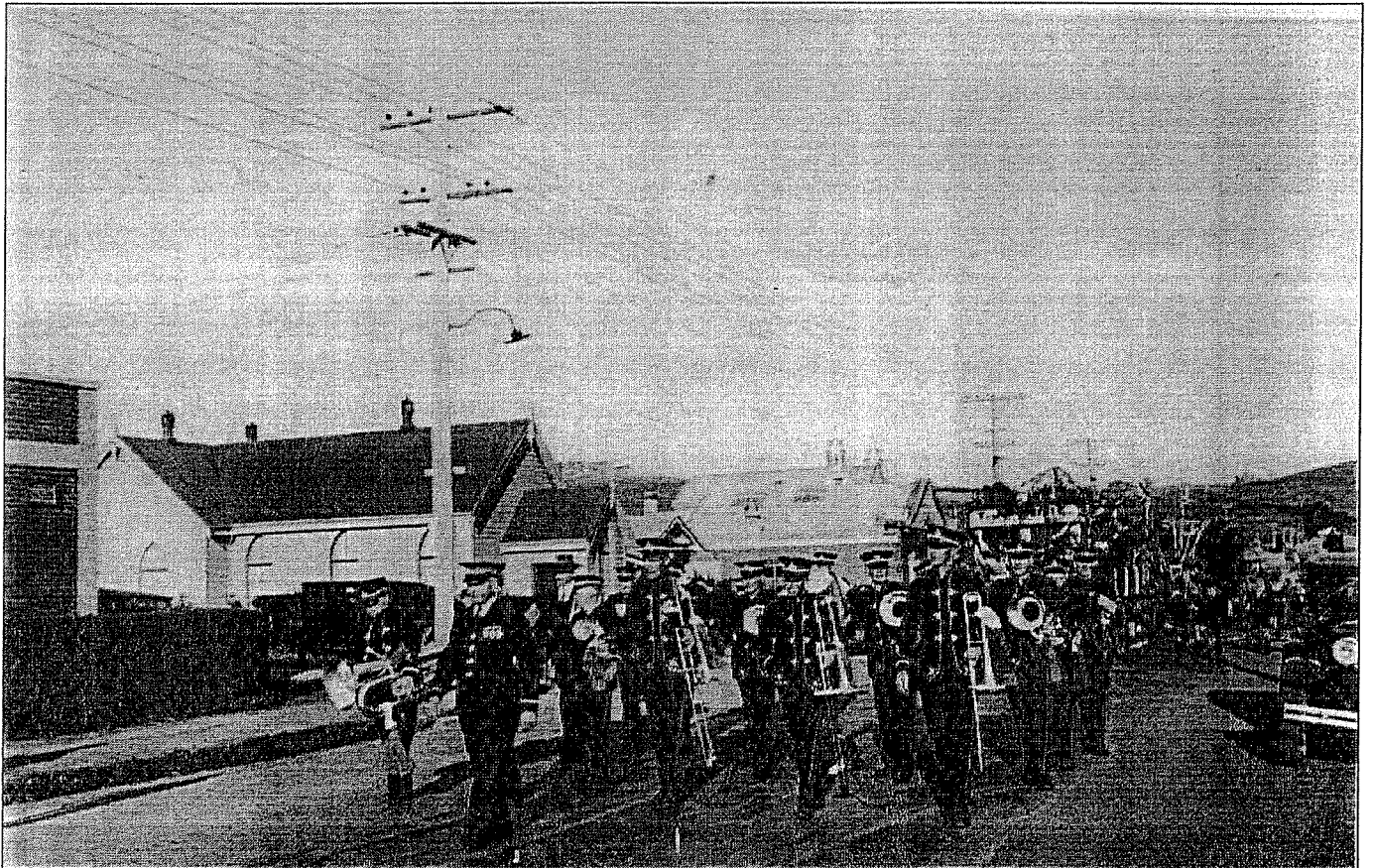




(Above) Mosgiel 5th Light Armoured Fighting Vehicle Band -- 1942.  
 Back Row: L to R: *I.Bassett, E.J.Kerr, W.Morris, W.J.Campbell, D.Burke, J.Swallow, B.Watt.* 2nd Back Row: *D.Cassells, A.Keast, G.Couper, T.Law, H.Walker, S.Young, F.Crane.* 3rd Back Row: *J.Fogo, G.Larsen, S.Harvey, J.Craigie, W.Fogo.* Front Row: *R.Harvey, H.Larsen, G.Grant, L.B. Borrow - Bandmaster, W.Tavendale, W.Brown, G.Bathgate.*

photos: B.Borrow.

(Below) The Mosgiel Municipal Band parading down Gordon Road. V.E. or V.J. Day.



## Chapter 3:

# The Emergency Reserve Corps.

The armed forces provide the offensive power and the first line of defence of a nation, yet, in so many cases throughout history, it has fallen to civilians to protect their own homes against invaders. These people gain little of the glory and recognition acclaimed to armies and generals, but their story is just as worth telling. New Zealand organised probably its most complex and comprehensive example of this during the Second World War, with the formation of the Emergency Reserve Corps. In the general alarm following the German offensive of May 1940, there were public calls for positive action and for the formation of a Home Guard on the lines of the British model, which sprang up overnight, in a confused state of organisation, but with a quarter of a million volunteers in 24 hours.<sup>1</sup> In comparison, measures by the New Zealand Government to increase Territorial Army training in response to the disasters in France, seemed insufficient and slow minded. The do-it-yourself traditions of many New Zealanders suggested immediate and active steps, especially with the Japanese revelling in the Nazi successes. Eventually, to unify the many offers for voluntary civilian service, the government passed the Emergency Reserve Corps Regulations (1940) on 16 August of that year. These formed the Emergency Reserve Corps (ERC), consisting of the Home Guard, Emergency Precautions Service (EPS) and Women's War Service Auxiliary (WWSA), under direction of the National Service Department, headed by Robert Semple.<sup>2</sup> Their purpose was to assist "in the preparation and operation of plans for securing public safety, the defence of New Zealand, and the efficient prosecution of any war in which His Majesty may be engaged, and of plans for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community . . .".<sup>3</sup> These regulations and organisations had the potential to affect many people and their communities. This chapter is then, an overview of the local organisations themselves in an effort to discover the impact that they had Mosgiel and its people. We begin with the Home Guard.

\*                         \*                         \*                         \*                         \*

The government established the Home Guard on a voluntary, unpaid basis, under the control of local authorities, for all men over sixteen who were British subjects, reasonably fit, able and willing to train to support the Armed Forces in the event of invasion. They envisaged training covering physical fitness, drill, signalling, scouting, guard work, road blocking and clearing, field exercises and lectures.<sup>4</sup> Semple

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<sup>1</sup> N. Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, pp.108-9. The fledgling organisation was originally named the Local Defence Volunteers (L.D.V.), until Churchill championed the more emotive 'Home Guard'.

<sup>2</sup> Stat. Regs. 1940/188 Reg 3 (2).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Reg 3 (1).

<sup>4</sup> MBC File: Home Guard File: *Home Guard of New Zealand: Synopsis of Scheme* (Pamphlet NSO-3) Dated 21 Sept. 1940.

spoke of men over military age who wished to do useful work, wanting only the satisfaction of making themselves ready to defend their country and practising with their mates.<sup>5</sup> The wheels of bureaucracy move only slowly, however. By the time enrolment forms were printed and Semple toured the country in September to promote the fledgling Emergency Reserve Corps, the mood of urgent excitement began to wane. Four months had passed since the adrenalin of Panzers racing across France and the RAF's performance in the Battle of Britain had seemed to postpone the danger of invasion.

Arrangements continued with Semple visiting Dunedin on his tour, meeting representatives of the area local bodies, including Mayor Hartstonge.<sup>6</sup> Six weeks slipped by until word arrived that Wellington had placed Mosgiel Borough into Home Guard Area No. 11, a predominantly coastal block from Waikouaiti County in the north, to Kaitangata in the south, as far inland as Roxburgh and centred on Dunedin City as its headquarters.<sup>7</sup> At the end of October the DCC forwarded enrolment forms to the Mosgiel Borough Council, which acted as the local enrolling authority.<sup>8</sup> By this time a Mosgiel Home Guard Committee had been established and on 8 November it met with National Service Department officers on a South Island organising tour, to discuss final details.<sup>9</sup> Advertisements soon followed, and locals at last received a chance to see some positive steps towards the civilian defence organisation the general public had pressed for, albeit a full six months after the excitement of May. Storekeepers placed posters in their windows<sup>10</sup> and notices appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* announcing that on the evening of 21 November 1940, Colonel A.S. Bruce Smith, the area commanding officer, would address a public meeting in Coronation Hall "for the purposes of considering the formation of a unit of the Home Guard for Mosgiel and surrounding districts of North Taieri, East Taieri, Allanton, Wylie's Crossing etc."<sup>11</sup> After explaining the position and objectives, Col. Smith handed out enrolment forms to those present and began Mosgiel's Home Guard. Its early days, however, left a lot to be desired.

The Mosgiel and District Sub-Area Company<sup>12</sup> seems to have started slowly in the early months of its inception and its impact on the town seems negligible. The fervour of Dunkirk had abated and recruitment numbers in the main centres were low. In November 1940, Dunedin city could only muster a total of 450 volunteers from its population of 80,000 inhabitants. By 24 January 1941, the *Otago Daily Times* reported that "the response by Dunedin men has been disappointing in the extreme", with around 2000 volunteers, only slightly more than Oamaru and considerably less than Invercargill and Gore. The Home Guard was decidedly more popular in country areas during the early stages of its development, probably as Taylor notes, a result of a

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<sup>5</sup> Taylor, pp. 454-5.

<sup>6</sup> Home Guard File: letter 3 Sept. 40, Town Clerk to the Mayor of Dunedin, A.H. Allen. (hereinafter TC to Mayor, Dn.)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid : List (no date) attached to letter 23 Oct. 40, Dn. TC to Mos. TC. This area was similar to the later Otago "Coastal" Blackout Area.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid : letter 23 Oct. 40, Dn. TC to Mos. TC.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid : letter 29 Oct. 40, J.S. Hunter, Director of National Service to Mayor, Mos.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid : letters 18 Nov. 40, TC to Mr. R.H. Ralston, storekeeper, Allanton and Mr. H. Wright, storekeeper, East Taieri, for example.

<sup>11</sup> War File : *Otago Daily Times* public notice insert for 16 and 20 Nov. 1940.

<sup>12</sup> Home Guard File : Official title used in letter 18 Apr. 41, C. Pilling, Secretary of Mosgiel H.G. to TC.

sense of isolation and the lack of army camps in their areas.<sup>13</sup> Allied to this, Paul Easton surmises that the opportunities for socialising at Guard meetings made it popular in the beginning with the residents of sparsely populated Central Otago.<sup>14</sup> In the face of accusations of apathy, Dunedin numbers doubled to just over 4000 in the next two months, but there appears not to have been a great ground swell of public enthusiasm, since smaller centres such as Invercargill, Napier and Palmerston North still had greater totals.<sup>15</sup> This lack of interest appears to have stemmed from the Guard's lack of purpose. In an effort to spark recruitment at the start of the year, Colonel Smith had commented to the local press that available men should be enrolled in the Home Guard and taking it as seriously as any enlisted member of the armed forces. He commented that "The time has come in New Zealand- in fact it is overdue- when every man must ask himself 'Am I, or am I not, prepared to defend New Zealand . . . We may wake one day to find war upon us'".<sup>16</sup> People had yet to be convinced of this however, and as Easton notes, many must have found the notion of a Home Guard superfluous, since no direct threat to the country existed.<sup>17</sup> The public knew the potential of Japan as an enemy, but an invasion of New Zealand seemed far fetched because of the vast distance between the two countries and the much trumpeted Singapore naval base barring the way. The air of desperation of Britain in June 1940 was not evident. People around the country were sceptical about its possible effectiveness and worth.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Home Guard did not have most auspicious start or effect in the local area. Even the local volunteers were disappointed to begin with.

John Brophy, addressing the British volunteers of 1940 in his book *Home Guard: A Handbook of the L.D.V.*, noted that "Those who have enrolled in the Home Guard can legitimately pride themselves on having already done something for the defence of their country. And the more resolutely and intelligently we prepare ourselves to meet the invasion the less likely it is to happen . . ." <sup>19</sup> In New Zealand, however, local Home Guardsmen, like their British counterparts in the early months of their formation, might have asked themselves whether they were actually doing anything feasible towards defending the nation. Early parades were often a nightmare for those responsible. With no equipment and few qualified instructors it was hard to keep the rank and file from standing around feeling bored.<sup>20</sup> After drill, physical exercises, more drill, perhaps some first aid lessons or rudimentary lectures on battlefield tactics by veterans of the previous war, there was little to do. This may be why a review of the physical training regime towards the "elimination of severe and jerky movements likely to cause muscular etc. strain, particularly of older men", occurred in May 1941, because it was a major part of the Home Guard programme.<sup>21</sup> Jim Rowe joined the Mosgiel Company, aged 15, with his friends at its beginning.

I was in the Home Guard right from the start; me and Dave Barsley and probably Ray Williams, we all joined that together, because we were in the very first parade that they ever had. Everybody, of

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, p.456.

<sup>14</sup> P. Easton, 'Southern Sentinals: A Brief History of Otago's Home Guard During World War Two', p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, pp.460-61.

<sup>16</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 January 1941, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> Easton, p.7.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, p.459.

<sup>19</sup> J. Brophy, *Home Guard: A Handbook of the L.D.V.*, p.15.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, p.459.

<sup>21</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 23 May 1941, p.7.

course, was in civvies. There was no such thing as uniforms or anything like that . . . just broomsticks, bits of stick carried in an imitation of a rifle [to] sort of give the impression of being soldiers. I can always remember old Jack Wheel, he sticks in my memory because of his personality; barking parade ground voice. He was a First World War man . . . ”<sup>22</sup>

Parades were on Tuesday and Thursday nights outside on the Recreation Ground for the first year, so they did not interfere very much with recruits’ social activities. The Council erected rugby club’s practice lights to enable activities to go on after dark, but generally parades were still at the mercy of the weather.<sup>23</sup> In February 1941, the Mosgiel and District Returned Soldiers Committee wrote to the government to form a Class II of the National Military Reserve for their members (middle aged men) to join. They were advised to join the Home Guard.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps they were not impressed with what they had seen. At this stage it appears to have had only as much impact in Mosgiel as any other reasonably sized club or organisation, such as the Scouts, did. Ray Williams estimated a strength of about 50 men in the beginning.

Straggling attendances were also a problem for many units. Nancy Taylor noted that training without uniforms and weapons, meant some units did not feel genuine.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, when the British L.D.V. had been in its infancy, a retired English general and area organiser for Northamptonshire complained that the shortage of rifles had a demoralising effect on his volunteers.<sup>26</sup> In January, a few elderly rifles were issued to the Mosgiel company for training purposes, although they would not fire.<sup>27</sup> Ray Williams recalled that this enabled the unit to practice their rifle firing drills, engage in bayonet practice and conduct more realistic parade ground drill, however, many still had to drill with sticks instead of rifles. These weapon deficiencies were similar to the early days of the L.D.V., where for example, the history of the Exeter unit recorded that after Dunkirk, “The volunteers on patrols and observation posts [in June 1940] were still in civilian clothes and carrying anything they could get hold of. Shotguns, many and weird varieties of revolvers, usually without ammunition, and last but not least a good hefty stick.”<sup>28</sup> In Mosgiel a number of hunters from around the area had joined and some farmers had donated the odd weapon, meaning the unit had some rifles and shotguns of differing types, so that it was not totally defenceless.<sup>29</sup>

Despite these measures, the Home Guard in Mosgiel or nationally, at this time did not have an estimable reputation. Some people in the town were not interested in its activities, or did not know of them, while others used to rib them, good naturedly.<sup>30</sup> It was the butt of many jokes for a long time and Paul Easton agrees that the comical image of adults “grudgingly clutching their rods proved the catalyst for many a joke” and gained them a reputation as the ‘broomstick brigade’. It was clear, he surmised, that Otago’s Home Guard was struggling for momentum.<sup>31</sup> People would have Ray

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, J. Rowe.

<sup>23</sup> Home Guard File : letter 26 Feb.41, TC to C.O, Mosgiel Home Guard.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid : Circular letter 4 Feb. 1941 to member from M.D.R.S.C.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, pp.461-62

<sup>26</sup> S. P. MacKenzie, *The Home Guard: A Military and Political History*, p.41.

<sup>27</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 Jan.1941, p.7.

<sup>28</sup> Mackenzie, p.40.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, J.Rowe. Ammunition was in short supply though.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews, C.Frew, B.Borrow, V.Crozier, E.Cameron, R. Williams.

<sup>31</sup> Easton, pp.10-11; *Otago Daily Times*, 9 Jan. 1941, p.6.

Williams on, saying things like “what were you going to shoot with a broomstick”, and a lot laughed at them.<sup>32</sup> Jim Rowe understood this attitude, admitting,

Oh yeah, I mean it was exactly like the ‘Dad’s Army’ attitude. When you come to think of it you imagine bloody grown men, striding round the countryside with bits of bloody wood and. . . [we] used to wear a white armband. It had a wee ‘H.G.’ and [a badge] in brass and I think you wore that on your tunic or lapel somewhere. And of course, it was very degrading to see soldiers wandering around in khaki and you were buggerising (*sic*) around with a bloody arm band and a hunk of wood. Oh, certainly it was a joke outfit for a long time . . . But in the beginning they had nothing and no uniform until very late on. Then it was made out of very thick wool and everybody used to scoff at it. It was a terrible looking uniform. Just your uniform, that’s all they could afford.<sup>33</sup>

This lack of weaponry and real purpose made it hard for some people in the community to take them seriously. They did not have the advantages of their compatriots in Britain. The L.D.V. too, suffered from initial jokes and some of the earliest pictures of them were suppressed by the censor due to their very amateur appearance,<sup>34</sup> but their superior national resources and government connections meant that most units had been equipped with battledress, boots, webbing, gasmask, helmets, rifles and Lewis guns by early 1941. The *Evening Star* enviously noted a British report that “It is practically impossible to distinguish a Home Guard volunteer from a regular soldier in battledress.”<sup>35</sup> In comparison, even after Pearl Harbour and a rush of defensive preparations, the chronic shortage of arms meant some rather inadequate weapons were issued to the Mosgiel company. Jim Rowe was given what seems to have been a Martini-Henry or Martini- Enfield rifle, which had been in use with the British Army since 1871, most notably in the Zulu Wars. It had been rebarreled to accept .303 ammunition.<sup>36</sup> Jim explained:

[At the beginning] they had nothing at all, they had nothing. I think eventually they went around the districts to the farmers and gathered up any firearms they had, y’know, old .22’s and old First World War Army rifles. I always remember, I got . . . a single shot, lever action thing . . . you used to pull the lever down and you’d slide the bullet in the slot it made. A real museum piece. You stuck one bullet in at a time, and kick, it’d kick so bloody much . . . Well, we used to fire this thing over the sandhills, over at Brighton . . . and they used to put kerosene tins down on the waterline and you’d fire out to sea, so there was no danger of hitting people; lie on the sandbank and fire out and down on the sea, ‘cause that was an imaginary landing, aiming at the Japs landing. And I was pretty light, you know, I was a pretty skinny wee bugger in those days, only sixteen perhaps, and this bloody big gun used to slide me back down off this bank, it kicked that much! A dag of a thing . . . It was a real museum piece.

While an amusing anecdote, it was hardly something to inspire great confidence from the general public, or the friends and relatives he recounted this to. So these difficulties and obstructions contributed to slowly erode the initial spirit and enthusiasm of the volunteers. Nonetheless, the training managed to keep the interest of most people. Both Ray Williams and Jim Rowe enjoyed their time in the Guard, even if the odd person scoffed at them. It was something to do with their friends and was a bit of

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, R.Williams.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, J.Rowe.

<sup>34</sup> A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War*, p.37.

<sup>35</sup> *Evening Star*, 12 July 1941, p.4; MacKenzie, p.91.

<sup>36</sup> I.Hogg, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Firearms*, p.230. Martini-Henry rifles in their original .45 calibre were still in use by local defence forces in the Suez Canal area as late as 1950.

adventure, for they were too young to go overseas with the 2NZEF.<sup>37</sup> They enjoyed the camaraderie and generally got on well with the older men. Most people in the immediate Mosgiel district knew each other so there was more sense of loyalty than companies gathered from areas like metropolitan Dunedin.

Activities proceeded with only a cautious optimism. The limited equipment available meant little of real worth for the defence of New Zealand could be achieved. It was said that government apathy and a lack of Army interest were killing the Home Guard, but things slowly changed later in 1941.<sup>38</sup> By April of that year the government decided to contribute to the previously negligible finances of each Guard company,<sup>39</sup> and in July, assisted by British advice, the government transferred control of the Home Guard from Semple's Ministry of National Service to the Army.<sup>40</sup> Although the average Guardsman did not perceive any immediate change of fortunes, the integration began to be noticed at the end of the year.<sup>41</sup> Army chiefs established the key task of the Home Guard as providing static defence of localities, of vulnerable and key points such as beaches, bridges and lines of communication in conjunction with the army. A part time infantry soldier, the Home Guardsman's chief asset was close knowledge of the immediate local area; the tactical theory being that they could inflict maximum casualties from their prepared defensive positions, delaying invasion troops long enough for counter attacks by local Army units to be launched.<sup>42</sup> Later in the year, this new doctrine had the effect of taking the Mosgiel company away from the town and out to the coast for much of the time.

With warmer weather at the end of the year, the military theories were put into practice. Improvised beach defences took shape in October and November and Army H.Q. allotted the Mosgiel unit, under the command of Capt. C.H. Bleach, an area of coastline to defend south of Brighton and stretching towards Taieri Mouth.<sup>43</sup> Following a survey by Army engineers, the company travelled to the area on the first Saturday of November to begin work on preparing defensive positions.<sup>44</sup> Weekend 'working parades' became more common after this and the Home Guard took up more of its member's spare time. The unit appealed for building materials, such as sandbags, old tar drums, flat iron and heavy timber for the construction of dug outs and trenches.<sup>45</sup> Jim Rowe revealed that creating these positions proved to be time consuming and tricky.

The number of bloody trenches they dug, they must have shovelled thousands and thousands of tons of sand, it was forever falling in, you know what sand's like, and the boxing would break . . . A lot of it had to be boxed, y'know put boxing inside it. Anything you could get hold of you used to cut up for revetments; manuka brush put in behind sticks to keep the sand from falling in . . . They lasted pretty good really, but it was a non stop job patching them up. Scrambling in and out of them they'd bloody get bits kicked out of them and sand would come in and you'd have to clean it out . . . and put brush or some bloody thing in behind the uprights to keep the sand from running in.

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<sup>37</sup> Both subsequently volunteered for J-Force (the occupation of Japan) in 1946.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor, p.466; Hancock, p.294.

<sup>39</sup> Home Guard File: circular letter, 29 Apr.41, Hunter (Dir. Nat. Service) to All Area Commanders.

<sup>40</sup> Hancock, p.295.

<sup>41</sup> *Evening Star*, 23 Aug. 1941, p.6.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, p.467.

<sup>43</sup> Interview, J.Rowe

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 Nov. 1941, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 22 Nov. 1941, p.7. "No offers of materials will be refused."

A verse from a song printed in the contemporary potted history of New Zealand's Home Guard, *The Book of The Guard*, sums up the experience of many coastal units throughout late 1941 and early 1942.

We ain't much good as soldiers  
So the "experts" all declare,  
We can't be trusted with a gun  
Or other lethal gear  
But as navvies, well we're wonders  
Knights of Pick and Shovel we,  
And our job is building Bivvies  
To improve the scenery.<sup>46</sup>

One opportune bright spot at this time was the government issue of boots to the company.<sup>47</sup> Prior to this the guardsmen provided their own footwear, so Jim described it as a "red letter day" when he received his pair of boots. They were only supposed to be worn on duty, but he found them to be very good quality and better than anything he owned, so used them at work in Chadwick's garage.

With Japan's entry into the war, activity increased. In the weekend before Christmas the company worked on its sector on Saturday, then voted to go again on Sunday.<sup>48</sup> The jokes about the 'broomstick brigade' ceased, but most people in the town did not actually get to see the effort which the unit put in. Access to beach defence positions was restricted<sup>49</sup> so that few, apart from the guardsmen's families, would see them leave in the morning and return at night covered in dirt and sweat. The family or neighbours might be regaled by some stories about the day's activities but even they probably did not appreciate the full picture. The *Evening Star's* weekly column 'Home Guard Notes' broadly tried to cover various activities but could not give full verse, just the odd paragraph for each unit. Colin Frew's fairly uninspiring perception of their activities, that "they used to spend most of their time going through their drill", appears to sum up the views of a number of locals. It seems then, that even at this stage, for some residents of Mosgiel their defenders remained anonymous or, at the least, uninteresting.

Work continued on the defensive positions, clearing the field of fire from natural obstacles and constructing barbed wire entanglements. Those selected were typically picked up at the Mosgiel District High School on Sunday morning by Army trucks and brought home at night.<sup>50</sup> Each section (about eight or ten men) had their own position of dugouts and trenches separated by about 100 yards between each one, because there was a lot of beach to cover. The company improvised communications, with some positions linked by field telephones, signal lamps and even whistles. The major command posts were also linked to each other, down to the defences at Taieri Mouth.<sup>51</sup> All these jobs were the task of the signals section. Since the Army integration, section members had learned morse code, semaphore, signal lamps and wiring techniques. Under the guidance of Jack Revill, the co-owner of the Mosgiel

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<sup>46</sup> *The Book of the Guard*, p.8.

<sup>47</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 Nov. 1941, p.3. Uniforms were still not available and appeals were made to the public to donate overalls and dungarees to protect the guardsmen's civilian clothes.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 20 December 1941, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 12 Jan. 1942, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> *Evening Star*, 7 Feb., 7 Mar. 1942, pp. 4, 5. A hot midday meal was provided by Army cooks.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.



radio shop, they built a telephone line of wire atop manuka poles running from Brighton down to Taieri Mouth; a distance of approximately ten miles.<sup>52</sup> Jim Rowe, one of the signallers, recalled:

It was our job to make this line from just rubbishy soft iron wire, not copper wire, . . . and you had to follow up and down these bloody gullies. It was pretty rough going and you had to make tracks for yourself. It worked though. They had these phones, army telephones, and they were big heavy bloody things; big hand crank on them. [The telephone lines] . . . were pretty primitive things, just made out of anything you could get; manuka poles, or bluegums, . . . a pretty strong straight stick. Used to . . . have to try to get them up about 20 foot high if you could, to get them over the bush and get a bit of bloody clearance over rubbish and stuff. They used to break quite a bit, being just soft iron wire. [It] had a lot of resistance in it and all the joints had to be clean, clean the wire very clean, [to] . . . solder them. These phones were that poor over long distances that if they got a bit of a voltage drop they'd lose the signal and you had to patch the bloody old iron wire up all the time. Then these guerilla buggers used to deliberately make breaks in it, and you had to go and up and find it. This was all practice. This was all on the old hobnail express too, y'know. You'd chuck a pack on your back and a big bloody coil of wire and a ladder and all this sort of junk; twenty miles, Brighton to Taieri Mouth, winding around the coast.

Kenneth Hancock described the manual work performed by the Home Guard during the crucial year of 1942 as "almost incalculable, certainly in terms of its value at a time of emergency."<sup>53</sup> The Mosgiel Company certainly contributed its part in this effort, both in construction and regular maintenance. However, despite all the efforts, the practice and making do in the best methods of the old 'Diggers' of the First World War, these activities had little impact on the town itself.

Perhaps because of this, some still treated the Guard with disdain. In spite of the outbreak of the Pacific war, Taylor notes a sense of unreality persisted amidst feelings that the Home Guard were simply playing at soldiers in the face of a ruthless enemy.<sup>54</sup> Writing to the *Otago Daily Times*, 'Wee MacGregor' suggested that the persistent farcical reputation, activities and lack of equipment of the Home Guard kept away many serious defenders, namely those veterans of 1914-18.<sup>55</sup> Evidence of this seeming lack of respect is shown by the poor new recruitment numbers after Pearl Harbour. On 17 December, Colonel A.S. Bruce Smith stated frustratedly that only 16 men had come forward from the whole of Dunedin and its suburban districts since news of the Japanese attack, when it needed 700. He continued that "Such a poor response at a time like this is difficult to comprehend . . . The hour has arrived when every fit man must serve".<sup>56</sup> Appeals were made for new volunteers to attend parades, including those of the Mosgiel Company.<sup>57</sup> As will be shown in Chapter 8, a majority of local residents, perhaps due to their southern isolation, were never really worried about the threat of Japanese invasion. Whether this, or the local Guard's reputation deterred volunteers is unclear, but in January 1942 the government settled the issue, making it compulsory for most men 18 to 65 years to join either the EPS or the Home Guard under the 1942 National Service Emergency Regulations.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview, J.Rowe. They used old cracked insulator cups given by the Post and Telegraph Department off the telegraph lines, which still functioned because of the very low voltage.

<sup>53</sup> Hancock, p.295.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, p.477.

<sup>55</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 Jan. 1942, p.6. "A seasoned veteran . . . is too much in earnest to wish to play around in a castle of make believe".

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 17 Dec. 1941, p.6.

<sup>57</sup> *Evening Star*, 20 Dec. 1941, p.3.

Training became more involved, but still away from the public eye, as supplies became more available in the Dunedin area. Mosgiel Company members received training in the use of Vickers, Hotchkiss, Lewis and Bren machine guns, though rarely fired them due to the ammunition shortage. N.C.O. instructors from Wingatui Camp visited parades while, at other times, the men would go the Kensington barracks in Dunedin.<sup>58</sup> Lee Enfield .303 rifles and bayonets were issued, and Ray Williams remembered some training with a New Zealand-made Sten gun, but that wasn't for long, as the butt fell off it during firing and the Army later withdrew them from use. They were also shown how to make 'Molotov cocktails' (petrol bombs made with beer bottles) and small bombs of gelnite.<sup>59</sup> In many respects using these 'toys' represented a reward to those who had remained loyal to the unit from the outset. The Company became more specialised with the instigation of a first aid and stretcher bearer section in February and a guerilla platoon in April 1942.<sup>60</sup> Over 100 such guerilla units were developed throughout the country to hide in the bush and hills in an invasion, emerging at night to harass the enemy rear using commando methods.<sup>61</sup> Mosgiel's guerillas consisted of ten or so of the younger and fittest members, led by local Otago middle weight wrestling champion Ray Tourell, who trained them in wrestling and (after Army instruction) unarmed combat. On top of their regular Home Guard duties they practiced camouflaging, reconnaissance and stealth techniques on the hills around the Taieri Plains.<sup>62</sup> On one occasion the platoon infiltrated into the middle of the Taieri Battalion headquarters during a war game, placing a few small detonators with short fuses in the cooking stoves. These blew up, announcing the start of the platoon's attack and showering the cooks and H.Q. officers with stew!<sup>63</sup> Ray Williams, a guerilla, also recalled with a smirk:

We used to go around and raid the odd little places. The signallers had a place at Tirohunga and we went and raided them one night with quarter plugs of jelly [gelnite] and made big bangs and things like that, and woke them up at one o'clock or two o'clock in the morning . . . Army signallers, and they reckoned we'd never be able to get up there, but we sneaked past the guard and got there around where the huts were, and a few bangs and disappeared back into the bush. We walked back down the road, away along the hills and we got our transport; go home.

Again, however, the public knew very little of these activities. Live firing exercises or gelnite explosions occurred far away from Mosgiel, meaning their organisation or noise did not affect residents. Indeed, none of the activities of the Home Guard in New Zealand had anywhere near as much impact on civilians as their compatriot British L.D.V. did in the tense summer of 1940. Following the Dunkirk evacuation, a national Fifth Columnist scare prompted zealous and somewhat grandiose reactions from many excited units. S. P. MacKenzie reports that cases of lovers in cars being interrupted by suspicious L.D.V.'s were common. One volunteer

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 14, 21 Mar., 9 May 1942, pp.3, 3, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, J.Rowe. ". . . because it was a long time before we saw proper hand grenades."

<sup>60</sup> *Evening Star*, 14 Feb. 1942, p.3; Interview, R. Williams.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, p.476.

<sup>62</sup> Interview, R.Williams. Ray recalled that they had constructed a lair up by Lee Stream, containing some spades, tarpaulins and equipment. He tried unsuccessfully to find it after the war because it was well hidden and commented that the gear was probably still there, because it was never picked up by the unit.

<sup>63</sup> Interview, J.Rowe. He was one of the unfortunates on cookhouse detail at the time. The Taieri Battalion consisted of the Mosgiel, Green Island and other companies.



Mosgiel Home Guard parading down Gordon Rd c.late 1942-early 1943.  
Note the different types of rifles carried and the bayonet scabbards.

L to R: Jimmy Milne, Ray Williams, W.Jones, Eric Millar, Gary Nicholson, Mr O'Leary,  
W.Harper, Mr Borrie, ?, ?, Emmett Dee, ?.

recorded that ‘Many a romance was shattered by the sudden demand for identity cards backed by a rifle pointed in the culprit’s direction’.<sup>64</sup> In the atmosphere of strained nerves, accidents and misunderstandings led to fatalities. British Home Intelligence reported that the propensity of L.D.V. to shoot first and ask questions later became a major talking point in north-eastern England at that time. On a number of occasions people who failed to heed or hear L.D.V. challenges were shot and killed by units who were armed and looking for trouble. In one incident in Romford, a noisy exhaust prevented a car driver from hearing an L.D.V. command and the pickets opened fire, resulting in four passengers being killed outright and a fifth seriously wounded.<sup>65</sup> Indiscriminate shooting at aircraft and parachutists also occurred. The only RAF pilot to win the VC during the Battle of Britain was shot at by a trigger happy Home Guard unit after baling out of his aircraft over Hampshire.<sup>66</sup> Luckily the War situation never deteriorated enough to prompt these type of reactions from Mosgiel Home Guardsmen. On occasions the Company established overnight pickets around the perimeter of Taieri airfield, but this is hardly comparable.<sup>67</sup> Generally, Mosgiel residents got off lightly from local Home Guard activities.

Finally the great day arrived, with the local issue of uniforms in the first week of June 1942.<sup>68</sup> At last the guardsmen felt less self-conscious and more like part of the war effort. Fully equipped, they paraded down Gordon Road on subsequent occasions, as Ray Williams said, “just to show how good we were”. Their public profile appears to have been greater by this stage, with a community sing in July and a concert early in 1943 organised to raise funds for cooking gear, denims and other equipment.<sup>69</sup> However, as Paul Easton concurs, the overriding irony is that just as the Home Guard began to fulfil its potential as a fighting force, the Japanese threat to New Zealand effectively withered and died on the back of successive naval defeats in the Coral Sea and at Midway island in May-June 1942.<sup>70</sup> The arrival of thousands of American troops in the country a few months later further eased fears. With the invasion threat greatly diminished, much of the Home Guard’s reason for being vanished. Despite the acquisition of machine guns and mortars and the construction of a rifle range beside the Taieri air base,<sup>71</sup> the attendance problems which had beset the organisation from the beginning increased. It never seems to have engendered the same public acceptance as their British compatriots, championed by Churchill himself, which annually celebrated ‘Home Guard Sunday’ on the anniversary of their foundation.<sup>72</sup> Activities became more elaborate as war games and Battalion tactical exercises were held later in 1942 as the guardsmen expanded on their basic training,<sup>73</sup> but comment in the newspapers continued to focus on the lack of attendance and men who had not registered.<sup>74</sup> Eventually, by the end of the year, the government decided that to meet the needs of the busy summer season and because of the “reasonably high state of efficiency of the

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<sup>64</sup> MacKenzie, p.58.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p.59.

<sup>66</sup> A. Calder, *The People’s War*, p.151. He survived though.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, J. Rowe.

<sup>68</sup> *Evening Star*, 13 June 1942, p.3. They included socks and a cap. The distribution to all units in the South Island was completed by December 1942. *ODT*, 24 Nov. 42, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> MBC minutes, 6 July 1942. This was held by the Mosgiel Businessmen’s Association; Kirk, p.148.

<sup>70</sup> Easton, p.37.

<sup>71</sup> *Evening Star*, 26 Sept. 1942, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 7 Jan. 1943, p.2; *E. Star*, 25 July 1942, p.3.

<sup>72</sup> MacKenzie, pp.118, 132-3.

<sup>73</sup> *Evening Star*, 24 Oct. 1942, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 28 Sept. 1942, p.2.

Home Guard” the hours of training would be reduced from 24 to eight per month over the summer.<sup>75</sup> By February 1943, with the Americans having taken Guadalcanal, reports from the North Island indicated a consistent drop in attendances, with some at only half strength. In the Dunedin area, many warnings were issued and the *Star* reported that “Locally the position is not good. Applications for leave have been numerous, as have absences without leave”.<sup>76</sup> Uncertainty about the future of the Home Guard plagued its last few months, until eventually, with safety from invasion certain and industrial manpower shortages growing critical, Prime Minister Fraser announced the effective end of the Home Guard on 28 June 1943. It went into reserve, with quarterly muster parades. In December it was announced that there would be no further parades.<sup>77</sup>

Hence, as Norman Longmate notes in Britain, few people outside the Home Guard ever took it seriously because its services were never called upon in earnest.<sup>78</sup> But what impact did it have on the members themselves? Most volunteers, particularly the younger ones, enjoyed the camaraderie and activities, even if equipment shortages did hamper them. For them it was less for King and country and more for the adventure.<sup>79</sup> Ray Williams explained that “It was full of fun in those days. When you were only an eighteen year old, you were looking for something to do. It gave us somewhere to go on Sunday; gave us something to do”. Jim Rowe admitted that he learned to cook in the Home Guard, for he would not have had the inclination to learn at home.<sup>80</sup> Both he and Ray missed it when it finished. Obviously the parades and working parties took up some spare time, however, week night activities in Mosgiel were rather sparse anyway. The chance to use gelignite or even fire Tommy guns, more than made up for any dull parades. It offered many of the reasons that men wished to join the Army, but with limited commitment. Older men with families must have felt it harder to give up spare time, but they generally possessed a stronger sense of duty (perhaps proven in 1914-18) and the Home Guard gave them a chance to make a practical contribution to the war effort, whilst younger men went overseas. On the other hand, a number of the local volunteers’ families were grown and had left home, so that the father had free time anyway. Most volunteers took a sense of pride from what the Company eventually achieved and that it allowed them to contribute to the defence of the country, although most would not miss the tedious labouring.

Compulsion brought more local men to parades, but appears not to have had as much impact as one may have thought. When the government passed the regulations of January 1942, many ignored newspaper appeals to join the Home Guard and chose the option to join the less demanding EPS instead.<sup>81</sup> Eventually, in April 1942, when some were transferred from that organisation into the Guard, a number simply ignored it, or never attended. Those forced to join by compulsion had only a maximum of 12 months

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<sup>75</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 Dec. 1942, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> *Evening Star*, 13 Feb. 1943, p.2.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, pp. 479-80. Uniforms and weapons were handed back, but boots were allowed to be retained.

<sup>78</sup> N. Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War*, p.111.

<sup>79</sup> Interview, R. Williams.

<sup>80</sup> He recounted, “I think that was the first time I ever learnt to cook, you know, peel spuds even, because at that age if you were a boy, that was the last thing you’d bloody want to do. No, but old Dave Barsley and I peeled hundreds of bloody spuds and peel onions . . . Oh, it was a lot of fun”.

<sup>81</sup> *Evening Star*, 2 Jan., 24 Jan., 14 Feb., 21 Feb. 1942, pp. 4, 3, 3, 3; *ODT*, 9 Jan. 1942, p.6.

service (from about June 1942 to June 1943) anyway, and probably not that much. A few much publicised prosecutions of parade defaulters took place around the country, but the task seems to have been too great for the limited bureaucratic resources allowed to it. In the days before computers and data bases, local authorities were far from all-seeing and all-knowing. People fell through the cracks, or were exempted for various reasons.<sup>82</sup> Those unfit to serve, or in key EPS roles, were excused. Many who worked in essential industry were eliminated and Colin Frew (a baker) and George Allen (a Woollen Mill worker), for example, did not have to join. Compulsion to the Home Guard did not necessarily mean compulsion for all. At least local men were not conscripted into the Army to be at the mercy of postings anywhere around the country.

In any event, the amount of time required to be spent at parades seems hardly to have been onerous. At the outset guardsmen met on two nights per week for a few hours. This continued through much of 1941, until the growing Japanese menace and allocation of beach defences meant the instigation of Sunday parades, at which attendance was not rigorously enforced each week. At the height of government interest, in mid to late 1942, guardsmen were supposed to train for 24 hours per month.<sup>83</sup> If this is broken down into even parts of 6 hours per week, perhaps one week night parade of two hours and four hours on Sunday, it does not seem all that much. Hours were greatly reduced to 8 per month over the harvesting summer of 1942-3 and restored only to a level of 16 hours per month by March 1943.<sup>84</sup> Many Sunday s were filled, but the Guard did not usually interfere with Saturday events, such as sport, gardening, or visits to the pub, apart from the few hectic months of defence construction early in 1942. The impact on member s time was generally as much or as little as they could get away with.

Thus, MacKenzie asks was the Home Guard worthwhile?<sup>85</sup> The answer in New Zealand's case, a definite yes. Invasion preparations had to be made, plus it gave guardsmen a sense of national contribution and something to do in the weekends. However, its reason for being did not come to pass and its activities remained relatively unappreciated, leaving its reputation wavering between poor to mediocre and its impact on Mosgiel only limited.

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The main companion of Home Guard in the formation of the ERC was the Emergency Precautions Scheme (EPS). The authorities designed this organisation to cope with civilian casualties and the disruption of vital public services and utilities, mainly in the event of an air raid, but also in case of invasion. It provided an opportunity for those too busy in essential work, not fit enough or young enough to join the Territorials or the Home Guard. The Emergency Fire Service (EFS) later provided an opportunity for those more able, while the Women's War Service Auxiliary (WWSA) allowed women of all ages, not in the EPS, a choice of voluntary contribution to the war effort. The schemes developed locally, as in most other communities around the country, with Ron Kirk noting in *Pulse of the Plain*, that " the

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<sup>82</sup> Taylor, p.473.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Those (usually older) men with non operational roles such as petrol station guards or traffic control were to train for only 8 hours per month.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 479.

<sup>85</sup> MacKenzie, p.182.

Emergency Precautions Scheme . . . touched Mosgiel at various points ”.<sup>86</sup> What impact then, did the formation of this government-inspired organisation have upon the town and its inhabitants?

The beginnings of the EPS scheme can be traced back to the Napier earthquake of 1931, which showed the need for local organisation in case of disaster. With the resurgence of the arms race by the middle of the decade the government formed an Emergency Precautions Committee representing the Departments of Internal Affairs, Police and Defence. This committee had, by July 1936, decided that the three main potential problems it faced were earthquakes, air raids and gas defence. It engaged the Red Cross and St John’s Ambulance Brigade to help with relief if necessary and persuaded the Army to train some civilians in gas decontamination. By 1939 Internal Affairs distributed an Emergency Precautions booklet to all local municipal authorities since they formed the basic framework of the scheme, mixed with some government departments such as the Police and Post and Telegraph.<sup>87</sup> A year before, the DCC became one of the first local bodies in the country to prepare a wide ranging scheme for national disasters including earthquake, fire or epidemic and this is where Mosgiel Borough took its first tentative steps into the EPS.<sup>88</sup>

The first venture into EPS was minimal, disorganised and uninspiring, setting the scene for low public perceptions of the organisation during the War. In June 1938, two members of the Mosgiel Volunteer Fire Brigade (MVFB) attended a Dunedin course in Air Raid Precautions, but noted to a meeting of the MBC in February 1939 that a lack of equipment was a major difficulty. The council resolved that it had discussed the possibility of forming an ARP squad, but could achieve no good purpose without proper equipment and instead urged the Government to provide it.<sup>89</sup> After the meeting the Town Clerk wrote to the local M.P. and Minister of Defence, Mr Fred Jones, stressing the desirability of forming and equipping an ARP organisation in Mosgiel, “having in mind the fact that the airport is nearby and that in the event of war we would probably be subjected to attacks from enemy aeroplanes”.<sup>90</sup> The possibility of danger showed on the minds of the town fathers, but inaction prevailed in the face of uncertainty. Jones replied that a tentative scheme for teaching anti-gas training in decontamination and the treatment of casualties had been formed.<sup>91</sup> By 2 October, a full month after the outbreak of war, a series of classes in ‘Air Raid Precautions’ began at 8 p.m. at the Fire Station Hall in Mosgiel.<sup>92</sup>

Most of the action taken at this very early stage of the War was understandably still quite rudimentary and seemed tentative. The overall local organisation of the scheme was rather pedestrian and somewhat confused. It must have seemed non-existent to the man on the street. On 22 September the Dunedin Emergency Precautions Central Committee, notified Mosgiel it was officially part of the Dunedin Metropolitan EPS but this simply left the MBC far from clear on what its role was to

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<sup>86</sup> Kirk, p.144.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor, p.481.

<sup>88</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 Mar. 1941, p.5.

<sup>89</sup> MBC minutes, 6 Feb 1939. The men were Superintendent John White and Fireman J. A. Wishart.

<sup>90</sup> War File : letter 9 Feb.39, TC to Min. Defence.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid: letter 20 Feb.39, Min. Defence to TC.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid: Notice for publication on Sat 30 Sept. 1939, in *Otago Daily Times*.

be at that point in time, or if the war situation worsened.<sup>93</sup> It correctly assumed its responsibility for maintaining the water supply and the other public utilities of the borough, but remained ill-informed as to the provisions of the scheme. Eventually, Mayor Hartstonge was invited to join a sub-committee of other suburban representatives on the Dunedin Public Utilities, Works and Water Committee,<sup>94</sup> which quelled any local rumblings to form a separate organisation in Mosgiel.<sup>95</sup> However, despite the Dunedin Metropolitan organisation's preparation (even by August 1940 only 39% of local bodies in the country had drawn up any sort of schemes), the general public felt little or no impact.<sup>96</sup> Some, if ignoring the dull council inspired reports in the local press, may have even known nothing about it. A few locals attended lectures, but the scheme existed mainly on paper; ready if the need arose, which seemed only a distant possibility as the inactivity on the Western Front persisted.

Little occurred until the agitation of May 1940 resulted in the August formation of the ERC. Semple toured the country in September, but the EPS appears to have been a poor relation at this time, because it received less promotion than the Home Guard. This is probably understandable since the most vocal protagonists of what would become the ERC, such as returned soldiers, farmers and hunters, had mainly the Home Guard as their goal and not specifically the EPS. Dunedin EPS authorities started an enlistment drive in the area for both men and women, however, there was great uncertainty generally about what to do and how to accomplish it. Col. Bruce Smith explained that "The EPS in military parlance will be the 'backliners' and will be concerned with transport, supplies, special police, traffic control, fire fighting and air raid work. The 'back line' guardians are equally as important as the 'front liners' [Army and Home Guard]".<sup>97</sup>

Yet, the Mosgiel Borough Council appears to have known little more than most of its citizens at this time. It seems that it still had no representative on the proposed Dunedin Public Utilities, Works and Water Sub-Committee nearly a year after it was recommended, since in October 1940, the Town Clerk had to ask clarification from Dunedin thus,

. . . Would you be good enough to advise me what is expected of my council in the event of an emergency arising. I assume that the council's staff will be required to look after the Borough water supply and . . . drainage system, but shall be glad to know whether there is anything else which we will be expected to do in Mosgiel. "<sup>98</sup>

This underlines the lack of impact with which the EPS touched the heart of Mosgiel decision-making. The inconclusive reply to this enquiry suggested again the

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<sup>93</sup> Dunedin City Council City Engineers File No. 44 : EPS 1938-1943; Minutes of Meeting of Emergency Precautions Central Committee 22 Sept. 1939. (Hereinafter DCC CE 44: EP Central Cte. Mins.).

<sup>94</sup> MBC Emergency Scheme Correspondence of Local Executive Committee File: letter 1 Nov. 1939, TC to TC (Dn). (Hereinafter EPS File).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid : letter 1 Nov. 1939, TC to The Under Secretary, Dept. Of Internal Affairs.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, p.482. Taumarunui, for example, did not set up their scheme until November 1940.

<sup>97</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 Jan. 1941, p.6. The supply section dealt with the provision, purchase and requisition of a great variety of things including food, clothing, vehicles, land and buildings. The works section dealt with the provision and control of public utilities such as gas, electricity and water supplies, demolition parties and general labour.

<sup>98</sup> EPS File: letter 9 Oct. 1940, TC to TC(Dn).



appointment of representatives to form a sub-committee and the Council accepted this.<sup>99</sup>

Local body dissatisfaction seems evident, however, as apparent Dunedin inaction continued into 1941. Early in March Mr Rodgers, the Town Clerk, notified leading members of the town and its organisations, including the Mayor and councillors, the secretary of the MDHS committee, Superintendent White of the Fire Brigade, Constable Phillips and Mr J. H. Hicks the Postmaster, of a proposed meeting in the Coronation Hall on the 11th of that month “to consider local Emergency Precautions arrangements.”<sup>100</sup> That line gives voice to some of the frustration which Mosgiel’s leaders must have felt, for there is no evidence that any of the proposed consultation with Dunedin regarding the EPS, through the Public Utilities Sub-Committee, actually occurred. It is hard now to understand what seems to be an incredible lethargy, however no real threat to the country existed to inspire urgency and the simple fact was that the Dunedin Central Committee was then still completing its huge task of revising the metropolitan emergency scheme. If the EPS had so little impact on those who led the community, then the effect on the average individual can be imagined to be non-existent. Emphasis of this is given by the Mayor of Dunedin, Mr A. H. Allen, who admitted that “many people wonder why no information is released to the public regarding the work of the Emergency Precautions Organisation.”<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, on 20 March 1941, representatives of the suburban boroughs, including Mosgiel, met in Dunedin with the Public Utilities, Works and Water Section to discuss the operation of each local body’s public utilities, water and drainage in event of an emergency,<sup>102</sup> leading to the eventual enrolment of MBC works staff in the EPS.<sup>103</sup>

The town’s leaders remained unsatisfied, however, and in June Mr Rodgers the Town Clerk complained to Col. Barclay, the Otago area EPS Liaison Officer, that:

... as we are still in some doubt as to what we in Mosgiel are expected to do in an emergency, I shall be glad to know whether the Emergency Precautions Scheme has now been revised and if so whether you are still willing to come to Mosgiel to give us information as to our part in it.<sup>104</sup>

The controller of the (Dunedin) Evacuation and Accommodation Committee emphasised the ambiguous situation when writing to Mayor Hartstonge advising that the Mosgiel Rotary Club was prepared to act as the Mosgiel representative on that body, subject to His Worship’s approval. There followed some tart correspondence before Hartstonge admitted that he did not know whether he had any authority in the matter.<sup>105</sup> Col. Barclay later instructed the controllers of all sections of the Dunedin EPS to make personal contact with the Mayors of each suburban borough to “afford them the fullest information” of the activities of the sections and its needs in their district.<sup>106</sup> It seems the bureaucratic machine moved slowly and that the MBC did not

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, letter 10 Oct. 1940, TC(Dn) to TC.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, letter 5 Mar. 1941, TC to Constable E. Phillips, Mosgiel Police Station amongst others.

<sup>101</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 Mar. 1941, p.5.

<sup>102</sup> EPS File: letter 21 Mar. 1941, S. G. Scoular, City Engineer and Controller of Public Utilities, Works and Water Section, EPS to TC.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid: letter 8 May 1941, S. G. Scoular to TC.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid: letter 3 June 1941, TC to Col. Barclay, Dunedin.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid: letters 2, 19 June 1941, Mr V. Jacobs (Controller, Evacuation and Accommodation Committee, Dunedin) to Mayor; 27 June 1941, Mayor to Jacobs. The Mayor gave his consent anyway.

<sup>106</sup> CE 43: EPS File: letter 2 July 1941, A. H. Allen (Chairman EP Central Committee) to S. G. Scoular, , MBC EPS File: letter 4 July 1941, Col. G. W. Barclay to TC.

appreciate it. Taylor also notes that the difficulty of organisation and administration was the major problem for the EPS around the country. In many areas the planning and structuring of arrangements were muddling and pedestrian, to the extent that Christchurch received criticism that its EPS existed only on paper.<sup>107</sup> In Mosgiel the EPS hardly even existed in that form.

There is little doubt that the Council wished to become more involved and that some residents were interested in participating. Both the Mayor and Town Clerk pushed the Dunedin Town Clerk for the expansion of the EPS in the town, stating that "many enquiries have been made by local residents as to whether their services can be utilised in any way".<sup>108</sup> Eventually the Central (Dunedin) EPS asked Mosgiel to form a Supplies Sub-Committee to ensure the prompt supply of food to people before their evacuation in time of an emergency.<sup>109</sup> Thus, after two years of bureaucratic confusion and seeming public inaction, Mayor Hartstonge chaired the first official meeting on 16 October 1941. This was the true beginning of local government participation in the Mosgiel EPS. Finally however, it took Japanese aggression to prompt the town's leaders to organise themselves and hold the inaugural meeting of the Mosgiel EPS Local Executive Committee on 22 December 1941. After more than two years of war, the town gained a measure of control over emergency precautions and some autonomy in decision-making. The committee consisted of many of the community leaders. The Mayor (W. P. Hartstonge) naturally became chairman, the others being; Cr. J. S. Blackie (Deputy Mayor), Postmaster E. W. Cate (Communications), Mr J. F. Frew, the owner of a local bakery (Supplies), Mr F. R. Hall (Wardens Corps), Constable E. Phillips (Law and Order), Superintendent J. White (Fire), Dr. J. P. Shaw (Medical), Mr A. E. Quelch (Evacuation), Cr. E. J. Wilson (Public Utilities) and Mr Robert Rodgers, the Town Clerk.<sup>110</sup> These men, for they were all men, although many women worked at lower levels in the EPS (such as the Mayoress Mrs Hartstonge, a member of the Supplies Committee) were charged with helping to prepare against the unknown. The organisational and administrative skills of the council, gathered together the small array of emergency bodies which existed and hastened the development of the fairly comprehensive EPS structure which emerged in the town.

During the eventful years of 1941-2, the new array of special emergency organisations sprang up in Mosgiel. However, as with the council manoeuvring behind the scenes, these local EPS enterprises were seldom projected into the public eye and as such, had a relatively small effect. Indeed, most of the EPS or ERC sections were simply extensions of local clubs or organisations with basically the same members, but a grandiose martial title. By Pearl Harbour, Mosgiel had an Emergency Fire Service (EFS), a Women's War Service Auxiliary, EPS Medical, Public Utilities, Communications, Headquarters, Supplies and Transport Sections and a Warden's Corps, yet these remained relatively low key.

The EFS proved simply to be an auxiliary extension to the local Mosgiel Volunteer Fire Brigade (MVFB) which had been formed in 1906.<sup>111</sup> In March 1941 the

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<sup>107</sup> Taylor, p.491.

<sup>108</sup> EPS File: letter, 4 July 1941, TC to TC(Dn). The Dunedin TC was Mr. R. A. Johnston.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid: Conference notes of meeting, 25 Sept. 1941. It suggested the Mosgiel organisation be self contained in view of the possibility of a breakdown in communications between the two settlements in an emergency.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Minutes of Emergency Precautions Scheme Local Executive Committee, 22 Dec. 1941. (Hereinafter EPSLEC Minutes)

<sup>111</sup> Kirk, p.103.

government established the Emergency Fire Service as a special branch of the Emergency Reserve Corps to boost established firefighting resources, including those of Mosgiel and other Dunedin suburbs. Painful experience gained in London, Rotterdam, Coventry and many other cities in the early years of the war deemed fire to be the main danger to people and property under air attack. The local section consisted of 13 men and a trailer pump,<sup>112</sup> with another pump unit at the Mosgiel Woollen Mill.<sup>113</sup> However it appears they had little to do throughout the War years. In April 1940 Dunedin instructed the Mosgiel EFS to respond to calls received from the Taieri Aerodrome, if deemed necessary to assist the Air Force fire engine.<sup>114</sup> Surprisingly, in light of the number of aircraft training accidents, according to the MVFB history *From Hose Reel to Motor Pump*, it appears that their attendance was not required at all. By the beginning of 1942 international events had become turbulent and rumours circulated in Mosgiel throughout January that EFS men would be sent to reinforce the garrison at Singapore. Instead, the Japanese advanced so quickly that these thoughts were soon forgotten and the local firemen remained at home and virtually inactive.<sup>115</sup> The EFS mobilised on a full war basis in the Dunedin region in March 1942, with crews in certain areas on guard day and night.<sup>116</sup> There is no mention of this occurring in Mosgiel although there were small sleeping quarters at the station, but it seems less likely since most people lived only a few minutes away from the Cargill St. Station or the Mill.

By the time of the MVFB annual meeting in July 1942 its members had received gas masks and steel helmets.<sup>117</sup> Fay Nicolson (nee Hall), whose father was a member of the EFS, recalled that they all used to practice on the large section of lawn outside the Woollen Mill cafeteria on Factory Rd. It was big enough to roll out the hoses and for the other related drills. However, she could not recall her father ever coming home and talking about attending a fire.<sup>118</sup> This is not surprising, because for all the initial training there was little activity for the firemen. Don Bates wrote that “. . . the war years proved to be quiet for both sections of the brigade. The records note that only five extra musters for air raid and gas mask practices resulted”.<sup>119</sup> Evidence of the brigade’s minimal exertion is shown in 1942, a year in which the brigade totalled only five calls - three chimney fires, one rubbish fire and one fire in a small shed -<sup>120</sup> and 1944-5 with only six alarm calls.<sup>121</sup> It seems, taking note of the time spent on maintenance of equipment and fittings and, as Taylor notes, an hour’s drill each week, the impact on the firemen was slight.<sup>122</sup> The firemen could however, feel some pride in belonging to what would have been Mosgiel’s most vital emergency organisation in the event of an air raid.

<sup>112</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 April 1941, p.9. Dunedin was subdivided into four, with Mosgiel in the Southern Division, along with Green Island, Burnside and South Dunedin.

<sup>113</sup> MBC Subject Files: Fire Protection and Correspondence with Fire Brigade File: letter, 25 Nov. 1941, TC(Dn) to TC. (Hereinafter Fire Protection File).

<sup>114</sup> Dunedin Metropolitan Fire Board Correspondence File, 1940-44: letter 17 Apr. 1940, Secretary to F/O. H. J. Lambert, Station Officer, No. 1 EFTS, RNZAF Taieri.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, Fay Nicolson. Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942.

<sup>116</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 Mar. 1942, p.4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 18 July 1942, p.8.

<sup>118</sup> Interview, Fay Nicolson.

<sup>119</sup> Bates, p.11.

<sup>120</sup> DMFB Correspondence File 1940-44: letter 27 Oct. 1943, Sec. DMFB to Min. Civil Defence.

<sup>121</sup> *Evening Star*, 7 July 1945, p.5.

<sup>122</sup> Taylor, p.488.

A companion service to Mosgiel's EFS was the EPS Medical Division, created from its local grassroots organisers, the St. John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross, which had been resident in the town since 1936 and 1939 respectively.<sup>123</sup> Their members shaped the backbone of the organisation, simply continuing with their regular duties under the guise of EPS arm bands. They aimed to preserve human life and dispense aid to the injured and distressed in an emergency. Upon the outbreak of war both national bodies formed a joint council to avoid conflict and wasted efforts as patriotic enthusiasm raised interest in first aid, which quickened with the news of the bombing raids over Britain late in 1940.<sup>124</sup> By March 1941, with the development of the Metropolitan EPS, Dunedin authorities announced the establishment of 44 first aid posts throughout the area and staffed, where possible, by a doctor and St. John and Red Cross volunteers. The Otago Hospital Board issued medical supplies but each station had to rely on the goodwill of the surrounding district to provide the furniture and basic equipment.<sup>125</sup> Mosgiel established its aid post in the Recreation Ground football pavilion, on Church St, and received £20 from the council to purchase stretchers and other equipment for EPS work.<sup>126</sup> Margaret Kingan can remember the "emergency hospital" at the Recreation Ground and also the Red Cross asking for donations of mattresses and blankets. The sewing guild of the Mosgiel Red Cross repaired donated sheets and pillowcases for the aid station.<sup>127</sup> First aid classes were held regularly by St. John's, including for the Home Guard, and blood transfusion services were created,<sup>128</sup> but activities proceeded slowly until the end of the year when Pearl Harbour prompted urgency. By June 1942, the *Otago Daily Times* painted a rather glossy picture of a comprehensive aid station scheme, listing it as having 50 beds available and screens, medical equipment, sterilisers and reception desks to provide a typical 'hospital' atmosphere able to be prepared for casualties within half an hour of the alert. It concluded saying, "If the time ever comes when they are needed the people of Dunedin will realise, and only then, the debt that they owe to those who have set up this organisation, giving freely of their time and energy and initiative . . ."<sup>129</sup> In the end, however, this small, rather anonymous group of local doctors, St John, Red Cross or volunteer aides never really received the recognition that they deserved, although the permanent pavilion aid station did give them more identification than other very obscure local EPS units. Even so, the community at large thankfully never needed the aid station, so their good works generally remained appreciated amongst only the Medical Section and the EPS hierarchy.

The flow on of the January 1942 ERC compulsion regulations, supplemented this core with a number of others, such as the formation of a 30-man stretcher bearer section in March, but these men were simply more like temporary visitors to an expanded St John's Brigade. Their training, for only two hours on Sunday mornings,

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<sup>123</sup> Kirk, pp. 288-9. Throughout the author's research the terms 'Medical Division', 'Medical Section' and 'Medical Unit' appear to have been used interchangeably.

<sup>124</sup> St. John Ambulance Association (Otago) Annual Report and Financial Statement 1940, p.25. (Hereinafter St. John Annual Report).

<sup>125</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 Mar. 1941, p.6. Eight of these posts, including Mosgiel, were larger in size.

<sup>126</sup> MBC Minutes, 5 May 1941.

<sup>127</sup> Red Cross Society (Otago) Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1942, p.20. (Hereinafter Red Cross Annual Report).

<sup>128</sup> Home Guard File: ERC Circular letter No.3, 2 May 1941, from J. S. Hunter.

<sup>129</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 June 1942, p.6.

does not appear to have been terribly taxing for them.<sup>130</sup> The Medical Section formed an efficient unit and confidence in the organisation and competency of the post and staff is emphasised by news in April that all airmen and soldier casualties on the Taieri in an emergency were to be treated there.<sup>131</sup> Of course, all the preparation came to nought as the months passed into 1943 and the threat of invasion or air raids receded. The unit continued to train into the middle of 1943,<sup>132</sup> however, in line with a National Service Department directive of August that the aid post continue in low key readiness as one of eight in the Dunedin area prepared for any unlikely enemy action or a civil emergency such as an earthquake. The wheel had turned full circle, for the members of the Mosgiel St. John Ambulance Brigade constituted the EPS medical unit at its reduced strength, and would remain with it until the end.<sup>133</sup> The keys to the Recreation Pavilion were finally handed back to the council late in 1944.<sup>134</sup>

If the Medical Section was most obvious of the Mosgiel EPS units (apart from the Wardens, who will be mentioned in the next chapter) the organisation as a whole was involved in many and varied jobs. The bureaucratic spider wove a tangled web, with the EPS planning for many emergency contingencies. However, these other units appear to have gained even less recognition than the Medical unit, since they tended to be more makeshift and obscure, and their members worked behind the scenes at the special tasks they had. These groups would have been important and prominent in an invasion or air raid emergency, but were not required, so that their physical presence around Mosgiel remained less than the Home Guard or EFS, with their uniforms and equipment, or the Medical Section, with its base at the aid station. Most remained fairly much the same organisation with a changed name.

The Mosgiel Communications Section consisted of all staff of the local Post and Telegraph Department, under the control of Postmaster Ernie Cate. Their task was to carry out, as near as practical, its normal functions, providing a system of communications, in an emergency.<sup>135</sup> Mrs Ella Cameron worked as a switchboard operator in the Mosgiel Post Office from 1940 until 1944, but she can remember no EPS activities in her time there, except for one trial which they had to attend. The Public Utilities, Works and Water Section - generally known as the Works Section - were another group allocated their own jobs in an emergency. Council staff were enrolled in the Works Section very early on, in May 1941 as mentioned above, to look after the town's water, drainage, gas, electricity and roadways. The same can be said of the Headquarters Section, which included the council office staff, including the mayors of Mosgiel Borough and Taieri County and their town clerks. One might think that this group would coordinate the efforts of the Mosgiel EPS to deal with any threat, while informed of the greater general situation by Dunedin. The Law and Order Section, again, built on an obvious existing structure, namely the police. The two

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<sup>130</sup> EPS File: 'Bearer Section, Controller's Report of Attendance at Parades etc., by W. E. Fagg'. No date but either August or September 1942.

<sup>131</sup> MBC Minutes, 9 April 1942.

<sup>132</sup> EPS File: letter, 8 July 1943, TC to W. E. Fagg.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid: letter, 30 Sept. 1943, TC to The Stationmaster, Railway Station, Mosgiel.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid: letter, 27 Sept. 1944, TC to Dr. J. P. Shaw.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid: letter, 8 July 1941, H. Miller, Controller, Communications Unit, Dunedin to TC; Mr Cate was to be the first to receive preliminary warning of an impending emergency and this was to be conveyed by telephone to the Mosgiel EPS officers in the following order; wardens first, then medical, fire, (headmaster of the district high school next), police and law and order, the Mayor and Town Clerk, Taieri County Clerk, operators of portable sirens, supplies and finally evacuation. EPSLEC Minutes, 11 June 1942

Mosgiel police constables headed, in effect, a squad of about 12 special constables which met occasionally.<sup>136</sup> In March 1942, Railways EPS units were established and these functioned in the Dunedin and suburban areas, including Mosgiel.<sup>137</sup> As the name suggested they mainly consisted of local railway employees who were to take care of the tracks, fuel and rolling stock in the area, in collaboration with the local body EPS. Finally, the very exclusive Spiritual Ministrations Section made use of the depth of religious institutions in the town. After the compulsory registration of January 1942, its ministers, and especially numbers of priests from Holy Cross College, were formed into this section to make use of their varied skills in an emergency situation.<sup>138</sup>

The Supplies Sub-Committee, as mentioned above, first convened on 16 October 1941 and mainly consisted of those townfolk who owned retail outlets and were, thus, used to supplying and distributing goods routinely. Each was responsible for the supply of the commodities traded in their own particular businesses. Mr Fred Frew, the chairman (after Mayor Hartstonge resigned), would supply bread; Mr Ralph Holland, meat; Mr J. W. Thompson, groceries; Mr John Wright, coal and Mr A. F. Cheyne any clothing if required.<sup>139</sup> They initially organised a supply depot in St Luke's Hall and later shifted into the Oddfellows Hall (now the Girl Guide Hall) on Gordon Rd., with the Presbyterian Sunday School Hall, on Church St., an auxiliary depot.<sup>140</sup> Twenty WWSA workers had also been enrolled for work in the depots by the end of the year, and by March 1942 the Dunedin EPS supplied emergency food cartons containing simple non-perishable goods, such as tea, sugar, salt, matches, cocoa, biscuits and milk powder, to be stored at the depot.<sup>141</sup> Apart from these preparations, however, it appears that the Supplies Sub-Committee could do little else until it became almost certain of an imminent air attack. Administration appears to have been the most pressing role this organisation had. Again, had an emergency unfolded, it would have had an essential role, but since most of its work took place in meeting rooms, few in the town were concerned with it.

Following a demonstration of about 20 cars in Gordon Rd. by a unit of the Dunedin Metropolitan Transport Section on the last Sunday in November 1941, local people were encouraged to join the newly formed local Transport Section.<sup>142</sup> Organisers compiled a list of local licensed drivers, (especially heavy vehicle licences) and the newly formed sub-section held its first meeting, under the instruction of Mr R. L. Fairmaid, late in January 1942. At evening parades the unit learned drill, mechanics and care of their vehicles, as well as revision of the geography of the area.<sup>143</sup> It had a fairly general role in an emergency and could involve many EPS activities which needed automobiles, ranging from fire patrols, communications tasks, as ambulance vehicles or for the evacuation of townfolk.<sup>144</sup> The vehicles on which the section depended were, with the exception of a council truck or two, all privately owned and

<sup>136</sup> EPS File: letter, 15 Sept. 1942, Const. Phillips to TC.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid: letter, 30 Mar. 1942, District Engineering Division Controller (Railways EPS) to TC.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid: letter, 19 Mar. 1942, TC to TC (Dn).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid: Minutes of Meeting of EPS Supplies Sub-Committee, 16 Oct. 1941. (Hereinafter Supplies Sub-Committee). There is no mention of recompense, but it is probable that they would have been able to recoup expenses for the goods provided from the state, if or when the emergency passed.

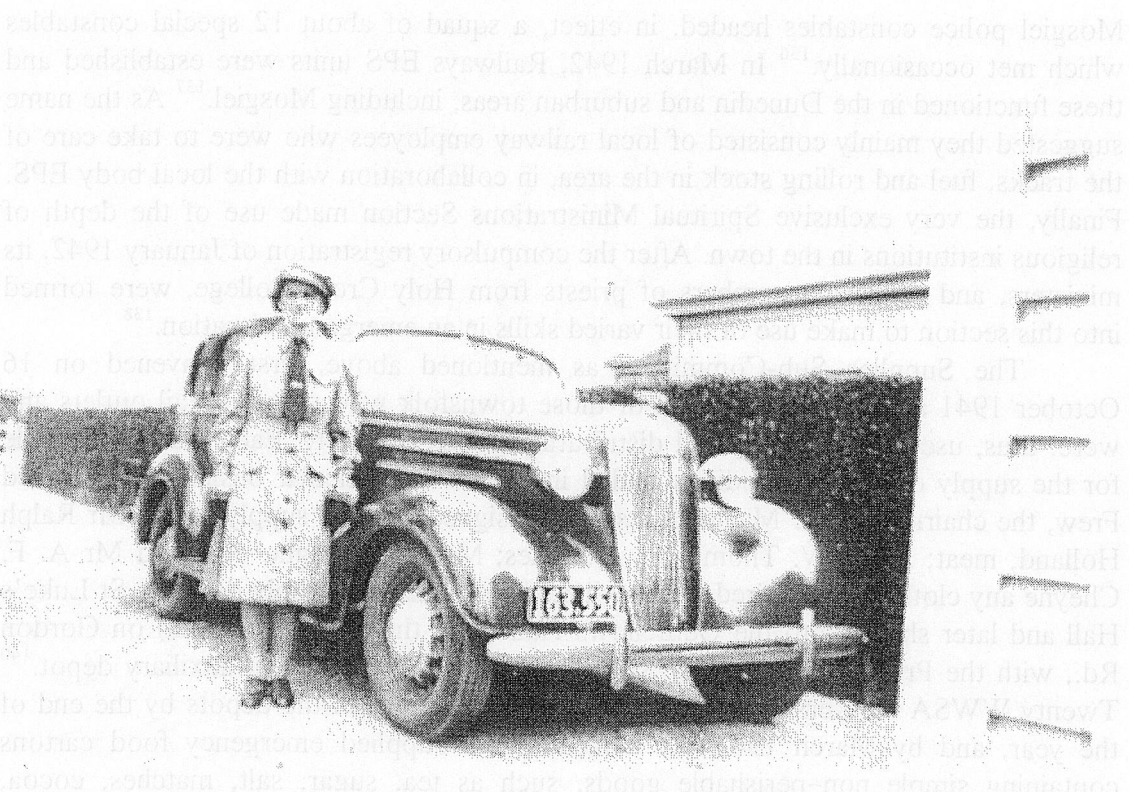
<sup>140</sup> EPSLEC Minutes, 9 Mar. 1942.

<sup>141</sup> EPS File: letter, 17 Aug. 1943, TC (Dn) to TC.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid: Notice for advertisement by Town Clerk, dated 25 Nov. 1941.

<sup>143</sup> *Evening Star*, 31 Jan. 1942, p.4.

<sup>144</sup> Taylor, p.562; EPSLEC Minutes, 9 Mar. 1942. This involved a good deal of ingenuity; an example being the suggestion that Mr D. P. Wilson's horsefloat might be used as an ambulance.



The WWSA ready for action. Local member Margaret Kingan, resplendent in the WWSA uniform stands prepared for any wartime eventuality.

Photo: M. Kingan

100 EPB File letter 15 Sept 1942. Genl Phillips to TC.  
101 Ibid. letter 30 Mar 1943. District Engineering Division Controller (Railway) EPB to TC.  
102 Ibid. letter 19 Mar 1942. TC to TC (Dn).  
103 Ibid. Minutes of Meeting of BR2 Supplies Sub-Committee, 16 Oct. 1941. (Reinstated supplies Sub-Committee). There is no mention of recompense, but it is probable that they would have been able to recover expenses for the goods provided from the state, if or when the emergency passed.  
104 EPB File letter 17 Aug. 1943. TC (Dn) to TC.  
105 Ibid. Notice for advertisement by Town Clerk, dated 25 Nov. 1941.  
106 Evening Star, 31 Jan. 1943, p.4.  
107 Taylor, p. 262. EPB File Minutes, 9 Mar. 1942. This involved a good deal of ingenuity, an example being the suggestion that Mr. D. F. Wilson's motorcar might be used as an ambulance.

lent or impressed. As Taylor concurs, the local authority preferred that impressed vehicles were driven by their owners, who were usually members of the Transport Section anyway.<sup>145</sup> Even then it was hardly a draconian impressment of an individual's car or truck, since they were used only for limited training and trials. The language and attitude appears generally quite relaxed, as this letter from the Town Clerk to a Mosgiel vehicle owner shows:

With reference to your enrolment in the Transport Section of the EPS, if you are willing for your car to be impressed for EPS purposes, on the understanding that, so far as possible, it will be driven by yourself in an emergency, will you please fill in particulars of the vehicle on the attached form and return to me at the earliest possible opportunity.<sup>146</sup>

In fact, it appears that transferred members could take their cars with them. When Mr. W. J. Roberts of Dryden St., Mosgiel, had been posted to the Home Guard, the Town Clerk noted that “. . . presumably Mr Roberts' motor car . . . will no longer be available for EPS purposes”.<sup>147</sup> It appears from research, that the impressment of private cars by the government for EPS purposes gave little concern to Mosgiel citizens. It seems almost charitable. Vehicles, impressed or volunteered, to the section were used for training and the odd trial only. The readiness to lend cars was helped by the scarcity of petrol. In February, EPS vehicles received a gallon of petrol to keep them mobile, plus a full two gallon tin and special vouchers for each owner-driver, for use in an emergency.<sup>148</sup> What members lost in spare time, they gained in petrol to keep their cars from standing idle.

Lastly, the Mosgiel Women's War Service Auxiliary (WWSA) was formed in July 1941, making it one of the 183 local centres and sub-centres nationwide.<sup>149</sup> This voluntary organisation, was not an EPS emergency unit, but a separate organisation of the ERC, under the wing of the National Service Department.<sup>150</sup> It coordinated the talents and interests of women willing to undertake part or full time national service for the War effort.<sup>151</sup> Initially district committees compiled lists of those willing to help in ways as various as driving, first aid, farming and gardening, clerical work, child care and factory work,<sup>152</sup> but eventually the Auxiliary delved into civil defence measures such as staffing the Mosgiel EPS Supplies depot.<sup>153</sup> Margaret Kingan found out about the WWSA through her job at the Woollen Mill, as a number of the mill employees belonged to it. She estimated there were perhaps forty or fifty women, aged from about sixteen up to sixty, some with children in their twenties or thirties. They met in the Lodge Hall once a week for drill, keep fit sessions and classes in things such as mechanics and first aid.<sup>154</sup> At the height of the Japanese threat the Mosgiel WWSA made up hundreds of small first aid kits for the use of individual EPS personnel at a

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<sup>145</sup> EPS File: letter, 5 Mar. 1942, TC to Members; Messrs Kirkland, Jones, J. S. Thompson, A. S. O'Brien, Murray, G. A. Renton, H. Swallow, J. Gordon, J. H. L. Pearce and J. Pryde; Taylor, p.562.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid: letter, 30 Mar. 1942, TC to Mr Murray Wilson, 9 Irvine St., Mosgiel.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid: letter, 8 Sept. 1942, TC to Controller, EPS Transport Section, Dunedin.

<sup>148</sup> Taylor, p.562.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p.1072.

<sup>150</sup> War File: Circular letter, 24 July 1941, TC to various women; D. O. W. Hall, *Women at War*, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Hancock, p.304. It followed the establishment of a similar women's organisation in Britain.

<sup>152</sup> Taylor, p.1070.

<sup>153</sup> EPS File: Minutes of Meeting of EPS Supplies Sub-Committee, 17 Dec. 1941. (Hereinafter Supplies Sub-Committee Minutes).

<sup>154</sup> The Lodge Hall is now the Girl Guide Hall on the corner of Wickliffe St. and Gordon Rd.



cost of 1/- per kit.<sup>155</sup> They dressed in a uniform consisting of a long sleeve belted dress of khaki cotton drill, tie and khaki cap, all made available through a government subsidy at a cost of £1.<sup>156</sup>

In the troubled year of 1942 another WWSA unit was established, possibly at the request of the local EPS executive to supply messengers or 'runners' with bicycles.<sup>157</sup> Fay Nicolson, another mill employee, joined this new group, called the Mosgiel Cycle Corps, at the age of 15. They held meetings in the Coronation Hall, lead by Ethel Wilson, where the relatively youthful members, learned first aid, bicycle mechanics, puncture repair and semaphore with their own set of flags.<sup>158</sup> They had a lot of fun, but were, of course, never required to put their training into practice, apart from one or two EPS trials. The WWSA hardly had a great impact on members or their spare time, but like the Home Guard, the uniform and organisation gave them a sense of contribution of worthy endeavour towards the war effort in a way which they felt best able or suited to. Margaret also saw it as a vehicle to stimulate interests and enthusiasm in the town at a time when there was little entertainment.

The onset of the Pacific war meant these organisations developed some sense of purpose, but much of the effort of the EPS still occurred on paper and in meeting rooms. In the aftermath of post-Pearl Harbour excitement, the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* summed up the organisation's poor public profile, admitting;

There has in the past been no true recognition of the importance of the [Emergency Precautions] scheme. Too many people have been apt to treat it in their minds as something that did not really concern them - perhaps even as something that merely provided an opportunity for those who had enrolled under it to participate in harmless play.<sup>159</sup>

The general public could not know of the plans and contingencies made by local bodies. Some emotive Mosgiel EPS decisions such as plans to use the swimming baths changing rooms (with concrete floors and water supply) as a mortuary in the event of an emergency, were not publicly aired.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, residents were not privy to a secret EPS circular received by Mayor Hartstonge in May 1942, entitled "Denial of Resources to the Enemy". It emphasised the importance of a scorched earth policy to prevent the enemy making use of captured equipment and supplies, denoting the EPS organisation the duty of overriding its normal function of property preservation, to instead carry out these plans of destruction on civilian resources, if necessary.<sup>161</sup> Many residents appear to have been only vaguely aware of the functions or even physical presence of the scheme. Again, the *ODT* provides some clue to this. After viewing an early Sunday morning trial in April 1942, its reporter stated:

<sup>155</sup> EPSLEC Minutes, 11 June 1942.

<sup>156</sup> Hancock, p.304.

<sup>157</sup> EPSLEC Minutes, 11 June 1942. The minimum age for the Cycle Corps was supposed to be 16.

<sup>158</sup> Interview, Fay Nicolson.

<sup>159</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 Dec. 1941, p.8.

<sup>160</sup> War File: letter 7 Oct. 1941, TC to Constable Adams, Police Station, Mosgiel.

<sup>161</sup> EPS File: EPS Circular No.85 (Secret), 6 May 1942, J. S. Hunter to Chairman of Local EPS. There are some fascinating instructions and methods detailing the immobilisation or total destruction of important machine plant or raw materials unable to be removed quickly, many of which would have applied to Mosgiel. Vehicles, locomotives and rolling stock, petrol stocks, garages, saw mills, and the Woollen Mill and dairy factory's plant would have been prime targets for explosives, the fouling of their machinery or simply a sledge hammer.

Few members of the public can possibly have a full conception of the carefully prepared scheme that has been planned for their safety and welfare. If they could have seen the organisation running smoothly and efficiently yesterday morning they would have been assured that, should Dunedin experience a blitz, the civil defences are ready to deal competently and adequately with any emergency in the safeguarding of lives and property.<sup>162</sup>

The scheme may have been carefully prepared, but few people, apart from participating members saw it in action, even in trials. In the author's interviews, almost all remembered the blackout, but only a few could recall the EPS itself. According to research, full-scale EPS trials took place in Mosgiel, only on three occasions in 1942 and again in 1943, so that they had little overall effect.<sup>163</sup> Most took place early in the morning; 7.18 a.m. on Sunday morning in April 1942 and 6.20 a.m. on Sunday morning in May 1943, for example, so that many of the uninvolved public might have slept through them. For those local EPS participants who attended, the trials took less than two hours, simulating rescue efforts in the event of injuries, fire and homelessness resulting from an air attack. Of those interviewed, only Ella Cameron, a local Post Office switchboard operator (and Communications Section member) recalled attending an EPS trial, and that only because it occurred on her day off and someone rang her house ordering her to attend. Thus, it did not disrupt.

As well as the low profile of EPS activities, many New Zealanders still did not see the need for them. Even with Japanese entry into the War, the repeated calls for new recruits reveal that, as with the Home Guard, many local people did not feel the situation desperate enough for them to join the EPS. Mayor A. H. Allen, on 13 December, appealed for approximately 3000 volunteers of over military age to complete the emergency services in Dunedin. Mayor Hartstonge had to appeal for sixty to seventy people to bring the local services up to the minimum required number, principally in the WWSA, Transport and Wardens sections.<sup>164</sup> A recruiting rally followed in Mosgiel on 20 December, including the Home Guard, the WWSA, MVFB men, the Taieri Pipe Band and the EPS Transport and Medical Sections.<sup>165</sup> But volunteers proved slow, prompting disappointment from the authorities, and frustration from the conservative press. It seems the most avid proponents of the scheme were the bureaucrats who invented and controlled it. In March 1942, the *ODT* in its best matronly tone, spluttered:

The blindness of a large number of people in the Dominion to the danger which assails them is positively tragic. They simply do not realise that a cruel, fanatical and powerful enemy is almost at their doors . . . they seem incapable of realising they are threatened with . . . subjection to a foreign yoke that would be ruthless in its severity and brutality. Against the risk of a contingency of this kind, the Dominion must take all possible precautions.<sup>166</sup>

However, as revealed in Chapter 8, most local residents did not fear an invasion, and as Paul Easton notes, Otago people appeared to be ambivalent about the threat.<sup>167</sup> Without a full air of desperation, as say a Japanese invasion of Australia might

<sup>162</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 April 1942, p.2.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 13 Apr., 5, 10 Aug. 1942, 8 Feb. 1943, pp. 2, 4, 4, 4; *ES*, 16 Jan. 1942, 29 May 1943, pp. 4, 4.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, 13, 16 Dec. 1941, pp.8, 6.

<sup>165</sup> EPS File: letters, 17 Dec. 1941, TC to Dr. J.P. Shaw, Mrs R. L. Fairmaid (WWSA), Mr J. White (Sec. MVFB) and Mr J. Kemp (Sec. Taieri Pipe Band) for example.

<sup>166</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 March 1942, p.4.

<sup>167</sup> Easton, p.24.

promote, some preferred not to become involved, or kept their participation as limited as possible. Letters to the press remarked upon the numbers of local people not involved in the ERC. Taylor remarks that the early stimulus of fear had waned by the middle of 1942; people were used to the close Pacific war. Leaders demanding efficiency and urgency were “flogging a dead horse” as long as the situation did not dramatically deteriorate.<sup>168</sup> The irony is that the longer the War progressed, the more complex and developed the EPS became. Just when public interest lagged, it was probably at its most efficient. Overall, however, it seems the ERC was a concept far from embraced by the whole community and affecting all.

Into 1942 and especially after the compulsory enrolment regulations in January, the state, through the Dunedin and local executives had, in theory, a lot of control over the individual. In practice, however, it had little impact on those directed. With the Mosgiel organisation only established late in 1941, official service for most volunteers consisted of little over a year until EPS cut backs early in 1943, and even less for compulsory members. In the context of military service of sometimes up to five or six years, commitment to the local EPS hardly appears ruinous. Apart from a weekly meeting of couple of hours, plus a few trials, the EPS made no other burden on a member's time. Although it is apparent through the EPS Correspondence File, that the majority of the members turned up, it seems that some were lax about attending, or not, as it suited them. These problems prompted Mayor Hartstonge to draw the Local Executive Committee's attention to the compulsory attendance clauses in the regulations in September 1942.<sup>169</sup> The local organisation could focus on individuals and issue warnings, but only long and obvious absences were commented on. Of 33 personnel in the Stretcher Bearer Section by August-September 1942, 12 were singled out, all having attended less than 6 times out of a possible 19 parades and 3 having never been.<sup>170</sup> With the invasion threat winding down, it does not appear that the offenders were punished, but does intimate that it was not impossible to avoid most parades and further reduce the minor effect on spare time for those unwilling even to put in their two hours of EPS practice. In the end, with such a large organisational task even the local bureaucracy created for facilitating total war service could not plug all the gaps or find all those defaulting, what it deemed to be, their duty.

By the beginning of 1943 and with the good news on all battle fronts, the government pruned EPS numbers (Dunedin area numbers were cut back to 3000 and then 1000 in July) and renamed it Civil Defence; capable for all war and civil disaster emergency situations. All other EPS units remained on paper, but in effect were quietly retired.<sup>171</sup> This subdued end was, perhaps, appropriate for an organisation that never really reached its full potential in terms of equipment, training or recognition.

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The overall life span of the Mosgiel Emergency Reserve Corps stretched from 1940-1944, yet it had only a limited impact upon the town and its people. Volunteer numbers never matched those hoped for by organisers, amidst initial scepticism about the need for emergency preparations to be made, whilst indecision and confusion

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<sup>168</sup> Taylor, p.569.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid: circular letter, 11 Sept. 1942, TC to Controllers of all Units.

<sup>170</sup> EPS File: 'Bearer Section, Controller's Report of Attendance at Parades etc.' By W. E. Fagg.

<sup>171</sup> Taylor, pp.570-1.

severely hampered the initial local development EPS. The local efforts at forming the Home Guard and EPS foundered on a lack of equipment, and constructive activities they could do. This gave rise to attendance problems and a poor public profile and even farcical reputation. Before the Pacific war the community at large did not take them seriously, and possibly neither did the volunteers themselves. The Home Guard, especially came in for a lot of ribbing over their lack of armaments. When the units increased their activities to meet the potential Japanese threat, much of the effort they put in remained anonymous to the rest of the townsfolk. The Home Guard's defensive works on the beach, the efforts of the signals section or the guerilla platoon, training, or the few EPS trials, were not on show to the local community like their companion organisations in Britain were. Some people knew little about them, and with no uniforms and few public appearances it stayed like that for a long time. Who really knew that a certain butcher, for example, had an almost secret identity as a member of the supplies section, ready to spring into action at the first hint of the siren? Only the Fire Brigade and the Medical Section, with its St John influence and the aid station were well recognised emergency services. If the other units had been needed to cope with an emergency situation, many in the town would have been surprised and impressed. Like many things, effort in prevention and readiness, is not usually appreciated, until it is needed. Similarly, the efforts of the local EPS organisers and the behind the scenes exertions of the Local Executive were not appreciated by the general public. In truth, much of the efforts of the EPS existed in offices and meetings of local government (more than the Army controlled Home Guard) which produced a lot of paper and plans, which would have been important in the event of an attack, but which produced much less actual physical effort or results. In the end, all the effort, and painfully developed bureaucratic organisation fell flat when the Japanese did not attack.

The impact on part of members themselves also remained limited, although many enjoyed their time and the friendships in the ERC, and most were ready to do their best to protect the town in an emergency. Initially many members simply performed their usual employment or volunteer work, such as the council Works Section or the St. John-laden Medical Section, under grandiose EPS titles. Compulsion targeted many townsfolk of all ages, with the registration and ordering of much of the male population, but this did not unduly upset their lifestyles. Attendances were not rigorously enforced, except in extreme cases, and some fell through the bureaucratic cracks. The hours were undemanding, except for the work put in by the Home Guard in the crisis period of 1942. In the context of an alternative to the rigours of military service, it proved a fairly soft option.

The story of the ERC in Mosgiel is an interesting one, which deserved to be told, but one which does not prove overwhelming in the greater history of the town. In the end the ERC needed to be formed as a preventative measure but, as with most organisations - such as modern day Civil Defence - they are only appreciated when needed. Although this was a total war, to which the central and local government responded with all sorts of bureaucratic initiatives, it made little difference to the pattern of Mosgiel life.

## Chapter 4:

# Air Raid Precautions.

At 6 a.m. bombs dropped.

I awoke to hear a roar and thundering, to feel that horrible 'got you' thud of a heavy bomb and the sound of half the world raining down on us. My mother and sister were both giving little screams; I put my arms round my sister and said 'It's all right' several times. Mother got off her bed, crying 'The house has been hit' as she ran to the stairs. 'No it hasn't' I shouted, and then, suddenly felt sorry for her and said 'Poor mother'. 'Get under the bed' said my sister. I didn't want to, because the thought of the iron bedstead falling on me didn't appeal. There was a flash and another came down, and our telephone started to ring. My sister again told us to get under the bed, so I got under and pulled at her to follow me, but she didn't move. She said afterwards that she couldn't move.<sup>1</sup>

When dawn broke the following morning it was drizzling. There was a mist over the town as men and women began to crawl out of their shelters, look for their friends and survey the ruins of their city. They could hardly recognize it. Remnants of walls with their ragged brickwork stood up like drunken sentinels helplessly guarding a scene of chaos. Hardly a building remained intact. It was impossible to see where the central streets we knew so well had been. Fires were still raging in every direction and from time to time we heard the crash of a fallen roof or wall. Up to that night we were surprised if we heard if this or that building had been hit. That Friday morning as we walked round the ruined streets we hardly knew what to do. It seemed so hopeless with our homes and shops and so much of our lovely old city in ruins. You might say we were dazed.<sup>2</sup>

Helpless images such as these, of air raids on London and Coventry in November 1940, haunted the New Zealand authorities with the possibility that such suffering and destruction could happen to their own communities. With the reports of damage being wreaked by the Luftwaffe on British cities, the government pressed ahead in the beginning of 1941 with blackout measures intended to protect its own. These lighting restrictions concerned all people in coastal communities, for it was not limited to volunteers and was policed by the local EPS authorities. Following the outbreak of the Pacific war these regulations were tightened and accompanied by preventative plans for air raid shelters and firewatching. During the middle months of 1942 there was a chance that the above respective accounts of a West London office girl and an eyewitness in Coventry, the morning after its devastating raid of 15 November, might have been mirrored by survivors of an attack on this country. Reports such as these stirred the government and local bodies to prepare for the worst. Although, in retrospect, no damage from enemy bombardment was inflicted on New Zealand and the protective measures were not needed, they did have their own particular, if relatively minor, impacts on citizens of towns adjacent to the coast like Mosgiel. The previous chapter discussed the impact of the formation and duties of the Emergency Precautions Organisation on those who joined it. This chapter slants off in an attempt to look at the way in which the government-installed air raid precautions

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<sup>1</sup> Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Longate, *Air Raid: The Bombing of Coventry*, p. 146.

(ARP) measures affected individuals and the town as a whole. Unlike recruitment in the EPS, an enemy air raid was definitely everybody's concern.

Air raids and air raid precautions were nothing new for the government or the public to digest. Many were familiar with the blackout precautions of London against the Zeppelin and aircraft attacks in the First World War. Press reports from the fronts in the Sino-Japanese and Spanish Civil Wars also awakened people to the realities of aerial bombing. In New Zealand, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the government's Emergency Precautions Committee foresaw in 1936 the future possibility of raids upon the country, though most probably only minor. Closer to home, in 1938, the Mosgiel Borough Council, conscious of the town's proximity to the (civil) aerodrome, dabbled in the idea of air raid precautions. Any real action, however, was hindered by the lack of guidance of the authorities. Despite the highly publicised reports of blackout regulations and shelters in Britain during the blitz of 1940, New Zealand and Australia were not considered to be in any real danger. The shelling of the phosphate plant on Nauru Island by the German raider *Komet* in December 1940,<sup>3</sup> however, forced this theory to be revised as it became clear that coastal towns were potentially in danger of receiving an unwanted salvo or two. The government calmly moved to deal with the problem in mid-February 1941, by adopting emergency lighting restriction regulations for the purpose of controlling or regulating the display and power of lights.<sup>4</sup> Hefty fines backed up the regulations, for those who failed to comply with them.<sup>5</sup> The aim was not a blackout but a reduction in lighting. Obscuring lights facing out to sea, prevented sky glow from concentrated lighting reflecting off pavements and walls, which might help raiders in their navigation or target aiming. Advertising signs and floodlights were disconnected, shop windows and verandah lights shrouded and street lights reduced in strength.<sup>6</sup>

Some initial dissention appeared in the face of this new government directive. Never before had the country felt such a wide ranging effect of government legislative powers in the area of citizens' everyday life. Even the conscription of the First World War concerned only males of a limited age group, and the imposition of petrol rationing in December 1939 really only affected those with cars. Much grumbling followed in Dunedin, as in the rest of the nation. On 9 April 1941, the *Otago Daily Times* noted that "Expressions of concern about the emergency restrictions on lighting, particularly on street lighting, seems to be fairly general throughout New Zealand", while the *Evening Star* reported that the public sharply criticised the Government's decision to declare a partial blackout. Two days earlier, at a meeting of the DCC, the Chairman of the Electricity Committee, in reply to public criticism, pointed out that the blackout had nothing to do with the council but was carried out under instructions from the Dominion Lighting Controller. Another councillor wished to receive an assurance from the Government that the lighting restrictions were necessary.<sup>7</sup> It is not too much to assume that some of the people of Mosgiel shared in the criticism of the Government-imposed blackout and wished to avoid what may have seemed uncertain, inconvenient and possibly even dangerous times ahead. Many probably did not wish to

<sup>3</sup> Laurie Barber, *War Memorial*, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> The Lighting Restrictions Emergency Regulations 1941. (1941/18), Reg. 4 (2)(a), (3).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Reg. 11. An individual could be liable to up to 3 months imprisonment, a fine of up to £50 and if the offence continued a further £10 each day. A corporate body was liable to a £200 and £20 for continuing.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, pp. 497-8.

<sup>7</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 8 April 1941, p.6.

experience such a new situation. Work on shading lights continued however, as did the emphasis on educating as to the potential dangers of sky glow. The *Star* stated that it did not take very many unshrouded lights to cast a definite glow on the low ceiling and the type of semi-cloudy night skies that were frequent over the Otago coast could provide a perfect indicator to any raider. Though the average person may have thought the steps taken drastic, it was possible in certain circumstances to see Dunedin's normal sky glow despite the natural curvature of the earth as far as fifty miles out to sea.<sup>8</sup> The consoling tones of an *ODT* editorial conceded that, "It would appear in these circumstances that the public must be prepared to accept, with the best will of which it is capable, the imposition of lighting restrictions that are undoubtedly a nuisance, but are considerably less so than an attack by enemy raiders would be."<sup>9</sup> It does seem this summed up the general feeling, for after the initial shock and reaction and thoughts of inconvenience, most people, if not accepting the necessity of the blackout or feelings of danger, at least accepted that there was little they could do except go along with it. Nancy Taylor also found that many Kiwis felt that they should not grumble about lighting restrictions when compared to the trials Britain was suffering or that which the 2NZEF was facing in Greece, and later Crete.<sup>10</sup>

The shrouding of street lights in Dunedin city, suburb by suburb, began by the beginning of April 1941. The Mosgiel Borough Council in its misguided enthusiasm to follow the wishes of the Dunedin EPS earlier in March, simply refrained from switching the street lights on for a few nights, probably very much to the annoyance of residents. After consultation with Dunedin authorities and assurance the lights would be dimmed, however, they switched them on again.<sup>11</sup> The Assistant Dominion Lighting Controller stated that lights should be reduced in strength but not in numbers.<sup>12</sup> The local Mosgiel authorities, it seems, took the restrictions and their enforcement very seriously. By the end of April DCC Electricity staff were fixing shades to Mosgiel street lights and replacing the larger lamps with smaller ones.<sup>13</sup> Bill Borrow remembered the light shades.

. . . as a matter of fact there used to be one down the end of Lanark Street for years after the war [as] they'd forgotten to take the shade off. See, the shape of those lamps, they had a wee bulb in them. Well they had a little tube ran down . . . over the lamp and it only threw light down onto the road as a circle of light. You couldn't see that light from a block away.<sup>14</sup>

Margaret Kenny also recalled that the street lights only shone a little round light down just when you stood underneath it.

In addition to street lights, other evident bright lights became targets. The first to go were the Taieri Rugby Club's night practice floodlights at the Recreation Ground, which on foggy nights caused a glow visible from North Taieri. Lighting Control stated that the nine lights could stay if the bulbs were reduced in strength from 500 to 200 watts, as had been done at Bishops court.<sup>15</sup> The T.R.F.C. Committee

<sup>8</sup> *Evening Star*, 9 April 1941, p.8.

<sup>9</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 April 1941, p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, p. 500.

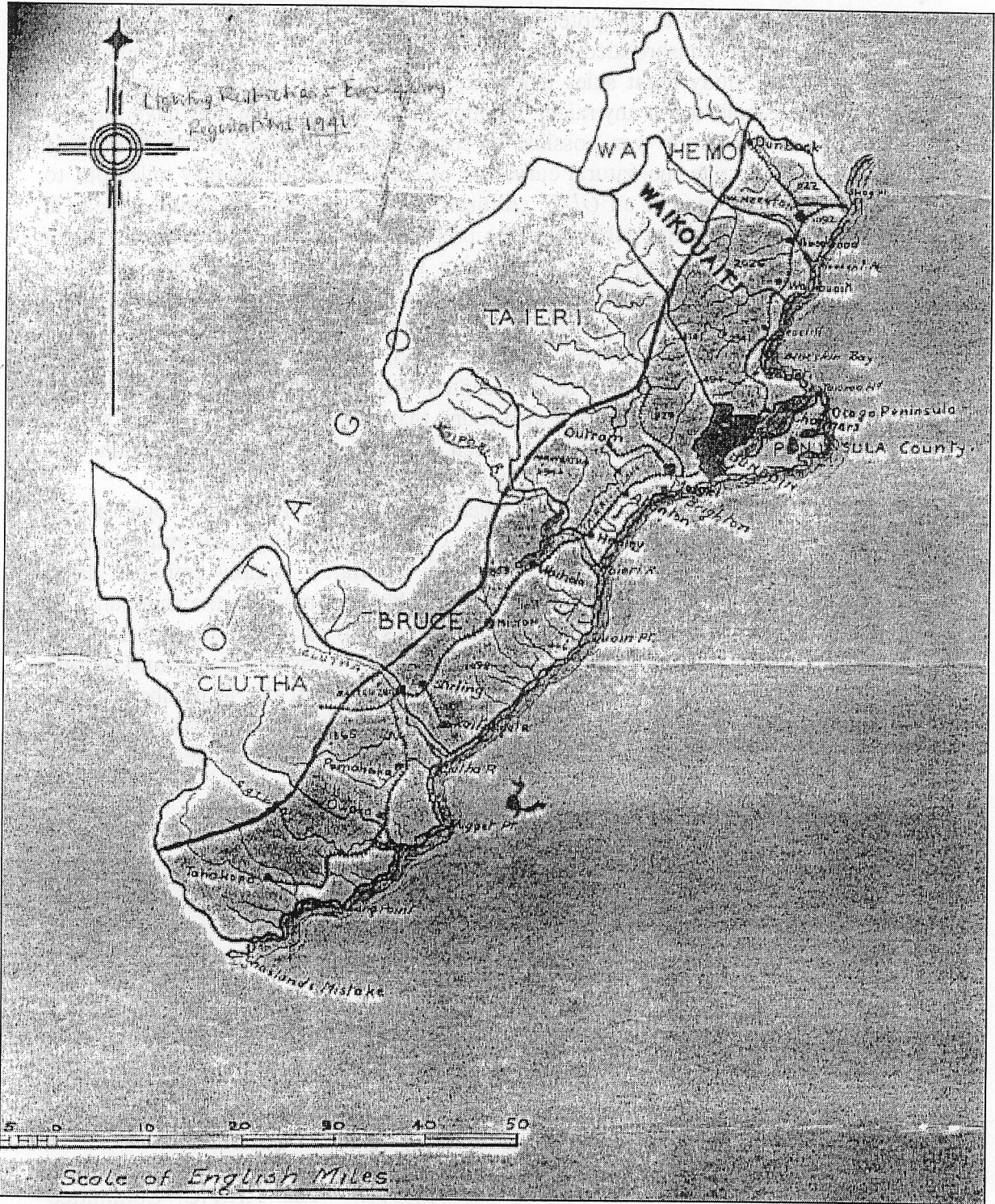
<sup>11</sup> MBC minutes 3 Mar. 1941.

<sup>12</sup> *Evening Star*, 5 July 1941, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> War File: letter, 24 April 1941, TC to City Electrical Engineer.

<sup>14</sup> Interview, B. Borrow.

<sup>15</sup> Otago Rugby Football Union Fair Minutes, 5 May 1941. Bishops court is the home of the Kaikorai RFC.



LIGHTING RESTRICTIONS, OTAGO "COASTAL AREA"

This shows the extent of the 12 mile coastal blackout restrictions. This map was dated 12/10/42.

EPS File.



unfortunately found the costs of this prohibitive, so elected simply not to use the lights for the duration of the restrictions.<sup>16</sup> While this hindered team practices, it had only minimal effect, since with player resources dwindling into the forces by 1941, there were only a couple of adult teams anyway.

Another obvious brightly lit area was the Taieri airfield, which began night flying operations in July 1941. Taylor noted that in other centres, particularly the North Island, there were frequent complaints about public concerns such as wharves, railway yards and aerodromes, which were prime targets, but still illuminated for their important work.<sup>17</sup> In comparison there seems to have been little or no comment made about RNZAF Taieri, which usually observed the blackout but breached it for night flying training. Fifty-three outside pilot (also called obstruction) lights were necessary for this task<sup>18</sup>, but must have created an obvious scene and glow around North Taieri. The officials, Taylor noted, answered that the lights in those places mentioned could be instantly extinguished in an emergency; exactly the solution reached at the aerodrome. Other aerodrome lights were shrouded in the usual fashion, while the outside pilot guidance lights situated around the Station were controlled from a single point in the Duty Pilot's hut.<sup>19</sup> While the bright lights may have caused some muffled comments from local residents faced with their own streets in darkness, it does not appear to have made mention in the local press. Being a military base serving the war effort, the average local hardly felt in a position to criticise it, as a politician in Wellington or prominent businessman in Auckland might, or even as a city councillor in Dunedin did. Residents probably would not have anyway. In matters of national security such as this, the Government and the military knew what they were doing as far as most local people were concerned and they would not question it. So, the lighting restrictions, or rather the lack of them, in this case do not appear to have any substantiated impact in comparison to the irritation it caused in northern centres.

Shop and house lights had to be screened, though only those showing to the open sea had to be completely hidden, so in this respect Mosgiel fared better than many of the Dunedin suburbs. Initially in these so called 'sky glow' areas, not directly visible from the sea, like the Taieri, simply shutting blinds or curtains after dark sufficed. These were found to be the most common methods used by residents in Britain in 1939 as well.<sup>20</sup> Advice from government and local advertisements aimed at those with sea view homes, gave an indication as to what Mosgiel had still yet to face. The Lighting Controller advised painting around the edges of windows to prevent chinks of light escaping and adding several thicknesses of brown paper to the window side of lamp shades to dull the glow.<sup>21</sup> Locally, in March, the D.I.C. promoted their stocks of blackout items under the slogan "D.I.C. proves that reduced lighting need not be costly". It offered four choices: "Temporary Sisalkraft Blinds, specially prepared and easily fitted (specimen size 4ft 6" x 3ft) each 1/11d.; Cotton Repp draw curtains, (10ft wide x 6ft deep) £2/16/- ; Fitted Fanlight Window Blinds (21" x 18") 3/11 d. up to (21" x 36") 6/6 d.;" and "Defence Measure Lampshades of Heavy

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 19 May 1941.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, p. 502.

<sup>18</sup> DCC Electricity File 15/13: letter, 22 May 1941, P. Keller (District Engineer) to City Electrical Engineer. (Hereinafter DCC E 15/13).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 16/19: letter, 17 July 1941, Keller to City Electrical Engineer.

<sup>20</sup> Harrisson & Madge, *War Begins at Home*, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, p.498. The value of Sisalkraft, a black paper and fibre compound used throughout Britain was also extolled.

Parchment. Suitable for the hall or any room with an outside entrance. Gives maximum of light, yet cuts out any glare. Suitable for overpainting in black, 2/6 d. each.”<sup>22</sup> Though, to begin with, many people used makeshift measures, it is clear that more permanent blackout measures for those Dunedin homes visible from the sea, where it was necessarily essential to be done properly, came at a cost to household income. The Mosgiel Borough Council purchased additional blinds for windows in the front of the Coronation Hall and the fanlights of windows in the office were covered with felt to comply with the restrictions,<sup>23</sup> but this was probably an exception. Most houses in the town already had curtains or blinds, so the potential monetary impact of having to purchase them to prevent sky glow would not have been great overall.

Vehicle lights were not immune from the restrictions. Trains were the first targetted, in mid-March. Bill Borrow recalled, “Travelling in the train at night, during the blackouts, the windows on the coast side always had to have the blinds down. You weren’t allowed to lift them up, so the ones on the coast side, going from Dunedin, the blinds were always down.” Whether this irritated travellers depended on the individual. Most probably did not worry about it and one might presume that the blinds would have been drawn down at night anyway. This particular lighting restriction affected a lot of Mosgiel residents, the train being the main mode of transport at that time, with several hundred people catching it into work in Dunedin each day. Whether the fact that the blinds needed to be closed had much impact on them, however, is a matter of conjecture. Bill, as a fellow traveller himself, thought that people got used to it very quickly and didn’t worry at all about it.

Headlight restrictions followed in June. The regulations divided a broad coastal belt, up to twelve miles (19.2 k.m.) inland, into headlight restriction areas and park light areas, placing Mosgiel in the former. Headlight restriction areas required alteration to cars and trucks so that in addition to a tail light, the front left hand light be in a steep dipped position and the front right hand park light, only, showing. Park light areas were seaward-facing streets up to three miles from the coast, which included most of central Dunedin and its coastal suburbs. In these, vehicles displayed only park lights and tail lights of no more than 7 watts and travelled up to the speed limit of 20 miles per hour.<sup>24</sup> Mosgiel vehicle owners who wished to drive at night were, thus required to physically tilt one light downwards eight inches for every ten feet of beam and to cover the other up. If they wished to drive to a parking light area at night, say perhaps to St. Kilda or Port Chalmers, then heavier restrictions needed to be followed. The *Otago Daily Times* suggested that most English cars would be easily fixed but in some cases the necessary adjustment of some American cars might require alterations to the actual wiring.<sup>25</sup> This may have produced minor inconvenience to some Mosgiel residents, for there were probably more American than English types in the town; the four local taxi drivers, for instance driving a Hudson, an Oldsmobile, a Pontiac and a Ford.<sup>26</sup> A brief check of the Mosgiel Court Book for traffic offences in the area reveals plenty of Oldsmobiles, Dodges, Studebakers, Fords and Buicks, but only a few Austins or Morris’s. The general effect of the adjustments to meet the lighting restrictions would be minute, however, because only a select group of the community had the

<sup>22</sup> *Evening Star*, 12 Mar. 1941, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> MBC minutes, 6 June 1941.

<sup>24</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 31 May, 18 June, pp.8, 4; Motoring organisations and the authorities also suggested that the mudguards of all automobiles be painted white to aid visibility.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 18 June, p.8. This was because of the double filament lamps fitted to many American models.

<sup>26</sup> MBC Taxi Cabs Licences File; Interview, Jim Manley.

motor cars to be worried about changing their light settings. Petrol rationing also severely limited the amount of time those cars had on the road. No traffic accidents were recorded in the Mosgiel Court Book during the months of blackout, thus eliminating another potential impact.

Throughout most of 1941 the blackout in Mosgiel continued in a relatively relaxed manner compared with Dunedin, or other northern cities visible from the sea, as when it began in March. The increasing threat of Japan, however, meant that the restrictions took on a new level of importance. There was no protest when Guy Fawkes night fireworks and bonfires were banned in November.<sup>27</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Eve Ebbett in her book *When the Boys were Away*. She found strict observance of the blackout occurred only after the attack on Pearl Harbour. Following the shock, new regulations required a drastic revision of light escaping from houses, shops or workplaces.<sup>28</sup> Even in coastal areas not visible from the sea the Government, in mid-December, instructed that,

The occupiers of premises must forthwith make provision for the immediate and complete blacking out at any time . . . of a room, or rooms, that provide enough accommodation for the greatest number of persons that may be on the premises at any time during the hours of darkness. Such provision must be by way of a screen ensuring that no light directly or indirectly escapes . . .<sup>29</sup>

This meant citizens had to take a lot more care when darkness came around. Jim Manley describes the blacking out routine in his home,

Often along the top of the blind . . . we used to have Holland, you know the old Holland roller blinds, and you'd have to put something along the top of there, a towel along or a blanket or something, or push something up against the window to make sure the light didn't get out. Of course in those days just about every old house had a front door with the glass down the sides, often had coloured glass down the side and so you'd have to put cardboard or something in all those panels.

They ended up leaving the cardboard over the front door panes during the day time to save time with it each night. Bill Borrow, whose family was perhaps more able to afford them, remembers having proper blackout curtains and using Sisalkraft and tape along the edges of the window. Mavis Ewart found most rooms in her house no problem to blackout, but had an awful lot of trouble with the large window in her living room which was hard to keep completely covered every night.<sup>30</sup> Understandably, after such a long time, these respondents could not remember how long it took them or their family each night to blackout their homes. A contemporary British survey compiled as part of the famous 'Mass Observation' project, estimated that the general mean for the British population in late 1939 (before the Blitz) amounted to about one hour per week. From their large panel of observers they calculated that 70% of them took five minutes or more and 46% took over ten minutes each night.<sup>31</sup> While the British regulations were stricter, there is a degree of comparison able between Britain in 1939 - before the air raids - and New Zealand in the first half of 1942. Even so, it seems to the author that in most Mosgiel homes less than ten minutes would have been sufficient; not enough time to irritate householders. The Mosgiel respondents agreed

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<sup>27</sup> Taylor, p.506.

<sup>28</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 Dec. 1941, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> *Evening Star*, 20 Dec. 1941, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews, B. Borrow, M. Ewart.

<sup>31</sup> Harrisson & Madge, p.192.

that the process of blacking out homes quickly became a habit, as did the observance of many other government regulations during the war, so that it did not really concern them. What did concern them was not doing it properly, for then they were most likely to be informed of this in no uncertain terms by the visit of a warden.

The Air Raid Warden service was created in Britain in 1937 to provide ‘leaders and advisors’, supervise air raid shelters and check the blackout; duties which they became infamous for during the Blitz.<sup>32</sup> Wardens began duties in Dunedin in April 1941 after imposition of the blackout. It took until October before Dunedin suggested to the Mosgiel Borough Council that a local unit be organised,<sup>33</sup> and not until the heady days of post-Pearl Harbour December before the Mosgiel Wardens Corps were officially formed at a public meeting on the seventeenth of that month.<sup>34</sup> Dunedin had been divided into fifteen districts while outlying areas such as Green Island and Mosgiel composed separate districts. Mr F. R. Hall’s appointment made him the Mosgiel District Warden over five Sub-Warden areas; that bounded by Gordon Rd., Mure St. and the Main Trunk railway line; bounded by Gordon Rd., Mure St. and Bush Rd.; between Gordon Rd., Bush Rd. and the Silverstream; between Gordon Rd., Factory Rd. and the Outram railway line and finally the area north east of the Outram railway line and Mossburn. Each Sub-District Warden had two Block Wardens to assist with their duties.<sup>35</sup> It is unclear who performed warden’s blackout duties before this. The local respondents had various ideas about this, suggesting the police, the Home Guard, council workers or even the Fire Brigade. The police sounds most reasonable, but none were very sure. The new wardens needed a detailed knowledge of their patrol area and the people. A later handbook suggested that they keep a register of every building in the area, listing its layout, the particulars of the dwellers and the room or rooms prepared for a complete blackout.<sup>36</sup> Wardens saw their task as protecting the community and were serious about their duty, but some residents did not appreciate their enthusiasm when it came to pointing out a light showing.

Enforcement of the lighting restrictions increased after Pearl Harbour, and again after the fall of Singapore in February 1942. Late in that month the Mayor of Dunedin, Mr A. H. Aitken, drew to the attention of residents in the Dunedin metropolitan district (Port Chalmers to Mosgiel) that flagrant breaches of the regulations could still be seen nightly. He warned the public that wardens would be active in the prosecution of their duties.<sup>37</sup> Eve Ebbett noted that the blackout appears to have been enforced more rigidly in some areas than in others, with one Dunedin woman she interviewed not remembering a blackout in the city.<sup>38</sup> Mosgiel, however, despite not being directly visible from the sea seems to have been patrolled vigorously,

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<sup>32</sup> Len Deighton, *Battle of Britain*, p.182.

<sup>33</sup> MBC minutes, 6 Oct. 1941.

<sup>34</sup> EPS File: letter, 15 Dec. 1941, Mayor to Mr. F. R. Hall.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid: List of Mosgiel Wardens Enrolled. Dated 24 Dec. 1941. Later terminology replaced the Sub-District Warden with ‘Block Warden’ and the Block Warden’s tasks became that of the ‘Street Warden’.

<sup>36</sup> DCC EPS File 6/5: New Zealand Civil Defence Handbook No. 3. Wardens Handbook, Feb. 1943, p.13. (Hereinafter Wardens Handbook); The position of water main shut off taps and backyard tools and equipment such as ladders, hose, picks and shovels were also suggested, for the warden could initially be faced with air raid damage and all this information helped rescue parties to save victims trapped beneath rubble and debris as quickly as possible. Mosgiel did not have a gas supply to worry about in case of an air raid.

<sup>37</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 Feb. 1942, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> Ebbett, p.43.

with nearly all 20 respondents interviewed recalling the impact of a visit from a warden. Being a physically small town it probably proved easy for block wardens to thoroughly cover the ground. Bill Borrow recollected one particular time.

We lived up in Gladstone Rd., Dad's house, and you had to blackout the windows with tape a bit up from the edge of the window and . . . what you called Sizelcraft. Anyway, one night my sister was actually teaching a pupil, piano pupil, in the front room there and there was a bay window, there was about six windows around the bay, and this Sizelcraft had been bent back. Next thing there was a bang on the on door, "Get that light out!". They came round occasionally, particularly out there.

The fact that Bill can remember this isolated incident after over fifty years shows that that particular visit must have had some impact on him and his family. They probably checked religiously that there were no chinks of light showing for the next few weeks, which was the desired result.

There are many other accounts of unsuspecting inhabitants of houses in Britain and New Zealand feeling a range of emotions from embarrassment and shock to anger, because of the visit of a warden. One woman on a farm near Timaru, interviewed by Eve Ebbett, recalled feeling like a traitor after being informed that her curtains let out too much light.<sup>39</sup> Tom Harrisson, the contemporary British historian, concluded that one of the results of making the blackout compulsory in Britain was that the ARP wardens acquired something of the status of police; able to knock on your door and tell you to mask your lights, or else.<sup>40</sup> According to the New Zealand wardens handbook, they also had the power to enter any premises by day or night if measures were not accurate.<sup>41</sup> Thus, many around the country may have felt on the back foot when confronted by officialdom on their doorstep. This appears to be less so in Mosgiel where most people in the town knew each other, compared to Auckland or even Dunedin, where the warden may have been a total stranger. It wasn't so much an unnerving or even intimidating experience, as the Timaru woman felt, but rather more neighbourly or informal, as the chances were that the warden would have been known to them. As most Mosgiel respondents made it plain, in a town of just over two thousand people, everyone knew everyone. It was more an annoyance and an embarrassment to be cautioned officially by a warden for the accident or oversight of having a light showing. The solid citizens of Mosgiel obviously were not trying to breach regulations, though a few may have been blase, so one can imagine having their mistakes pointed out to them in no uncertain terms would, for most, not have been the most pleasant experience. Then again, there are always some people who do not like to be told what to do.

The attitude of the warden, however, also played a part in how dented one's pride got and, thus, how they felt. There were complaints about wardens from around the country and in Britain. In November 1939, 15% of the British 'Mass Observation' panel found wardens officious or impolite,<sup>42</sup> while Nan Taylor generalised that around New Zealand, some were understanding, some officious.<sup>43</sup> Within any cross section of the community this is probably true and wardens were no exception. Jim Rowe, a member of the Home Guard, recalled that block wardens looked after different

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Harrisson & Madge, pp.204-5.

<sup>41</sup> Wardens Handbook, p.7.

<sup>42</sup> Harrisson & Madge, p.209.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, p.545.

segments of the town. In his experience he found their blackout patrols annoying. "You really had to do it properly. There was a lot of sort of petty officialdom . . . you know how you give a bloke a uniform and a bit of authority and he thinks he's bloody Hitler . . . that sort of thing." Though they were doing their duty, it depended on their approach. Other respondents had different reactions according to the attitude of the warden. One, in her words, was 'told off' by a warden for having a light showing, which like Bill Borrow's experience clearly had some influence on her. Another recalled, in an altogether more friendly outlook, that a warden would knock on your door to tell you that you had a light showing. The difference in impact between informing and berating on the individuals made one experience unpleasant and the other simply matter of fact.

There was always the potential impact of official action in the form of prosecutions for breaching the lighting restrictions after the Japanese threat became apparent, but locally this did not amount to anything. By February 1942, as mentioned above, the authorities around the country clamped down. Fourteen Aucklanders were prosecuted and given fines ranging from £2 to £6 at the end of January, while the first prison sentence was given to a repeat offender on 6 February.<sup>44</sup> The first local prosecution followed that month in Dunedin, along with a warning from the City Police Court Magistrate of future heavy penalties if the restrictions were not obeyed.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the other larger centres, no Mosgiel residents were prosecuted in the Mosgiel District Court during the war for offences against the lighting restrictions. One local man, R. J. Pearson, was charged by police in March 1942 for displaying a light from a motor car during a blackout trial, but the case can not have been a good one, for the magistrate dismissed it without prejudice.<sup>46</sup> It appears, on the whole, that, whatever their demeanour, Mosgiel wardens were lenient when it came to handing out official punishments. Only in November 1942, a few weeks before the blackout was lifted, did they decide to stop giving warnings to residents who failed to comply with the regulations.<sup>47</sup> Thus, although the thought may have been in the minds of some, they never really had reason to fear the local wardens for the power they wielded, as they may have if, perhaps, a string of local residents had been prosecuted. In general terms, then, the patrolling and enforcement of the regulations in Mosgiel did not really have any tremendous impact on the inhabitants in the overall experience of the blackout. No matter if the warden or police were petty or picky, it was just one of those things, for it was known and expected that if a light was showing the officials would do their duty and advise the dweller. It may have been unnerving to a woman alone, in a city or isolated farmlet, but in reality only a minor irritative factor in this close community.

Throughout the first half of 1942 bureaucratic measures in the form of regulations and restrictions concerning the blackout were very prevalent. Daylight saving, as an example, continued throughout the winter months to help.<sup>48</sup> There were official and precise blind drawing times, published in the papers, which varied each week as the seasons changed. Naturally, as winter approached and the days became shorter the time at which lighting restrictions applied became earlier in the evening and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 Feb. 1942, p.6. The man, who was charged with "allowing light to show from the building occupied by him", was charged 15/- and 10/- court costs.

<sup>46</sup> Mosgiel Magistrate Court Criminal Record Book No. 5., p.76.

<sup>47</sup> EPS File: letter, 10 Nov. 1942, TC to TC(Dn).

<sup>48</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 Mar. 1942, p.4.

later the next morning.<sup>49</sup> The protective measures continued with the introduction of full blackout trials for all coastal communities. These lasted about an hour and were designed not to eliminate sky glow but as preparation to prevent enemy aircraft from bombing objectives there. Following unannounced siren blasts, any sign of illumination from inside houses had to be effaced, trains and trams remained stationary without lights and all street lights were extinguished. Even matches were not allowed to be struck outside until the all-clear sounded.<sup>50</sup> Aircraft from RNZAF Taieri simulated the enemy and reported on the effectiveness of the trials held over the whole Dunedin Metropolitan EPS area in January, March and November 1942 and March 1943. The first efforts were described as ‘a failure of the first magnitude’ in all areas, except Port Chalmers, because of lights left on betraying the city and several practical jokers even flashed torches at the aircraft.<sup>51</sup> Improvements were gradually made and in March 1943, Mosgiel was singled out by the RNZAF pilot for being ‘particularly well blacked out’.<sup>52</sup> So, people became used to it, though they were forced to do it less than a dozen hours in total. Overall it proved just another minor bureaucratic inconvenience which they took in their stride.

Most reacted this way because, despite the rules and rigmarole, its impact was limited. It did not appear to affect the social habits or lifestyle of Mosgiel residents much and certainly not to the extent that it did in Britain and, to a lesser extent, Auckland. The blackout in Britain had wide ranging effects on citizens, even before the bombing raids began. In November 1939 the greatest resentment in Britain about the war, according to the ‘Mass Observation’ project, focussed on the blackout as the one aspect above all others. It rated well above grumbles about transport problems, petrol shortages, price rises and even evacuation, among both men and women because of the tremendous social impact resulting from its imposition.<sup>53</sup> Being vulnerably within range of German aircraft meant a total blackout, not simply sky glow measures, in Britain. Combined with gloomy winter weather, it meant the streets of cities were pitch black. The lack of lighting in public places made it very hard to identify people, intimidating many, for whom the footpath was akin to an obstacle course and each set of footsteps encountered, a potential enemy. Many women in cities were afraid to go out alone because of bag snatching, molestation and stalking incidents,<sup>54</sup> while for everyone pedestrian traffic accidents constituted a very real hazard. Because of the inconvenience some simply stayed home at night. Many did eventually adapt, but Harrison and Madge suggest some, especially those used to cosmopolitan life, became socially isolated. These people read books, played cards, listened to the wireless or went to bed early instead of going to shows, the pictures, visiting friends or going for walks.<sup>55</sup> Harrison and Madge conclude with the effective generalisation that, to men the blackout was mainly boring, to women it was frightening. The press echoed these

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<sup>49</sup> DCC E 15/13: letters 20 Mar., 12 June, 1 Sept., 2 Dec., 1942, Dunedin Lighting Controller to *ODT* and *Star*. Schedules of lighting restrictions to be published. The longest time period of restrictions was week commencing 21 June; from 5.14 pm to 8.06 am. The shortest was scheduled for the week commencing 27 December; from 9.01 pm to 4.21 am.

<sup>50</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 26 Nov. 1942, p.4.

<sup>51</sup> *Evening Star*, 22 Jan. 1942, p.6.

<sup>52</sup> DCC Town Clerks File 33: EPS R/2; letter, 24 Mar. 1943, Wing Cdr. S. Dilkison, C.O. RNZAF Station Taieri, to His Worship the Mayor (Dn).

<sup>53</sup> Harrison & Madge, pp. 184-5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.216.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 193-4, 216-17. They go so far as to suggest that the whole structure of British leisure was changed.

thoughts in Auckland. The *Auckland Star*, in late 1942, pronounced that the lighting restrictions were “an inconvenience to everyone who stays at home . . . [and] a danger to everyone who goes abroad at night”. It had only “unhappy memories of darkened streets, of increased traffic dangers and of better cover by night for the lawless”, when they were lifted.<sup>56</sup> Nancy Taylor discovered that many Auckland women were unwilling to go out alone at night even though bag snatching and assaults actually proved isolated. Some women’s organisations and churches changed meetings from evenings to afternoons, because they did not feel safe to go out at night.<sup>57</sup> Even in Dunedin at the introduction of restrictions, a City Councillor admitted, “There was a grave fear in the approaching winter months that the blackout would cause an increase of such evils as accidents and molestation of women”.<sup>58</sup> In practice, however, many of the fears of the blackout in New Zealand proved to be less substantial than originally thought, more so in smaller towns like Mosgiel.

To begin with, an interesting point worth noting is that things in Mosgiel were lit much lower than today. Most rooms had only one light bulb of about 60 or 75 watts compared with our standard 100 watt bulb. In some cases rooms had no lights and were lit by candle or lamp. Street lights were also weaker, their much smaller round bulbs hardly comparable to the standard large fluorescent type of today. Jim Manley recalled that there were also only three street lights per block, one on each corner and one in the middle, instead of the four lighting each block in the town now. Residents were also used to the dark in the early hours of the morning because the street lights were normally turned off between about 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. to save power.<sup>59</sup> People during the War were more familiar with weakened lighting and the darkness, than perhaps they are today, meaning less adjustment was needed to adapt to life in the blackout. It also initially meant less adjustment was necessary compared with larger city dwellers, like Auckland or Dunedin, who were used to brighter and more extensive public lighting around streets and from shop windows. Country villagers in Britain found the same true in comparison with their cities.

It was also the cities where the social impact of the blackout was more prevalent. In Mosgiel and smaller towns around the country, life continued with regular routines conceding little to the blackout. While Londoners and many Aucklanders worried about the potential dangers and inconvenience of the blackout; of molestations, assaults, traffic accidents and dirtied streets, the darkness held few fears for local residents. Being a small and close knit community took away much which intimidated individual city dwellers. In Mosgiel there were few cars on the road at night and in a small quiet town it was easier to see and hear traffic approaching during the dark. There is only one recorded conviction during the war for a traffic accident involving injury in Mosgiel and that occurred in 1940, before the restrictions. The number of local convictions for riding bikes without a light (41) also suggests that the streets were very safe from traffic numbers for so many to risk this.<sup>60</sup> Thus, residents had little to worry about in that respect. Other fearful aspects of the dark were more than compensated for by a confidence which came from a close community spirit. As mentioned before, there were not many strangers in Mosgiel. Margaret Kenny suggested that most people knew every house in the town and who lived there. There

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, pp.548-9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pp.503-4.

<sup>58</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 April 1941, p.2. Cr. E. J. Smith.

<sup>59</sup> Interviews, Jim Manley, Bill Borrow and Colin Frew.

<sup>60</sup> Mosgiel Magistrate Court Book No. 5. p.33.



were no groups of soldiers wandering the streets on overnight leave, no Americans, no drunken groups of strangers, no street gangs or petty criminals hiding in the shadows as in northern centres and people felt safe. Margaret, then in her twenties, recalled,

[There was] no bother in those days. We would wander about at night, there was no fear in those days. There was no violence or anything as such around the streets . . . I'd go down to a friend's place at night and come home later on at night, no problems at all. I don't think anyone was frightened to go out . . . Like, you wouldn't venture out at night wandering around today, but in those days it was no problem.

All the respondents repeated these sentiments. Mavis Ewart, a young mother at the time, said it never occurred to her to be afraid when going up the street in the blackout. Eve Ebbett records similar positive responses from women in Wellington and Gisborne, proving the initial public fears in other centres were not all justified. However, while the vast majority in Mosgiel felt safe, I doubt if the same could have been said for Wellington. In a town like Mosgiel, where people went out and left their doors unlocked there seems to have been no thought about danger. Well, no real thought. Jim Rowe used to escort his sisters home from dances sometimes, but commented that nothing would have happened anyway. George Allen remembered a friend who talked non-stop when walking home one night from a social. But, as he left George at his gate and was faced with walking home in the dark he became very quiet, then took off at top speed and ran all the way home. "Goodness knows why", George said, "because there was nothing to be frightened of in those days". This appears to be true, for very few anti-social crimes were committed. During the years 1939-1945 only about half a dozen convictions for drunkenness in a public place, two for fighting in a public place and two for assaults on women occurred. The assaults can hardly have been serious, for the defendants were charged £3 and £5 respectively, the same amount others had been charged for offences such as driving without a heavy traffic license, using indecent language in a public place, or drinking on licensed premises after hours.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the nervousness was more a case of some being afraid of the dark itself. Vera Crozier, a young woman at the time was one who suffered from this primal fear.

I remember when I used to do a night duty at the Post Office on a Sunday in the telephone exchange. I used to be quite scared biking. I didn't like the loneliness, biking along our road here [Gladstone Rd.] because all the houses in Gladstone Rd. were all the way off the road, and low lights, and in the dark in the winter time. I just didn't like it, not that anything happened and we didn't have a lot of these strange things happening nowadays. . . So I used to get a taxi sometimes; Baldy McLean. The bike was put on the back, he picked me up at the Post Office and I came home.

Nonetheless, most locals felt completely at ease in the blackout.

The impact of its gloom proved negligible on social lifestyles in Mosgiel, unlike Britain. In the first place, because people felt safe, it did not prevent venturing out visiting friends, going for a walk, or attending dances. Ray Williams recalled quite a number of weekend dances. The only difference was that regulations meant blinds were drawn and curtains pulled across the doors to prevent light escaping. Secondly, there was little impact on social activities because there were very few things to do. Unlike the cities, staying in at night was generally the norm for residents, blackout or not. Younger people may have gone to dances or socials in the weekend, but couples

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 74, 79.

tended to stay home more than now, especially during the week, for there was little in the way of entertainment in the town. That great social mecca, the pub, closed at 6 p.m., so that apart from the two billiard halls, a couple of Chinese fruit shops which stayed open late, or the pictures, there was nothing except a dance now and then. People had less expectations about entertainment than now, or of those in London then. They were content staying at home at night, especially after a long day's work, to read or listen to the wireless, even in the weekends, so that the imposition of lighting restrictions did not make the same impression on them as it did on socialites in Britain, Auckland or Wellington.

One social activity, however, which many residents attended regularly, the church, was slightly affected as Mosgiel set a precedent for Dunedin.<sup>62</sup> At the request of Mayor Hartstonge, the Mosgiel and North Taieri Presbyterian Churches among others, curtailed evening services and replaced them with an afternoon alternative from March until September 1942.<sup>63</sup> This prevented the need to comply with regulations on church windows during the dark of the autumn and winter months, rather than for any worries about the protection of church members. This represented another small dent in pre-war routine, but nothing which would have been given more than a second thought for the war effort.

Commercial activities were, like social activities, hardly affected by the blackout, although some nuisances did occur. Restrictions curtailed some shop lighting displays and neon lights during the hours of darkness. A. F. Cheyne & Co., drapers, in Gordon Rd., for one, disconnected their neon sign at the request of the Dunedin Lighting Controller.<sup>64</sup> It seems, though, that no other businesses in the town had them, so it hardly had an effect.<sup>65</sup> Restrictions also meant many business premises required screening and shutters, more so those which continued to work into the night. The extensive glass windows and sky lights in the Mosgiel Woollen Mill, like other factories in Dunedin, received special attention from the lighting controller.<sup>66</sup> Fay Nicolson worked there and recalled,

. . . All the big windows along the mill, they were all painted a camouflage sort of colour, which didn't make it any easier to see with the kinds of lights we had. We could see through it alright in daytime, but it got dark quicker than it normally would because of the glass being all painted.

Nancy Taylor also found that this painting of awkward glass windows instead of screening them was not unusual.<sup>67</sup> Visibility and ventilation (from closed windows), thus, became lessened slightly, but the blackout restrictions did not unduly change the pattern of work at the mill during that period. Workers coped with the conditions and that was that. Nor did the blackout affect Frew's bakery, another Mosgiel business carrying on much of its commercial production in the hours of darkness. Colin Frew remembered having shutters on the doors, but commented that it didn't make any difference.

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<sup>62</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 Mar. 1942, p.4.

<sup>63</sup> Mosgiel Presbyterian Church Deacons Court Minute Book, 4 Feb., 19 Aug., 1942.

<sup>64</sup> DCC E 15/13: letters, 23 April 1941, Manager, Claude Neon Lights of New Zealand Ltd. to 'Mosgiel Lighting Controller', 8 May 1941, Dn Lighting Controller to Mgr., Claude Neon, Auckland.

<sup>65</sup> Interview, Jim Manley.

<sup>66</sup> DCC E 15/13: letter, 12 Jan. 1942, N. R. McIsaac (Chief Warden) to City Elec. Engineer (Dn).

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, p.545.

Retailing also seems not to have been unduly affected by blackout restrictions. Late night shopping, though dismissed in Auckland and Wellington in 1942, appears to have continued in Dunedin and Mosgiel on the traditional Friday night.<sup>68</sup> The downturn in trade due to people's unwillingness to venture out after dark, as noted by Taylor in northern centres, seems not to be an issue because residents felt safe and there was not usually much open, as mentioned before. Thus, as with many other things, the problems experienced in larger northern towns and cities were not raised in Mosgiel. In general then, the impact of lighting restrictions, which in theory may have had quite an impact on social and commercial activities, instead simply proved more of a nuisance than anything.

With the gradual change in the war situation and the beginning of the American offensive action at Guadalcanal in August 1942, the blackout regulations were slowly eased. Initially, relaxation applied only to inland areas, with the coastal belts remaining the same, more or less.<sup>69</sup> This stayed the only concession until December brought a general lifting of most restrictions, except in Auckland and Wellington.<sup>70</sup> However, the Dunedin City Council remained circumspect in the face of reports that street lighting cowl covers were being removed in Christchurch, for there was a possibility of having to refit them at short notice if the situation in the Pacific changed; a very expensive task.<sup>71</sup> The Mosgiel EPS Executive echoed this attitude the next month, in the New Year, when it called for more blackout trials to be held.<sup>72</sup> Eventually, though, in mid February the DCC, from whom the MBC took its lead, voted to restore normal lighting (after Auckland had done the same) and work commenced at the end of the month to remove street light shades. Even after that the Dunedin authorities, grimly bureaucratic to the end, held the blackout trial planned for 23 March 1943. Then, finally, the nuisance of the blackout, which Mosgiel had felt for twenty-one months, had ended.

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Shelters were the second aspect of the ARP plan. If the blackout was a preventative measure, stopping raiders from finding their target, then air raid shelters were a reactive measure, to protect civilians from sustaining casualties in the event of a raid. The development of shelters, however, meant a tremendous expense for something which might not even be used. In light of this after the Komet incident, the government held back from throwing large amounts of labour and money wholesale into the project. Throughout 1941, the military and EPS authorities firmly believed that any attack would be a hit and run air raid or short naval bombardment, which did not justify purpose built shelters. They insisted that makeshift, relatively effective shelters could be fashioned in tunnels, basements and ground floor rooms if needed. The government generally accepted these decisions and maintained this policy throughout the growing tensions of 1941 against, particularly in Auckland, increasingly anxious public concern.<sup>73</sup> The public, having seen many newsreels, were used to Londoners sheltering from the Blitz and wished to follow their lead. In reality, however, it has

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<sup>68</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 Mar. 1942, p.4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 27 Aug. 1942, p.4.

<sup>70</sup> DCC E 15/13: EPS Circular No. 139, 23 Dec 1942, The Lighting Restrictions Orders 1942, Amendment No. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 Dec. 1942, p.4.

<sup>72</sup> EPSLEC minutes, 26 Jan 1943.

<sup>73</sup> Taylor, pp.507-8.

been found that three quarters of Londoners endured the bombing with no air raid shelter except the space under the stairs.<sup>74</sup> Deep shelters were discovered to have a demoralising effect, and by December 1940, only five percent of London's population used public shelters, most preferring dispersal and trusting their luck.<sup>75</sup> This was little comfort to the average New Zealander who had not yet experienced air raids and who probably felt that it was better to be safe, and feel safe, than sorry. By October 1941 the authorities had wilted slightly and an initial round of paper preparations were being considered, but no building scheme was prepared at that stage. The economic strain of a total war effort meant only an emergency situation warranted the beginning of shelter building. Thus, little had been achieved by the time Admiral Yamamoto turned his task force towards Pearl Harbour.

A flurry of activity followed news of the attack as efforts were made to close up the gap in defences. A central technical body guided various local authorities in their preparation of temporary shelter and dispersal plans. Auckland, the closest northern target to the trouble, flew into community slit trench digging, achieving 10,000 feet of trenches by Christmas Eve, as well as countless ones which appeared in individual suburban sections.<sup>76</sup> Wellington postponed all weekend sports events to get the community out digging, although it had the geographic advantage of hills, gullies and tunnels to provide cover.<sup>77</sup> Trenches were begun in the Octagon on 15 December, although Dunedin did not embark upon extensive digging, for as Nan Taylor noted, "it rejoiced in the natural protection of gullies and stands of trees."<sup>78</sup> Mosgiel, situated on a plain however, did not possess these natural advantages but the Dunedin City Engineer (S. G. Scoular) reassured those in this position that "other plans for the flat . . . will be put into effect as soon as possible."<sup>79</sup> Also on 15 December, the Mosgiel Borough Council discussed action to be taken for the safety of its residents. Mr Hartstonge stated that the erection of public shelters should be undertaken at once and asked residents in the back streets to provide their own trenches, about 3ft. 6 wide and 5 ft. deep, on their properties.<sup>80</sup> Engineers favoured slit or relatively wide shallow trenches as a protection in case of an air raid and to reinforce this Mr Scoular referred in the *Otago Daily Times* to "an incident which occurred in Greece where the New Zealand soldiers had simply lain down in the furrows of a ploughed field and had had very few casualties".<sup>81</sup>

Whether these impassioned pleas or inspiring stories had much effect on Mosgiel residents is debatable. It appears few felt it necessary to heed the mayor's advice. Only three of the author's respondents could recall the existence of public trenches, and only two of having a trench on their property. Most dismissed these ideas, although a few thought that public air raid trenches may have been a possibility, but couldn't remember them. In reference to air raid trenches, Colin Frew said,

No, not here in Mosgiel. We never had anything like that at work and we didn't have any at home. There may have been those who had an underground room or something . . . I can't even remember

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<sup>74</sup> Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor, p.509.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.511.

<sup>77</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 Dec. 1941, p.4.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, p.514.

<sup>79</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 Dec. 1941, p.4.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 16 Dec. 1941, p.6.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 13 Dec. 1941, p.8.



A home made air raid shelter. In the wake of Pearl Harbour the authorities suggested that every household should have one. In Mosgiel, far removed from the threat of the Japanese, it seems that most local residents did not bother.

Photo: King, p.247.

that the Borough Council had any air raid schemes. . . . I can't even remember any delegated place of safety even if we did have an air raid.

It is understandable that events of over fifty years ago, which may have been more important to some more than others, can become clouded. It is also apparent that despite the official directives it was a matter of personal preference. Some residents did dig trenches while others for whatever reasons, did not. In February 1942, the Mayor of Dunedin, A. H. Allen, issued an angry statement stressing that "the people of Dunedin do not appear to realise the serious position that at present exists and are not taking the necessary steps for their own protection in their homes in the event of enemy action".<sup>82</sup> So it seems that bureaucratic directives did not impress that many to take action. A Hastings woman interviewed by Eve Ebbett remembered people visiting to check on how her family's trench was progressing,<sup>83</sup> but in light of the fact that a number of Mosgiel residents did not have them - or even knew others who did - it seems official interest there was perhaps not as strong. Private trenches were not mandatory by law, only strongly suggested.

Jim Manley's family, in Gordon Road, did follow the advice of the authorities to provide a trench.

We dug, well we had trenches. Everybody had to build a trench in their backyard and the old man dug one down the back. It was a big trench, he was an expert at digging . . . . It was a great big deep hole and I think it was supposed to have iron or something on top; dig the hole then put the iron over the top and put soil on top of that, so that if there was an air raid, you'd go down to the trench and be out of the blast area . . . .

Mavis Ewart had one in her garden. Some people had well constructed ones, perhaps a legacy of someone's experience in Gallipoli, or France, in 1914-18. One woman questioned by Eve Ebbett recalled her father built a trench in her backyard with a roof and protective sandbags which was stocked with provisions. Another in Hamilton remembers her brothers and father covering their trench with corrugated iron and covering it with tree branches.<sup>84</sup> The trench dug by Jim's step father, however, was simply that, just a trench in the ground about 15 feet long and 6 feet deep, open to the elements and it stayed like that. No work to tidy it up occurred. Perhaps after the initial impact of the mayoral announcement wore off it did not seem necessary to complete it, or more probably he could not be bothered.

The first, obviously hurried, efforts of the council to provide public air raid shelter in Anzac Park for those in the central business area were just as rudimentary. What was basically a drainage ditch about 150 feet long and 3 feet deep was dug on the edge of the section beside a hedge. Of course after a few days of rain, especially in winter time, the open hole became filled with water and mud. This caused Jim Manley to remember thinking, as he walked past it on his way to school, that he would have had to have been pretty desperate if there was a raid on to jump in there. It may have provided a sense of comfort to some to know that some type of precautions had been made. On the other hand, the same residents would probably have been apprehensive if that was the best protection that the town could offer in the face of an air attack.

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<sup>82</sup> *Evening Star*, 24 Feb. 1942, p.4.

<sup>83</sup> Ebbett, p.46.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.45.

By February 1942, with news of the fall of Singapore and acceptance of the Pacific war, the MBC, perhaps feeling the pressure of responsibility, proposed an extensive programme of digging. They deepened the existing trench in Anzac Park, fitting duckboards at the bottom of it, although a shortage of council labour meant the job took longer than hoped.<sup>85</sup> Other public trenches were constructed along the main Gordon Road retail area in April, on the Jubilee Reserve (corner of Gordon and Factory Roads) and a ditch opposite the railway station. Other public trenches were constructed on the Jubilee Reserve (corner of Gordon and Factory Roads) and a ditch opposite the railway station was dug in April. Vacant sections on Gordon Road offered by Mr D. Wallace (opposite the Town Hall) and Mr W. Knott (opposite his Railway Hotel) for the same purpose were also accepted by the council, and trenches constructed there.<sup>86</sup> Shelter trenches, then, appear to have been quite well spread around making it surprising that more people could not remember them. One might suggest that a hole in the ground is relatively inconspicuous and unless it was specifically pointed out to someone as 'an air raid trench' it might go unnoticed, or at least be so trivial as to be too difficult to recall over fifty years later. Another explanation is that they were mistaken for part of the never ending council digging which occurs in each local borough throughout the country every year. Perhaps it is as simple as the fact that some did not walk through the park, beside the railway, or on the vacant sections, which incidentally were fenced off.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, it surprised the author how few people could recall trenches and how little impact they appear to have had.

One might also think with so many private and public ditches around, there could have been some danger. On 7 May 1942 the *Otago Daily Times* reported the story of a sixteen year old Auckland boy who fell into a slit trench on dark night, driving a thick splinter from a heavy wooden upright into the side of his head. It pinned him there for ten minutes until railwaymen heard his cries for help and rescued him. Although this sounded gruesome his condition was not serious. The same sort of situation occurred on Jim Manley's property when an old man fell into their trench early one evening. Circumstances were slightly different, however, for he was very drunk! As Jim recalls, he had obviously been shunted out of the pub after 6 o'clock and stumbled towards home in the dark of the blackout, taking a short cut through the vacant section at the back of their family property on Gordon Road. The unfortunate old fellow fell straight into the deep muddy hole that was their air raid trench and had to yell for help until some of Jim's family heard and hauled him out. As with most things which occurred in Mosgiel it was hardly serious, but one wonders how often this type of incident happened. It certainly stuck in the mind of Jim's family and they always kept an eye on the smaller children to make sure the same thing did not occur.

As time passed, with the completion of the stop-gap shelter trenches, the authorities shifted emphasis to providing better purpose-built air raid shelters. New regulations required the owners of business premises where more than 30 people worked to provide shelter for them, because of the thousands of people congregated in the business districts of the major towns and cities. This included Mosgiel, part of the Dunedin Metropolitan EPS district, and at the beginning of 1942 the Borough Council,

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<sup>85</sup> MBC Minutes 23 Feb. 1942.

<sup>86</sup> MBC Subject Files: Air Raid Shelter File: letter 5 Mar. 1942, TC to City Eng. ; MBC Minutes 2 Mar. 1942, 6 Dec. 1943.

<sup>87</sup> MBC Minutes 2 Mar. 1942; Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 17 Mar. 1942, TC to Mr W. Knott.

under instructions from the DCC, served notices to the Mosgiel Woollen Mill and Holy Cross College requiring the provision of air raid shelters on their premises.<sup>88</sup> In the case of the Mill, it concerned the City Engineer that “the surrounding fields are absolutely flat and featureless. The mill buildings have inadequate exits and the only normal exit is on Factory Road, which is near the Aerodrome and upon which a congestion of the public is not desirable.”<sup>89</sup> Auckland and Wellington reached solutions with basement shelters and tunnels evacuated in hillsides.<sup>90</sup> Dunedin initially relied on the Caversham tunnel, the Town Belt and some basement shelters, but developed a new idea for large concrete pipes (five and six feet in diameter) set in a prepared bed with concrete walls at either end to stop the blast. These shelters, with seating inside them, were praised by the Minister of Civil Defence, W. A. Bodkin, and by September 1942 more than 3000 feet of pipes were being installed around the city.<sup>91</sup> It was eventually intended to use these pipes at the Mill and Holy Cross. Under the regulations the owner of the shelter paid 25 per cent, the local council 25 per cent and the government took up the rest.<sup>92</sup> Tenders for the mill shelters were received from well-known local builders A. J. Souter (£2400), Robert Muirhead and Son Ltd. (£2900) and R. Mitchell and Sons Ltd. (£2960).<sup>93</sup> Plans were drafted and approved, yet the potential financial windfall to one of these companies was nil because the building never went ahead. These shelters had no impact on the town. It is a frustrating case study which emphasises the sluggish workings of bureaucracy, even in wartime, but is too detailed to be mentioned except in passing here. Following delays over confusion as to Mosgiel’s entitlement to the government subsidy,<sup>94</sup> the original flat concrete slab hut designs were scrapped due to a critical shortage of concrete and cement. The replacement pipe shelters were in such demand that none were available until October 1942. By December, the Japanese threat had greatly eased but Mill executives still desired to proceed with the scheme.<sup>95</sup> Eventually, as 1943 began with the whole programme under review, the National Service Department instructed that those shelters which had not already begun construction should not go ahead.<sup>96</sup> Many months of discussions, planning and agreements, thwarted by shortages and indecision lead to nothing being achieved. This has echos of the companion Emergency Precautions Scheme. Interestingly, one legacy did remain. Ron Kirk notes that in March 1942, in accordance with government regulations, the council levied a special rate of 2½ pence in the pound on the unimproved value of all rateable property in the Borough to provide some share of the cost of erecting the shelters.<sup>97</sup> When it became apparent into the new year that they still had not been constructed, the Council fielded

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<sup>88</sup> Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 28 Apr. 1942, TC to Min. National Service.

<sup>89</sup> DCC CE 43: EPS File; letter, 9 Feb. 1942, City Eng. to A. J. Baker, National Service Dept., Wellington.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, pp. 516-22.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 524-5; Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 15 June 1942, City Eng. to TC. “During an actual trial, rifle and machine gun fire with ordinary and armour piercing bullets at a range of 130 yards scored the exterior but caused no marks to the interior of the pipes. Also a Boyes anti-tank gun, using .55 calibre armour piercing full charge bullets, was fired from all angles with the same result.”

<sup>92</sup> Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 11 Feb. 1942, TC to Rector of Holy Cross College.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, letter, 18 Mar. 1942, Millar and White Architects to TC.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, letter, 2 June 1942, TC to District Eng.; 5 June District Eng. to TC.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Mosgiel Woollen Mills Factory Company Ltd., 1 Dec. 1942.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 12 Jan. 1943.

<sup>97</sup> Kirk, p.145.



some protests from locals over the continued levy,<sup>98</sup> but it appears that the funds were appropriated for some other purpose. Ratepayers, in effect, were taxed for something which, aside from some calculations and plans, did not exist. Thus, Dunedin had its pipe shelters for people to see; to provoke discussion, to provide both a sense of comfort and apprehension; for children to marvel at, for amorous couples to use late at night, for people to photograph and ministers to praise. The impact of the shelters on Mosgiel was simply a mountain of paperwork.

Getting rid of the air raid trenches proved slightly harder, however, for they were a physical reality. In August 1943, Mayor Allen stated that all open slit trenches could be filled in where they constituted a nuisance or required continued maintenance. The Octagon ones soon became a memory,<sup>99</sup> and Taylor writes that by October shelters were officially no longer necessary, but in Mosgiel caution prevailed. It is hard to say whether fear of the Japanese, or fear of the cost involved, explained the reluctance to fill in the trenches. Something as simple as a shortage of labour might explain the lag. However, it took until December 1943 before the trenches in the Jubilee Reserve, Mosgiel (Anzac) Park and Knott's section closed their ugly scars.

Despite the fact that the shelters were not built and the trenches were not needed, a feeling prevailed early in 1942, in the minds of the authorities at least, of Mosgiel's vulnerability to possible air attack. While the individual citizen did not give this notion much thought, the council and EPS organisation, through their positions of power, felt responsible for the town as a whole. The direction of much anxiety focussed on the district high school and the North Taieri school with their congregations of children. The Otago Education Board held to the quick dispersal of school children, rather than clogging school grounds with trenches. They hoped the parents were not tempted to leave shelter to collect them in an alarm.<sup>100</sup> Those schools deemed to be vulnerable were to be closed as soon as the authorities advised the possibility of daylight raids without warning.<sup>101</sup> The council and school committee were, thus, indignant when they found Mosgiel classed a non-vulnerable area. They reasoned that the half mile proximity of the RNZAF Station made this classification a nonsense. The problem had been foreseen by the council as early as February 1939 when they communicated their anxiety to the Minister of Defence.<sup>102</sup> Though someone reading this with hindsight might think this presumptuous as Mosgiel had nothing to worry about, the local authority did have a point. The only military aerodrome in the lower South Island, RNZAF Taieri had the potential to host major offensive military aircraft, like a Hudson or a Blenheim. As such it would seem to have been a priority target for enemy raiders intent on striking at Dunedin. The Japanese were at the peak of their power and later aircraft launched from submarines flew over Auckland and Wellington, so the potential, however unlikely, was there. The Council, thus, raised a storm of protest to the Dunedin and Wellington EPS authorities, and to the Director of Education himself<sup>103</sup> until the eventual April 1942 reclassification of the schools as being in a vulnerable area.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>98</sup> MBC Minutes, 1 Mar. 1943.

<sup>99</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 Aug. 1943, p.4.

<sup>100</sup> *Evening Star*, 18 Feb. 1942, p.7.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 15 Apr. 1942, p.4.

<sup>102</sup> War File: letter, 9 Feb. 1939, TC to Min. Defence.

<sup>103</sup> EPS File: copy of telegram dated 1 April 1942, Mayor to Director of Education.

“ MOSGIEL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADVISES THIS SCHOOL CLASSED NON VULNERABLE (STOP) AS MOSGIEL SCHOOL ABOUT HALF MILE FROM AIR STATION I

Preparations were also made in the town and on the Taieri for a billeting scheme for those who may have been made homeless in the eventuality of an air raid. Volunteers were called for at various Mosgiel church services in February 1942<sup>105</sup> and residents in Taieri County were canvassed for their assistance.<sup>106</sup> The author can find no evidence that these preparations progressed any further than this however. The local government and EPS authorities, thus, did genuinely see themselves as a potential target, although there may have been a touch of self aggrandisement about the importance of the organisation. The mothering approach of the local bureaucracy in trying to protect the town kept with its other efforts in the EPS. It was better to be making preparations and organising at least on paper than not at all. The impact of this behind the scenes paperwork, meetings and red tape on the average resident of Mosgiel, however, was negligible because they were never needed.

Thus, the air raid precautions programme, unlike the very underrated EPS of the previous chapter, did have some impact on the people of Mosgiel. The compulsory blackout precautions meant that all members of the community were affected and this is reflected in the number who can recall living in it. Because it covered a wide area, however, the impact of the blackout did not cause as much strain as in Britain or larger northern New Zealand centres. Indeed, New Zealand got out of the ARP very lightly compared with front line Britain. Despite the rules and regulations to obey, or their enforcement by the wardens, residents soon adapted to them. They also quickly became used to the darkness which was such a bugbear to larger cities and, being in a safe close-knit community, it did not unduly affect normal social or commercial routines. The lighting restrictions turned out to be more of a nuisance or an annoyance than any lifestyle changing burden. From the response of interviewees, it appears that air raid trenches were even much less than a nuisance. It is surprising that so few could remember them, but perhaps fitting, for they were fairly innocuous and never needed. Once dug they became forgotten as another oddity of the situation the country found itself in. Apart from the small comic value of the old man falling in, the impact of the government direction to dig trenches was, in general not important at all, apart, perhaps from giving some visual focus to war effort. Of much greater concern to the town were the economic effects of this total war, which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

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CONSIDER THIS SCHOOL DEFINITELY IN VULNERABLE AREA (STOP) COULD YOU PLEASE ALTER STATUS ACCORDINGLY

HARTSTONGE ”

<sup>104</sup> Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 11 Apr. 1942, District Engineer, Public Works Dept., Dn to TC.

<sup>105</sup> EPS File: letter, 29 Jan. 1942, TC to Reverends S. A. Grave and H. Haigh and Adjutant Christopher (Salvation Army).

<sup>106</sup> EPSLEC Minutes, 9 Mar. 1942.

## Chapter 5:

# Business and the Economy

In contrast to the previous chapters, where the impact of New Zealand's involvement in the War on Mosgiel has been mild to negligible, the economic effects of the six year struggle are much more prominent. While no physical war damage occurred to the country, the effect of participating at maximum effort stretched its small economy to near breaking point. Still recovering from the impact of the Depression and the 1938 overseas reserves shortage, the war came as the third crisis on the economy in a decade. The historian J.V.T. Baker called the war "a state of economic emergency",<sup>1</sup> for it placed such a tremendous burden on the country's productive capacity. Edward Walker notes that war inevitably brings an element of totalitarianism into the economic system, and so it proved domestically during the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> To meet the challenge of total war, Peter Fraser's Labour Government introduced economic controls and regulations more far reaching and comprehensive than those already prominent in its welfare interventionist policies of 1935 to 1939. Despite the planning and channelling of the economy, by 1942 New Zealand struggled in its balancing act, attempting to supply goods and produce to both its own domestic market and desperately needy Britain, as well as to supply United States forces in the Pacific. At the same time large numbers of its own labour force were serving at home and overseas in the armed forces. This meant shortages of supply for many industries, direction of much of the remaining labour force and a lot more red tape for everyone as the government realigned industrial production to provide for military needs instead of peacetime requirements. It also meant central management of prices and wages and increased taxation. This total war and its total economic war effort had negative and positive effects on the commercial operations in Mosgiel. But how much impact did it really have? We focus first on the town's main business concerns.

The Mosgiel Woollen Mill has always been the town's most prominent industry and as such some introduction is required. Local author Ron Kirk described it as "Mosgiel's oldest manufacturing concern and greatest employer of local labour",<sup>3</sup> barely touching the surface of the impact which it has had on the town. Since the establishment of the mill in 1871 by Arthur Burns and its subsequent public formation as the Mosgiel Woollen Factory Company (Ltd) two years later, it proved to be of stature amongst the nation's woollen manufacturing industry and in the economy of Otago. The company grew surely into the new century and played an increasingly important part in supplying material to government order in the Boer and First World Wars. The First World War years proved to be successful enough for the company to pay out shareholder dividends of up to 10% in 1918.<sup>4</sup> It also progressed steadily

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> E. R. Walker, *The Australian Economy in War and Reconstruction*, p.13.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk, p.192.

<sup>4</sup> P. J. Stewart, *Patterns on the Plain*, p.76.

through the hard times of the Depression. Commentators of the time described it as “sound as a bell” in 1933.<sup>5</sup> However, as Ron Kirk notes, the industry has been subject to international events, changes in technology and Government policy and assistance and controls”.<sup>6</sup> During the period of our focus, international events and Government controls proved the main influences on the Mill. The Labour party very much heightened the pattern of government influence on the company’s operations after sweeping to office in 1935. The introduction of the 40 hour week and raised wage rates, described as “drastic labour legislation” by a director in the annual report of 1936, as well as higher taxation, cut into profits and necessitated increases in production and price to attempt to make up the shortfall.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, from the directors’ attitude throughout the War it sometimes seems that the leftist government and its policies was more the enemy than the Germans or the Japanese. Because of this and other general conditions, the Mill experienced a greater overall impact than in 1914-18, or most other business concerns.

With the outbreak of armed conflict in September 1939, government attention turned once again to the manufacturing sector to supply its armed forces. Surprisingly the authorities were inadequately prepared to provide uniforms for the large influx of volunteers for the first echelon of the 2NZEF and those who followed them. The government looked to the country’s woollen mills to make up the deficit, which had obvious implications for Mosgiel and the local operation. Along with the other mills around the area - Roslyn (Dunedin), Bruce (Milton), Oamaru and Timaru - it became classed as an essential industry, having an important role in the production of material for battledress, greatcoats, underwear and blankets supplied to the services.<sup>8</sup> Between 1941 and 1944 the Mosgiel plant employed between 8.3 and 9.4 percent of the total staff of New Zealand’s woollen mills. In response to labour shortages later in the War, the government quickly directed workers to the Mill, such was the importance of its task. The operation represented a significant contribution to the war effort, and one to which the authorities paid full attention.

The first results of this attention were the sweeping government powers, introduced in the first days of the War, to control all manufacturing production in light of its necessity to waging total war. The Factory Emergency Regulations 1939 provided scope for the government to appoint controller to organise New Zealand’s factory production and ensure its supplies according to its importance to the war effort. Various controllers had the power to direct the production, output and fix the prices of manufacturing operations.<sup>9</sup> Direct measures such as these were required to give government war orders precedent over civilian needs without having to outbid civilian market demand, which it was felt might result in runaway inflation. In practice, however, these powers were rarely used. Rather it appears in Mosgiel Woollen’s case that war orders were simply given first priority over civilian commercial ones, while prices must be assumed to have been fair enough since they did not raise any comment in the Mill’s annual reports for the period. Though the potential for punitive government action existed, it remained unnecessary. Mosgiel Woollen’s company

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.78.

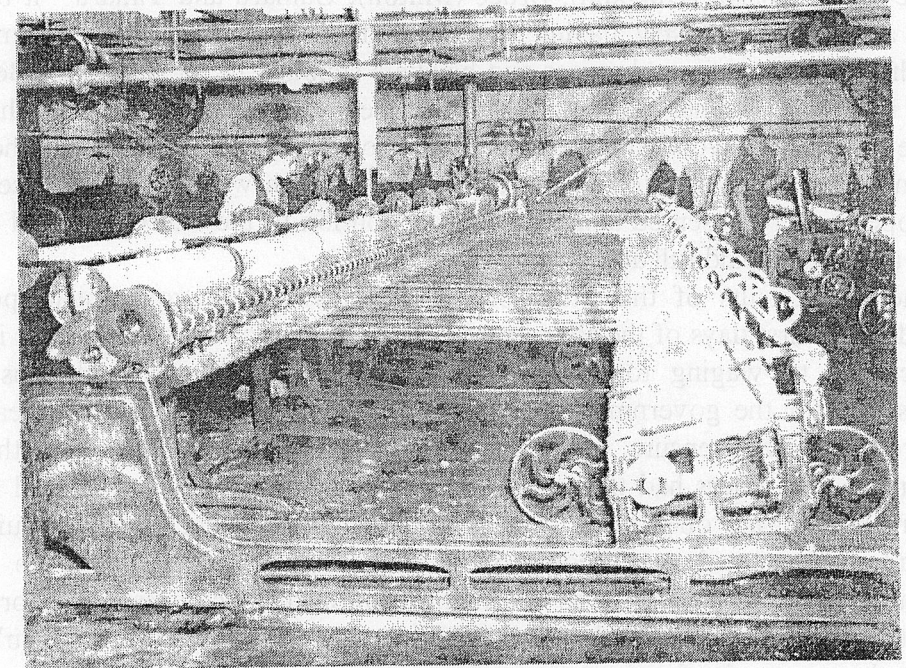
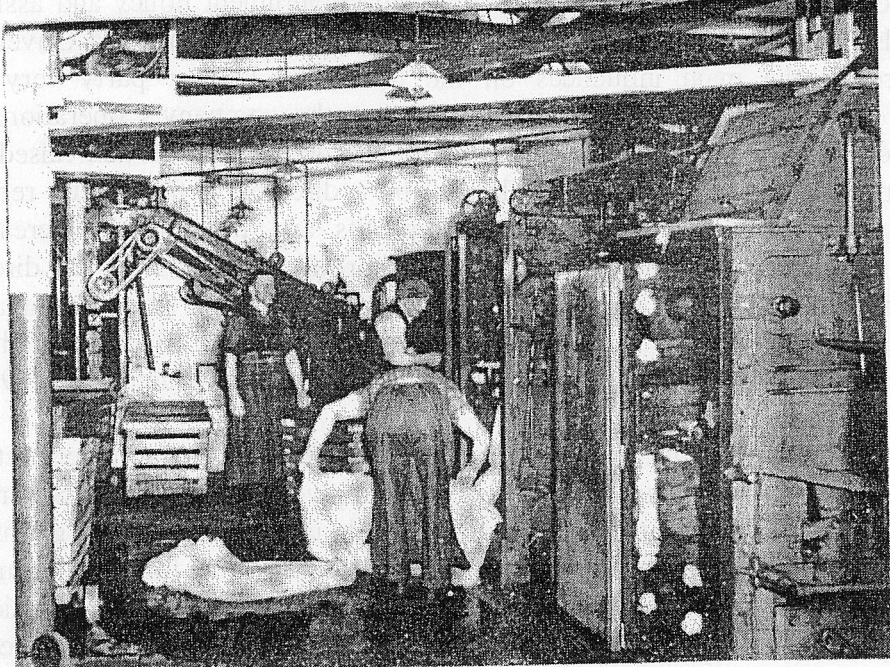
<sup>6</sup> Kirk, p.190.

<sup>7</sup> Sixty Third Annual Report and Balance Sheet (1936), Clipping reprinted from *Otago Daily Times*, 18 Nov. 1936. Hereinafter Sixty Third Ann. Report (1936).

<sup>8</sup> Baker, p.98.

<sup>9</sup> The Factory Emergency Regulations 1939 (1939/43): Reg. 2; The Supply Control Emergency Regulations 1939, Amendment 1 (1940/21): Reg. 3.

through the hard times of the Depression. Commissioner of the time described it as "second as a bolt" in 1933. However, as Ron Kirk notes, the industry has been subject to intermittent and control by the federal government since the late 1930s.



Mosgiel Woollen Mill at War. Scenes from inside the factory during the War.

Photo: Stewart, p.80-81.

bill p.78  
Kirk p.190  
The Supply Control Emergency  
Regulations 1939 Amendment (1940/21) Reg. 3  
The Factory Emergency Regulations 1939 (1939/43) Reg. 2  
The Supply Control Emergency  
Regulations 1939 Amendment (1940/21) Reg. 3  
The Supply Control Emergency  
Regulations 1939 Amendment (1940/21) Reg. 3  
The Supply Control Emergency  
Regulations 1939 Amendment (1940/21) Reg. 3

directors knew the role it would be expected to play in fulfilling war orders and accepted to do all they could. Specifically this meant that the looms and machines produced a lot more khaki at the expense of most of its civilian orders.

After the War began, then, the garments being produced not only changed but significantly increased as well. Fortunately for the company it received some new machinery shortly after, ostensibly as a part of a plan to increase output to offset the 40 hour week and higher production costs.<sup>10</sup> This took the harsh bite off the transition into the heavily increased war production which the company faced. It did feel the direct impact of war, however, when several other shipments, ordered as part of the update, were lost *en route* to enemy action. This blow stalled the original plans to some extent. Insurance covered the monetary loss, but as the conflict spread, plant replacement became impossible; existing equipment had to last out the rest of the War.<sup>11</sup> Assistant manager John Lyon and his mechanical staff had to make full use of their technical knowledge to keep the mill running smoothly.<sup>12</sup> The tax department even allowed a higher rate of depreciation on the machinery because of the extra work it was required to do.<sup>13</sup> Such concessions enabled the company to meet the Wellington's demand for greatly increased productive output; the single most overriding impact of the war on the Mosgiel operation.

Mill output quickened considerably toward the end of 1939 in the initial and uncertain stages of the war. In November, chairman J. S. Hislop informed shareholders that the board was unsure what effect the war conditions would have on business, but assumed, as in 1914-18, a brisk increase in business would occur.<sup>14</sup> They can hardly have foreseen the impact this new total war would have. It is unlikely that they could have foreseen an overwhelming war situation in which an immense 170,000 men and women (about 10% of the population) served in the forces; all requiring uniforms. As one of only 13 woollen mills in the country the pressure on it became intense.<sup>15</sup> By November 1941 Mr Hislop told shareholders that the bulk of the orders had been government contracts and that Mosgiel Woollens could claim to have done "its fair share" for the war effort.<sup>16</sup> Between 1939 and 1941 the company raised the number of units hours worked at the Mill from 577,200 to 782,700, the number of staff employed from 299 to 340 and its gross profit from £49,000 up to £97,000 respectively.<sup>17</sup> Speaking a few months later, in May 1942, the Minister of Supply, D. G. Sullivan, acknowledged the contribution of Otago's woollen mills to the war effort.

In Otago you have the greatest concentration of woollen production in the Dominion and from here comes the greatest supply of supply of material for the clothing of our fighting services. Otago Woollen Mills every week are turning out for our armed services two miles of great coating, six miles of tunic cloth, 8000 pairs of socks and over 1000 hats. In the manufacture of battledress and other

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<sup>10</sup> Sixty Sixth Ann. Report. (1939).

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, p.81. This impact was in the luck of the draw. The Timaru Worsted and Woollen Company proceeded with a similar modernisation programme of imported English machinery in the early years of the war and safely received all of it. G. McLean, *Spinning Yarns*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Sixty Eighth Ann. Report (1941).

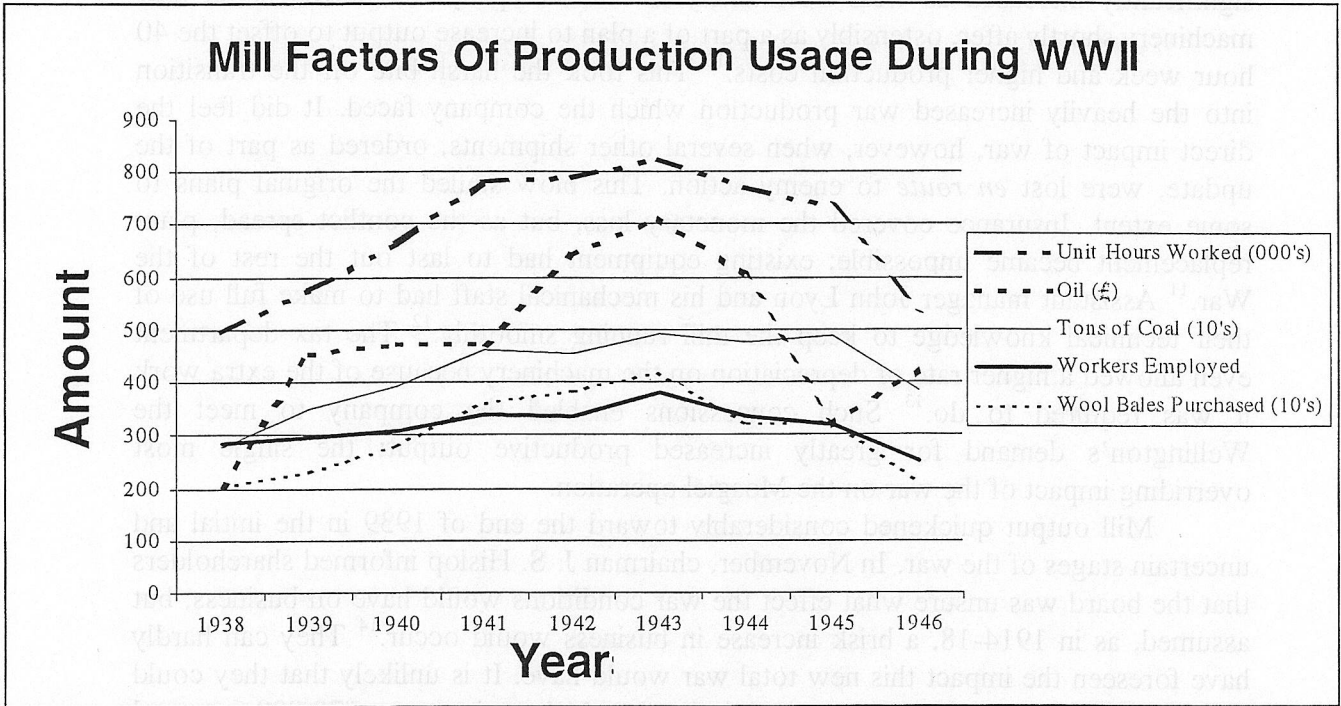
<sup>14</sup> Sixty Sixth Ann. Report (1939).

<sup>15</sup> Yearbook (1946), p.372. Between the years 1941-3.

<sup>16</sup> Sixty Eighth Ann. Report (1941).

<sup>17</sup> Mosgiel Woollen Limited Statistics Book (Hereinafter Mill Statistics Book), pp. 4, 33, 93.

Figure 1.



November 1941 Mr. Hishop told shareholders that the bulk of the orders had been government contracts and that Messrs. Woollens could claim to have done "its fair share" for the war effort.<sup>10</sup> Between 1939 and 1941 the company raised the number of units hours worked at the Mill from 277,200 to 782,700, the number of staff employed from 299 to 340 and its gross profit from £49,000 up to £97,000 respectively.<sup>11</sup> Speaking a few months later, in May 1942, the Minister of Supply, D. G. Sullivan, acknowledged the contribution of Otago's woollen mills to the war effort.

In Otago you have the greatest concentration of woollen production in the Dominion and from here comes the greatest supply of material for the clothing of our fighting services. Otago Woollen Mills every week are turning out for our armed services two miles of great-coats, six miles of rain cloth, 2000 pairs of socks and over 1000 pairs, in the manufacture of puttees and other

<sup>10</sup> Sixty Sixth Ann. Report (1939).  
<sup>11</sup> Stewart, p.81. This impact was in the face of the fact that the Turnar Woollen and Woollen Company proceeded with a similar modernisation programme of imported English machinery in the early years of the war and safety received all of it. G. McLean, *Spinning Yarn*, pp. 74-5.  
<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>13</sup> Sixty Eighth Ann. Report (1941).  
<sup>14</sup> Sixty Sixth Ann. Report (1939).  
<sup>15</sup> Yearbook (1945), p.872. Between the years 1941-3.  
<sup>16</sup> Sixty Eighth Ann. Report (1941).  
<sup>17</sup> Messrs Woollen Limited *Statistics Book* (Harcourt Mill Statistics Book), pp. 4, 34, 35.

# Mosgiel on Guard!

Mosgiel's task is to provide warmth to resist the attacks of cold and chill. Mosgiel garments are guaranteed to unfailingly serve this purpose.



# MOSGIEL

THE MOSGIEL WOOLLEN FACTORY CO. LTD. DUNEDIN

Mosgiel on Guard. The Mosgiel Woollen Mill were not shy when it came to trumpeting their involvement in essential war production. Mosgiel garments had to be kept uppermost in the public mind, because there were few available. Civilian production was drastically reduced during the War.

Source: *Otago Daily Times*



clothing splendid work is being done - work that is to be still further extended to meet the ever growing demand due to the expansion of our forces.<sup>18</sup>

Mosgiel, being the second largest of the four mills, took a major share of the credit for this vital production.

With the Japanese threat at its highest, output continued to rise to a point where Stewart notes, normal trading conditions became chaotic. Estimates reveal that from 1941 until the end of the war, about 80 percent of the Mill's loom production had been directed to the fighting forces.<sup>19</sup> Fay Nicholson, who worked in the hosiery and finishing department sewing up army and navy jerseys and woollen underwear, recalled that it was nearly all for the forces with "just a little bit of the other [civilian] thrown in occasionally". They produced great rolls of khaki material there, but did not make battledress. Margaret Kingan, then a machinist, worked on woollen underclothes for both military and civilian orders and remembers that they stopped making white blankets and changed to grey military pattern. The War's influence on the pattern of production was very much evident, not only to the boardroom, but to those on the shop floor and most obviously to consumers. With so much of the nation's woollen mill capacity going to the forces, civilian supplies became scarce. Ongoing shortages of ordinary items such as underwear, socks and jerseys meant that clothing became one of the first commodities to be rationed in May 1942. At the end of that year, Hislop thanked the 'ordinary customers' for the way they accepted the company's inability to meet their usual requirements.<sup>20</sup> Newspaper adverts at this time trumpeted the fact that Mosgiel spent much of its productive capacity on service orders, probably as a form of explanation to customers and also to keep the brand name in the mind of their consumers.<sup>21</sup> In 1944, Hislop urged to the board that ". . . the upheaval be taken philosophically until the war was won and then efforts should be made to 'bring back' normal conditions so that firms can think for themselves and trade where and with whom they desire in the interests of the community generally and the shareholders."<sup>22</sup> It appears the board developed a nervousness about the effect of neglecting its staple pre-war consumer market for four years, since it was by no means assured that customers would come flocking back to buy Mosgiel Woollen products after the War. In the end the market share did indeed return to normal, but the impact of wartime trading is evident.

During 1914-18, the effect of war orders on the Mill had seemed almost serene in comparison. Manager John Roberts' fears of serious commercial disruption proved unfounded. In 1917 he could report that work had gone on quietly and ordinary trade had been good.<sup>23</sup> In contrast the years 1940-45 proved anything but business as usual. Production may have risen in both conflicts, but company faced a much greater burden in the Second World War.

According to J. V. T. Baker, woollen mills reached peak production in 1942-3 when military demands were at their height.<sup>24</sup> This is reflected in the performance of

<sup>18</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 May 1942, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, p.82.

<sup>20</sup> Sixty Ninth Ann. Report (1942).

<sup>21</sup> Mosgiel Limited Advertising Book (1936-54); Clippings: Apr., Jun. 1942, Mar., Aug. 1943; *Otago Daily Times*, 11 April 1942, 4 February 1944, pp. 3, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Stewart, p.82.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.76. Sir John Roberts was replaced by Hislop in 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Baker, p.161.

Figure 2.

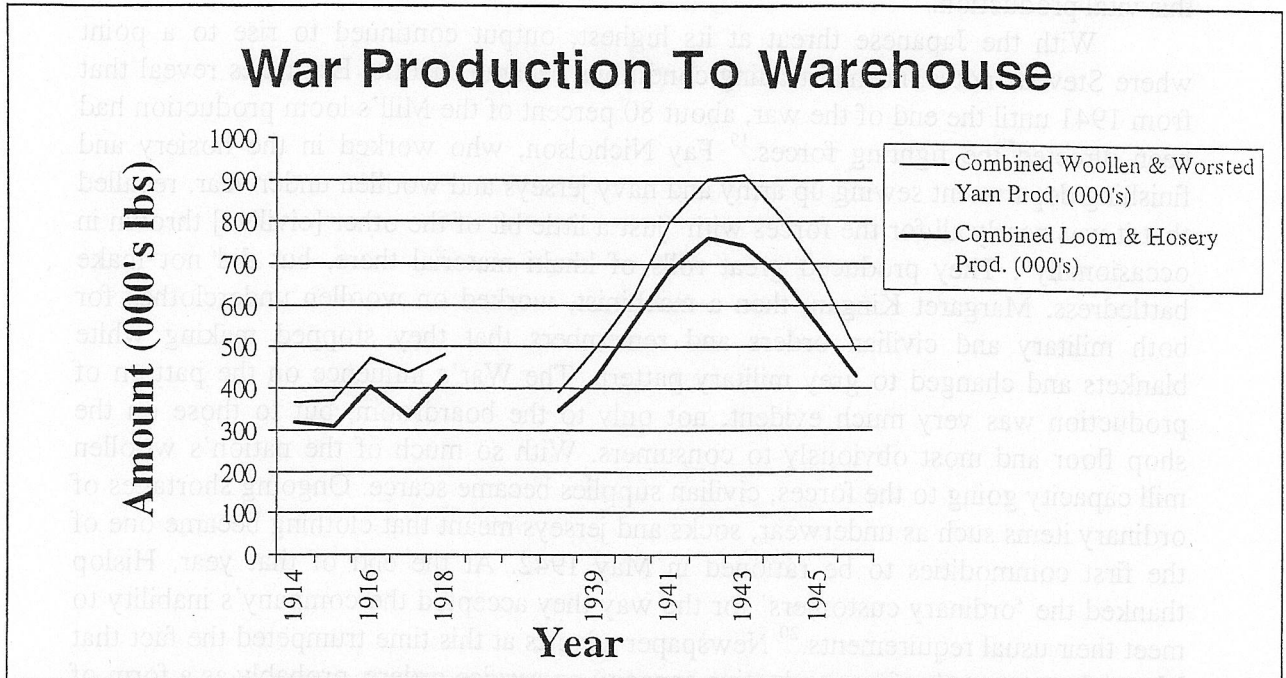
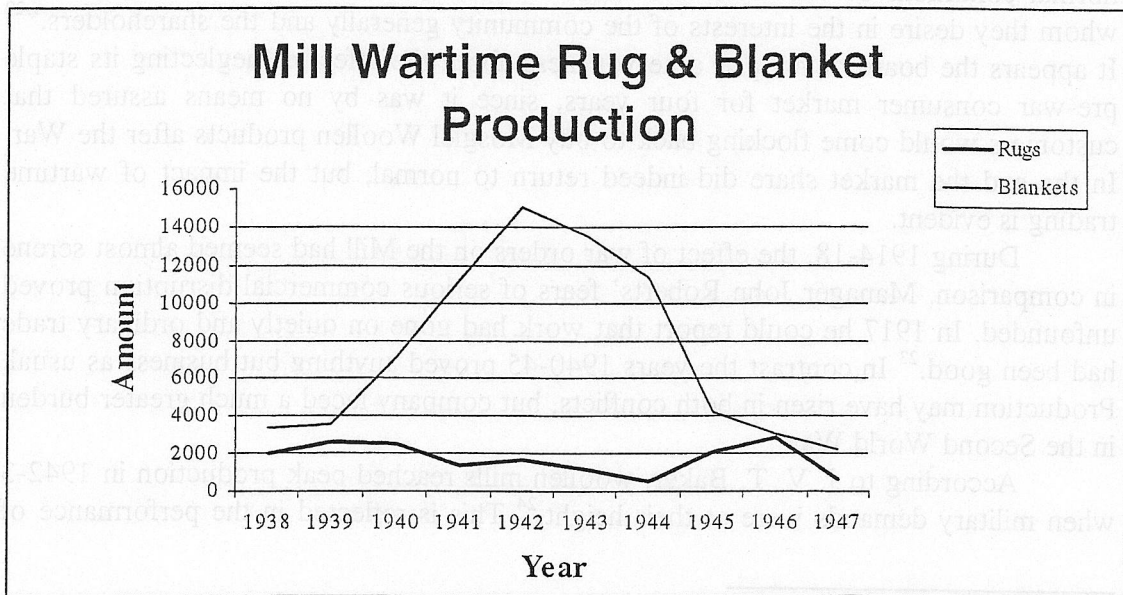


Figure 3.



Mosgiel Woollens in that year. Figure 1 (facing previous page) is a mixed graph neatly demonstrating how the five factors of production available to the author - amount of labour employed, unit hours worked, wool bales purchased and lubrication oil and coal used - all give local confirmation to Baker's assessment as they rise to a peak in 1942-3, then fall away. Figure 1 clearly demonstrates the pattern of woollen production needed by the country as it moved from peacetime to a total war footing and back again.

Output end results also affirm Baker's analysis, emphasising again the effect of the conflict. The output of yarn was highest in 1941-2 at twice the pre-war figure. Mosgiel produced its highest combined woollen and worsted yarn spinning figure a year later, having raised total output in an 84 percent leap from 496,000 yards in 1938-39 to a record 912,650 yards in 1942-3. Comparable First World War statistics show a much less rapid growth in productive output of only 32 percent, indicative of the smaller impact of that conflict in comparison.<sup>25</sup> Baker points to overall hosiery production (underwear, socks) reaching 75 percent above the pre-war amount in 1941-2.<sup>26</sup> Mosgiel reached a peak in hosiery manufacture for that year, turning out 224,000 lbs, an increase of 62% from 138,000 lbs in 1938-9, creditably close to the national average. The years 1914-18 saw only an 18% increase from 111,000 to 131,000 lbs.

Indicative of the new scale of production, Mosgiel Woollens sent consecutive new record totals of combined loom and hosiery production - 559,000, 688,800 and 764,900 lbs respectively - to its warehouse in the three financial years from 1939-40. The peak year of 1941-2 represented a 79% increase from the pre-war 1938-9 total of 425,000 lbs. With the peak 1918 combined total at only 432,000 lbs it shows the tremendous strides made for the second war effort.<sup>27</sup> Figure 2 (facing) gives an excellent illustration of the Mill's war production, representing yarn and combined loom and hosiery output, showing a steady rise to peak output, then as the tide of conflict turned, a gradual decrease back to pre-war amounts. 1914-1918 figures are included to give a comparison effect.

Further evidence of the conflict's commercial effect is shown in the figures for blanket and rug production. Baker observes that in 1942-3, blanket production had reached to over 70% above the pre-War figure.<sup>28</sup> Figure 3 illustrates that under War orders the company showed a tremendous 415% increase in blanket production - 3633 in 1938-9 to 15,080 in 1941-2 - comprising 6.2% of New Zealand's total output. However, the increase in blankets proved to be at the opportunity cost of rug production. Rugs, obviously more for the civilian market, were limited in manufacture by half from 1938-9 (2598) to 1942-3 (1116) and crashed to only 543 the next year; a total decrease of 478% in their production for the period.<sup>29</sup>

By August 1943, fifteen months after the introduction of clothes rationing, Minister of Supply Sullivan promised weary consumers an increase in stocks of civilian clothing, announcing that arrangements had been made to divert New Zealand industry to meet civilian needs in clothing material, clothing and footwear to make up on the

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<sup>25</sup> Mill Statistics Book, pp.15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Baker, p.161.

<sup>27</sup> Mill Statistics Book, p.33. The peacetime 1937-8 total combined loom and hosiery production numbered only 350,000 lbs, so in effect the increase for the five years to 1941-2 was a tremendous 118%.

<sup>28</sup> Baker, p.161.

<sup>29</sup> Mill Statistics Book, p.31.

Figure 4.

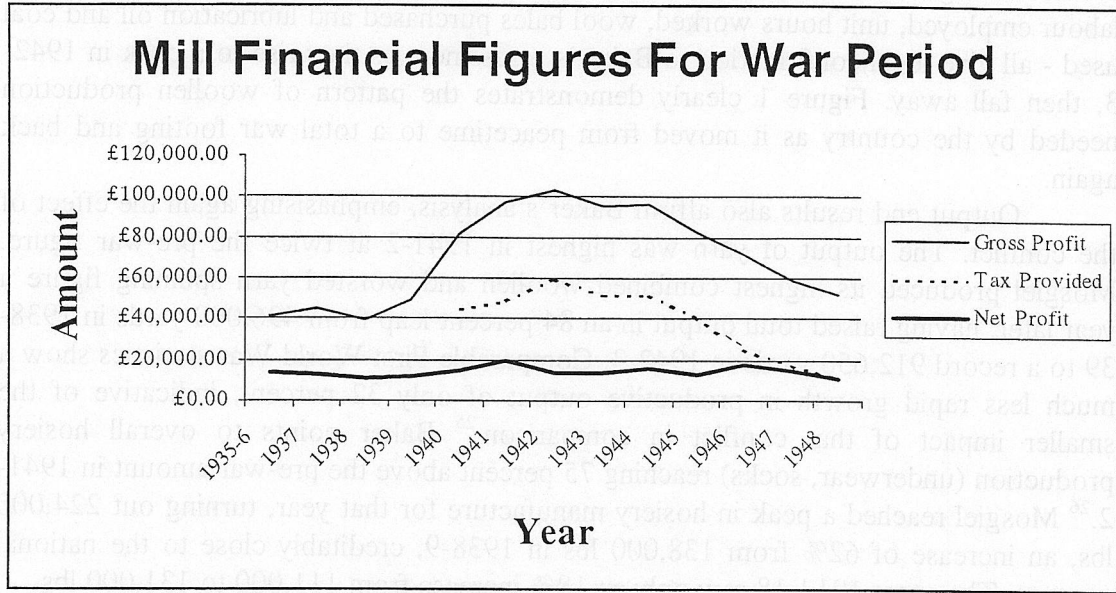
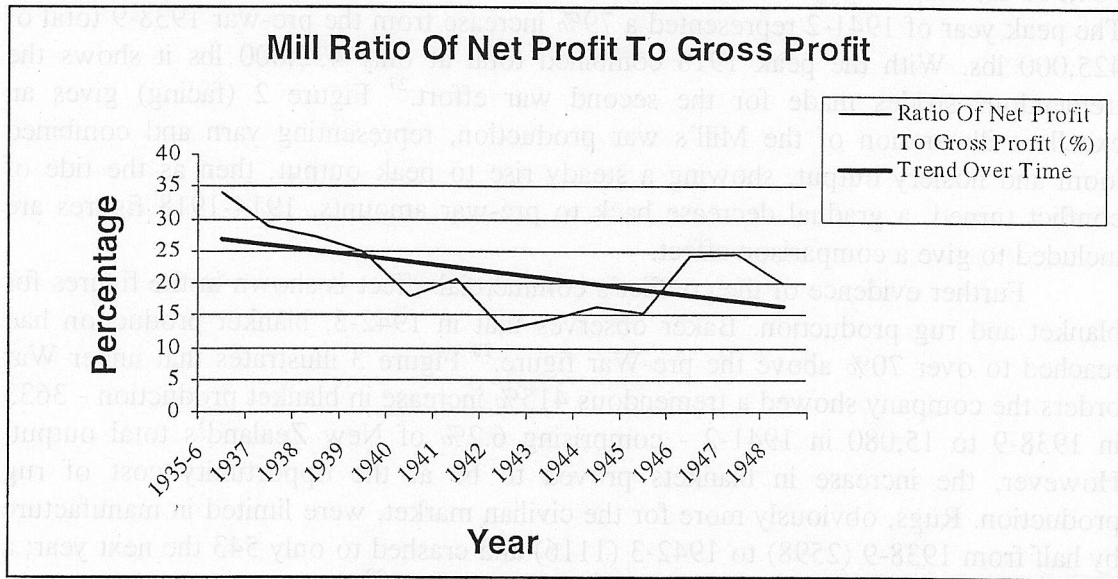


Figure 5.



By August 1945, fifteen months after the introduction of clothes rationing, Minister of Supply Sullivan promised weary consumers an increase in stocks of civilian clothing, announcing that arrangements had been made to divert New Zealand industry to meet civilian needs in clothing material, clothing and footwear to make up on the total decrease of 4.8% in their production for the period.

Mill Statistics Book, p. 15-16.

Baker, p. 181.

Mill Statistics Book, p. 33. The postwar 1937-8 total combined beam and hosiery production amounted only 150,000 lbs. to effect the increase for the five years to 1941-2 was a tremendous 118%.

Baker, p. 181.

Mill Statistics Book, p. 31.

shortfalls.<sup>30</sup> By November of that year Hislop stated in the annual report that government contracts had “eased considerably”, allowing the Mill to fulfil more civilian orders.<sup>31</sup> The War’s pressure to produce an unparalleled upsurge of output in most product lines for military contracts had eased, leaving the company to reverse its effect and set about making civilian goods their priority once again.

In financial terms a record of such a sustained rise in output meant profit margins for Mosgiel Woollens increased forcefully as well. The company benefited from a 260% increase in gross profits, lifting a 1937-8 figure of £39,800 to a peak 1941-2 figure of £103,700. As the period of intensive government production passed and manufacturing levels dropped, gross profit dwindled to £59,400 by 1946-7. These statistics testify to the throughput at the mill, but of course do not take into account total expenses. Including these in calculations leaves the Mill’s net profit and makes for more sober viewing. As shown in Figure 4 (facing), Mosgiel’s net profit remained relatively stable, with a minor improvement, up 61% from the 1938-9 figure of £10,898 to a high point of £19,947 in 1940-41. Despite the massive military production it continued to remain about an average of £14,500 through the war years. The main reason for the large difference between gross and net profit were the heavily increased wartime taxation provisions, which quickly proved a sore point for the company directors. Already opposed to the Labour government and its intervention in the workplace this endeared it to them even less. The most significant increases in wartime tax yields came from direct taxes on incomes,<sup>32</sup> and in our case study, Mosgiel Woollens huge gross profit meant, in effect, a large income to be taxed.

As well as the usual income tax (which included a social security charge of 1s in the £) the War Expenses Act raised all rates of income tax by an extra 15% for 1939-42. In August 1942, the government raised this surcharge for war expenses to 33 1/3%. In addition the Finance Act 1940 imposed a new war tax, the National Security Tax, fixed at a flat rate of a shilling at every pound of income and raised, at the height of the Japanese threat in May 1942, to 1s 6d in the pound.<sup>33</sup> On top of these taxes, which affected both local businesses and individuals, the hefty output of the Mill meant that it was also stung by the Excess Profits Tax of 1940. In that year the Government pledged that no profits must be made out of the extra efforts of the people of New Zealand.<sup>34</sup> Under this Act, ostensibly to prevent war profiteering, any income deemed by the Commissioner of Taxes to be substantially over the “normal income” of the company was taxed at a rate of 60 percent; increased to 75 percent in 1942. Normal income in the terms of the Act meant either the greatest amount of assessable income in any of the three years ended in March 1939 or the average of these years.<sup>35</sup> For Mosgiel Woollens, this meant either the 1938-9 (gross profit) figure of £49,200 or a 1936-9 average of £44,800 respectively, which are hardly comparable to the actual totals of well over twice that size recorded during nearly all the years of the war. Thus, taxation hit the company proportionately very hard, only returning to normal pre-war levels around 1947. The other woollen mills, such as Timaru and Bruce felt a similar impact. The financial review of *The New Zealand Truth* emphasised that this skimmed

<sup>30</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 Aug. 1943, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> Seventieth Ann. Report (1943).

<sup>32</sup> Baker, p.261.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59. In other words to prevent war profiteering.

<sup>35</sup> The Excess Profits Act 1940 (1940, No.22): Regs. 3, 5.

the 'cream' off the increased gross earnings.<sup>36</sup> Wellington's penchant for intervention in the business world eventually became of extreme irritation to the directors. Stewart notes that J. S. Hislop, was publicly silent about the government's financial moves. However, during the latter War years he criticised the necessity of paying record company taxes - up to £60,000 - leaving the business unable to build up reserves to re-establish themselves following the cessation of hostilities. In effect he complained that war work was penalising the company.<sup>37</sup>

In *Spinning Yarns*, Gavin McLean found the Timaru Worsted and Woollen Company had similar problems. Its chairman W. H. Walton, too, warned the public that the company would have little with which to build a sound post-war base.<sup>38</sup> Other businesses felt the same burden, emphasising the overall impact of the government's desperate wartime search for internal revenue. The chairman of the Farmers Trading Company in Auckland, for example, was quoted as saying in 1942 that "company taxation has reached the absolute limit".<sup>39</sup>

Moving to Figure 5, the ratio of net profit to gross profit demonstrates the effect of increased expenses and taxation (or in other words how much the company is able to keep). Since expenses were reasonably stable after 1941, the ratio emphasises the sharp decline as wartime taxes after 1939-40 bit into the large military contract profits, only returning to somewhere near pre-war levels after the cessation of hostilities. The general pattern of a declining ratio since 1935 is a legacy of the taxation and labour policies of the newly elected Labour government. Thus, from a total gross profit of £556,000 for the years 1939-40 to 1944-45 the company's net profit for the same period amounted only to about £90,000, showing the overall effect of taxation, in keeping returns - while reasonable - only slightly above pre-war levels.

Overall, then, the figures suggest that the tremendous increase in war manufacturing did not greatly benefit the mill, in commercial terms, at all. Net profit or financial benefit to Mosgiel Woollens did not greatly rise, although the installation of new plant, a water softener, a new water bore and a Grinnel sprinkler plant during the War do show that some financial inventory was gained.<sup>40</sup> The question is, however, did the huge productive effort benefit the company more than the costs, such as neglecting its civilian market or the extra wear and tear on the machinery? On the whole, noting the moral duty to serve the country in a war, it did, but only until the question of war taxation is included. In that case the answer appears more negative. Commercial concerns, however, were only secondary to the total war effort, with the survival of the country through equipping the army paramount. The company was, of course, patriotic with management and workers wishing to serve New Zealand's war effort as best they could. Its reputation among consumers also benefited from the efforts put in during those years. In any case, Mosgiel Woollens had no choice but to shift to war production with the emergency powers over supply and manufacturing which the government could wield. All its competitors were in the same position. These facts are indicative of the tremendous indirect impact the War had on the mill. The direct impact consisted only of minor losses of plant, the gradual dwindling of the labour supply and the negligible effect of the blackout. The indirect effects of the war

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<sup>36</sup> *The New Zealand Truth*, 10 Feb. 1943; Clipping in Mill Statistics Book.

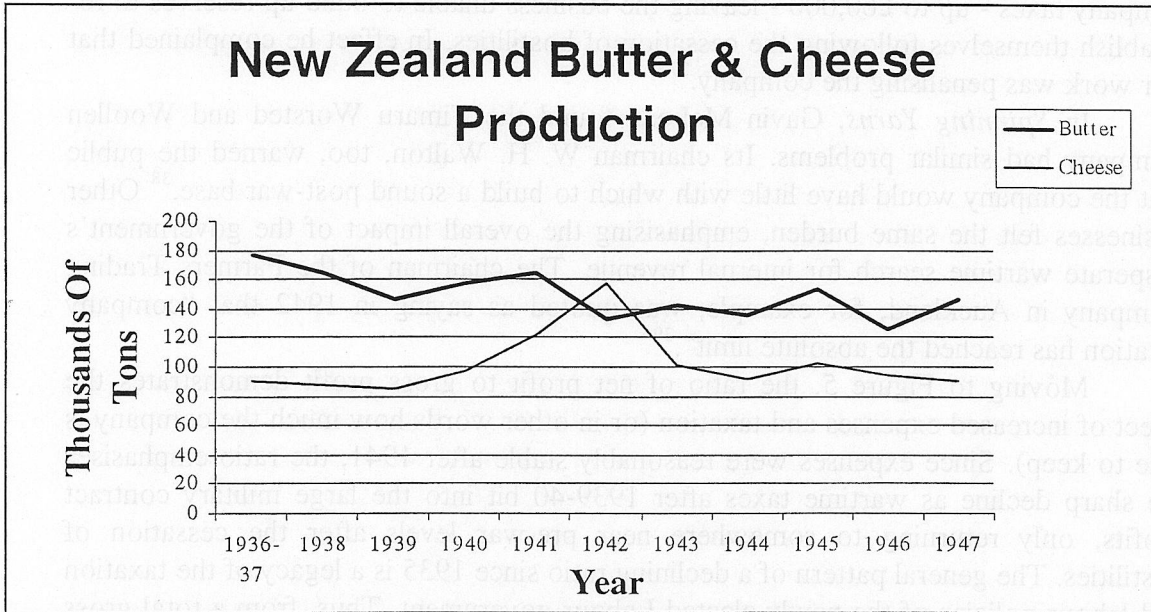
<sup>37</sup> Stewart, p.80; Sixty Ninth Ann. Report (1942).

<sup>38</sup> McLean, p.74. The chairmen of other competing mills no doubt also shared similar views of distain towards the tax rate and the Labour government.

<sup>39</sup> *Evening Star*, 24 June 1942, p.4.

<sup>40</sup> Stewart, p.81.

Figure 6.



Source: J.V. T. Baker

The New Zealand Year, 10 Feb. 1943. Clipping in Mill Statistics Book.  
Stewart, p. 80. Sixty Ninth Ann. Report (1942).  
Ibid. can. p. 74. The chairman of other competing mills no doubt also shared similar views of dis-  
towards the tax rate and the Labour government.  
Evening Star, 24 June 1942, p. 4.  
Stewart, p. 81.

through government control were much greater and might perhaps be simply seen as an extreme extension of Labour's pre-war policies toward influencing business. Before the War they were designed generally to help redress the balance between business and labour. During the war, control was for national security purposes and its impact was necessarily enhanced. The government controlled the supply of the raw material and labour when it became short; it told the Mill what to produce for it, demanded greatly increased output and then heavily taxed the resulting high levels of production. Thus, the war had a large overall impact on the Mill. Many things happened in a hectic and vibrant period for workers and management but, in the end, Mosgiel Woollens did not greatly gain from it.

This pattern of governmental control and influence was widespread over the whole economy throughout a large section of companies and businesses. New Zealand's economy became even more tightly controlled than before the war. It was not a planned economy, but was certainly well supervised, reflecting the high stakes being fought for and the nature of a war economy; diverted to meeting war needs over individual commercial ones. As such this impacted on the businesses. Like the Mosgiel Mill, most other local businesses felt the embrace of increased bureaucracy to some extent.

The Silverstream Dairy Factory felt such effect and more. Established as a condensed milk factory on the banks of the Silverstream under the management and later ownership of L. S. Dyer in 1906, it changed to butter production in the early 1920's.<sup>41</sup> When War broke out, Douglas Dyer had replaced his father and stepped up production to meet the new demands. In 1940, however, the general dairy industry fell victim to the vagaries of the war. The fall of the Low Countries and France cut many of Britain's traditional dairy sources and her government looked to New Zealand, in part, to make up the shortfall. Baker notes that it expressed a preference for cheese rather than butter because of its rich protein, fat and mineral content, being essentially a meat substitute in wartime.<sup>42</sup> The industry had to make an about turn, stepping up cheese supply, meaning that some butter factories converted to cheese to meet production needs. From 84,000 tons of cheese exported to Britain in the 1939-40 year, the figure rose to 160,000 tons for 1941-2.<sup>43</sup> Figure 6 (facing) shows the effects on New Zealand domestic production.

The Silverstream factory became one of those which was, in the words of Ron Kirk, "compelled to switch its whole operation over to the production of cheese".<sup>44</sup> Whether they were actually compelled or forced to change seems dubious. From the author's research it seems more likely that the government requested them to change, sweetening the deal somewhat with low interest loans, but all the time holding its emergency powers in reserve.<sup>45</sup> Dyer received this news with some trepidation, no doubt, for though the government provided a subsidy as well, it still meant an expensive capital outlay and extra transport arrangements. Patriotism meant the staff set about the venture with energy. With cheese production so important it also meant more bureaucracy for the factories. The Cheese Industry (Registration of Employment) Order 1941 meant the owner of every cheese factory had to register with the

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<sup>41</sup> Kirk, p.198.

<sup>42</sup> Baker, p.199. British industrial researchers reported that cheese provided twice the vitamins, protein and energy value per foot of shipping space than frozen lamb.

<sup>43</sup> Yearbook (1946), p.275. Butter exports remained constant at 115,000 tons in the same period.

<sup>44</sup> Kirk, p.198.

<sup>45</sup> *Evening Star*, 5 June 1941, p.5.



government and furnish production and labour force details. By the end of 1941 any other activity which slowed up the quantity of cheese output, such as exotic flavouring or colouring was prohibited.<sup>46</sup> This probably did not specifically affect the Silverstream factory, however, it does emphasise the pressure on the industry to perform.

At the height of the Japanese threat, Silverstream also felt the effect of the authorities' power to impress vehicles. Under the Motor Vehicle Impressment Emergency Regulations 1941 (1941/145) the Chief Impressment Officer had the power to impress any motor vehicles or any equipment for the armed forces. This did not appear to occur much for private cars in the EPS (see Chapter 3), but did in this instance for the army. Jim Rowe explained how it impacted upon the dairy factory:

They [the authorities] impressed a lot of vehicles; y'know, just go around to you and say I want that vehicle and take it to the Army and paint it an army colour. A lot of that was done. All the later model stuff was gathered up. They were really late model trucks and they [had to] cart the cheese and the milk to Dunedin with a great big tractor and trailer. They had no cabs on them in those days, . . . all out in the bloody weather. Big, for those days, a real big tractor (*sic*), a big farmer one, an International Harvester. He used to go through to town [Dunedin] twice a day, but it was pretty slow going, probably doing only 15 miles per hour perhaps . . .

The factory managed without its trucks for a while, but it must have been very inconvenient for management and staff, not to mention the suppliers and distributors, and especially the driver. It was, though, but another link in the harried re-allocation of the resources of the economy to fight a total war.

The allocations changed quickly, however, and the increased emphasis on cheese production lasted for only two seasons. United Kingdom access to North American cheese in 1942, combined with Japanese conquest of many sources of margarine producing vegetable oils meant that the request changed and only 85,000 tons of cheese were needed in 1943-44.<sup>47</sup> By March 1943 most of the factories which had changed in response to the 1940-1 requests had reverted back to butter.<sup>48</sup> This War turn around seems to have been of less concern to the Silverstream Dairy Factory, for it had stronger domestic problems. Ron Kirk picks up the story in *Pulse of the Plain*.

Government measures were being introduced, calculated to put all privately owned dairy companies out of existence and to compel them to sell out to co-operative concerns. The Dyers resisted strongly, trying to circumvent the various restrictions and regulations for a surprising length of time., but were finally compelled to bow to the inevitable and sell out to a co-operative- the Co-operative Dairy Company of Otago Ltd in 1944-5. This concern promptly closed the factory down and sold it to British Chemicals Ltd. It was an unhappy end to an industry which had been one of Mosgiel's most lively and most productive, providing work for many people and utilising effectively the milk and cream from a wide area of the country.<sup>49</sup>

It is ironic that a purely domestic decision, unrelated to the War, caused the closure for the company. In many respects, it felt the impact of the Labour government more than most.

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<sup>46</sup> The Cheese Manufacture Restriction Order 1941 (1941/216).

<sup>47</sup> Yearbook (1946), pp.275-6. During the two seasons emphasising greater cheese production, the equivalent of three normal seasons worth were sent to the U.K. Baker. p.201.

<sup>48</sup> Baker, p.201.

<sup>49</sup> Kirk, p.199.

Evidence of the potentially huge effect that the War situation could have on a business can be illustrated by the fate of another local dairy factory situated, Mosgiel Cheese Ltd. This branch operation of the Dunedin Wholesale Milk Company at Silverside deregistered as a cheese factory and registered as a skimming station (another essential war task) providing cream and skim milk in 1941. This progressed successfully until the unfortunate introduction of butter rationing in New Zealand in October 1943. Closely allied to butter, the sale of cream for domestic or manufacturing purposes was prohibited except with special permits.<sup>50</sup> Thus, as the company's sixth and final report stated with remarkable brevity, "As a result of there being no outlet for cream, the factory was closed as such and eventually sold . . . and all assets and liabilities transferred to the Dunedin Wholesale Milk Company Ltd . . ." <sup>51</sup> With a limited market for cheese production again by that stage it seems the company could not convert back to its original business, although the author could find few details. Nevertheless it does show how various developments in the war situation reverberated around the world to affect local business. The Mosgiel Cheese Factory's closure is an impact of total war in circumstances when the government's allocation of national resources cannot be stretched to meet some items, such as cream. This pattern of control was especially strict in New Zealand's vital primary production sector, such a large part of its export trade and war effort.

Tight control and the overriding of consumer demand were the fundamental effects of the war on the motor trade industry. The strict rationing of petrol quickly crushed much of the business of garages, which had to eke out a living on their limited sales and some automotive repair jobs. In 1939 Mosgiel had three service stations, Mosgiel Motors Ltd., G. W. Stevenson's and Arthur Chadwick's, which served petrol and performed automotive and mechanical repairs. Besides the usual emergency regulations the Oil Fuel Controller had specific power to withhold supplies of oil fuel and ban the use of petrol.<sup>52</sup> This potential strict control, greater than that of other resources, emphasises the importance of conserving oil fuel for defence and essential purposes while, at the same time reducing import shipments which were costly for the country both in terms of scarce overseas funds and Allied seamen's lives. In the main the private consumer and fuel retailers carried this sacrifice.

Like the others in Mosgiel, Arthur Chadwick's Shell garage and neighbouring cycle shop in Gordon Rd (on the present day site of Preen's Drycleaners) gradually felt the impact on business after the reimposition of petrol rationing on 1 February 1940.<sup>53</sup> Even at this early stage the *Otago Daily Times* reported that day that Dunedin petrol resellers were concerned with the future, forecasting drastic curtailments in their business, possibly to the extent of forcing them out of business. On the other hand garage proprietors - who did vehicle repairs and sold petrol like Chadwick's, as opposed to service stations who only sold petrol - generally adopted a more optimistic

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<sup>50</sup> Taylor, p.820.

<sup>51</sup> Mosgiel Cheese Limited, Sixth Annual Report and Balance Sheet (1944). Silverside is beside the Silverstream on Riccarton Rd.

<sup>52</sup> Baker, p.131. Australia did not introduce petrol rationing of any severity until April 1941.

<sup>53</sup> Rationing commenced on the outbreak of war until enough oil fuel stocks accumulated had so that it became unrestricted again. In December 1939, however, the British Government asked New Zealand to reimpose rationing to conserve U.S dollar funds and reduce the number of tanker trips needed. The strain of war was just beginning to tell.

“wait and see” policy, pinning their hopes on the fact that the public would keep their cars running regularly.<sup>54</sup>

By June, in the aftermath of Dunkirk, basic private car rations were trimmed to 4 gallons per month for a 9½ horsepower car, 6 gallons per month for 9½ to 14½ hp and 8 gallons for those over 14½ hp, while motorcycles received two.<sup>55</sup> Little profit could be made by garages from such a small turnover and with such heavy restrictions on fuel there were fewer cars on the road driving smaller distances, meaning much less demand for mechanical servicing. Jim Rowe, the apprentice mechanic at Chadwick’s recalled a significant downturn in trade, although the extra ration allowances for farmers from around the Plains and other essential users helped the petrol station side of the business. Some garages tried to drum up extra trade. One advert in May 1941 posed the question, “Your car in 1943. How will it be?”,<sup>56</sup> encouraging regular tune ups to protect the vehicle against the uncertain length of the war restrictions.

Neither Chadwick’s, or any other Mosgiel garage, appear to have placed any such advertisements in the local newspapers, probably because they felt the extra business gained would not cover the prohibitive cost of advertising in the smaller wartime papers. Despite such advertising efforts, the war had a near crippling effect. It seemed as Nancy Taylor described, “mechanics were unemployed, trade and business were depressed and the petrol tax [boosted by war tax and import duties] was unduly heavy”.<sup>57</sup> The state of the business was typified by the fact that D. Gough, the owner of the East Taieri garage, felt it necessary to write to the Taieri County Council asking for a reduction in the rental for the petrol bowsers because of the decreased sales of petrol.<sup>58</sup> Worse followed when Pearl Harbour meant the suspension of all petrol for private cars until March 1942. In that year petrol imports, which fell rapidly in the first three years of the war, were at their lowest for any year since 1933.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the downturn in business, the bureaucracy of petrol rationing meant much extra paperwork. One Dunedin service station owner complained to an *Otago Daily Times* reporter that the office work had risen by “leaps and bounds” due to the complicated returns they were required to deliver to the authorities. Jim Rowe affirmed this rigmarole, which he experienced, explaining:

Every commercial operator had a license and a sheet that he had to sign every time he drew petrol. Well, that had to be filled in, signed and all this . . . and balanced up each month, and had to have all the receipts balance. [Then they] had to go to an Oil Fuel Controller. Usually he was the Postmaster, I think, in those days . . . One pump was used mainly for people with licenses, so it was easy to balance it . . . They’d use the other one for coupon sales.

Jim Manley, who knew G. W. Stevenson’s son, remembered that every garage used to have a pump painted grey which was the one used by the general public. Any others must have, as Jim Rowe said, been used by those with licenses. Thus, the system with the pumps made it easier to balance accounts but most staff must have loathed the extra paperwork which had to be sent to the Postmaster who was, indeed, the local Oil Fuel Controller. In Jim Rowe’s experience, however, the authorities, as concerned with

<sup>54</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 Feb. 1940, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> Taylor, p.745.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 2 May 1941, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, p.744.

<sup>58</sup> TCC Minutes, 26 Sept. 1941.

<sup>59</sup> Baker, p.417.

Mosgiel at least, were not absolutely rigorous and he could not remember the Controller visiting the garage many times to check up on records or petrol tanks. He commented:

In the main they relied on honesty. Oh there was a black market in it [petrol], there's no doubt about that and one or two got lumbered for it y'know. None that I can remember in Mosgiel, but there was (*sic*) certainly fuel outlets that got lumbered . . . and got fined, or might have even lost their licenses . . . But people realised that there was a war on you know, that's in the depth of the war anyway I think, and they played the game.

Some prosecutions for breaches of the regulations did occur in Dunedin, however.<sup>60</sup> Plenty of prison sentences for more serious petrol crimes were handed out, mainly in the North Island. While this is not evidence of the local black market which definitely did operate in supplying petrol during the War, it does show the impact of the petrol shortage. It also shows the overriding importance of the coupon system and its associated paperwork during the rationing years 1939-46 and 1947-50.

Bureaucracy also prevented any petrol seller from opening longer hours, in the hope of selling to more customers to boost their meagre profits. Under threat of heavy financial penalty, the Oil Fuel Retail Hours Emergency Regulations 1942 stipulated the hours of 7.30 am to 5.30 pm on weekdays and 7.30 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday as the only ones allowed.<sup>61</sup> One local bright spot amidst the depressing scene, however, were the farmers who, being in such a vital industry, were allowed extra petrol to run their cars and especially their tractors. Jim Rowe remembers some driving over to the garage in the tractor pulling a trailer with 44 gallon drums in it to be filled up. Others had 44 gallon drums strapped to the back of their cars. They all had big cars and, in his view, always seemed to have a bit of money around.

Chadwick's garage eventually closed during the War. Ironically, it was not due to the War's indirect economic effect of shortages, but the direct impact of an army call up. Having lost two other staff into the forces, Arthur Chadwick himself, received call up papers by the middle of the conflict, leaving Jim, then aged 16, there alone. Initially Jim and Mrs Chadwick tried to cope with the garage, pumps and the bike shop, which posed problems, as he recalls.

For the first six months after Arthur went into the army I was sort of on my own, but I was only halfway through my time [apprenticeship] then and there was not a hell of a lot I could do in the way of mechanical work. The service station was kept open to serve petrol . . . but the garage would not have been operating as a garage for maybe a year or eighteen months or so . . . But they still kept the bike shop going because . . . it was only essential vehicles running and push bikes really came into their own during the war so there was a big demand for push bike work. The bike shop was sort of separate from the garage. There was a shop next door to it and . . . [Mrs Chadwick] used to sort of keep an eye on the pumps and if anything was wanted she'd give me a yell and I'd go and do what was wanted.

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<sup>60</sup> One manager of a Dunedin service station on two occasions ran out of petrol and purchased stocks to replenish his tanks over the counter from another petrol station, using coupons which had already been surrendered to him by his customers. For this technical breach in the purchase of a total of 44 gallons of petrol he was convicted and fined £2; *Otago Daily Times*, 2 March 1941, p.7.

<sup>61</sup> The Oil Fuel Retail Hours Emergency Regulations 1942 (1942/181): Reg. 2 (3) and see also The Oil Fuel Retail Hours Emergency Regulations 1940. Sales outside these times could be made in the case of an individual emergency or designated passenger carrying vehicles. These were fairly close to the allowable pre-war hours of trade anyway.

The garage had been virtually closed except in name, as Jim struggled on doing grease and oil changes and other simple tasks, as well as minor cycle repairs in the shop. Eventually, because cycle parts were hard to obtain from England at that stage, even bike repairs dried up, so he could do little. This prompted the decision to fully shut down the garage. Jim later returned after Arthur did to complete his apprenticeship, although the trade in automotive repairs still hardly existed. The solution to this continued problem for Chadwick's came near the end of the war, when they sold neighbouring bike shop, shifting the cycle repairs into the near empty garage so that in Jim's words "it became more or less a service station/bike shop".

While Chadwick's experience represents only one perspective of the impact of war on their industry, it is indicative of the problems that other garages and petrol retailers faced in Mosgiel, as around the country. It highlights the crippling impact of the oil fuel restrictions on both petrol reselling and automotive repairs. Low turnover meant low profits and the only thing to increase with more bureaucracy was the paperwork. From an expanding and enterprising trade, the war turned the automotive service industry into a sickly and heavily regulated shadow of itself. The added impact of Arthur Chadwick's call up put extra pressure on his struggling business and contributed, along with the downturn associated with petrol and bike shortages, to the interim changes experienced during the war. It shows the hardship faced by some, especially in small business, of serving their country, however, they managed to cope with it.

Luckily for Chadwick's, the bike shop did provide good business for a time, as cycles were the predominant form of transport in the town. Not many residents owned cars, so perhaps petrol rationing did not concern so many, nevertheless, it did have an effect in boosting the popularity of bicycles and bicycle sales. An *Evening Star* advertisement in April 1941 for W. A. Scott & Sons in Dunedin, simply but pointedly suggested, "Petrol Cut Again? Go by bike instead.",<sup>62</sup> and in December; "As petrol gets scarcer and scarcer more and more people are discovering how much healthy exercise and enjoyment of summer a 'Speedwell' cycle can give".<sup>63</sup> Many people adhered to this advice. In the days following Pearl Harbour, a frenzy of cycle buying occurred after the indefinite suspension of all petrol for private cars on 13 December. The war situation inflated demand to extreme levels, outstripping the retailer's meagre supplies. With such a flurry nationwide, it is not too large an assumption that Chadwick's, the only cycle dealer in Mosgiel, shared in the initial bonanza, possibly even receiving orders from Dunedin. This must have been a welcome boost to balance their flagging petrol sales. Eventually, however, the negative implications of this impact began to show when, as mentioned by Jim Rowe, the run on cycles and parts led to their scarcity as well.

It was very difficult to get new parts . . . [and] very hard getting tyres in particular. I think, in fact, you had to have a permit to get bike tyres at one part of it . . . They were reserved for people in essential occupations. All that sort of thing, tyres, inner tubes and all kinds of car stuff was really rationed. A tyre was like gold . . .

Even the limp promise of the importation of 3000 British made bicycles<sup>64</sup> could not prevent government intervention into the trade with strict regulations to preserve

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<sup>62</sup> *Evening Star*, 3 April 1941, p.2.

<sup>63</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 Dec. 1941, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 Aug. 1942, p.4.

stocks, and that of the especially scarce tyres and tubes.<sup>65</sup> Thus, for the rest of the War this would have appeared to have limited Chadwick's sales to whatever they could obtain. At the same time, as mentioned above, even repair work slowed dramatically for lack of parts; a symptom of the same supply shortages.

The War, through the petrol shortage, quickly turned cycles into a lucrative trade. Just as quickly, however, like the garages and service stations, the effects of war made it depressed and heavily restricted.

Petrol restrictions also had an obvious impact on the transport industry such as taxis. Mosgiel had four taxi drivers; Archie 'Baldy' McLean who drove a Terraplane Hudson, Bill Kingan who drove a Ford V8, Edward O'Fee (Pontiac) and Miller Finnie (Oldsmobile).<sup>66</sup> Following Dunkirk, rationing imposed limits of 110 gallons per month on licensed taxi operators when working single shifts and 180 gallons per month for double shifts. The limits on trade were obvious. A letter from Bill Kingan and Baldy McLean of Mosgiel Taxis Ltd. to the Town Clerk in December 1940 indicated that the rations proved inadequate, especially with the busy holiday season approaching. Having received no reply from an enquiry to Wellington authorities for an increase in rations, the drivers contemplated having to turn down work and also call in outside taxis for work already booked. They remained concerned that the town would be without a satisfactory taxi service when it was most urgently required.<sup>67</sup> It is unclear if these efforts brought about a boost to their ration, or whether they had to take the consequent actions mentioned in the letter. The Town Clerk, Mr Rogers, had already argued their case for a larger allocation to the Oil Fuel Controller months earlier, so it may not have held much weight. He stressed the importance of the service, much of which consisted of ferrying people to or from the railway station and providing transport to or from outlying areas on the Plain.<sup>68</sup> Ray Kingan recalls his father's plight.

His petrol was restricted, though not to the same extent as [private motorists] . . . were, but it was restricted. He was always running out of petrol . . . had to spin it out over the month, or whatever period he had it. He had to keep the car mobile for an emergency or things like that, like hospital runs; when you had to deliver someone to the hospital at night or such . . .

Japanese entry into the War meant even more conservation of the precious liquid as strict rationing cut back the allowances for taxis to 75 gallons and 120 gallons per month respectively. This more or less forced an adaptation of their trade. The Taxi Licensing Authority suggested drivers exercise discretion in the type of work they undertake so their reduced petrol supplies might last through the month.<sup>69</sup> Pragmatic taxi drivers already had a reasonable answer though. A Dunedin taxi proprietor interviewed by the *Otago Daily Times*, said:

The position in a nutshell is that the public must be prepared to face double loading in taxis, and allow for some latitude in the times of arrival of taxis they have ordered. Double loading will mean that all the passengers will continue to pay full fare. This is not unfair because the taxi companies will

<sup>65</sup> The Bicycle Tyre and Tube Control Notice 1942 (1942/225); The Bicycle Tyre and Tube Control Notice 1942, Amendment No. 1 (1942/249).

<sup>66</sup> MBC Taxi Cab Licences File: Licenses issued on 1 June 1939.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, letter, 14 Dec. 1940, W. Kingan and A. McLean (Mosgiel Taxis Ltd) to TC.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, letter, 21 June 1940, TC to The Oil Fuel Controller, Wellington.

<sup>69</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 Dec. 1941, p.4.

continue to have the same overhead charges, and a smaller petrol allocation with which to make revenue. There will be no fortunes made in the taxi business now.<sup>70</sup>

The government belatedly accepted and authorised this practice of doubling up passengers and their paying full individual fares for distances under 10 miles, by passing the Taxicab Emergency Regulations in March 1942. No more than two people could hire at a time and each only had to pay what they would have been liable for if they were the sole hirer using the taxi over the shortest route to their destination.<sup>71</sup> Semple, the Minister of Transport pointed to the much needed conservation of petrol, tyres and manpower of this, while still providing a reasonable standard of service and hoped the public would co-operate.<sup>72</sup> These conditions became adopted quickly in the spirit of the war effort. A 1943 dissertation study of fatigue in the local taxi industry titled *The Taxi Driver* by Otago University medical students, G. R. Brownlee and T. R. A. Davis, however, found that although double loading saved tyres and petrol, it inevitably led to overcrowding in many cases, despite legislation against this.<sup>73</sup> Certainly in Mosgiel, this impact of the War conditions persisted. Local habits often saw many more than the regulation load in the car, especially in the regular trafficking of Airforce men to and from the Taieri Air Station. Vera Crozier remembered that “it didn’t matter how many Airforce boys were in Baldy McLean’s taxi, he always said that there was room for one more”. Arthur Duff and his friends always hailed a taxi from the base to the Wingatui station and vice versa, rather than walk the two miles. Other occasions demanded crowding the taxi. Margaret Kenny recalled “if we were going to the East Taieri dances there would be more than the limit in it”. So it seems, in this local case, neither the public or the drivers minded this impact of the War on the trade.

Brownlee and Davis also pointed to the use of dangerous tyres due to the scarcity of new ones and the poorly maintained conditions of wartime roads as other impacts of the War upon the trade.<sup>74</sup> Ray Kingan could not remember the condition of taxi tyres being that bad, but some very old ones were used. He also spoke, as example, of “an old fellow who used to run a truck/bus thing from Dunedin to Taieri Mouth delivering freight and passengers. The tyres on his truck were bald and the white canvas was showing. Of course he never went faster than 30 miles per hour, so any speed danger was not a problem.” Presumably the taxi operators would drive to conserve both tyres and petrol. On the positive side, however, the lack of traffic on the roads made driving safer, while assaults on local taxi drivers by servicemen appear to have been non-existent, unlike Brownlee and Davis’s findings of Auckland and Wellington. A sensational incident in 1943 involving the stabbing of Dunedin woman taxi driver, Nellie Duncan, seems entirely out of character for the city, let alone Mosgiel.<sup>75</sup>

Adaptation to double loading eased the considerable impact of petrol and tyre rationing, for drivers were at least still in business, but they were not going to make a

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> The Taxicab Emergency Regulations 1942 (1942/91): Reg 2. They also received a small discount for their trouble.

<sup>72</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 Apr. 1942, p.4.

<sup>73</sup> G. N. Brownlee & T. R. A. Davis, ‘The Taxi Driver’, p.11. They were part time taxi drivers themselves.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>75</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 January 1943, p.2. She received only relatively minor wounds.

large profit. They were in business to survive until the impacts of the war could be lifted.

The local baking industry was not plagued by such dramatic controls or events as some mentioned above, but nevertheless, still felt some effect from the War situation. It impinged on some activities but also provided new opportunities. Before the war much competition existed between the four local bakers - Frew Brothers, Lang's, Walker's, Turnbull's and J. R. Brown Ltd. from Caversham - for the trade in Mosgiel and on the Taieri.<sup>76</sup> In September 1939 they fell under the jurisdiction of the Wheat and Flour Controller who had the power to prescribe any manufacturing, ingredient, sale or delivery conditions.<sup>77</sup> Since bread did not become subject to rationing, initially business continued on as usual.

In those days house to house delivery, with bakers competing for custom was common.<sup>78</sup> After Pearl Harbour and the Japanese thrust southwards, however, the petrol and tyre restrictions resulted in changes for local delivery patterns. On 16 December the *Otago Daily Times* reported the Minister of Supply, D. G. Sullivan, stated that "Motor vehicles engaged in handling deliveries of foodstuffs and essential commodities such as milk, bread, meat and coal, or concerned with the essential public services, would have to be very substantially reduced".<sup>79</sup> The head of the Fuel Oil Licensing Authority in Wellington, Mr J. V. Raines, also stressed the desirability that retail deliveries, including milk and bread, be co-ordinated.<sup>80</sup> Deliveries around the district were curtailed slightly, but the rhetoric seems to have had little effect in Mosgiel until June 1942 when the Delivery Emergency Regulations (1942) enforced the zoning of specified delivery areas for each baker, to prevent overlapping and the waste of petrol, tyres, time and manpower. Colin Frew, son of the owner Mr Fred Frew, recalled that zoning restrictions did not cause too many problems however, for, as he explained:

. . . we were zoned according to our turnover, you see, so that nobody was disadvantaged because of the zone. Nobody lost by it and nobody gained by it. All the bakers were quite happy with the way it was zoned out . . . There was no friction with any of the bakers . . . y'know, there was no poaching of other people's zone. We were quite content with the one we had and left the others to theirs.

He remembered that Turnbull's and Walker's were more or less confined to Mosgiel and it was Frew's and Hendry, the baker at Outram, which supplied bread to the Taieri Plain. Jim Rowe, having left Chadwick's garage, drove Frew's bakers truck at that time and described his job.

They zoned the area and made one baker [Frew] do around Mosgiel, East Taieri, North Taieri, over to Wingatui and right down to Berwick and over across to Henley and then back up the main south road. That was a big run that, used to take all day; six o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night by the time you got home, pulling the big trailer too. That was the first time they started to pull trailers behind the bakers cart.

Residents around the Plains had to accept the lack of consumer choice caused by zoning for the war effort, if they wanted bread delivered.

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<sup>76</sup> Kirk, p.112.

<sup>77</sup> The Wheat and Flour Emergency Regulations 1939 (1939/142).

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, p.323.

<sup>79</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 Dec. 1941, p.4.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



Along with the reduced choice of vendor, came a reduced choice of product allowable. Taylor notes that some large Auckland bakeries had been turning out up to 40 sorts and sizes of loaf, but eventually the people had to take what was available.<sup>81</sup> The Breadmaking Industrial Control Order, in March 1943, restricted bakers to concentrate production on a limited range of six loaf types, all at least a minimum weight of 2lb. It was an offence for bakers to refuse to supply a 2lb loaf.<sup>82</sup> Colin recalled that Frew's reduced the variety of their bread during the war. They kept mainly to the basic 4 lb loaf, producing up to a thousand per week. "There was a certain amount of rationing" of sugar as Colin also recollected. With sources falling to the Japanese in 1942, industrial supplies of sugar were restricted from 50-100 % of the 1941 usage.<sup>83</sup> This sounds very strict but Frew's found that it did not really restrict them in their manufacture of cakes. Meat rationing in 1943 also meant manufacturers were allowed only two thirds of their pre-rationing usage,<sup>84</sup> but similarly had only a minor effect on production. According to Colin, the authorities were "pretty generous" with their supply of restricted goods, so that they never really ran short of anything, "because after all people had to eat". Petrol rationing did not seem to bother them either, for they "always managed to get enough to do what was required in the way of delivery". Paper proved a persistent shortage and retailers such as grocers or bakers who had previously wrapped items up in paper bags had to request their customers to bring their own.<sup>85</sup> In this vein Jim Manley remembers, as a small boy, fetching the family loaf of bread in a pillowcase from Walker's bakery. Unlike Borrow's, Frew's, being an essential industry, did not lose any staff to the manpower authorities. They could also appeal against the call up of staff to the army and, indeed, never lost anyone to the forces for the duration because of this.<sup>86</sup> Though the restrictions pinched at the business sometimes, it was nothing that it could not weather for the years of the War. On the other hand, for Frew's the impact of the war proved to be not all negative.

Several business opportunities opened up to them as a result of the war situation. The close presence of the RNZAF Air Station at Taieri aerodrome boosted the turnover of some local retailers to some extent. Frew's were not large enough to meet its bread needs, which were brought in from Dunedin, but did supply cakes for the base canteen. As well, Colin explained another profitable sideline. ". . . At dinnertime we'd go over to the Airforce base with hot pies and we'd just pull up along the fenceline, you know, and they would come out and get their hot pie for lunch". As with other local businessmen they found the closure of the air base in early 1945 disappointing, taking as it did, an excellent little bonus in their turnover. They also began what would become a large part of their later business by dabbling in catering social functions for servicemen about to depart overseas.<sup>87</sup> Their competitor J. S. Turnbull also catered some of these functions. The war years were, then, not that

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.324.

<sup>82</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 Mar. 1943, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> Yearbook (1946), p.697. Sugar for manufacturing purposes remained rationed until August 1948.

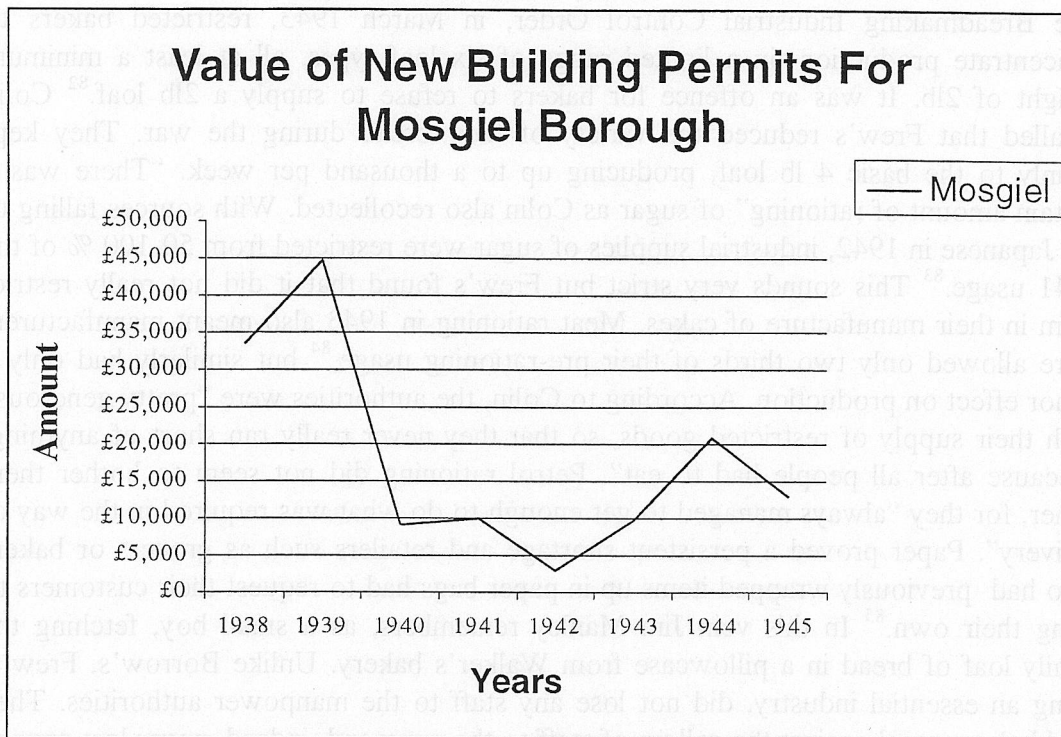
<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.698.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, p.755.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Colin Frew.

<sup>87</sup> Mosgiel District Patriotic Committee Correspondence and Finance Records (Hereinafter, MDPC Correspondence); Account 1 Dec. 1940 from Frew Brothers to The Secretary, Mosgiel Patriotic Association. An account in December 1940 for the Mosgiel Patriotic Association, which organised the send offs, listed the usual fare; Sandwiches (£1/10/-), 25 Dozen Cakes, at one shilling per dozen (£1/5/-), Tea (1/8), Sugar (1/-), Milk (1/6) at a total of £2/19/2.

Figure 7.



Source: New Zealand Local Authorities Handbook.

harmful for their business. Indeed, it seems to have progressed along quite profitably, for Frew's were able to take over the Outram bakery later in the conflict and sell their goods from it.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, Frew's felt the impact of the war through the increased bureaucracy of zoning and rationing, however, this proved only of minor consequence. The opportunities offered by the air station and catering the send offs, offset much of the negative effects of the government controls, so that in contrast to the other local businesses we have seen, the impact of the war on the bakery was quite small.

The building industry continued locally during the war, although in a rather interrupted fashion as shortages and defence priorities took their toll. As an indication, by 1942 even the number of building permits issued by the Mosgiel Borough Council, mainly for add on rooms or sheds, or outhouses, had dropped to half the 1938 number.<sup>89</sup> Figure 7 (facing) demonstrates this trend more, showing that the value of new building in the Borough rapidly dropped from £44,662 in 1939-40 to only £3,054 in 1942-3.<sup>90</sup> Robert Muirhead and son were one such local builder - while also juggling a funeral directors, a hardware shop and a few petrol pumps - who felt the press of total war on their trade. From the outset, the Building Emergency Regulations 1939 imposed the usual wide ranging powers on a Building Controller who could control the issue of all building permits and regulate the supply and use of building materials,<sup>91</sup> so that important (usually war related jobs) took precedent. According to Baker, in March 1941 a governmental order of priority had emerged, listing defence works as the most important, followed by hospital construction, buildings for processing or storing farm produce, new factories and then housing. By this stage, anyway, private building had become very sluggish because of severe shortages of corrugated iron.<sup>92</sup> For Muirhead's who were cottage builders and joiners, mainly used to building houses, the situation did not look favourable, having struggled through the Depression. However, like the saying, as one door closes another opens and this was literally true for them.

As the war situation and regulations meant a severe downturn in private construction, so it opened up new opportunities. Military contracts kept them busy for long periods of time in the first half of the war. Robert and James Muirhead, and the carpenters they employed were among the army of tradesmen and builders from over Otago working in association with the Public Works Department to construct RNZAF Taieri Air Station at the beginning of the war. Contributing to building barracks, officer's houses, huts and their interior finishings (cupboards, wardrobes and such) kept them busy long after aerodrome's pilot training began. They also had the advantage of owning a yard which meant they could store timber and work off site, making such things as their own doors, window frames and furnishings to send down the road to the base.<sup>93</sup> More government work followed this when they participated in the refurbishment and maintenance of Wingatui Racecourse Military Camp during 1941-2. While these jobs are, perhaps, not comparable to the construction boom of later United States Army camps in the North Island, or other public defence works, it

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<sup>88</sup> Interview, Colin Frew.

<sup>89</sup> Mosgiel Borough Council Building Permits Books 1938-1942. Their totals were 40 and obviously 20 respectively.

<sup>90</sup> New Zealand Local Authorities Handbooks, 1938/39-1946/7.

<sup>91</sup> The Building Emergency Regulations 1939 (1939/155).

<sup>92</sup> Baker, pp. 225, 248.

<sup>93</sup> Interview, Jim Manley. He commenced work with Muirhead's in 1947.

nevertheless represented a substantial piece of good fortune to turn up on the doorstep of local builders.

Muirhead's, making the best out of a bad situation for the country, turned their hand to air raid trench construction and installing the walls and duckboards in the local council trenches.<sup>94</sup> They also tendered for the potential financial windfall to build the proposed pipe shelters at the Holy Cross College<sup>95</sup> and Mosgiel Woollen Mill<sup>96</sup> although these did not get much beyond a rudimentary planning stage. Interspersed with the government work they continued constructing farm buildings (permitted under the regulations) and small maintenance work around the town. The hardware shop and petrol pumps provided extra income but were also hit by shortages. As Figure 7 shows, after 1943 the situation eased as defence works were completed and the government freed some resources to deal with the chronic national housing shortage, leaving Muirhead's to gradually return to what they knew best. The War had a tremendous impact on the industry cutting out practically all private building, but the war did not choke it almost to death, as happened with the petrol restrictions on the garages. Instead, in many cases as took place locally, the war threw up new opportunities of government work, so that while Muirhead's felt the upheaval and limitations wrought by the conflict, they also found alternative benefits. The impact on them, while both negative and positive, was nonetheless comprehensive.

In contrast, the small local coal mining industry on the hills south east of Mosgiel, owned by local man George Scurr, found the outbreak of war an immensely positive impact. As one of the first industries to be classed as essential in January 1942, a shortage of quality imported Australian bituminous coal combined with increased industrial war production meant Scurr's Willowbank company were able to supply as much of the local lignite to the government as they could.<sup>97</sup> Excess profit and war taxes may have taken some of the gloss on the high output, but government subsidies to mine owners in 1940 and 1942 would have gone some way to off setting this.<sup>98</sup> For Scurr's and the local industry, the war had a significant impact in making their product a lot more important than it had been before its outbreak and enabled them to benefit for it.

Rather than the larger manufacturers or processors like the mill, dairy factories or even the coal mine, the multitude of smaller retail businesses were at the sharp end of the effects of the War. These small businesses, shops, stores and tradesmen, made up most of the economic activity in the town forming the major part of the local service hub of the Taieri Plains. Proprietors and owners spent each day dealing with the different problems and complications of stock shortages, rationing, even panic buying and administration and regulations to be obeyed, more than large manufacturers had to. They saw how it affected the customers and the business community at ground level. These small enterprises had less financial margin to survive the problems doled out by total war, than large firms, so felt its impact and saw its effects more sharply. A brief overview of these emphasises this and show really how far wartime government bureaucracy and supply uncertainty infiltrated.

Shortages of stock or material were the main problem throughout the retail trade, brought about or accentuated by the war, and this in turn meant other headaches

<sup>94</sup> Air Raid Shelter File: letter, 31 Mar. 1944, TC to District Engineer, Public Works Dept., Dunedin.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, letter, 29 May 1942, Mandeno & Fraser, Registered Architects, Dn, to TC. See also ch.5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, letter, 18 Mar. 1942, Millar & White Architects to TC.

<sup>97</sup> Kirk, pp. 209-10; Baker, p.410.

<sup>98</sup> Yearbook (1946), p.337.

such as rationing and its administration for some. The impact of rationing at its most preliminary stage fell on the Post Office, as the local government agency and distributor of the ration books. All traders in rationed goods were required to be registered and licensed for each type sold, under rationing emergency regulations of 1942 and 1943.<sup>99</sup> The rigmarole had only begun, however. Each consumer had to register with one trader and then surrender the appropriate coupons to obtain the goods.<sup>100</sup> Obviously heavy punishment awaited those retailers (or at least those who were caught) who contravened the regulations. Grocers or general stores probably fared worst in this paper war, stocking many of the goods like tea, sugar, butter and eggs which required the 'equitable distribution' of rationing at various stages. The grocers in Mosgiel, Harold Johns, Henry Wilson (of Wilson W. & R. Stores), Jim Mitchell, Bill Culling (Star Stores South Island) and the Mosgiel Industrial Co-op, thus would have had most of the town population's (2349 according to the 1945 census) individual registrations for each of these four commodities. This meant a lot of administration, many thousands of coupons in use, and a tremendous amount more reconciling, checking and book work for the proprietors. Less than a month after sugar became the first food item rationed in April 1942, the president of the Otago Master Grocers Association, Mr W. Anderson, complained that "The selling of sugar by coupon has imposed an enormous amount of extra and unnecessary work on the retailers".<sup>101</sup> This has echoes of Jim Rowe at Chadwick's. It must be noted that rationing did limit sales, but to even amounts for individuals, so that generally the same quantity that shopkeepers received from distributors would be sold, just in equally divided parts, rather than some customers buying out all the limited stock leaving the rest with none. Rationing was only a symptom of the shortage disease.

These shortages, the handicap of supply uncertainty, meant that in many cases, retailers could provide only a shadow of their pre-war variety of goods. It must have proved dissatisfying for the local grocers to face their customers with only limited stock lines, even if the War took priority. Longmate noted that it was the retailer who bore the brunt of citizens' rationing and austerity.<sup>102</sup> As stocks of goods dwindled and replacements became irregular or non-existent, supplying everyday items such as golden syrup, mustard, shoe polish, pencils, torch batteries and soap were very scarce.<sup>103</sup> An example of the difficulties of providing a decent service is seen in a local newspaper report of 1944, stating that "supplies of sardines and tinned fruit will shortly be available for distribution through retail grocer's stores in Dunedin. Both of these lines of tinned food have been practically unprocurable in New Zealand for the last two or three years".<sup>104</sup> It is easy to understand the retailers' frustration at the unavailability of important lines of stock like this for so long. Incidents of panic buying following rumours of imminent rationing or shortages of specific items occurred in Dunedin and other cities, but do not appear to have ignited in a town as small as Mosgiel.

Butchers, such as locals Alec Steven, Bert McCunn and Ralph Holland, and drapers were other groups to feel the bureaucratic press of rationing. Taylor notes that

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<sup>99</sup> The Rationing Emergency Regulations 1942 (1942/111); The Rationing Emergency Regulations 1942, Amendment No.1 (1943/35).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid (1942/111), Reg. 8, Reg. 9 (4); Taylor, p.789. Even small children had coupon books.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 5 May 1942, p.2.

<sup>102</sup> N.Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War*, p.356. (Hereinafter Longmate, *How We Lived Then*.)

<sup>103</sup> Taylor, pp. 765-66.

<sup>104</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 May 1944, p.4.

after their introduction in March 1944, coupons were “no mere facade” for the distribution of meat. Each days coupons had to be totalled and banked at least once a week. The bank’s credit slips, with other supporting evidence went with the butchers four weekly returns to the rationing authorities. All butchers received 100 lb of meat for every £2/15/10d of coupons banked in the preceding fortnight.<sup>105</sup> Rationing applied to practically all fresh carcase meat,<sup>106</sup> so that it wielded a certain influence over the local trade. Generally the public tended to save their coupons for traditional Sunday roasts, so each Saturday morning from 1944 became an impossible scramble with most prime meat selling out soon after opening. Draper’s stores, like A. F. Cheyne’s, in Mosgiel also followed a similar rigmarole, cutting coupons for clothing and household linen rationing and sending them to the Rationing Controller each month.

Some dealers in non-essential items which the authorities felt, did not warrant rationing or control notices, felt the press of war through the unavailability of their stock. Leslie Borrow,<sup>107</sup> the local jeweller, watchmaker and optician in Gordon Road, found the War a challenging time. Imports of clocks had been severely cut in 1938 by the import controls and stocks were low by the outbreak of war. So, too, were wristwatches which, came from Switzerland, and were soon scarce.<sup>108</sup> Watchmaker’s stocks dwindled away with little assurance of replacements. Leslie’s son, Bill Borrow, who worked in Dunedin before joining the RNZAF, remembered his father’s problems:

For new stock, yes it was very difficult. It was very hard to get replacement watches that were any good . . . It seemed as if, no proof of this, but a lot of the watchmakers or jewellers, reckoned that . . . somehow a lot of the stock [was] going over to the forces by certain people that had connections. This sort of thing always happens in wartime.

Taylor notes that by April 1941 even the cheaper wristwatches had vanished.<sup>109</sup> However, in the south at least, it appears that this was not quite the case. Bill recalled that “the top quality line seemed to disappear quickly; very hard to get, but you could get the cheaper stuff and I think the suppliers raised it a bit in price and it went through the chain. But I wouldn’t say to an exorbitant level”. So there were a few watches to sell, but hardly a great range to tempt customers or make much profit.

Demand for repairs of existing watches thus, increased heavily, but according to the *Auckland Star*, “lack of parts and skilled labour made these very slow”.<sup>110</sup> In comparison Bill Borrow, however, thought that “parts in New Zealand were pretty well stocked”, besides which his father would make many parts if he didn’t have them. Repairs did keep him very busy though for, as in Auckland, demand swamped the remaining watchmakers, since others with the technical skills were putting them to use in the services, particularly the Airforce. Being the only watchmaker meant demand was always there, but this large turnover of repair work did not ensure a financial windfall. In those days watchmakers charged a flat estimate for a job, not priced by the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p.832.

<sup>106</sup> Yearbook (1946), pp.697-8. Canned corned beef and mutton were not available for local consumption. Even mince was eventually rationed.

<sup>107</sup> His picture appears between pages

<sup>108</sup> Taylor, p.763.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. On top of this, Mr Borrow had the contract for the care, maintenance and repair of all railway clocks in Otago. Kirk, p.114.

hour as they do today. He worked usual retail hours, but also did quite a bit of work at home or else went back to the shop at night to try to get through the pile of repairs.<sup>111</sup>

It certainly did not help in 1942 when the National Service authorities directed his assistant, Ruby Armstrong, into the Mosgiel mill. Bill explained:

Well, Dad had a girl, worked at the shop for him, and she was a good girl too, and they just sent him the papers one day. She had to have an interview and she was manpowered to the mill. . . You couldn't stop it, you just lost staff. They'd take them away and say you've got to work at the mill . . . It was his only assistant. He had to rattle around by himself and try and find someone else to train . . . He got another girl after a while, but everyone was in the same boat.

Against a non-essential industry like a watchmaker/jeweller's shop, the Mill's production of military garments took priority for labour allocation. This is perhaps the most direct example of the war on L. B. Borrow's watchmaking business, leaving him without any relief to cope with the shop counter and the urgent repairs waiting out the back.

Mr Borrow coped with this, nevertheless, just as he coped with the other effects of war on watchmakers and jewellers. The paucity of stock, even if the situation proved slightly better than Auckland, and the resulting long hours of busy repair work on customers' failing pre-war watches and clocks, meant the war certainly had a marked impact on his business.

Shortages, the bugbear of most retailers, grew more common as the country's economy stretched to breaking point. The *Otago Daily Times* on 20 May 1942 stated that many Dunedin tobacconists had sold out of their stocks and were unable to procure any further supplies, laying the blame on disrupted war shipments from the North Island and a producer's labour shortage. By Christmas time in that year a Dunedin tobacco shop proprietor admitted difficulty in meeting public demand, since most popular brands were in very short supply. Fancy lines such as pipes, pouches, cigarette cases or holders were snapped up immediately if any became available.<sup>112</sup> Local stockists of tobacco, for example, like hairdressers Joll, McCloy and Scott, or billiard saloon owners Ernie Matson or John Walker would have felt similar pressure, for their trade was practically the same to that in Dunedin.

Business continued without much problem for local fruiterers G. W. Wong, C. Law and Bill Hoad, with local vegetables from Outram market gardens, and fruit from Central Otago. However, the more exotic varieties (which probably fetched exotic prices as well) were missing. In June 1941, for example, an small shipment of Samoan bananas arrived for the first time in two months, but Australian oranges and lemons were off the market.<sup>113</sup> This occurred well before the outbreak of the Pacific war, which further disrupted shipping schedules and made imported fruit a very low priority item. Jim Manley hardly ever saw bananas in Law's shop, in Gordon Rd, during the war and never saw items such as pineapples or coconuts until after it had ended.

Publicans found early problems with liquor supply. By July 1941 many were only able to sell spirits in measured nips across the counter.<sup>114</sup> In August 1942 an *Otago Daily Times* report recorded local hotel keeper's comments that unless something was done to augment supplies in the near future, Dunedin would become

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<sup>111</sup> Interview, B. Borrow.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 16 Dec. 1942, p.2.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 28 June 1941, p.2.

<sup>114</sup> Taylor, p.757.

“bone dry”.<sup>115</sup> This was not a pleasant thought for William Knott of the Railway Hotel or John O’Brien of the Mosgiel Hotel (now The Crofter’s Arms). The seriousness of the position can be seen by the fact that one informant who self rationed his bar sales of whisky to one bottle a day explained that pre-war he could dispose of about 60 bottles a week. The sale of rum had been banned after Pearl Harbour, to keep the limited stocks for military use, restricting choice even more.<sup>116</sup> Jim Rowe was more scathing about the quality of whisky available in the local establishments.

. . . There was certainly a shortage of spirits, because they brought some whisky, some Aussie whisky over, and one was called ‘Corio’, and they called it Cor 10, and it was bloody awful, I mean it was like paint stripper, bloody terrible whisky; real rot gut stuff. But that was the only whisky that you could get hold of, all of the scotch whiskys and that sort of imported whiskys, that was stopped.

By 1943 even a shortage of glasses befell local publicans when it became “impossible” to obtain supplies from Australia and none were being produced in this country.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, beer supplies continued to be relatively stable, even if they were watered.<sup>118</sup>

On top of supply problems, direct government intervention in the trade via new regulations meant to minimise drunkenness in a time of national emergency, imposed further limits to publicans. Under the Licensing Act Emergency Regulation 1942 (No.2) (1942/186) bars would open an hour later, from 10 am to 6 pm on weekdays and Saturday, but also close between 2 pm to 4 pm on Saturday, the day of biggest drinking turnover. It became an offence to sell liquor to take away from the hotel, not only to soldiers as had been since the start of the war, but to the other services as well. However, these proved not to be such a problem, since the after hours trade to locals continued to flourish undaunted throughout the War years (see Chapter 8). Of more concern was the lack of trade brought about by the number of local young men, traditionally good clientele of pubs, away from the town with the services. Despite the difficulties of some shortages and the intervention of bureaucracy the pubs still managed to do a good trade.

Radios too, disappeared after production for the public had ceased in July 1942.<sup>119</sup> Initially the war proved good for business, with manufacturers and stockists encompassing a war news sales pitch. Begg’s of Princes St, Dunedin, for example, exhorted readers of the *Otago Daily Times* in April 1940 to “TUNE INTO THE NEWS DIRECT FROM EUROPE WITH A 1940 PHILCO - Everyday; every night . . . almost every hour . . . the stirring news of historic events is being broadcast from the capitals of Europe - vivid fateful, dramatic”.<sup>120</sup> However, numbers advertised for sale in the *ODT* dropped dramatically from 1939 to 1943. All this meant that Ernie Cooper of Mosgiel Radio Supplies had to rely on repairs of radios and other small electrical appliances such as jugs and irons to keep his shop afloat.<sup>121</sup> It may be why he had taken on J. A. Reville as a partner in the business by 1944.

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<sup>115</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 Aug. 1942, p.4. “There will be a more rigorous form of prohibition in respect to wine and spirits than the most ardent temperance advocate ever contemplated”!

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 18 Dec. 1941, p.8.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 17 June 1943, p.2.

<sup>118</sup> C. Bollinger, *Grog’s Own Country*, pp.55-6.

<sup>119</sup> Taylor, p.764.

<sup>120</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 Apr. 1940, p.12.

<sup>121</sup> Interview, Jim Manley.



So generally, shortages affected most of the wide array of businesses in Mosgiel. Jim Rowe, at the garage, agreed, commenting on his fellow traders plight.

Oh yeah . . . turn over must have dropped to hell with the restricted amount of goods you could get hold of to sell . . . and it must have made quite an impact on people employed, particularly in shops and things like that . . . I don't know that any closed completely that I can think of, but I mean all that type of business would certainly face a marked downturn.

The War did infiltrate effects into most trades and occupations, but this is not to say that it put them all out of business. A comparison of the 1941 and 1945 editions of *Stones Directory* reveals only a few changes in the whole of the Gordon Road retail area. Barton Gilmore, general merchant had gone by 1945. Annie Millan (fancy goods) and Catherine Fahey (confectioner) had been replaced by Mrs Brough, a florist, and Mrs Cronin (homemade cakes) respectively. The Mosgiel Radio Supplies of Ernie Cooper became a partnership with J. A. Revill, while Maurie Walker, one of Frew's competitors, at 150 Gordon Road, had been replaced by an outlet of the Caversham Baker, J. R. Brown Ltd. Whether these changes were brought about by shortages and low profits is unknown. One thing is sure, however, the war did not help any of these businesses. Bruce Wood took over Chadwick's cycle shop as mentioned previously, and another cycle agent, Ernest Peat, had set up a shop by war's end, as bike and tyre shortages ended. These changes seem only to be the norm of business activities over a passage of four years. The other retailers and businesses survived, selling what stock they could get, while the customers accepted the lack of choice as part of the war effort. Profits may not have been outstanding but business competition continued. Ron Kirk commented that through its history sometimes it seemed there were too many shops in Mosgiel for the population and competition was very tough.<sup>122</sup> It seems likely that the war with its supply problems was one of those times and the resultant squeeze on sales must have hurt the shops somewhat. The easy option of a trip into Dunedin to try to find goods which were scarce in Mosgiel, also added to the pressure of the local retail sector.

In many cases rationing or shortages meant other goods were substituted by consumers so that those shops with more variety available fared better. Specialist businesses such as a service station, radio shop or coal merchant would have had more problems when supply dried up than grocers or general stores like Mosgiel Industrial Co-op or Star Stores, with a lot of different product lines. Consumers might buy jelly crystals for use as a sugar substitute, use a shirt as a pyjama top or buy rice to top up the meat ration, for example. Most of their money did not disappear; after a fruitless search it simply went to different things. Workers who were generally earning more than before the war, due to longer hours and overtime, were not starving as a result of the war; their choice had simply been restricted.

One positive aspect of the war to impact on other centres, the influx of American troops as in Auckland and Wellington regions, had no bearing on Mosgiel, for practically all were stationed in the North Island. The big spending Americans, with the exchange rate very much on their side, pumped an inordinate amount of money into their local economies. Mosgiel businesses did not get to partake in any such river of money that other small towns near the American bases, such as Paekakeriki or Warkworth did. Things were not all bad for local shopkeepers and craftsmen though,

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<sup>122</sup> Kirk, pp. 116-17.

because of the presence of RNZAF Taieri and Wingatui Camp at various times, but these did not produce anything like the American windfall. Soldiers were only allowed out of Wingatui camp on limited occasions and most shops were closed by 6.00 pm every weekday except the late Friday night.<sup>123</sup> Hotel closing hours (see above) were also 6.00 pm. Unless they lived in Mosgiel, most soldiers or airmen with a day's leave or more, headed for the brighter lights of Dunedin to spend their money. The fact that the usual time off for leave was Saturday night and Sunday for the pilots,<sup>124</sup> when all the shops were closed in Mosgiel, did not help matters.

However, the Air Station and Wingatui camp were so large that a sizeable number, like the RNZAF ground staff who were stationed more permanently at the base, still visited Mosgiel, especially when they only had a few hours off. Many residents recalled that there were a lot allowed out of camp and the air station on Friday night; the late shopping night.<sup>125</sup> Soldiers or airmen with a few shillings to spare might buy some small luxuries such as tobacco, cigarettes, fruit, sweets, writing paper, magazines or a book to raise the monotony of camp life. They might pass their time by buying some fish and chips, then visiting the billiard parlours or the pictures. Many came over during the week nights to go to the pictures run by Ernie Strain in the Coronation Hall.

Some RNZAF officer instructors lived in the town in state houses in Green St. Jim Rowe remembered a few with cars who were good customers at Chadwick's garage because they received extra petrol rations and hence bought more petrol for living off base. In these and other subtle ways, such as Frew's selling pies at the fenceline of the base, a lot more money flowed through Mosgiel's cash registers than would have without the military presence. This is given voice by the vociferous efforts of council and businessmen to oppose the rumoured closure of RNZAF Taieri late in 1944. The town would have picked up more than its proportional share of business. Dunedin with a population of 80,000 received most of the contracts for the supply of goods and services and also got much of the money from men on leave, from the two military establishments. However, even the small slice of this business amounted, proportionally, to a lot for Mosgiel, with its normal population of just over 2000, and had a comparatively very beneficial effect.

If the service presence was somewhat of a bonus, then the town relied on the farming sector. Mosgiel had developed very much into a service town for the Taieri Plains and during the war this proved no exception. It is not in the scope of this study to look at the impact of the war on farming or market gardening or its vital contribution to the country's war effort, but the farmers did, however, have a relatively important influence on business in the town. Apart from their obvious supply of milk to the dairy factories, local grocers and fruiterers usually received their vegetable and egg supplies from the Taieri. Mosgiel served many of their other needs for mechanical repairs and bulding construction, coal, petrol, groceries and other household and consumer items. Despite grumbles about low milk prices and labour shortages, with guaranteed government markets for all the milk,<sup>126</sup> meat and wool they could produce, farmers always had enough money to make have a telling impact in Mosgiel shops and businesses. Jim Rowe recalled that they all had cars, with extra petrol rations and used

<sup>123</sup> Yearbook (1946), p631. The Shops and Offices Act 1920.

<sup>124</sup> Interview, Arthur Duff.

<sup>125</sup> Interviews, Bill Borrow, Jim Manley, Fay and Gary Nicolson, George Allen, Ray and Isobel Williams and Jim Rowe.

<sup>126</sup> Most of the Taieri Plains are in dairy production.

to come into the town on Friday for late night shopping. He said that they always seemed to have money, although they probably did not come to town that often. When they did, however, it provided the town with regular and solid income.

As this chapter draws to a close it is important to recognise the role of the government's major financial stabilisation and taxation policies. It implemented a comprehensive economic stabilisation scheme in December 1942 to fix wages and prices for about 150 cost of living necessities - covering such things as rent, basic foods, clothing and household items - in an effort to prevent accelerated inflation. The relevant fact for the wartime Mosgiel businesses is the strict price control on the goods and services they sold, and the wages paid to employees. Thus throughout the war, dealers in most everyday items; the grocers, draper, butchers, bakers and services like taxi drivers were restricted in the price that they were able to charge for their goods. They found themselves in a strange limbo, not controlled by supply and demand, but by government dictated price ceilings. They could not raise prices to offset the shortage in commodities. In the course of the War, it was proved another bureaucratic difficulty to contend with.

The bogey of taxation proved to be the other main direct government influence in the War. The Labour government showed a marked reluctance to borrow overseas to fund the war and determined to raise capital through taxation and internal borrowing to cover the huge costs of the War. Raised wartime taxation from the War Expenses Act and the National Security tax of 1940 affected all businesses from local traders, services and shops the same way it did the mill or dairy factories, increasing the problems of trade and manufacture in wartime.

Overall, the economic effects of the War proved prominent in the town. In the main, the War had a widespread, usually negative impact, on Mosgiel businesses, in contrast to other areas of the community we have seen. Local businesses felt the pressure of a country attempting to function while trying to fight and win a modern war. Some could adapt, most had to cope until the end of hostilities. The impact of this total war manifested itself mainly in the form of a greatly increased bureaucratic governmental presence and influence over businesses and the worsening shortage of goods and materials available. This shortage, of the supplies of all sorts of goods from overseas and within the country, or of transport to deliver it, had obvious effects on those retailers whose livelihood it was to on-sell these, or those businesses which used them as part of manufacturing process. Shortage of manpower also proved a war-induced impact. The outlawing of the use of scarce commodities or the limiting of their distribution through the rationing system affected some unlucky others in the War's latter years. The individual administration of rationing, the coupon collection and balancing of official accounts provided further problems and extra work for them. Many industries and businesses felt the impact of the extension of central government control, which under Labour had already increased before the war. Regulations, controllers, and increased administration to keep control of the country's limited resources reached into most areas of local business. Most felt the effect of the government policy decisions to restrict certain aspects of their business activities; whether on trading hours, impressment of vehicles, manpowering of staff, zoning, enforced price fixing, the implementation of rationing or supply controls, under the auspices of the war effort. The changed conditions affected some very heavily in many aspects of their operations. The government's influence on the Mill and the dairy operations as well as the war-induced shortage effect on the garages, taxis, building trade, some retailers and even the coal mine, are examples of this. Most are negative

impacts, the latter positive. Nonetheless it did not choke economic activity in the town. Some found the war impact only minor irritation, such as the zoning of Frew's delivery area, butchers or publicans. However, few were hardly touched by the effect of the War at all, whether on their supplies of raw materials or goods, their production or their service to customers. Thus, the War had a significant overall impact on the business community in Mosgiel.

## Chapter 6:

# Workers and Employment.

Just as local business ventures felt the pressure of the War, so did labour, their main factor of production. Many workers in Mosgiel faced changes and disruption to their jobs and livelihoods as a result of the effects of the War. It proved to be an exciting time for many, in contrast to the drab problems of living through the recent Depression. Unemployment fell gradually as men moved into the armed forces and industries set about increased war production. Eventually this disruption carried through to a point where a labour shortage developed, opening the way for many traditional social customs to be put aside, if perhaps only temporarily. Women, especially, found the effect of this and it became much more acceptable, even patriotic, for those without children to take up employment. Women were also able to take up jobs in traditionally male dominated areas, such as the Post Office, since many of the local men had been called up. For younger men, military service was an obvious impact of the War. For a lot of those remaining, the pressure of increased war effort meant changes to their employment conditions, resulting in longer hours and less holidays. Eventually, this overwhelming pressure led the ever present Labour government to intervene by taking all aspects of the labour market under its control through the publication of the National Service Emergency Regulations 1942. The implementation of what would become commonly known as 'the manpower', unprecedented in 1914-18, affected the town considerably, as it did in most other parts of the country. As we will see, the War and associated war effort led to many changes for the workers in Mosgiel during the years 1939-45.

At the outbreak of war, the echoes of the Depression which had struck so savagely at the country were not long distant. Indeed, 19,000 men remained unemployed or on assisted work in September 1939,<sup>1</sup> but a substantial improvement upon the worst figure of 79,500 unemployed at the height of the hardship in October 1933.<sup>2</sup> Mosgiel shared in the burden and living conditions for many were difficult. The Government Unemployment Board in Wellington conceived a programme known as Scheme Number 5 to place subsidised unemployed labour with local bodies and Mosgiel Borough took on as many as it could. Work included a variety of jobs such as roading, scrub cutting, cleaning and, later, the construction of the town's swimming pool. The Taieri County set up an unemployment camp at Deep Stream in 1932, where conditions were very hard. Kirk writes that "about 80 men were put in tents at the depth of winter and set to an ordinary public works job on the steep road. Some men received only 5/- a week".<sup>3</sup> Without the comfort of a modern day benefit to fall back on the reality of unemployment affected all types of people in the town. In *Pulse of the Plain* a local newly wed couple then, remembered that time vividly.

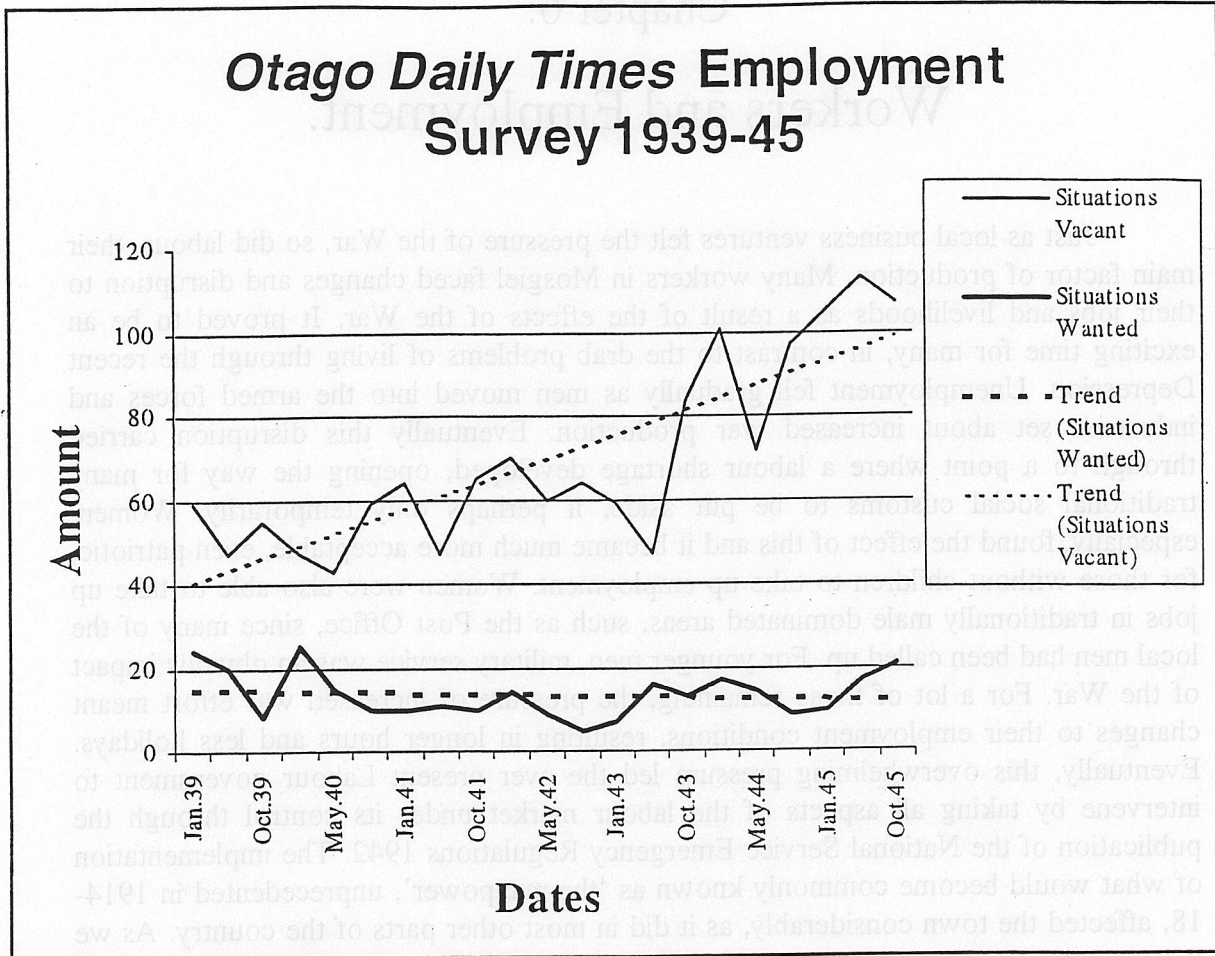
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<sup>1</sup> Baker, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Yearbook (1938), p.802.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk, p.153.

Figure 8.



Source: *Otago Daily Times*.

These figures are taken from the *Otago Daily Times* "Situations Vacant" and "Situations Wanted" columns for the last Saturday in the months of January, May and October in the years 1939-1945. Job vacancies increased as the nation's available labour resources were absorbed into war industry.

Opportunities for work were eagerly grasped. You grew vegetables, picked up coal off the railway line and got loads of wood . . . Women became adept at making things go a long way. Even the so called elite were hit. The depression was a great leveller. On the number 5 scheme one worked alongside such men. Some of the older men on the work gang who could not ride a bicycle would often have to walk long distances to and from work. It was a terrible time, but it was character building. You had to survive.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the Mosgiel Mayor's Unemployment Relief Fund and other charity efforts helped those in need of assistance.

With the Labour victory at the polls in 1935, new initiatives prompting full employment began. Scheme 5 became superseded by Scheme 13; further subsidised construction and upgrading work designed to place all fit unemployed men in full employment in local authorities, at award rates of pay. Subsidies in this case ranged from £1/10s to £2/5s for single and married men respectively to, in some cases, full wage cost.<sup>5</sup> In 1938 twenty-eight Mosgiel men benefited from the 100 percent subsidy arrangement, working for the M.B.C. Things gradually improved for many Mosgiel families with members out of work who had known only hardship and struggle for a long time.

The Depression years and those of slow recovery affected many men and, through them their families. A lot felt ashamed of being out of work in those times, for more so than today, their job was a major part of their identity and what others knew them by, so that some social stigma as well as financial pressure burdened them. The outbreak of war reversed this situation as it overtook the slow improvement in the economy to enable full employment where workers were at a premium. For most people the war was not welcome, but for many the changed employment prospects were.

The declaration of war did not bring immediate relief, however. After an initial week's flurry of almost 12,000 recruitments, the first mood of acceptance and excitement waned, and it slowed up. Taylor writes that many men were reluctant to leave good jobs paying £5 or £6 a week to join the discipline and drudgery of the Army for 7s a day. Thus, wholesale gaps in the labour force did not appear overnight. Jobs were still eagerly sought after. In Christchurch and Dunedin, for example, where papers initially published the names and addresses of volunteers, employers were swamped with applications for jobs before the present holders had even taken the medical examination.<sup>6</sup> The Mayor's Unemployment Relief Fund continued to operate after the first months of war, mainly giving assistance in the form of clothing, grocery or footwear orders and bags of coal into 1941, showing the depth of the problem.<sup>7</sup>

Slowly but surely, as men enlisted in the Expeditionary Force and the more glamorous R.N.Z.A.F. and Navy, jobs opened and the pool of unemployed shrank bit by bit, paving the way for women to enter the workforce in increasing numbers. The B.E.F. evacuation at Dunkirk proved the first crisis spurring greater enlistment in the forces. Job vacancies opened up and the jobless moved into them. Figure 8 (facing) demonstrates how the numbers of situations wanted through advertisements dropped. The unemployment problems of previous years began to be a memory as the situation turned around quickly after this. The war brought mixed feelings for some, for

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.152.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, p.87.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, p.72.

<sup>7</sup> MBC: Mayor's Unemployment Relief Committee Minutes, 22 April 1940; 14 July 1941.

although its tragedy and waste was upon them, at least they had jobs with which to restore their own self respect and a standard of living for their families which may have been lacking for a long time.

Speakers, posters and newspapers urged people to back up the fighting forces by working for victory - "work for your lives".<sup>8</sup> The seriousness of the situation dawned on the public, many it seems, for the first time. It prompted some women to reassess their own lifestyles and employment choices. Their growing participation in the workforce, as part of the industrial readjustments became a feature of the wartime economy. The terrible days of dole queues for their men were over, so much so, that now the chance existed for women to get both a job and a pay packet.

Before the war, women working for wages were the exception rather than the rule. Pamela Mason, in her dissertation 'The Redistribution of Womanpower', writes that generally young woman stayed at home until they were married, though by the beginning of the war it had become more acceptable to work at "suitable" employment until that time. After marriage, societal norm contended that most woman give up their employment to become homemakers supported by their husband. Housework without modern appliances and packaged foods was laborious and regarded as a full time task. Those who did continue work were regarded as 'unfortunates' because their spouse could not fully support them. She notes, "social convention decreed that women with small children should be full time mothers, and criticism and discrimination were directed at woman who disobeyed", for many people believed the sanctity of the family unit would be threatened if they did work outside the home.<sup>9</sup> This, not surprisingly, seems to have been the general feeling in Mosgiel, as it was in most other towns in the country. In the 1936 census 76% of the total female population of 735,258 classed themselves as 'dependent' on some other income, usually their husband or father, showing the scale of that custom.<sup>10</sup> Job prospects for those who chose to work were mainly limited to a range of traditional women's employment, such as nursing, teaching, libraries, office or shop work for those with better backgrounds; factory work or the drudgery of domestic service for others.<sup>11</sup> However, the onset of war made it not only acceptable to work, but patriotic. It also opened up a wider range of employment opportunities for many and in the process broadened their own horizons.

Around the country women moved into jobs which focussed on the war effort and war production, but initially still within the sphere of the traditional industries for their sex. Indeed, D. M. Brosnahan, in her thesis 'A Woman's Place', comments that initially women were actively discouraged from activities viewed as unfeminine in the hope that society should remain as unaltered as possible by the intrusion of war.<sup>12</sup> The expanded production of clothing, footwear and food processing factories welcomed more women into their premises, as happened in the case of the Dunedin area. In Mosgiel, the woollen mill was an obvious focal point. As we have seen previously, the production levels of this essential industry were to increase dramatically and it required labour to accomplish this. Local women had worked at the Mill since its inception in 1871<sup>13</sup> and with women seen to be adept at tasks such as sewing and weaving, it had

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, p.134.

<sup>9</sup> P. Mason, 'The Redistribution of Womanpower: Women in the Workforce, 1940-1945', pp. 8-11.

<sup>10</sup> J. Thrush, 'World War Two and its Postwar Repercussions on New Zealand Women', p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> D. M. Brosnahan, 'A Woman's Place : Changing Attitudes to the Role of Women in Society During World War II in New Zealand', p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, p.29.



long been accepted as a traditional women's job. It continued to be the single main employer of women in the town as it still does today. Many girls in the town tended to go there straight from school at age 14 - the school leaving age - until they married and, in some cases, after that if they needed the money. It tended to be a working class occupation, with the better educated or wealthier girls more inclined either to stay at home or aim towards the niceties of shop or office work. Mason suggests this to be the case, stating that factory work appears to have been regarded as a lower class occupation, with several of her interviewees expressing this opinion.<sup>14</sup> Some unmarried women continued in their work for many years until their retirement, such as Miss Bessie Turnbull, who worked in the hosiery section through the Boer, First and Second World Wars,<sup>15</sup> but few came back after having children.

Into the critical year of 1940, women made up 70.6 % of Mosgiel Woollen's 309 employees,<sup>16</sup> emphasising the scope of their participation, but it still did not prove enough. The pressure to acquire more staff to cope with the new production targets grew. The Bruce Woollen Mill, in Milton, faced with similar problems in 1940, established a bus service to bring additional workers in each day from Balclutha.<sup>17</sup> Taylor notes clothing and footwear factories and woollen mills drew back married women to work even before the fall of France. She writes that by the end of May 1940, Cabinet ministers were declaring that no greater service could be rendered to the country than skilled women going back to their old jobs. Eventually, towards mid-1941 P. C. Webb, the Minister of Labour, was calling on 'women of the middle classes' to tackle factory work.<sup>18</sup> In Britain, the government appealed to the heroic nature of factory work in pamphlets, slogans and newspapers.

In bureaucratic and economic terms this proved a sound theory and many women came forward, but in reality it took a while for the old social values about married women working, especially those with children, to wane. D. M. Brosnahan concluded that New Zealand society had difficulty in adjusting to the disruption caused by the new demands of the war<sup>19</sup> and this appears to have been true to a certain extent in this context in Mosgiel. Isobel William's mother, aged in her late forties, was one who heeded the call to go to work in the mill, but had to overcome some initial disapproval. Isobel explains:

I worked in the mill for about 9 or 10 months and didn't like it at all, so I left and stayed at home to look after my brother . . . and my mother went, she was an experienced sewer, so she went and worked at the mill . . . A lot of the ladies around the district thought this was disgraceful, you know, going away to work, but it wasn't very long before a lot of them had joined her and they never stopped either . . . I think she really enjoyed it. She wouldn't say then, of course, [but] the money was very handy. You didn't have a lot of money in those days, but I think she really liked the company . . .

The original attitudes took a while to discard, even on behalf of the war effort and I suspect some never agreed with it, seeing it only as a necessary evil. Margaret Kenny recalled a few older married female workmates, but in her department (hosiery) they tended to be younger and single. However, once people became more familiar with the situation, given status by governmental pleas and the example of the efforts of British

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<sup>14</sup> Mason, p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Kirk, pp.136, 144; Stewart, p.106.

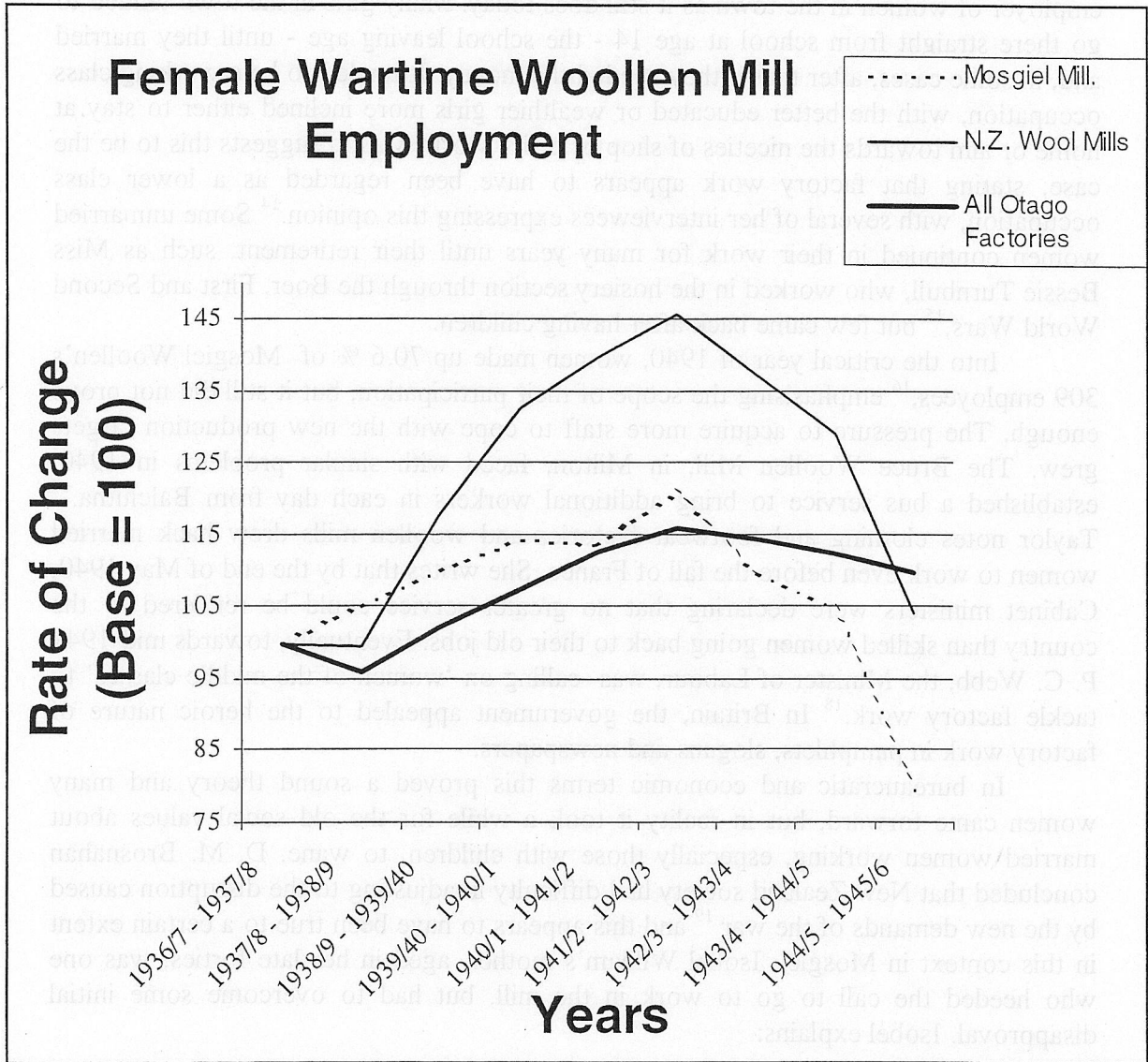
<sup>16</sup> Mill Statistics Book, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> McLean, p.111.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, pp.1090-91.

<sup>19</sup> Brosnahan, p.28.

Figure 9.



Wartime Female Woollen Mill Employment

Years	Mosgiel Mill.	N.Z. Wool Mills	All Otago Factories
1936/7 - 1937/8	100	100	100
1937/8 - 1938/9	105.1	99.5	95.9
1938/9 - 1939/40	110.0	117.8	102.1
1939/40 - 1940/1	114.2	132.8	107.4
1940/1 - 1941/2	113.8	140.0	112.6
1941/2 - 1942/3	120.9	145.7	115.9
1942/3 - 1943/4	109.6	137.3	114.4
1943/4 - 1944/5	104.9	129.1	112.4
1944/5 - 1945/6	79.6	104.3	109.8

women flooding into the work place, it became an acceptable activity for local married women to follow suit and a lot did. Fay Nicholson also noticed the return of a lot of women back to their old jobs in the Mill during the war.

Evidence of this flood of women workers back to the Mill is shown in Figure 9. It compares figures of female employment, between the Mosgiel mill, all national woollen mills and all Otago factories.<sup>20</sup> The table shows the cumulative percentage change in each category for each of the war years, starting at a base of 100 for the change between the preceding year 1936/7 - 1937/8. In other words, the second row shows that while the number of females employed at Mosgiel Woollens rose by 5.1% from the financial year 1936/7 to 1937/8, the figure for all 13 woollen mills in New Zealand dropped by 0.5%, and that for all Otago factories dropped by 4.1%. The next year's percentage changes are added on to the previous figures to give a cumulative total. In this case Mosgiel rose another 4.9% to put it on 110 (or 10% above the base figure), New Zealand woollen mills rose 18.3 % to be on 117.8, while Otago factories rose 6% to be on 102.1. The graph gives a better impression, showing the considerable rise in the numbers of women working, especially in all woollen mills throughout New Zealand. Mosgiel does not increase in such large leaps as this, suggesting that it was closer to capacity production than most other mills before the War, but rises faster than the growth rate of employees for all Otago factories. The Otago factory statistics are dealing with much larger numbers (around 4000) than the other two which accounts for the less dramatic changes. All three, however, show the peak employment numbers between the critical War years of 1941/2 and 1942/3, then the dramatic drop off as the crisis fades and the War is won. The minor decline of Mosgiel between 1940/1 and 1941/2 is rather confusing, however, perhaps the number of volunteer workers drying up, evidence of the Mill's increasing need for manpower control to direct females there after that date. The violent scale of the decline in females employed from 1943/4 - 1944/5 to 1944/5 - 1945/6 represents the effect of the release of many women from manpower controls and the large numbers of women returning to, or starting a home. These will both be discussed in more detail below. Overall, the graph shows the temporary nature many of the women workers; working to win the war and return to their previous lives.

Joanne Thrush notes that this wartime labour demand raised the image of women's employment in industry considerably, thus also contributing to this acceptance.<sup>21</sup> For many women, this chance to enter the workforce was greeted with open arms and they found it a stimulating experience in comparison with the hum-drum of life at home. Isobel's mother certainly felt this way. Ella Cameron, for example, took up work at the Post Office after her husband went overseas in the Army. It kept her occupied and the money was also useful.<sup>22</sup> One Auckland woman interviewed for Deborah Montgomerie did not go out to work but in hindsight wished that she had, to relieve the isolation and loneliness of her wartime experience of raising small children without her soldier husband to help.<sup>23</sup> Taylor adds that, "To receive their own pay packets, even slender ones, increased their self respect and offset the nag of rising prices . . . They liked being with other women on the job, away from the silence and well-worn home routines, and there was the sense of doing one's bit for the war

<sup>20</sup> *New Zealand Statistics of Factory and Building Production 1938-47*, pp.16, 28, 33-35, 42, 66. (Hereinafter *N.Z. Factory Statistics 1938-47*); Mill Statistic Book, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Thrush, p.25.

<sup>22</sup> Interview, Ella Cameron.

<sup>23</sup> Montgomerie, p.157.

effort".<sup>24</sup> This aptly captures much of the reason that they grasped the opportunity to take up jobs.

Of course, some did not like the work and left, such as Isobel herself, and a good number felt neither the need, nor inclination, to get a job, despite others doing so. It simply reflected the continuity of their pre-war values. Few women with smaller children to look after contemplated it either. Isobel stressed that women with dependant children did not go back to the Mosgiel mill, despite the shortage of labour, unless they had a daughter at home to look after the young children. This is in contrast to Britain where the pressure was such that married women with young children were encouraged to go to take up jobs. English historian Penny Summerfield found that the provision of collective nurseries for their children, pushed through by the British Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin himself, was a major focal point of the war on the home front, enabling industry access to relatively untapped but much needed labour resources.<sup>25</sup> There were no such opportunities in Mosgiel, or most of the country for that matter, for women with small children to go to work. Taylor notes that only in Wellington, where the demand for female labour was greatest, did an effective provision for the care of pre-school children with working mothers take place. In November 1941, P. C. Webb, the Minister of Labour, praised those working women who left their children with others and he spoke of the possibility of organising nurseries, but the government, for once, did not become involved.<sup>26</sup> There seems to have been no organised effort in the Mill, for example. In Mosgiel some may have left small children with their parents, friends, or a neighbour, but the author suspects very few. The prevailing attitudes, in the town at least, had changed only so much because of the war. It may have been seen to be feasible to let older women go to work, but not those with the responsibility of young children. The desperation of the war situation in Britain did not really apply as much in Mosgiel.

For many of those women who took the step into employment which they normally would not have, their 'war job' was initially for a limited time and simply for the war effort. Mason notes that women were seen as working to bring their menfolk home more quickly, than for any intrinsic value that paid work might give them. Kate Darian-Smith discovered the same in Melbourne.<sup>27</sup> This is true for many and they left employment near the end of the war. Ella Cameron, for instance, resigned near the end of the war when her husband was about to come home from overseas. Montgomerie also found that while some of her women interviewees needed to work to support themselves, a number chose to enter the workforce mainly motivated by a sense of patriotism.<sup>28</sup> A Mass Observation study conducted in British factories in 1944 concluded that, "There is no doubt . . . that a large majority of the women factory workers look forward to settling down and making a home after the war. A minority of less than a quarter were willing to continue in their present work"; and that those who wanted to stay were generally older women, unmarried or widows.<sup>29</sup> The situation appears somewhat similar in the Mosgiel mill. A lot of younger women left to get married, to return to their home duties, to be with husbands returned from overseas or,

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, pp.1091-92.

<sup>25</sup> P. Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*, pp.67-69.

<sup>26</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 21 Nov. 1941, p4. ". . . nurseries where philanthropic women can care for the infants of those who are doing war work."

<sup>27</sup> Mason, p.14.

<sup>28</sup> Montgomerie, p.201.

<sup>29</sup> A. Calder & D. Sheridan, *Speak for Yourself: A Mass Observation Anthology, 1937-1949*, p.178.

for some, to return to jobs they had been manpowered from. However, as in the study, older women like Isobel Williams' mother and a number of her workmates, found they enjoyed their job and their fleeting taste of independence enough that they stayed on after the war at Mosgiel Woollens. In 1945, Hislop, the Board Chairman, stated that "The year had been a most difficult one for some time due mainly to the reduced number of females in the company's employment", as may be evidenced by Figure 9.<sup>30</sup> In April 1945, a local Manpower Appeal Committee heard that there was a shortage of from 25 to 30 female workers at the Mosgiel Woollen Mill.<sup>31</sup> Instead of making up this shortfall, however, much heavier losses ensued over the next year, greatly increasing the problems of Mosgiel Limited. Between March that year and March 1946 the number of women employed had dropped by 31% from 203 to 140.<sup>32</sup> This was matched by a comparable fall in the number of female workers in all 14 woollen mills around the country. It slumped down 24.8% from 1,942 to 1,460 in the same year, showing the extent of the problem and similarity of feelings of many women around the country to vacate their jobs with the War over and manpower restrictions lifted.<sup>33</sup> Thus, aided by this on-going severe female labour shortage at the mill in the later War years, those wanting to stay had no problem in retaining their positions. Thrush also found that many other married women in all types of jobs willingly remained in paid employment.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, some Mosgiel women, like Isobel's mother continued at the Mill for years after the end of the war, well into the 1950's. Ray Williams commented that some of them stayed and stayed until they were sixty years old. The Mill may have found it beneficial to keep these older women anyway. A contemporary study by Maude Eaton found among other things that in contrast to initial thoughts, they made adept and dependable workers. Older women whose children had grown up, mainly worked because they enjoyed it; they enjoyed the company and the activity, like Isobel Williams' mother did. They tended to show greater reliability and responsibility than their younger colleagues who had short concentration spans and "an all-absorbing preoccupation with the subject of marriage".<sup>35</sup> These changed circumstances came about as an impact of the War. Older married women benefited from the relaxation of the stricter pre-war social norms which the labour shortages caused, to get employment and then prove worthy of keeping it once the conflict had finished. Without this, it is a lot more unlikely that they would ever have had the chance in the beginning to experience all that they did.

Women not only took advantage of the wartime labour worries to move into employment in greater numbers, but also into new employment areas. Around the country opportunities arose in previously unthought of areas away from traditional 'women's work', where few or none had been before. Women worked in sawmills, in

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<sup>30</sup> Seventy Second Ann. Report (1945). This continued to occur into the 1950's.

<sup>31</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 April 1945, p.6. The National Service Department report for that year intimated a shortfall of 270 female woollen mill workers nationwide. *A.J.H.R. 1945*; H-11A, Report of the National Service Department Employment Division, p.30.

<sup>32</sup> Mill Statistics Book, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> *N.Z. Factory Statistics 1944-6*, p.66; The 1945 National Service Department report to the House of Representatives blamed marriage, maternity, ill health, the widespread antipathy of juveniles to mill employment and an over-reliance on directed workers as the main reasons for the decline. *A.J.H.R. 1945*; H-11 A, p.49.

<sup>34</sup> Thrush, p.85.

<sup>35</sup> M. Eaton, *Girl Workers in New Zealand Factories*, pp. 16-20. This study was on behalf of the Industrial Psychology Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

brickworks, munitions works, the linen flax industry,<sup>36</sup> in engineering factories, in metal working, in rubber factories, at meatworks, in banks, the public service, on trams, trains, in taxis, as truck drivers, on milk rounds, as zoo attendants, joiners,<sup>37</sup> driving ambulances<sup>38</sup> and served in the police, Women's Land Service and the armed forces. Mosgiel, being a small town however, did not provide as much available choice. Before the war, the only employment prospects of most women (with a typical Standard 6 - 8 education) in the town were in the Mill, local shops, or some in domestic duties. The Mill had an overwhelming importance. For example, of the ten marriages recorded at the Mosgiel Methodist church between the years 1940-1945, eight of the brides were Mill workers and aged 19 to 23.<sup>39</sup> Others did piece work at home such as dressmaking or sewing repairs and a few were secretaries or office clerks. Some may have travelled to Dunedin to work at the Cadbury Fry Hudson factory, with a few more in offices in the city, but that was generally the scope of employment for local women. During the war the Mill's need for labour meant an obvious outlet for most locals wanting to work, but a few moved into different avenues opened up by the war. The Post Office became one of these major employers of women.

According to Mason, women replaced men in large numbers around the country, until the peak of female employment, in 1944 when almost 5,000 were engaged by the Post Office.<sup>40</sup> Thrush notes that women had always worked there,<sup>41</sup> however, in Mosgiel, Ella Cameron became the first woman employed there - at least during the war period. She started in 1941, greeted by eight male staff members, including the Postmaster Mr Cate, office staff and postmen. When she left late in 1944, only three males were left; the new Postmaster Mr Rose, Frank Scott and the telegraph boy Jimmy Chalmers.<sup>42</sup> The rest had been called up to the armed forces and replaced by women, providing ample evidence of the impact of the War in this situation. She did not meet any ill feeling or resistance on moving into the job, unlike in some situations, more especially in Britain (which pushed the gender employment roles further than in New Zealand) when women went into much more traditional male dominated jobs like steel working or machining.<sup>43</sup> Other women soon followed Ella into positions vacated in the Post Office. For the first few, their job consisted mainly of clerical work and manning the telephone exchange. Operating the exchange meant hard work but Ella preferred it because of the early morning or evening shift hours, enabling her to be at home in the day time to work in the garden and be with her mother, since her husband, brother and brother-in-law were all in the Army. She recalls that the work was very busy, especially on Sunday shifts with only one operator on. Stock sales were another peak time in the week, with stock agents and farmers calling each other up all day on Wednesday. Saturdays, the main racing day, were hectic with calls from the bookies.

Others moved into completely new jobs. Pamela Mason details the experience of one woman in a small country Post Office in the Dunedin postal district who, aged

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<sup>36</sup> Mason, p16.

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, pp.1074-96.

<sup>38</sup> *Evening Star*, 29 August 1942, p.8.

<sup>39</sup> Mosgiel Methodist Church Marriage Register, 1940-1966.

<sup>40</sup> Mason, p.28.

<sup>41</sup> Thrush, p.20.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Ella Cameron.

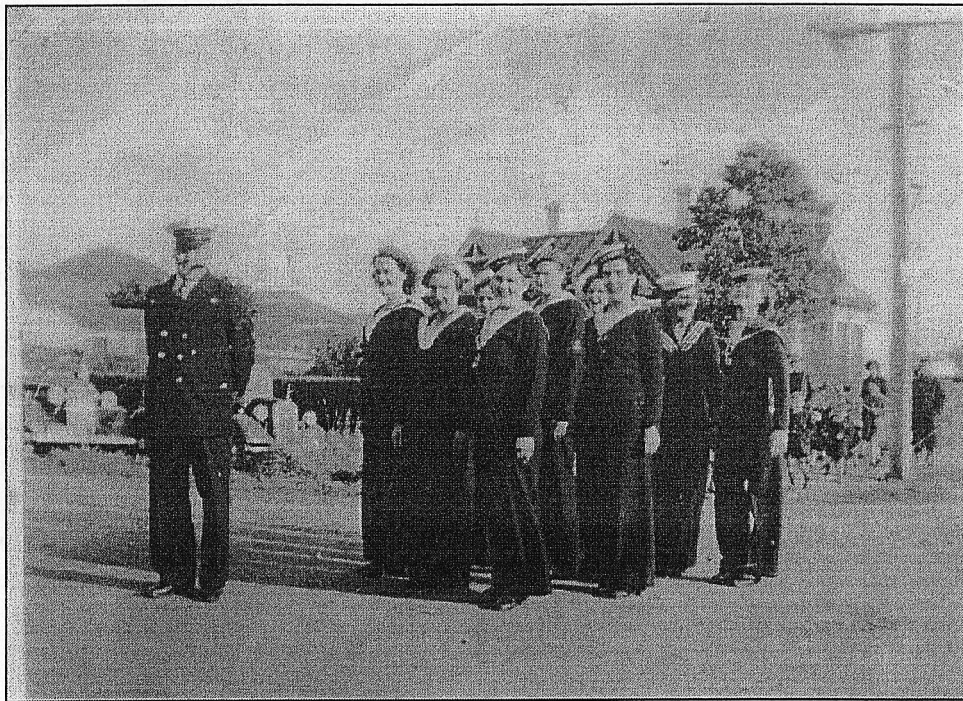
<sup>43</sup> Costello, p.201. Some male workers were afraid if women took their jobs they would be sent into the Army.



Three Mosgiel Post workers about to set off on their early morning postal delivery rounds.

Left to Right: *Daisy Gamble, Mavis Ashby, Noela Borrow.*

photo: V. Crozier.



V.E. Day Parade. Staff of the Mosgiel Mill before they boarded their battleship float in the big parade.

The captain of the ship was well known taxi driver 'Baldy' McLean. The crew were :

Front Rank: *I. Harper, A. Ives, P. Tourelle.* Second Rank: *R. Cullen, I. McMillan, M. Pouré.* Back Rank: *H. Grey,*

*D. Paul, M. Deaker.*

photo: I. Williams

25 with only a month's experience in the job, was asked to take over from the Postmaster when he went into the army in the middle of 1942. After attending a course in Christchurch for three months, she took over a staff of seven, (including one man) for the duration.<sup>44</sup> A change of such innovation did not occur in Mosgiel, which was similar in size with eight staff, but managed to replace the Postmaster Mr E. W. Cate with Mr Rose during the War. However, as the numbers of male staff dwindled at Mosgiel, postwomen replaced postmen for the first time ever, as a very visible impact of the War. Initially, although postwomen had appeared for some time in northern cities, the Dunedin Chief Post Office had been reluctant to use them until absolutely necessary. That time came in March 1942 when the first two, members of the W.W.S.A., set out on their daily rounds in Dunedin, accompanied by the fanfare of local newspapers which stated that more postwomen would be employed when vacancies occurred.<sup>45</sup> By this stage 70 women had replaced men in various jobs in the country offices of the postal district and the trend continued, as postwomen eventually became a common sight around Mosgiel and the Taieri. Noela Borrow, Daisy Gamble and Mavis Ashby were full time postwomen and mail sorters. This new employment meant totally different work than most had ever done, or even attempted before. Noela's brother, Bill, recalled her job.

She had a push bike, which they had to supply for themselves; I think she got 1 and 6 [1s 6d] for expenses . . . and her delivery area was from here [central Mosgiel] to the North Taieri hills every day. In the morning, go up there and back to the Post office, and afternoon up the hill to East Taieri and back; on a push bike, wet or fine. . . She also met the quarter to seven train in the morning from Dunedin to pick up a mail bag off it. Put it on the front of the bike, balance it on the bike and take it down to the Post Office. That was all just normal . . . it didn't pay much either . . .

Vera Crozier, one of the exchange operators, remembers filling in for the one of the postgirls on some occasions and doing the North Taieri run, because there were not many houses. The job sometimes had its little rewards and they really felt they were doing something useful as she explained:

. . . If there was mail from soldiers, you biked flat out to get to the house to get the letter delivered in the box. And I remember one man, he was a prisoner of war, he came from North Taieri and he was very friendly at that time with the North Taieri school teacher . . . I used to bike flat out to the North Taieri school to deliver this letter, prisoner of war letter, in the letter box and I thought how happy they'd be, because the P.O.W. letters were very few and far between.

In doing these new jobs sometimes the women found themselves in situations with which they had never had to cope with before. Lauris Edmonds, in her book *Women in Wartime*, describes a number of these experiences; such as land girls crossing swollen rivers or burying dead cows; tram conductresses dealing with drunken soldiers, a woman teaching Polish in a local refugee camp, or a bank teller, delivering bank cheques to businesses around her town, something unthinkable before the war. With the limited variety of employment in Mosgiel there were not as many new situations as these, but the local Post Office did produce a few. Ella Cameron recalled a dreadful experience she had one night at work on the telephone exchange.

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<sup>44</sup> Mason, p.29.

<sup>45</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 March 1942, p.4. ; *Evening Star*, 9 March 1942, p.2. These women wore the khaki uniforms of the WWSA.



Well, . . . the telegraph must have gone off at 5 o'clock, the telegraph office in Dunedin must have switched off. . . then if there was a 'U.G.M.', an Urgent Government Message, to tell you that somebody was killed or wounded or a desperate message like that, well they used to ring it through on the exchange and give it to us. My name was Isobella, my correct name, and I was on the board this night and I got this Urgent Government Message and I said no I wasn't allowed to take them, until I could find [someone senior] . . . and I couldn't get Mr Dark and I couldn't get Mr Rose. . . He [the Dunedin operator] came through later on and he said, "Well you'll have to take the message because it's got to be delivered tonight". And he started off with, "Mrs Isobella . . ." and I nearly fainted at the board, because my husband was overseas . . . It was actually Isobella Bain . . . and the chap said to me, "Are you alright" and I said, "I am now that I've got the surname, because you've just given me my own name and I thought it was for me, you see". . . So after that they were never allowed to give an exchange operator a message like that until one of the [senior] staff could be found to take the message. Oh yes that was a terrible night . . . You knew when it was, it used to just come through with 'U. G. M.' . . .

Vera had a similar experience when relieving on the telephone exchange.

I was on this particular Sunday night and they phoned through from Dunedin and said "We've got a U.G.M. for you" and I said, "Oh, I don't know if I can take it or not" and she said, "Oh yes, you'll have to" and I said "Well, I'm the only one here". So I said, "I'll take it on one condition, that its not related to a John Blackie" and she said, "I'm sorry it is", because the Blackie family . . . they were our family's best friends. She said, "You'll have to take it" and I said, "I'm sorry I can't", so I put them onto the postmaster . . . Then because we weren't allowed, because everything was confidential with these sort of messages, well I couldn't ring up my parents . . . and say, "Oh, John Blackie's been killed".

They were experiences that neither ever wanted repeated. This tended to be the problem with working in such a small community, as the postmistress interviewed by Pamela Mason agreed. With customers being personally known to the staff it made delivering or receiving bad news especially difficult.<sup>46</sup> Not all the situations were bad or stressful, however. Once, Ella received a box of chocolates for her help in a toll call connecting a caller with his bookie. Similarly, another time - known because of her help on the phones - she received a "hot tip" from a jockey at Wingatui, to put her shirt on a certain horse. The point is, that she would never have been involved in gambling or racing before the War. The impact of the War was to put people in new jobs in which they faced new challenges and experiences, both good and bad, which they would never have before 1939. They may not all have been pleasant, but it broadened their horizons in ways which some probably could not have imagined before the war.

While women took over a number of new jobs, some remained the preserve of men. These tended to involve heavy lifting or strenuous physical exertion. Taylor notes examples of women not being accepted as drivers of trams, nor accepted to repair the rails or roading. The public, she says, were uneasy about women doing pick and shovel work.<sup>47</sup> In Mosgiel, similar old values had not totally vanished. At a special meeting in November 1943, the M.B.C. resolved that G. E Gamble, the Council night-cart operator, must not allow his daughter to be employed with him on the cart, presumably the nature of the work being deemed not fit for a woman.<sup>48</sup> Thrush also found that women hired by the Railway Department were not deemed strong enough to take over

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<sup>46</sup> Mason, pp.29-30.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, pp.1084-85.

<sup>48</sup> MBC Minutes, (Special Meeting) 29 November 1943. Even if it seems she was helping him because of his ill health.

Figure 10.

Mosgiel Male Wartime Occupations (Class Groupings).

Category	1937	Class %	1941	Class %	1945	Class %
1.Empl.	9		8		8	
2. Prof.	4	} 4.9	7	} 5.2	7	} 6.2
3.Semi P	11		16		20	
4.Self E	118		139		123	
5.Offic.	15	}33.2	15	}35.6	17	} 34.9
6.W/ Col.	28		44		57	
7.Skilled	99		119		111	
8.Semi S.	35	}61.9	41	}59.2	38	} 58.9
9.Unskil.	166		169		183	
Total.	485	100.0	559	100.0	564	100.0

Figure 11.

Mosgiel Male Wartime Occupations (Individual).

Category	1937 as %	1941 as %	1945 as %
1.Employer	1.9	1.4	1.4
2.Professional	0.8	1.3	1.3
3.Semi-Profess.	2.3	2.9	3.5
4.Self Employed	24.3	24.9	21.8
5.Official/Petty Ex.	3.1	2.7	3.0
6.White Collar	5.8	7.9	10.1
7.Skilled	20.4	21.3	19.7
8.Semi-Skilled	7.2	7.4	6.7
9.Unskilled	34.2	30.2	32.5
Total.	100.0	100.0	100.0

men's positions as engine drivers or firemen.<sup>49</sup> Likewise in Mosgiel, at the Mill, some jobs stayed with the men. George Allen recalled talk of bringing women into the spinning and carding section. He said, "It was a monotonous job on the machines, . . . heavy enough, plenty of work, plenty of sweating too. They talked about women doing that job, at one part, but they were never brought in. There was a lot of lifting and that . . .". While the war did alter many aspects of the labour force, some things or attitudes did not change.

While many women moved out into the workforce and into new roles, many men also found their routines and lives changed. The most obvious effect of the War on many men was their enlistment in the armed forces, whether volunteers or through the later ballots. This meant the disruption of leaving their jobs for small periods of time for Territorial training, to anywhere up to the full six years duration of the conflict, depending on their circumstances. Following Pearl Harbour and again after Singapore, a lot of men were called up for home defence garrison duty. Hancock notes that as the War progressed, total military mobilisation had risen from 0.5 % of the male working population - aged 15-64 - in September 1939, to 29.5 % in September 1942 and 24.7 % by the end of 1943.<sup>50</sup> These figures give some impression as to the impact of the War in taking between one half to nearly one third of the male workforce out of the labour market for almost two years. Of those not subject to military service, some were unfit or too old, but many were under the industrial conscription of manpower. Thus, for a great many men in the military age group - up to 46 years - the War meant feeling the firm hand of government control at some stage, through their service in the armed forces or in the restrictions of work in an essential industry. Similarly, the same is true for Mosgiel men. Of those interviewed or mentioned during the previous chapters, Alan Kenny, Ray Kingan, Bill Borrow, Ian Murdoch, Arthur Chadwick, L. B. Borrow (in the OMR Band), Vera Crozier's father and Ray Williams, served in the armed forces at some stage during the War, as did Arthur Duff (although he was not from the Taieri then). George Allen and Ray Williams - until March 1945 - were held in essential industry at the Mill. Jim Rowe, Gary Nicolson and Jim Manley were too young.

While younger men were very much affected, a survey of male occupations for Mosgiel and its vicinity from *Stones Directory*, based on the Caversham project, reveals that no dramatic change occurred for the township during the War.<sup>51</sup> The occupations have been split into nine distinct categories which, are simplified into three broad 'class' groupings. The divisions are the same as those established by Professor Erik Olssen, and set out as tables following the same methodology as Tony Lynch in his dissertation 'Otago 17- Southland 11: A Social History of Otago Rugby in the 1940's'.<sup>52</sup> Figure 10 shows the specific numbers of each grouping and the percentage

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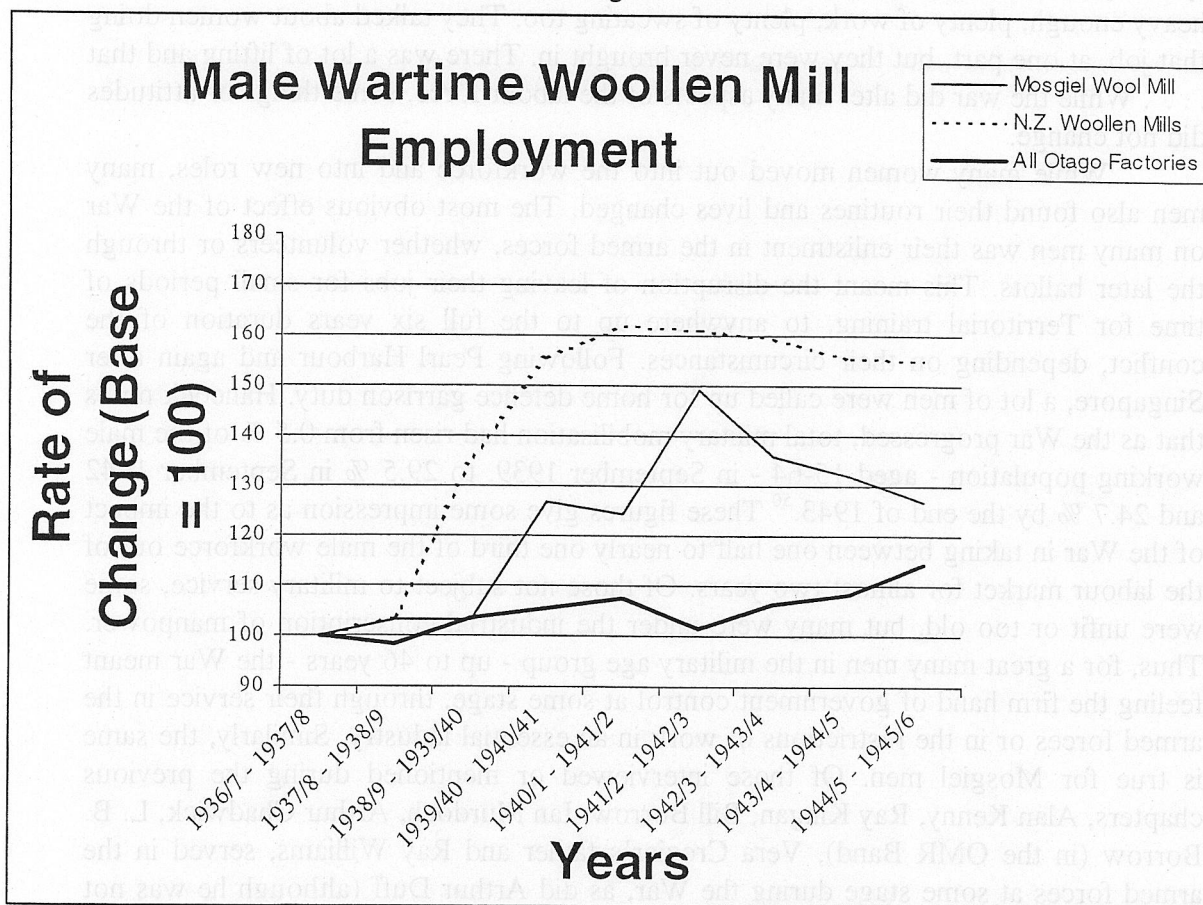
<sup>49</sup> Thrush, p.19.

<sup>50</sup> Hancock, p.307.

<sup>51</sup> The occupations have been split into nine distinct categories which, for later purposes, will be simplified into three broad 'class' groupings to accommodate the reduction in precision when making comparison with the small size of the ERC registration sample. The divisions will be the same as those established by Professor Eric Olssen in the Caversham Project study of that community, and set out as tables following the same methodology were, in Tony Lynch's 1984 dissertation *Otago 17- Southland 11: A Social History of Otago Rugby in the 1940's*.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The occupations are ranked from 1. Employer, 2. Professional, 3. Semi-Professional, 4. Self Employed, 5. Officials, 6. White Collar, 7. Skilled, 8. Semi-Skilled, down the spectrum of perceived status, to 9 Unskilled and are grouped broadly into, for want of a better word, 3 'classes'; upper, middle and lower. New Zealand has never really had a class system in the strict English sense, but

Figure 12.



Wartime Male Woollen Mill Employment.

Year	Mosgiel Wool Mill	N.Z. Woollen Mills	All Otago Factories
1936/7 - 1937/8	100	100	100
1937/8 - 1938/9	103.3	103.4	98.6
1938/9 - 1939/40	103.3	135.4	103.5
1939/40 - 1940/41	127.0	155.5	105.6
1940/1 - 1941/2	124.4	161.8	107.7
1941/2 - 1942/3	149.4	161.4	101.7
1942/3 - 1943/4	135.9	159.7	106.3
1943/4 - 1944/5	131.8	155.7	108.5
1944/5 - 1945/6	126.7	155.2	114.2

of each of the 3 broad class groups for the three samples taken in the 1937, 1941 and 1945 editions of the directory. Figure 11 lists the percentage figure of the nine specific groups for each of the three years sampled. Figure 11 reveals that there is no significant change in most of the categories, although in some such as 1, 2, 3 and 5 we are dealing with such small sample figures as to make them insignificant to gain any more than that conclusion from them. The changes of most interest are that the 'Self-Employed' group (4) has dipped in 1945, possibly suggesting the harder economic times of supply shortages putting a few out of business later in the war. The 'Skilled' group (7) fluctuated only slightly, representative of many of the tradesman and older men being employed in essential jobs such as factory mechanics, lathe operators, carpenters and bakers. Of more interest is the 'Unskilled' group which dropped by 4% in 1941, perhaps suggesting that many of this group had either joined the army - which would have welcomed hardy outdoor working types, such as labourers, surfacemen, miners or railway gangers - or that a few had moved on to a better class of job. Most revealing to the former theory is the fact that the number of labourers fell from 98 (20.2%) in 1937, to 92 (16.5%) in 1941, continuing to drop to 78 (13.8%) in 1945. Since, however, the *Stones Directory* lists only the owner of the dwelling, it must be noted that these figures tend to be biased toward older men who have had enough time and money to own or rent their own house. It does not list the occupations of sons, brothers, other male relatives or borders to broaden out the comparison, leading thus to the large number of self employed section. It also does not fully show the effect that armed service had on the careers of many the younger men (the natural candidates for it) and the town. The *Directory* entries also can only be taken year by year, not revealing temporary Territorial service for instance. Nonetheless, we can see that for the more mature age group, employment on the home front remained fairly stable, with the exception of a number being held in their essential jobs by manpower regulations.

Mosgiel's main essential occupation, the Mill, predictably employed an increased number of men, although more irregularly than their female counterparts. Figure 12 (facing) shows comparative percentage change figures of the Mosgiel mill, New Zealand woollen mills and all Otago factories, with the base year of 1936/7-1937/8 set at 100, as above. It must be noted, however, that we are dealing with smaller totals - 90 in 1937/8 and 110 in 1945/6 - so the figures may be a little over representative, and tend to fluctuate. As evidenced with female Mill employment, the peak year was reached in 1941/2-1942/3, similar to other New Zealand mills. The surprising drop-off of men in Otago factories in this crucial year is probably due to the fact that many in less essential industries (unlike woollen milling) had been sent into the army for home defence. Most Mosgiel Woollens' male employees would have been exempted military service, such was the importance of their job to the war effort. The Mill quickly imitated the heady rise of the national average at the outbreak of war (a 32% rise from 1938/9-1939-40), although not to such a large extent (23.7%). It generally kept at over a 25% increase on the 1936/7-1937/8 figure for all of the conflict, representing the increased productive capacity of the war effort. Male employees at the Mill begin to drop as the War nears its end, but the figures do not plummet dramatically as they did with the female workers. This is evidence of the difference between the two, in that many females were only temporary 'war workers', while many of the men at Mosgiel Woollens, simply continued in their same job before,

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most people, especially earlier in the century, had had set ideas about the status which certain occupations hold. These are generally bound to monetary earning capacity.

during and after the conflict. Their jobs may have been classed essential and they may have worked a lot longer hours, but they simply worked through the years 1939-45, making their own contribution to the war effort. The Otago factory figures also provide comparison with those of the females near the end of the War. The male figures rise steadily as returned servicemen move back into jobs and those of the female drop as they leave employment. One intriguing point is the slight drop in 1940/1-1941/2, when one might think a substantial rise would have occurred. Perhaps some men had been sent into the army, in the post Pearl Harbour call up. Generally the figures show an increased number of job opportunities at the Mill.

As the war ground inexorably on the labour shortages became acute. Evidence of this is given by the fact that by 1942, owing to the difficulty of finding a janitor for the Mosgiel District High School, the children were forced to clean the school themselves.<sup>53</sup> Inevitably, New Zealand felt the power of the government to control the remaining pool of labour in the name of the war effort. The entry of Japan into the war and the associated flood of men into the armed services hastened the government to move towards compulsion in industry to secure priority in the labour market for essential industry. This control, universally known as 'manpowering' became accepted as a hazard of life during wartime and had wide-ranging implications for many men and women. Some people felt it the most striking of all the impacts which the war placed upon them.

Under National Service Emergency Regulations of January 1942, regulations made every civilian, irrespective of age or sex, liable for direction to work of national importance in a bid to make up the loss of 45,000 men from industry to home defence after Pearl Harbour.<sup>54</sup> Locally, the *Otago Daily Times* called it,

. . . the most drastic law ever enforced in [New Zealand's] . . . history affecting the utilisation by the individual of this labour power. Under the terms of this law a person may in certain circumstances, be forbidden to leave the service in which he is employed or may be ordered to return to a service which he has left.<sup>55</sup>

As the pressure increased on the work force from the demands of this total war, the state took an almost omnipotent control. National service, with its connotations of conscription, had in effect, in this time of emergency, been expanded from a limited group of men of military age to the wider community.

Orders to register for work of national importance began in March 1942, with men aged 46-49 and women aged 20-21. Initially there was some hesitation about calling for the registration of women, which is why only those aged 20-21 were called. However, the upper age limit became gradually extended to meet the insatiable demands of industry. By October 1942, at a time when over 150,000 men were mobilised into the armed forces, women aged up to 30 and men up to 59 were included. By January 1944, all women 18-40, except those with children under 16, who were exempted, were required to register. Two months later, by March of that

<sup>53</sup> J. Cumberbeach (ed.), *A Century of Education in Mosgiel 1871-1971*, p.17.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, pp.99-100. The National Service Emergency Regulations 1940, Amendment No. 8.(1942/5). These became refined into The Industrial Man-Power Emergency Regulations 1942 in October of that year, as the responsibility for manpower was taken from the National Service Department to the recently formed Department of Industrial Manpower.

By September 1942, the peak of military enrollment, industry had lost 171,000 men to the Armed Forces overseas and within New Zealand.

<sup>55</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 Jan. 1942, p.4.

year, some 147,000 women were registered nationwide.<sup>56</sup> Eve Ebbett explained what it felt like, following the order to register, from her own experience in Hastings.

Having registered with a Manpower committee, . . . [people] then had to wait for the rather dreaded summons. For most, the sting of an impending summons was eased by a great deal of banter; all the same the committee had considerable powers and people knew it. The Manpower never "directed" anybody. The Manpower "grabbed" people, and "being grabbed by the Manpower" was the common expression which, when uttered darkly, was like being threatened by the police. No one knew in advance what she would be "grabbed" to do and most of us went in fear and trembling to our interviews. We knew that the Government had issued a list of protected occupations which exempted a person from being moved elsewhere, but no one knew what these occupations were: the list was secret and not disclosed . . . [After the interview] I came away enormously relieved . . . All the same, the interviewer had been cautious in what she said and I was left the feeling that although I'd been relieved this time, there was still a war on and my turn could yet come.<sup>57</sup>

For some it may have been their first contact with bureaucratic authority figures, heightening their apprehension, although none of the interviewees in the Mosgiel area volunteered remembering such feelings of trauma.

The direction of workers to essential industry started cautiously, with fewer than 5,000 orders used throughout the country up to June 1942. This increased to 59,000 between April 1943-March 1944 and 78,000 between April 1944-March 1945. The government reached into the lives and occupations of people as it never had before.<sup>58</sup> By late 1942, Man-power Officers even had the authority to enter any business premises during working hours, check the books and interview workers in the quest to shift labour from non-essential jobs.<sup>59</sup> It impacted on many people around the country, and Mosgiel proved no exception. Some were placed into very different jobs than they were used to. The hitherto secure routines of many people, more especially women, were disrupted and their lives turned upside down through these regulations. As Ebbett notes, it opened up new opportunities, and for some, changed their lives irrevocably.<sup>60</sup>

In the local area, the direction of labour proceeded promptly since, the government regarded woollen mills as high priority for labour allocation.<sup>61</sup> The essential nature of the Mosgiel mill acted as a magnet to the authorities and a number of people, mainly women, were plucked from their jobs under the manpower regulations and sent to work there. Ebbett records one Dunedin woman recalling that "There was a lot of misuse of labour. As long as you were manpowered into *something* it was all right."<sup>62</sup> For Mosgiel girls, the Mill tended to be that 'something'. Taylor ascertained that for women under manpower, it was more 'horses for courses', citing the example that girls from nice Auckland homes were not pushed out to the Westfield meat works.<sup>63</sup> However, with the Mill being one of the few large essential enterprises in the area, many had to go there. Margaret Kingan remembered that, "A lot of girls that I worked with in the mill they had never worked in their lives. They were just girls

<sup>56</sup> Baker, pp.100-1. Men aged 18-45 had already registered for military service. Those found unfit for it were automatically listed for essential employment.

<sup>57</sup> Ebbett, pp.50-1.

<sup>58</sup> Baker, p. 101; Taylor, pp.670, 666.

<sup>59</sup> The Industrial Man-Power Emergency Regulations 1942 (1942/296). Reg. 40.

<sup>60</sup> Ebbett, p52.

<sup>61</sup> Baker, p.161.

<sup>62</sup> Ebbett, p.47. Her italics.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, pp.676-77.

who had left school and stayed at home to help their mothers, like some of them did in those days. Well, you see, they . . . put those girls into essential industry". Alan Kenny also knew, in his words, a few "lofty ladies", who did not have to work before the war, but were manpowered into the Mill by the authorities. The influx of directed workers endeared some initial suspicion, both on behalf of those manpowered there for the war and those who had always worked there. Maude Eaton's contemporary D.S.I.R. study also noticed this, as well as distrust of manpowered girls from higher income or 'class' backgrounds.<sup>64</sup>

In Mosgiel, where a lot of people from varied backgrounds were manpowered into the Mill - the only major factory - it probably occurred more than Eaton suggests. Vera Crozier recalled that her sister experienced this initial resentment, after her direction there.

My sister Hilda worked in an accounts office in Dunedin, typing, then in the Trustees Executors Office, where they appealed against her manpowering. They applied and said that she was doing specialised work and then they let her stay . . . Then they called her up again a few months after. And then some of her friends she knew in Mosgiel, they passed nasty remarks, as much to say, "Oh you office girls, you don't want to come and work in the Mosgiel Mill do you ?", and my sister, being Hilda, she thought, "I jolly well will, I'll show them", so she came out. I think she was in the wool department, where you stood and watched wool then spun onto something and if the wool broke, you tied a knot in it . . . The first day, can you just imagine this, she arrived in the door and all the girls got up on a chair and got up on an old box so they would be a bit higher than what Hilda was, coming from office work. And they all called out nasty things to her, not very nice words, and she thought, "Oh gosh, what have I come to; how am I going to put up with this?" But, however, she did . . . and by the time it was time to go [at the end of the war], they all thought she was lovely and they gave her a beautiful gift.<sup>65</sup>

In the end, she adapted to the upheaval and unfamiliar job well enough, gaining the friendship of her workmates, but it certainly opened her eyes to life as a factory worker.

A number of others in the town also found themselves directed to similar new situations. Margaret Kenny, for example, trained in office work, but was sent to the Mill. Noela Borrow, mentioned above, likewise found herself in totally different employment. Bill, her brother, explained that, "She was pretty hot on piano playing and teaching and she taught music at home after she left school; she had her letters and that (*sic*) . . . and she was manpowered into the Post Office, into the mail part, delivering the mail." The assistant at L. B. Borrow's jewellers, as mentioned in the previous chapter, also became directed into the Mill. Ray Williams went as far as to say that most married women (without children) who had worked in the Mill previously, were brought back to take up employment again. Jim Rowe commented that, in his experience, a lot of local people ended up being manpowered into the mill, coal mines or farms. His best friend Doug Gale, who lived in Mosgiel, found himself manpowered into the coal mine at Kaitangata. It was hard at first, but gradually he got to know the work and eventually stayed on after the war to end up settling there. The ability of the Manpower Officer to distribute scarce, but vital, labour to areas of necessity also extended (temporarily) to some people in the armed forces. Two Mosgiel men, Alan Kenny and Ray Kingan among others, experienced this. Before Christmas 1941, the authorities sent Alan back from Ashburton Military Camp to the local farm on the

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<sup>64</sup> Eaton, pp.85, 86.

<sup>65</sup> Interview, Vera Crozier.



Taieri, where he had worked before joining the army, to participate in the harvest. With experienced farm hands being short, he stayed all summer before returning to camp.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Ray Kingan had dairy farm experience and was sent back from training in the Pacific Islands to work on a farm in Taranaki for a season. Afterwards, they transferred him back to the islands to continue where he had left off.<sup>67</sup>

While the experiences detailed by the interviewees proved reasonably satisfactory for them and many others directed to work in similar situations, some manpower options were acutely unpopular. A lot of young women did not want to be thrust from their shop or office into an alien environment, such as a mental hospital or a freezing works.<sup>68</sup> As Kate Darian-Smith also found in Melbourne during the War, some chose to keep a measure of control on their lives by volunteering to another essential industry which they found less abhorrent, or to the armed forces, to keep ahead of the direction of Manpower.<sup>69</sup> Montgomerie notes the rush of Auckland women to join the armed forces ahead of possible direction to the short staffed Westfield canning factory, in early 1943 which came to be known as 'The Westfield Scare', as an example.<sup>70</sup> In Mosgiel most women who were directed, went to the woollen mill and accepted it, but it turned out to be not the only option. Margaret Kingan knew of "quite a few from Mosgiel" who were sent up to the psychiatric hospital at Seacliff, including an acquaintance, Muriel Murray. Whether a 'Seacliff scare' occurred is not known to the author, but considering the vehement reaction against direction to psychiatric hospitals around the country, it may have been entirely possible during the latter stages of the War, when the compulsion of women had become more commonplace.

Of course, an appeal was available against the seemingly divine decision of the Manpower Office. Under the refined national service regulations of the Industrial Manpower Emergency Regulations of October 1942, appeals could be lodged to an Appeal Committee for a public hearing. A number of people undertook this option, especially against the most unpopular jobs.

Besides the more familiar direction of labour into essential industries, the authorities had the power to make the labour already working there remain there. Just as workers could be directed into War jobs, they could be held at them indefinitely. One incident concerning a Mosgiel Woollen Mill worker, emphasises this, and also, interestingly, shows how much pre-war conceptions of married women working had changed, at least temporarily. In April 1943, the Industrial Manpower Appeal Committee considered an appeal by Miss Edna Brown against the refusal of the district manpower officer to give her permission to leave her job at the mill to be married to an airman and subsequently shift to Christchurch. She was prepared to do essential work there, and also conceded that if the RNZAF posted her husband - based in Christchurch for further training - overseas she would return to Mosgiel Woollens, but in the meantime felt she deserved "as much happiness as possible". The Mill, in turn, offered to grant a three months leave of absence rather than lose her. However, while commending Miss Brown's attitude, Mr Evans supported the officer's initial decision not to release this skilled worker permanently, noting that the manpower office felt that its policy must remain consistent. In the end, the case finished inconclusively, with the

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<sup>66</sup> Interview, Alan Kenny.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, Ray Kingan.

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, p.678.

<sup>69</sup> Darian-Smith, p.60.

<sup>70</sup> Montgomerie, p.267.

appeal committee adjourning it so that Miss Brown was allowed to go to Christchurch in the meantime, subject to her reporting for direction to essential work there, until she was “required” by the committee to return to Dunedin.<sup>71</sup> Whether she returned or not is unknown, but it does show the power that the authorities were, within limits, able to wield over workers during wartime. That the government could control her life to the extent of preventing her travel to another town to be with her husband, and to be able to call her back at some indeterminate time in the future is almost inconceivable today. Others were held. On the same day the committee heard an appeal of a woman who, having had three weeks leave to marry a naval rating, wished to be released from the Roslyn Mill to live in Auckland to be with him when he came on leave. It reserved its decision, with the manager of the mill opposing the appeal, stating that there were at least 40 other cases of a similar justifiable nature at that mill.<sup>72</sup>

Ray Williams, another to be held in essential mill work, experienced the appeal process first hand, but instead hoped it would fail. In this case the appeal, which had been successfully granted a number of times before, came from the Mosgiel Woollen’s management against Ray’s call up to the armed forces. Initially Ray had not worried about this, feeling that through his work in the weaving section, he was making a valid contribution to the war effort. However, he fell sick, and when he returned from three months leave, he found another man had taken over most of his job, so he felt wasted, considering that the military authorities had classed him Grade I - fit for overseas service. Management went to the armed service hearing, to once again appeal for Ray as essential, but they did not expect him to go as well! He takes up the story.

Well, the appeal came up every six months, and they had to tell you your appeal was coming up. . . [So] they said, “Are you going to oppose it?” and I said, “Oh, I don’t think I’ll bother, it’s a waste of time”. But when I got home for lunch I decided, well why not, so I went away in [to Dunedin]. When it came around to my turn, my name was called out and the manager said I was essential in the work and the chairman said, “Is there anybody here to have any more to say about this man, that he should be at the mill, or should he go into camp”. . . I stood up and said, “Yes, I’ve been off ill for three months with a rash on my arms and they’ve carried on without me; another man has got my job”, and they said, “Is that right Mr. Woods?” [the Mill manager] and he said, “Yes”, and therefore; “This man must go to camp”.

Ray was pleased to get out of the Mill and joined the RNZAF, serving at Harewood for six months until the end of the War.<sup>73</sup>

Manpower affected a wide range of local residents, especially onwards from 1943, when its impact became much more pronounced. The necessity of the war situation changed many people’s hitherto very settled lives. Upon a word from the authorities they were required to go through the bureaucratic rigmarole of registration, interviews and, in a number of cases, appeals. Most might rather have avoided it, since if they did wish to work at essential industry, like the Mosgiel woollen mill for example, they could have easily applied to work there previously, of their own free will. Little wonder that when asked about Manpower, Bill Borrow said that it was a big thing in Mosgiel, and Jim Rowe commented that it upset a lot of people’s lives,

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<sup>71</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 April 1943, p.2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Interview, Ray Williams. Incidentally, when he returned to the mill he did not get his old job back, which he was entitled to under The Occupational Re-Establishment Emergency Regulations 1939. He left the Mill disgruntled and was accepted into the army for J-Force (The occupation of Japan). Even when he returned from that to the Mill, he could not get to return to his old job.

emphasising its more noticeable impact on a small town like Mosgiel. Although it did upset a lot of people, most of the townsfolk accepted it as a necessary evil of the war effort. Even the *Otago Daily Times*, hardly an apologist for the Labour government stated that "It is essential to impress upon the whole community . . . that it must recognise the needs of the State transcend everything else".<sup>74</sup>

The citizens of Mosgiel realised that the needs of the country were important and heard the rhetoric of a 'people's war', but perhaps not all agreed with the extent to which the war effort impinged on the industrial front and their jobs. Obviously they did not want to lose the War, but, in their opinion, were some of the extreme measures of manpower really necessary? Was the 'cradle to grave' State taking things too far, especially when it had become clear by 1943 with the victory in North Africa, invasion of Italy and progress in the Pacific, that the main war danger was over? Indeed, the government had to keep badgering the fact, through the press, that the War had still to be finished off from then until eventual victory in 1945. Those in government departments and high level office and business positions did not feel the disruptive effects of manpower as average people from Mosgiel thrust into the Woollen Mill or Seacliff did. They did not understand that many of those on the receiving end of labour conscription did not regard it as some sort of privilege to work in essential industry. Manpower and the policies of the manpower office became a common topic of complaint and discussion in newspapers from 1942 onwards.

Yet, Mosgiel people accepted the manpower regulations silently. A number may have muttered under their breath about individual hardships or disruption, but in any event they had little choice against government penalties and community peer pressure. They had to accept them, even if they did not want to; the weight of participating in a 'total war' saw to that. Deborah Montgomerie found the same conclusion with respect to women, the majority of whom on balance, seemed to accept its necessity and, indeed, the ultimate justification of the War. Those who did not agree or were less willing to change their lifestyle to aid the war effort were constrained by the overwhelming atmosphere of approval for the War. There was, for example, no public outburst when the National Service Regulations were applied to them.<sup>75</sup> In December 1942 at an appeal hearing, the chairman of the Auckland Manpower (Industrial) Committee admitted that "Many people conscripted into positions are not happy, but today if they do not like it, they must be disciplined".<sup>76</sup> Extraordinary times meant extraordinary measures and the average Mosgiel person was in no real position to do anything about it, except perhaps appeal. Their attitude was generally resigned and those affected by it treated manpower as one more inconvenience to go with the blackout, army conscription, petrol rationing and such like. Bill Borrow summed up this attitude saying, "You were manpowered and that was that". Montgomerie concurred with this type of compliance, since many of the women she interviewed stated to the effect that 'You just had to do it'.<sup>77</sup> An Auckland Methodist minister's daughter, Kathleen Kelly, who was manpowered to Patamahoe market gardens in South Auckland felt the same:

. . . Once the Japanese came into the War we just had a feeling that they were going to come down at any moment. I suppose there were a few people who wished that they could not do anything but they

<sup>74</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 23 January 1942, p.2.

<sup>75</sup> Montgomerie, p.259.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, p.678.

<sup>77</sup> Montgomerie, 292.

didn't say it out loud because everyone else would have sort of turned on them and told them what they thought of them . . .<sup>78</sup>

This is probably similar to many people directed into the Mosgiel Mill or other essential establishments all over the country. A prevalent patriotic notion such as this is the reason Baker could conclude that, "For so far-reaching a control, direction of civilian labour proceeded with surprisingly little friction".<sup>79</sup> Considering their country was at war and the fact that they had little choice, nearly all accepted it, and without untoward vocal dissent. The solid patriotic citizens of a small country town like Mosgiel were no exception.

Along with the government control of workers and changes in their employment structure, the war brought about associated changes in work place conditions. As the country strove to move into a total war effort, with its implied increase in industrial production, the hours of work had to increase also. During its first term the Labour government had generally reduced working hours (for which ordinary rates were payable) in industry down from 48 to 40 hours, and in shops from 48 to 44 hours.<sup>80</sup> The shock of Dunkirk, in May-June 1940, prompted the government to warn the public about the extra effort needed. Walter Nash, speaking at the height of the crisis, warned that "Workers would have to surrender conditions they had fought for 40 or 50 years, as nothing could retard in any way production and the dispatch of things overseas could be allowed to continue".<sup>81</sup> Reports of further magnanimous patriotic offers by workers to work longer hours, donating their overtime to patriotic funds, were highlighted in the press.<sup>82</sup> At the same time as this, the recently introduced 40 hour week, still treated suspiciously by farmers, businessmen and other opponents of the Labour government, came under attack, although trade unions remained cautious, unwilling to sacrifice workers hard earned gains to hysteria.<sup>83</sup>

Eventually, as more and more resources were directed into the War effort, industries and their employees, especially those in essential undertakings, sacrificed the 40 hour week to meet the war effort. With the expansion of armed conflict into the Pacific the government urged a further increase in effort. In a graver echo of the statements at the time of Dunkirk, Prime Minister Fraser, speaking on 11 December 1941, said:

We must at once face the fact that this will involve all of us in many inconveniences and perhaps hardships which we must prepare ourselves to face. To meet this emergency a considerable alteration in our normal life and work must be expected. Workers and employers . . . would be required to accept variations in the conditions of employment and management.<sup>84</sup>

In general terms this came to mean the extremities of manpower control, but it also represented the previous and subsequent increased working hours for many around the country. The increasing scarcity of labour combined with the focus on essential

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, pp.259-60.

<sup>79</sup> Baker, p102.

<sup>80</sup> Yearbook (1946), pp. 629-31.

<sup>81</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 31 May 1940, p.6.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 8 June 1940, p.12, for example.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor, pp.136-40. Many industries were short of raw materials and longer hours would only increase unemployment.

<sup>84</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 12 December 1941, p.4.

production meant that a number of the local labour force found themselves working much longer hours than before the War. A brief summation of the local Emergency Reserve Corps enrolment forms (NSO-6) of February 1942, gives an idea of the amounts of time that some people were already working at that stage.<sup>85</sup>

Following their compulsory registration, the potential recruits had to fill in their details, including Question 11: "State any reason why you might be unable to render service in the ERC". Some of the answers received are revealing of the toll the War took on Mosgiel workers. R. D. Paul, a Mill engineer, stated he was "Working an average of 19 hours overtime a week and longer if necessary". W. H. Ashby, a wool scourer, was "working an 11 hour day" at the Mill. George Hendry, bootmaker, was "repairing boots for the Air Force and working about 60 hours per week". The answer of John Kirkness, a labourer at the Railways Hillside workshop; "Working 10 hours a day and 8 hours Saturday on munitions. Leave house 7am, return home at 8.30 pm", emphasises the strain that some people, especially those in essential industry, were under. Another Hillside worker, Edward West, an engineer's fitter, was exempted from E.R.C. service because he was "working overtime", as did C. S. Miller, freezer hand, "working long hours at essential work". These increased hours were the direct impact of the War and the industrial war effort. At the Mill for example, overtime became the norm at one stage. Ray Williams remembers the hours of work during the week were 8 am to 5 pm, with an hour off for tea and then back for 6 pm to 8 pm overtime, and the usual hours of 8 to 12 on Saturday mornings. In June 1940, the government removed turn of the century restrictions prohibiting women in woollen mills working after 6 p.m., enabling local women to also participate in evening overtime.<sup>86</sup> Fay Nicholson, commenting on her extra hours at the Mill said, "I can't remember how much overtime, but I can always remember we used to knock off at quarter past eight [at night], because we used to go to the pictures and we never ever got there much before half time!". At the Post Office telephone exchange, Ella Cameron worked two Sundays in three in addition to the rest of the week; the first week from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the second from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. She was the only one on duty, remarking that, "Nobody came to relieve you. You sat at that [switch] board for seven hours. Nobody would do that today".

In the Mill, especially, a lot more overtime was worked. Indeed, overtime at the Mosgiel mill for much of the conflict appears to have been significantly higher than the national average. Figure 13 (facing) gives a comparison of Mill figures and those from the *New Zealand Statistics of Factory and Building Production* for 1937-8 to 1945-6.<sup>87</sup> By dividing the yearly unit hours worked, by the number of employees and then dividing that figure by 50 weeks (Mill workers received about 2 weeks holiday per year), it gives an approximate average of the hours of overtime worked each week at the Mill. It must be noted, due to the generalised nature of the raw data, that this is only an average of each person (both males and females) to give an impression of the level of overtime. It does not mean that every worker completed precisely such an amount each week; some women for example, may only have worked part time. The same is true that the data for the national figure for each year is also simply an average. Nonetheless, the results show that once War production of government and military

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<sup>85</sup> EPS File. See Chapter 3.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, p.1089.

<sup>87</sup> Mill Statistics Book, pp. 2, 87-90, 115-121.; *N.Z. Factory Statistics, 1938-1946*, pp. 28, 32, 33, 34, 66.

orders became more important to the Mosgiel operation, the amount of overtime worked on top of the usual 40 hours increased significantly in comparison with the national average.

From the pre-war average of no overtime - although this does not mean that no one at all got overtime - or short time, Mill workers correspondingly averaged 3 hours extra each week in 1939-40 and double that in 1940-1, rising to a peak of 7.1 hours the next year, as vital military production increased. A surprising slump back to 3.3 hours, due to the addition in that 1942-3 year of 44 new employees (a 13% rise from 336 to 380), probably manpowered, to ease the burden of peak production, is followed by the continuation of the previous year's average until 1945-6 when, with the War over, a number of women left and production tailed off. In comparison, the combined national averages of overtime for the 13 (and in 1943-4, 14) woollen mills in the country show comparatively less effort. From the injection of war effort in 1939-40, it remained around just over 3 hours per each week throughout the War. Mosgiel Woollens also compares very favourably with the average hours of overtime for all factory wage earners throughout the country. The 1946 *New Zealand Official Yearbook* lists these averages per week as being; 1939-40, 0.9 hours; 1940-41, 1.2 hours; 1941-42, 1.6 hours; 1942-3, 2.5 hours and 1943-44, 2.9 hours.<sup>88</sup> Although, this is what one might expect when comparing an individual essential industry with the nation's many and varied factories, many of whom would not have been working extra hours. Thus, the impact of increased hours might be seen more in Mosgiel than other mill towns. Generally Mosgiel Mill workers did more hours than other factories in Dunedin, except probably for the Hillside workshops or the larger Roslyn Woollen Mill. The constant grind did start to wear on workers employed in factory work, especially in the winter months, but like many other things in wartime, most simply accepted it and treated it as part of their own war effort until the hours returned to normal.

Perhaps the last word on hours of work goes to Cyril Breeze, a poultry farmer in Gordon Road, which also illustrates the contribution of farmers to the war effort. In reply to an abrupt official letter regarding his absence from Air Raid Warden meetings, he stated to the Town Clerk:

. . . I thought you were well aware that my time was fully occupied in producing as I had stated on my enrolment form. I might state for your information that my hours of work in war production is (*sic*) from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and I would also like to point out that I have no half holidays or weekends off. It is a seven week work (*sic*) and I have not been off the farm in one whole day in two years.

We have at present 3000 fowls and these birds are now in full production. The work entailed in feeding the fowls, cleaning pens and numerous other duties is more than a full time occupation . . . For war production purposes we have been requested to try and produce more eggs and chickens, and this we are endeavouring to carry out. Our normal stock is 1400 birds. . .<sup>89</sup>

The long hours worked by people in New Zealand, however, were modest in comparison with some of the hours put in by servicemen on duty overseas. 'All in Effort', writing to the *Otago Daily Times* in November 1941, responding to reports of long hours at N.Z.R. workshops, summed this up saying, "Thousands of men from New Zealand are working more than 50 hours per week and risking their lives and

<sup>88</sup> *Yearbook* (1946), p.363. The actual figures listed male and female overtime per year, the author averaging them and dividing by 50 to give an approximate figure per week.

<sup>89</sup> EPS File: letter, 14 September 1942, C. Breeze to TC.

receiving 7s a day”.<sup>90</sup> The burden of the forces put the strain of local workers somewhat into perspective.

The question of holidays also came into focus, affecting local mill workers in a minor way. Due to the Japanese scare all firms engaged defence production, including all woollen mills, received only two days off at Christmas and were required to work through the 1942 Easter holidays.<sup>91</sup> In Mosgiel a number of workers appear to have taken few holidays during the War. Work became an important factor. Jim Rowe recalled that they didn’t get many holidays, since essential jobs had to be kept going. Colin Frew emphasised this:

I think everybody used to take a minimum of holidays. I can’t remember ever having a holiday during the six years of the War . . . [apart from] one in 1940. That was before Britain really got into the War then. Nobody seemed to be very particular. I think they thought they were doing their bit, by doing with as few holidays as possible. They felt they were doing their bit for the war effort by doing that. You see if you went away for a fortnight holiday you had to get the labour from somewhere and labour was scarce.

Perhaps as a legacy of the Depression, or just of the times, holidays were seen as a luxury, especially for the male breadwinner of the household. Bill Borrow recalls that “Holidays were a rare thing. Didn’t bother with them much. There was no feeling that because it was school holidays you went away, or at Christmas you’d go away on holidays like there is now”. Many of the women interviewed by Eve Ebbett felt that it was a common occurrence never to have had any holidays during the War.<sup>92</sup> Petrol shortages and restrictions on railway travel meant the holiday plans of many remained unfulfilled through this period. These sacrifices, however, were just another minor contribution which some workers had to make to the overall war effort.

Related to long working hours, hard work, the forced direction of people into jobs, but also the increasing power of labour, was the much publicised problem of absenteeism, most especially in factories. Taylor notes that by 1941 the growing labour shortage had given workers a position of strength, enabling them to take a day off here and there, aside from sickness or accidents, without fear of losing their jobs;<sup>93</sup> something unthinkable just a few years earlier in the hard times of the Depression. Newspapers commented harshly on this new found cheek harming war production. In December 1942 the *Otago Daily Times* reported that absenteeism was said to be general throughout both the North and South Island, the main culprits being young women whose employers did not find them “amenable to discipline” or interested in their work.<sup>94</sup> Up to 31 March 1945 the Manpower Office dealt with 24,994 complaints about cases of male absenteeism and 17,078 of females. Of these, respectively, 5,737 and 4,105 were not substantiated, 15, 403 and 10,140 resulted in a warning to the worker, while 3,854 and 2,833 had fines imposed as punishment.<sup>95</sup> Considering the much higher proportion of men over women in the labour force, these figures do

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<sup>90</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 November 1941, p.9. Fifty hours was the reported average amount of time worked each week by N.Z.R. staff employed on munitions manufacturing jobs.

<sup>91</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 December 1941, 21 March 1942, pp.2, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Ebbett, p.119.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, p.684.

<sup>94</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 December 1942, p.4. Older women were found to be more conscientious toward their jobs as seen above.

<sup>95</sup> *A.J.H.R. 1945*; H-11, Report of the Department of Labour, p.82.

suggest a problem centred among female workers, but one tempered by the fact that most older ones had a home to keep on top of their full time employment.

Dunedin does not seem to have figured prominently in this problem, however. It appears to have been more prevalent in the larger cities, especially, Wellington and Auckland, where there were more distractions for workers and more scope for them to remain undetected. The main troublesome times seem to have been after the Christmas-New Year and Easter holidays. Apart from some initial incidents of absenteeism in early January 1941,<sup>96</sup> Dunedin factories were relatively free of problems compared to many highly documented cases in northern cities after various holiday periods of 1941-1944. For the Mosgiel Mill the same appears true, with the *O.D.T.* reporting that no cause for complaint had been given there.<sup>97</sup> However, eighteen months later W. L. Wood, the general manager, referred to the problem of absenteeism holding back production.<sup>98</sup> A 1943 Labour Department survey of absenteeism amongst female woollen mill workers found an average of somewhere from 1 hour 15 minutes up to 3 hours 45 minutes absence per worker, per week to be usual. In comparison, women in clothing manufacturing were much worse with from 2 hours 29 minutes up to 4 hours 25 minutes average absence for each worker per week.<sup>99</sup> So, whether Mr Wood was referring to figures similar to, or less than this average, or to what he perceived as a worse problem is unclear. Nonetheless, since no other complaints or mention of absenteeism at the Mill occurred, either in subsequent annual reports or in the press, we might assume that its incidence was isolated or, at least, no worse than average there. On the subject of absenteeism, former Mill employee Fay Nicolson commented that, "In those days you wouldn't dare do that. [It was] very seldom someone didn't turn up for work in those days. Even if you had a sore leg, sore arm or whatever, you still wanted to work. You'd have to be really sick." George Allen added that you did your job and that was that.<sup>100</sup> This solid work ethic appears to have been prevalent among most workers, besides which, taking the day off from the Mosgiel Mill was a lot different from the problem centres of Auckland and Wellington. There was not much to do in Mosgiel, and being such a small town, word would soon get around about a worker's absence. This would most likely get back to the boss or at the very least the culprit's parents, causing problems for most young women - the main problem - who still lived at home until marriage. It probably did happen occasionally, but is a far cry from girls with no ties, flitting in anonymity in Auckland, lured from their dull factory job to the glamorous entertainments of a large city swamped with soldiers. In this case the War did not change established values.

Thus, more than the economic problems described in the last chapter, the War seems to have had proportionally more impact upon the town due to the number of workers affected. Few of these workers worried about the problems of management or small businesses. Most of the townsfolk were only concerned with the labour side of the equation. After the hard times of the Depression, the impact of the War in Mosgiel made plenty of changes. Worries about unemployment lessened as men joined up and increased production meant a local demand growth for workers. The numbers of women and men working in the Mosgiel Woollen Mill increased, although traditional

<sup>96</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 11 January 1941, p.6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Sixty Ninth Ann. Report (1942). "If this could be solved, the output would be even better than it was".

<sup>99</sup> *A.J.H.R. 1943*; H-11, Report of the Department of Labour, pp. 5-6.

<sup>100</sup> Interview, Fay Nicholson and George Allen.



attitudes about married women working took a while to discard. However, it soon became accepted, even patriotic, for women, especially older women, to leave home and move back into the workforce. The priority for younger mothers, though, remained their children. This war work proved mainly to be temporary, but it allowed some local women to move into, not only traditional, but new areas of employment. This thrust some into new experiences and situations, such as Ella Cameron and Vera Crozier at the Post Office, which would not have occurred in the pre-war labour market.

For younger men the impact of the War was very strong, for they either left their jobs to enlist or were eventually shifted into essential employment. Middle aged men felt less impact. Their most important war effort was continuing at their jobs as efficiently as possible. Both men and women, especially at the Mill or other essential undertakings, also felt the effects of the War on employment conditions, through longer working hours and fewer holidays.

Eventually, however, with New Zealand's labour resources stretched to beyond their limits, the firm hand of the Labour government gradually increased controls over workers. Mosgiel, as around the country, felt the force of the National Service Regulations of 1942. Manpower control meant bureaucracy extended to an unprecedented level. Mosgiel residents, both men and women between certain ages, went through the rigmarole of registering and a number were held in their jobs, such as Ray Williams. Others were forcibly directed to new ones, usually at the Mill, although a few went to Seacliff. It is little wonder that Jim Rowe commented that manpower control upset a lot of people's lives, especially in a small town like Mosgiel. While not enjoying these powers, the community of workers generally accepted them as necessary for the war effort. Local people tried not to let these things upset their lives.

By the end of the War, most things had returned to the way they had been in 1939, with a great number of women leaving the labour force and returning to the home. The exception to this was the group of mainly older women at the Mill who, encouraged by the ongoing labour shortages, appeared to revel in their new found social acceptance of being able to work.

In the end, the labour shortages prompted by a country fighting a total war, meant important, even surprising changes, even if many were only temporary. They had a significant effect on local employment and the lives of many workers in the town. Labour and workplace changes wrought by the War, then, produced the most prominent impact upon Mosgiel.

## Chapter 7:

# Home Life.

Having seen how the economic impact of the war infiltrated into businesses and the labour market, many problems were obviously passed on to other residents of the town as consumers. This disrupted most Mosgiel households and their home making activities through the increasing shortages of many previously available consumer goods. Rationing, the by-product of the shortages, has been discussed to some extent from the retailer's point of view and it brought problems to individuals and families as well. Retailers' frustration at not being able to supply goods, became matched by customers' frustration at not being able to buy various goods. Sacrifices and changes to the normal routine had to be made by all members of the community. In general, however, the shortages did not have as much impact on lifestyle or living conditions in Mosgiel, or New Zealand as a whole, than they did in other many other countries. Adaption to war conditions, as with other aspects of life evidenced in previous chapters, meant some disruption but enabled most residents to cope with minimal trouble. In some cases the problems experienced by other New Zealanders passed many Mosgiel residents by. Likewise, the same process of adaption and acceptance allowed the leisure activities of most individuals to continue through the War. Some were not affected, others, mainly suffering from the disruption of the departure of club members or teammates from the town continued on as best they could. Unlike in the First World War, the town's clubs and associations benefited from a more circumspect attitude in society, allowing them to persist with their activities and meetings, until life returned to normal.

The prospect of food shortages became an area of concern in most households initially, since a good variety and quality of food is essential for a healthy lifestyle. From the outset of the war, supply problems meant varieties of many foodstuffs gradually disappeared to leave mainly insipid fare. Much more than in the First World War, local grocer's shelves felt the combined effect of shipping losses, transport pressure, manpower production problems, government rationalisation orders and New Zealand's hard currency deficits. The list of affected foodstuffs read like an epic movie with what seemed an ever increasing cast of thousands. Beginning in 1940, fish supplies were severely reduced; bacon and ham were only available on a limited basis after 1941; all pork and most canned meats were banned from domestic consumption by 1943; cheese was available through the War in restricted amounts, but the sale of both cream and margarine was banned in 1943.<sup>1</sup> Some local milk shortages in the South Island also occurred.<sup>2</sup> Taylor reports various shortages of locally grown vegetables, honey and eggs, and Baker mentions potatoes and onions.<sup>3</sup> Egg supplies

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, pp. 769, 830, 820, 827; *Yearbook*, p. 679; Many of the larger fishing trawlers were converted to minesweepers in 1940. Most of the pork products, the canned goods and margarine went to the American forces in the Pacific.

<sup>2</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 June 1942, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, p.777.; Baker, pp.462-3.

Figure 14.

*Weekly Ration Per Person in 1944.*<sup>1</sup>

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>N. Zealand (oz.)</i>	<i>Britain (oz.)</i>
Sugar	12	8
Jam	Not Rationed	4
Fats-		}
Butter	8	}
Other	Not Rationed	}
Liquid Milk	Not Rationed	40
Cheese	2*	3
Tea	2	2
Bacon and Ham	3*	4
Other Meats †	40	20

\* Not rationed but supply controlled at approximately this quantity per head of population.

† Approximately. Expenditure was rationed at 1s. 9d. too 2s. a head in N.Z. and 1s. 2d. in Britain.

<sup>1</sup> Baker, p.471.

were cut by half in 1942.<sup>4</sup> Cream of tartar, essential for cooking disappeared; varieties of bread were drastically cut and after 1941 only the most basic types of biscuit were available.<sup>5</sup> Many other items, reliant on ever diminishing supplies of sugar, such as golden syrup, sweets, chocolate, condensed milk, ice cream, jam, jellies, soft drinks and rich cakes became scarce or vanished. Similarly many imported items, for instance, mustard, fruit such as pineapples, oranges, bananas, raisins, dates and tinned fruit suffered the same fate.<sup>6</sup> On top of the shortage of these, and other items, the government eventually imposed the rationing of four key food items; sugar in April 1942 and tea, two months later; butter in October 1943 and meat in March 1944.<sup>7</sup> Under the Rationing Emergency Regulations of 1942, individuals or families could not purchase rationed goods without presentation of their ration book.<sup>8</sup> Registration with a grocery retailer and a butcher became necessary, and careful management of the family ration books and coupons (issued through the Post Office) became a priority for the housewife. The coupon became “if not literally a token of value, at least the essential medium for the purchase of goods in the restricted categories”.<sup>9</sup> The combination of these shortages and rationing pressures of the war seem, on the surface, to have placed an onerous burden on local families to provide enough to eat. They were, however, offset by a number of factors which contributed to limit their effect on the town to a very moderate level.

To begin with, the actual physical impact of a lack of some usual staple foods was not as bad as many anxious housewives may have thought. A British rationing experiment, conducted at the beginning of the war, concluded that even a very strict rationing (than actually did occur in Britain) of most food items, had a negligible effect on their physical well being, as long as three staples - bread, potatoes and green vegetables - were available in reasonable quantities.<sup>10</sup> Most people, would then, after a period of time, get used to the deprivations in their diet if necessary.

In contrast to Britain, the impact of rationing or food shortages on New Zealand was much less than that suffered by the British people, or those in occupied Europe. Mosgiel’s woes were put into perspective by the privations suffered by many residents of ‘the old country’. Peter Lewis in, *A People’s War*, writes that “Food was the main, ever-present preoccupation of most civilians. The drabness of daily diet was relieved by small treats and tiny victories- an extra orange, a present of chicken or rabbit, . . . the hens starting to lay, watching eagerly for the tomatoes to ripen . . .”<sup>11</sup> One British respondent interviewed by Norman Longmate recalled his mother always fretting about food and how to feed the family. Another woman said that “Food was our obsession”.<sup>12</sup> A comparison of rationing in both countries in Figure 14 (facing) shows the advantage enjoyed by sparsely populated, but highly productive, New Zealand.

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<sup>4</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 January 1942, p.4. They were, like many other items, required for the rapidly expanded defence forces.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 2 March 1943, p.2; Taylor, pp.762, 828.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, pp.791-2, 756, 826; *Otago Daily Times*, 17 May 1944, p.4; See also chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> Barber, pp.128, 186, 205.

<sup>8</sup> The Rationing Emergency Regulations 1942 (1942/111); Reg. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 May 1942, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> R. A. Mc Cance & E. M. Widdowson, *An Experimental Study of Rationing*, pp. 18-19, 58.

<sup>11</sup> P. Lewis, *A People’s War*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>12</sup> N. Longmate, *The Home Front: An Anthology 1938-1945*, pp.150, 155.

to the [war] diet in a way, because of coming out of the Depression . . . We were quite used to going to school with dripping, beef dripping, on sandwiches instead of butter and that sort of thing. A lot of people used to do that". Tastes were simpler and palates more hearty than they are today.

Living on a low income also meant eating much the same kind of foods, irrespective of war or peace, rationing or a free choice. They ate what they could afford; usually the cheap things with little variety. Jim Manley, whose family was not wealthy recalls,

We just had the same sort of diet all the time, I mean we didn't have the same sort of expectations as people have got these days . . . I guess that we basically lived on sausages and mince; the leg of mutton, perhaps if the old man got some lambs fry's from somebody at the pub, they often used to get stuff like that; potatoes, cabbages, carrots, the basic vegetables, nothing really fancy. And you know a lot of the stuff was fried, pan fried in the oven ; it was pretty bland sort of tucker, and Belgium rolls, if you had any of that sort of stuff. We very seldom had pressed meat or anything like that, maybe on the odd special occasion, but we got by.

Isobel Williams had similar memories of cheap but filling meals. "My mother used to make onion soup, which I hated; potato soup and I hated it, and all these sorts of things . . . make do's; you didn't do without, but you just got the essentials". Eating low cost foods, however, meant most things they usually consumed were not rationed. Vegetables, an essential part of working class meals, never had to be rationed, since there were generally enough grown in New Zealand. Meat was rationed to help increase export supplies to Britain, but since the meat by-products, such as sausages, mince and offal were not of exportable quality, they were exempted. Jim Rowe mentioned that American tinned sausages were quite common. Thus, the family meals of Jim, Ray, Isobel and probably many other locals remained relatively unaffected by the rationing controls. Hamish Keith, in his book *A Lovely Day Tomorrow*, also notes that the Kiwi diet remained "reasonably stable" throughout the war decade.<sup>21</sup>

When shortages and rationing did affect local households, their ingenuity deflected some of the impact. Women took the main role in dealing with the household problems and disruptions brought about by the war. They were, as Joanne Thrush notes, regarded as the traditional home economists<sup>22</sup> whose major focus was providing for the comfort and well being of their husband and children,<sup>23</sup> while her husband's role was mainly earning and providing money.<sup>24</sup> In spite of a number returning to, or going into the workforce for the first time during the war, the vast majority of women with families or other relatives stayed home to look after them as normal. This seems, indeed, to have been the case in Mosgiel for most couples. Women's main war effort was on, what the British Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, described as 'The Kitchen Front'.<sup>25</sup> They took the brunt of coping with the shortages, rationing and coupon books on top of their usual household activities. In a 1944 speech, D. G. Sullivan, the Minister of Supply, highlighted some of the New Zealand housewife's problems during wartime, referring to ". . . their trying task of maintaining interesting and satisfactory meals, of providing adequate clothing for the family, of securing coal and wood and of

<sup>21</sup> H. Keith, *A Lovely Day Tomorrow: New Zealand in the 1940's*, p.42.

<sup>22</sup> Thrush, p.24.

<sup>23</sup> H. May, *Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women*, p.111.

<sup>24</sup> J. Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male- A History*, p.232.

<sup>25</sup> Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, p.153.

the other commodities and services necessary for the home".<sup>26</sup> With very few modern appliances or pre-packaged food items available to help, it made what was regarded as a full time task even harder, and positively onerous compared to today.<sup>27</sup> However, locally and nationwide, the greater majority of women were up to the task and cushioned the effects of many war problems through their versatility.

Keith notes that New Zealand women had a strong "make do" tradition.<sup>28</sup> Jock Phillips also observes this, crediting it to an extension of the tough times of the 1920's and 30's.

. . . economic pressures revived the value of women's work in the home. Home baking, knitting, darning- anything to avoid spending money on expensive manufactured goods- became increasingly significant. The good manager, the woman who could spin out the housekeeping money and 'make do', became the housewife's ideal.<sup>29</sup>

The *Otago Daily Times*, emphasised this common independent attitude in 1942, suggesting that, "Against the danger of shortage the wise householder will of course do his best to protect himself by his own efforts".<sup>30</sup> Local resident Bill Borrow stressed this, saying that, "You cut your cloth accordingly . . . to how many coupons you had; and the housewife became pretty adroit at this you know. They'd know exactly how much they were going to use a week". As in wartime Britain, little was thrown away and housewives became adept at stretching rations to go further. Isobel Williams remembered that you never wasted anything. Friends and relatives were a good source of advice, as well as radio hints from 'Aunt Daisy',<sup>31</sup> publications such as the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, the *New Zealand Listener*, or the women's page of the *Otago Daily Times*. Recipes changed as the war progressed, and those with mention of ingredients such as chocolate or oranges, or items with a lot of sugar or butter, for example, gradually fell by the wayside.<sup>32</sup> Their replacements, under columns entitled, "War Economy Hints" and "Recipes That are Economical", stressed the necessary versatility and thrift of wartime, suggesting dishes such as, Rabbit Soup, Potato Hotpot, Mock Pork,<sup>33</sup> or Dripping Cake, Beetroot au Gratin and Hard Times Bacon and Egg.<sup>34</sup> In the face of this adaptation, however, Taylor does note that butter rationing modified housekeeping substantially, with woman having to practise restraint, instead of having unlimited supplies. Warm milk and gelatine would make it go a long way for spreading on bread,<sup>35</sup> but Ella Cameron recalled that it made baking a problem at times. Many housewives stored up supplies of infrequently used items, such as golden syrup, when possible. Vera Crozier remembered local people preserving eggs in kerosene tins filled with waterglass or by coating the shell with a layer of Ovaline. If

<sup>26</sup> D. G. Sullivan, *Wartime Shortages; Broadcast Address*, Speech , Wellington, 1944.

<sup>27</sup> Mason, p.8.

<sup>28</sup> Keith , p.43.

<sup>29</sup> Phillips, p.227.

<sup>30</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 July 1942, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, p.827. A weekday morning commercial radio broadcast by Mrs Daisy Basham aimed specifically at housewives. During the war she publicised listener's recipes and improvisations.

<sup>32</sup> *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 7, 14 September, 1939; 11, 25 January 1940, pp. 18, 20, 34, 30; for example.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 5 June 1941, pp. 28-29. Mock pork was made of pressed breadcrumbs, beans and onions, served with gravy and apple sauce!

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 23 May 1940, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, p826.

this was not done properly, however, they would go bad, as one woman warned readers of the *Evening Star*.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes some lateral thinking provided satisfactory substitutes for goods which were restricted. Jim Manley recollects that, “. . . because we all took sugar in our tea and there was such a shortage of it, Mum used to buy jellies, and we used to have jellies on our porridge instead of sugar. You know, those were the silly things. You could get around coupon things by buying jellies; as simple as that”. Adaptation again was the key. Due to the unavailability of fresh cream, Christmas Day 1943 brought an unprecedented demand for ice cream in dairies all around Dunedin.<sup>37</sup> ‘Making do’ also meant having a certain flexibility when it came to the ration books themselves. It seems that many households (illegally) swapped coupons, a process made easier by the intimacy and neighbourliness of living in a small town. Jim Rowe said that “There was quite a bit of a trade went on; you know, people who had more than they needed and families that didn’t have enough . . .”. In this vein, Jim Manley’s family did not use many clothing coupons, and sometimes used to swap them for sugar.<sup>38</sup>

Aside from the ingenuity of housewives there were other factors which stifled the impact of food shortages for a number of people. Living on the Taieri had its advantages over life in a city, since not all food came from the grocery store. Skills learnt growing up close to the country proved useful. Ray Williams, for example, sometimes went after his own food.

Oh, rabbits weren’t hard to get; plenty of rabbits around, but you couldn’t get bullets. Now, when I was off [sick] with my arms from the Mill . . . I applied to, well I had to go through Post Office actually to apply, . . . to get enough ammunition to shoot rabbits, and I could sell the skins, because I was only on 7 and 6 a week, like social security sort of thing. And I got so many bullets and I borrowed a rifle from a farmer, he had this .22 rifle, so could use that. But I didn’t get many because I reckon the barrel was bent on it !

Wild sheep, pigs and goats were on the menu of Jim Rowe and Gary Nicolson, who hunted over the back of the hills at North Taieri . On the back of Jim’s motorbike, sometimes with a .22 rifle, sometimes with a bow and arrows, they rode there before work to get their prey. They were quite successful too, with Gary noting that, “We used to live on wild sheep in those days”.<sup>39</sup> Besides hunting, a number of families, especially those on the outskirts of town, produced some of their own food. Vera Crozier recalled that “a lot of people around certain areas” had their own cow. Ray Williams’ family, living at North Taieri, also had a cow, with which they used to produce their own butter.<sup>40</sup> Those in Mosgiel who didn’t, often had friends locally, or further afield, who would supply them with those extra little items of food. Mavis Ewart was one who had friends in the country whom she said “were pretty good to us”. A farmer sometimes gave Isobel Williams’ father a turnip, or a rabbit, or such like, to take home with him. Priests and students in the Holy Cross Seminary were even more self sufficient, keeping cows for milk and butter; cattle beasts and pigs which they slaughtered themselves, and fowls for eggs.<sup>41</sup> Many people in the town kept

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Vera Crozier; *Evening Star*, 15 February, 1943, p.4.

<sup>37</sup> *Evening Star*, 27 December 1943, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Jim Manley.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews, Gary Nicolson, Jim Rowe.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Ray Williams. Producing butter in a small amount did not contravene rationing and supply regulations.

<sup>41</sup> Correspondence with Monsignor Tom Liddy.

# Grow a VICTORY GARDEN



WORK FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 5th

In some districts, set out — in other districts, prepare to set out — main crop ONION PLANTS. Pukekohe Longkeeper. Plant early cauliflower and lettuce. Sow peas.



For fullest instructions— CONSULT your Victory Gardening Book "VEGETABLE GROWING IN THE HOME GARDEN" 64 Pages for 6d. in Stamps Post Free from Dept. of Agriculture, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch or Dunedin

Grow A Victory Garden. Many Mosgiel residents already had well stocked gardens even before the War; a legacy of the hard times of the Depression and 'make do' attitudes.

Source: *Otago Daily Times*

Interview Van Grozier, Evening Star 15 February 1943, p.4  
Evening Star 27 December 1943, p.2.  
Interview Jim Manley  
Interviews Guy Nicholson, Jim Rowe.  
Interview Roy Williams, Producing butter in a small amount did not convey meaning and supply regulations.  
Correspondence with Monsignor Tom Liddy.



chickens at a time when the *Evening Star* described the eggs available for sale in Dunedin as “luxuries” and “rarities”.<sup>42</sup> Isobel Williams recalled, that “lots of people had hens”, although more than 12 meant classification as commercial production with all its bureaucratic responsibilities.<sup>43</sup> Jim Manley’s family kept hens, so that they were never really short of eggs, with the added bonus that when one died they were able to eat it.<sup>44</sup> According to the 1945 Census 35.7% of households, or 221 of the 618 dwellings in Mosgiel Borough, kept fowls, hens, geese or turkeys.<sup>45</sup> When compared with Dunedin city’s figure of only 8.9 %, it shows how Mosgiel was more cushioned from supply disruptions. The borough also boasted four poultry farmers with flocks of between one and two thousand in number and one farmer with more than two thousand,<sup>46</sup> so it seems likely that many small scale non-regulation sales or gifts of eggs occurred around the town. In season, small berry fruits, either cultivated, or growing wild around the borough provided an extra source of sweetness and flavouring for jams.<sup>47</sup> In a letter to the *Otago Daily Times*, ‘Mother’ of Mosgiel, wrote that, “Many people have small fruits in their gardens”.<sup>48</sup> Jim Manley vividly recalls picking buckets of gooseberries and blackcurrants in the summer holidays. Some residents possibly benefited from parcels sent from overseas. One woman interviewed by Eve Ebbett, received gifts of the best quality cigarettes from her husband in the Islands, via the American PX stores. A carton of these to the butcher would help him to miraculously conjure up some extra cuts of meat or possibly (banned) pork.<sup>49</sup> Gary Nicolson admitted that there were all sorts of things that could be worked if you were in the right place at the right time. It was just a matter of knowing the right people. Many little ruses like these helped to soften the blow.

As with many aspects of the war, the paternal hand of government helped the populace through the shortages. Encouragement given to backyard vegetable production in 1942, when supplies were at their poorest,<sup>50</sup> culminated in the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaigns of 1943-4 (see facing page).<sup>51</sup> Extra sugar supplies were provided for home jam making over the summer months and for next of kin servicemen’s parcels,<sup>52</sup> although many, including ‘Mother’ of Mosgiel, writing to the *Otago Daily Times*, complained they were not enough.<sup>53</sup> The customary Labour government provision of free milk and apples to school children continued, if somewhat intermittently.<sup>54</sup> The Health Department campaigned to keep people healthy, free from

<sup>42</sup> *Evening Star*, 15 February 1943, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 January 1943, p.6. This was also confirmed by Ray Williams.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Jim Manley. Getting wheat used to be a problem, however, so they mainly fed them on scraps. They were usually pretty scrawny and tough when cooked, he noted.

<sup>45</sup> Population Census, 1945 (Hereinafter 1945 Census): Vol. XI, Dwellings and Households; Section 23, p.36; Appendix A, Census of Poultry, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, Census of Poultry, Section 9, Flocks of fowls- Individual Cities and Boroughs.

<sup>47</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 December 1942, p.2. These were also sold to Dunedin jam factories.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 19 December 1942, p.6.

<sup>49</sup> Ebbett, pp. 106-7.

<sup>50</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 8 April 1942, p.4. The government “. . . appeal[s] to every loyal New Zealander interested in the growing of vegetables to develop his activity during the crisis through which we are passing, so that there will be a sufficiency for those who are doing the work and the fighting.” ; 22 July, 1942, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 4 August 1944, p.3; Taylor p.785.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 9 September 1943, p.4. “ 2 lb. . . to make comforts for Christmas parcels”.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 16 July; 19, 26 December 1942; 2 March 1943, pp. 4, 6, 6, 2; *Evening Star*, 29 October 1943, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 June 1942; 16 February 1943, pp. 4, 2.

winter ills and able to work. Their “Don’t Let Winter Get You Down” advertisements of 1944 advised “eating rightly (*sic*)”, getting eight hours sleep, dressing according to the weather, ventilated rooms and visiting the doctor if symptoms persisted.<sup>55</sup> The government also encouraged and legislated intensive recycling schemes. Under the auspices of its national body, the Otago Council for Reclamation of Waste, initially concentrated on scrap metal, ostensibly to go towards the production of munitions and weapons.<sup>56</sup> Jim Rowe, working at Chadwick’s Garage recalled, “. . . there was a bin thing for putting pots and pans and brass and lead and all that in . . . garages had bins for that stuff. Anything at all that could be made into more war things”. Margaret Kingan also remembered a scrap metal collection drive, with a truck driving around the streets. The Borough Council stored the booty in its yard, until collection could be made.<sup>57</sup> As the War progressed and shortages increased, however, the scheme was expanded to things such as paper,<sup>58</sup> - since most was imported - rubber<sup>59</sup> and cleaning rags.<sup>60</sup>

A few shortages did seem to remain a problem, however. Taylor records that with tea, the “outstanding necessity of a New Zealander”, rationed to only 2 oz each per week, some people felt very deprived.<sup>61</sup> Ella Cameron agreed. Bell Tea advertisements of the time emphasised its stronger flavour, requiring less use of the precious ration.<sup>62</sup> In Mosgiel, most of those interviewed missed the little luxuries of sweets and chocolate the most. Ray Williams recalled that they would rarely get blocks of chocolate, only boiled lollies, and some Sante and cinnamon bars. Indeed, Taylor notes that by 1943 chocolate had become a rarity,<sup>63</sup> while a Dunedin retailer admitted to the *Evening Star*, that he refused more sweet sales than he made, due to insufficient supply.<sup>64</sup> In the same year, the Taieri Ladies Hockey Club bought a box of chewing gum, giving the lucky club members one piece each Saturday, “as it is very scare”.<sup>65</sup> On the whole, however, the food shortages meant little problem for most Mosgiel residents. Ella Cameron summed this up saying, “we didn’t feel that we were hard done by”.

Shortages of many other goods were met with the same acceptance and ingenuity as had been food. Clothes, household linen and footwear rationing began in May 1942 and the ‘make do’ tradition of the housewife applied. The Rationing Controller recommended budgeting couponed clothing purchases for the year.<sup>66</sup> No doubt many local women had them calculated precisely. Taylor observed that the severe shortage of knitting wool meant that old garments were unravelled and re-knitted, with children’s jerseys often contrived of many colours.<sup>67</sup> Ebbett reports

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 4 August 1944, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 18 July 1940, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> War File: Letter, 12 August 1943, TC to Sec. of Nat. Council for Reclamation of Waste Material.

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, p.755. *Otago Daily Times*, 8 December 1942, p.4.

<sup>59</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 23 February 1943, p.2.

<sup>60</sup> War File: Letter, 21 February 1944, Sec. of Nat. Council for Reclamation of Waste Management to Secretary, Mosgiel Waste Reclamation Committee.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, p.790.

<sup>62</sup> *New Zealand Home Journal Monthly*, November 1942, p.68.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.792.

<sup>64</sup> *Evening Star*, 5 November 1942, p.3. Supplies were provided by manufacturers only once a month.

<sup>65</sup> Mosgiel Newsletter to Forces No.3; 23 August 1943.

<sup>66</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 June 1942, p.6. “A guiding principal must be buy only when actually needed.”

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, p.762.

advice to make children's clothes last longer by reinforcing their knees and elbows with patches.<sup>68</sup> Jim Manley recalls that these techniques had been used by his mother even before the war. Garments were often created from humble beginnings. Margaret Kenny used curtain material to make long evening frocks. Her mother used to clean cotton flour bags snow white, until perfectly clean of writing, to make pillow cases out of them.<sup>69</sup> Many women coped with a drab, utilitarian wardrobe, but for the fashionable, shortages of silk stockings were more than they could bear. Imports ceased in 1940 and overworked New Zealand mills could not provide enough. Substitutes of dubious quality existed, including imported stocking creams,<sup>70</sup> or even gravy browning.<sup>71</sup> Isobel Williams was one who dealt with their unavailability.

During the war you couldn't get silk stockings, so the girls used to paint their legs and get a friend to get a seam, a pencil seam, up the back like the seam of a stocking and wear no stockings at all. Sometimes you wore three quarter socks in the winter . . . for a bit of warmth or just ankle socks. You couldn't get silk stockings, they were a luxury. You might get someone come back from overseas and bring you a present, if you had a brother or whatever over there . . . because my brother, he was in the Navy and he brought me back some stockings.

Other shortages were dealt with less easily. Some household items became unprocurable during the war and consumers had to do without, or make them last. An advert for '3 in One Oil' featured a picture of a sewing machine and the slogan, "You can't replace it, so protect it". It emphasised that household tools, such as the sewing machine, or vacuum cleaner had to last for the duration, requiring the constant protection of their oil.<sup>72</sup> Electrical appliances were short and only began to make an appearance later in the war.<sup>73</sup> New telephone installations were suspended after Pearl Harbour, and massive demand remained unfulfilled until after the war.<sup>74</sup> Shortages also meant everyday household items such as crockery, glasses and cutlery, soldiered on for years with chips and cracks.

A shortage of coal, however, was more serious. Mosgiel had no gas supply and coal was still the most common form of fuel. Of the town's 618 dwellings recorded in the 1945 census, 65.6% had coal ranges; 31.4% electric and only 1.9% both. Taieri County was even more reliant, having 78.3% coal and only 17% electricity. The averages for all of New Zealand were 37.5%, 29.8% and 2.5% respectively, with gas ranges totalling 23.7%.<sup>75</sup> Any shortage of coal could not be laughed off quite as easily as golden syrup or bananas could. People depended on it to cook, heat water and heat homes which had less insulation than today. The beginning of the winter of 1943 saw unofficial coal rationing of generous quantities occur in Dunedin.<sup>76</sup> Winter the following year saw it reintroduced when city supplies were almost exhausted.<sup>77</sup> By June 1945, the situation in Mosgiel became serious enough for the Mayor, Mr

<sup>68</sup> Ebbett, p.93.

<sup>69</sup> Interview, Margaret Kenny.

<sup>70</sup> *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 8 August 1940, p.12; B. Gardiner (ed.), *It Wasn't Easy: Memoirs of Wartime Women of the South*, p.27.

<sup>71</sup> Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, p.252.

<sup>72</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 April 1944, p.8.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 30 May 1944, p.4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 23 December 1941, p.4.; 17 April, 1944, p.4. Six Hundred applicants in Dunedin in 1944.

<sup>75</sup> 1945 Census; Vol. XI; Section 23- Means of Cooking and Electricity Supply.

<sup>76</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 May 1943, p.2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 9 March 1944, p.4. Dunedin needed coal more to produce gas for its residents, who were restricted to using it between 6 am. and 7pm.

Hartstonge, to complain to the Minister of Mines that due to the severity of the winter “. . . The residents of this Borough are at present suffering considerable hardship through the acute shortage of coal for household purposes”.<sup>78</sup> Mavis Ewart was one who remembered the coal shortage. Further correspondence with no result occurred, so that even a year later in 1946 the same problem existed.<sup>79</sup> Yet again, however, the adaptability of some residents and the intimacy of the small town eased the impact of another war shortage. Jim Manley’s stepfather used to procure ‘donations’ from the Railways Department, thus:

He went onto the railway . . . on the track gang from Wingatui to Mount Allen, so he used to ride a bike over there to the depot at Wingatui and of course he used to take a sugar bag over the handles of the bike and bring it back at night with a lump of coal in it. It was the steam coal they used to use in the train. So, when the train was going slow round the corner or something like that, they’d give the driver a whistle and he’d drop a few lumps of coal off, so a lump of coal would go in the bag and over the handlebars of the bike. Helped to keep the home fires burning . . . It was probably broken up, because it was such strong coal it’d burn the grate out if you used it all the time, so they mixed it with other stuff.<sup>80</sup>

Gary and Fay Nicolson recalled similar generosity from N.Z.R. Gary’s mother, living at North Taieri, gave the drivers some cream and eggs. They responded by throwing lumps of coal over the side. Other children would gather mushrooms for the drivers and receive the same reward. On the other hand, Mavis Ewart’s brother-in-law, a fireman in Dunedin, looked after her by sending bags of coal. Something could usually be done to prevent the situation from becoming grim. Locals had probably been using methods like these for years before the War.

Petrol was probably the most obvious and long lasting shortage for residents of Mosgiel. For virtually the whole of the war, supplies for private cars were restricted to only a token amount. This did have some impact in a society which had, by the 1930’s begun to embrace the new freedom and status of this most glamorous consumer item. Phillips describes the motor car as being regarded as a sacred object, noting that, “The family Sunday drive with a stop for ice cream became a widespread custom”.<sup>81</sup> In a working class town like Mosgiel, however, it appears there were not that many cars around, so that impact was lessened more than other areas. Emphasis of this is seen in a letter by the Town Clerk, just after the end of the War, concerning arrangements to welcome local Mosgiel soldiers at the Dunedin Railway Station. He wrote that, “there is a growing reluctance for the relatively few car-owners (*sic*) in Mosgiel upon whom we can call for help in these occasions”.<sup>82</sup> Most of those interviewed felt that not many people could afford cars. Jim Manley recalls that there weren’t many cars around, save for people with money, “rich cockeys”, stock and station agents and the like. Margaret Kenny did not recall that there were many cars either. As one woman interviewed in Lauris Edmond’s book succinctly put it, “. . . as for petrol, who had a car in those

<sup>78</sup> MBC Subject File: Coal Shortage File; letter 29 June 1945, Mayor to Minister of Mines, Wellington.

<sup>79</sup> MBC Minutes: 6 August 1945, 10 June 1946; *Evening Star*, 6 July 1945, p.4.

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Jim Manley. Once his workmates played a trick on him, took out the coal and loaded a big railway hook into the bag. He staggered all the way home with this on his handlebars and was hardly pleased when he unwrapped it.

<sup>81</sup> Phillips, p.227.

<sup>82</sup> Mosgiel District Patriotic Committee File: letter, 21 September 1945, TC to Chief Traffic Inspector E. H. Barrett, Dunedin.

days?"<sup>83</sup> These are consistent with findings made by Tony Lynch in his dissertation, that most Dunedin people relied on public transport, even after the war. His interview with Mosgiel rugby player Peter Johnstone makes this clear.

There were very few people who were motorised, and we either caught the bus or the train. I remember when I played first for Taieri just before the war - the only bloke who was motorised in the team was Jim Barron. He had a BSA Silver Star motorbike, and he was the envy of the whole team. He gave it one kick and he chugged away down the road, whereas we walked or rode a pushbike. After the war a few of the blokes were fortunate enough to have a vehicle, but the majority didn't and we had to find our own way to the [rugby] grounds.<sup>84</sup>

Public transport provided a cheap and regular service into Dunedin. Since 1900, the advent of the 6.55 a.m. worker's train had enabled Mosgiel residents to travel to work in Dunedin before the usual 8 a.m. start.<sup>85</sup> During the war the Mosgiel Station in early morning was a hive of activity. Bill Borrow was one of the many daily passengers.

Two main trains went in there in the morning; 6 minutes past 7 and 12 minutes past 8. The seven train it had, oh, usually about 13 carriages and they were packed . . . I don't know how many would be in a carriage, I wouldn't like to say, probably might have been thirty or forty. The eight train had a bit less than that as a rule and the Outram train used to come over in the morning; get here just before the eight o'clock train went out. That took quite a crowd really. It started here and stopped at Wingatui, Abbotsford, Green Island, Burnside, Caversham, Kensington, Dunedin. It was packed by the time you stopped at every station on the way in. Believe it or not, they were still picking up passengers from Caversham . . . It went into the main Dunedin station, so Stuart Street [Dunedin] was a hell of a busy place in those days with foot traffic.<sup>86</sup>

Jim Manley also recalled the organised chaos of the early morning station.

. . . People who worked in town went to work on the train, and there were hundreds of people on the train. I can't remember how many carriages they had now, but with the school kids, kids who went to Kings High School or Tech who used to catch the train, I would say that there would have been at least nine or ten carriages on the train. There were two trains, one at 10 past 7 and one at 10 past 8 in the morning and then there were trains that went backwards and forwards during the day, all day and two big ones that run back at night, probably at about half past 5, and there was one at 10 to 6. Well, on the busy ones in the morning, I mean roughly say 10 carriages, there could have been five hundred people on the train quite easily. . . Yeah we used to see them running up the street when I was an apprentice [carpenter], mind you that was just after the war, but same thing. They used to run up the street, people were putting their ties on, eating toast and all sorts of things . . .

Bill enjoyed travelling by train, so petrol rationing did not unduly concern him. The regular daily service offered the opportunity to read or study, which many people did, or to play cards with other passengers. A small bus service, departing twice a day to town, run by Mr Millar Finnie, or a taxi - although this would have been far too expensive for most - were other options, but trains were the main form of transport.<sup>87</sup> In spite of some complaints concerning the infrequency<sup>of</sup> the train timetable, due to coal

<sup>83</sup> Edmond, p253.

<sup>84</sup> T. Lynch, *Otago 17 Southland 11: A Social History of Otago Rugby in the 1940's*, p.45.

<sup>85</sup> Kirk, p. 118. Before this it was virtually impossible to live in Mosgiel and commute to Dunedin each day before 8 a.m.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Bill Borrow. The fares were reasonable - 3 or 4 shillings for a 10 trip ticket.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid ; *Otago Daily Times*, 27, 29 April 1944, pp.10, 10. He also made trips from Mosgiel to the Airport and around the Plains. See also Chapter 5 on the Mosgiel taxi services.

restrictions later in the War,<sup>88</sup> they served the Mosgiel public reasonably well in wartime.

Excursion trains also provided an opportunity for holiday travel for most of the War. In the wake of Pearl Harbour restrictions on train journeys of over 100 miles did upset Christmas plans in 1941,<sup>89</sup> but within a year they were relaxed as the war situation progressed more favourably for the Allies.<sup>90</sup> Dunedin district railway traffic figures for Christmas 1942 were reported as being comparable with those for peace times, while those for Christmas 1943 set a record for the Dunedin Railway Station.<sup>91</sup> Mosgiel residents did not seem to travel far anyway. From those interviewed, many hardly went on holidays, usually since they could not afford to, and those that did travelled only small distances - mainly by train - to places like Allanton, Brighton, Edendale or Oamaru where they stayed with relatives. Regular excursion trains also enabled general public attendance at special events such as country race meetings in places like Beaumont or Riverton, or Otago rugby matches in Invercargill.<sup>92</sup>

Around Mosgiel, most people walked, or used bicycles, as they had before the war. Indeed, bikes were very much an integral part of life for a town situated on the flat Taieri Plains. Many rode to their jobs at the Mosgiel Woollen Mill. Jim Rowe, an apprentice at Chadwick's Garage for part of the war remembered that, ". . . Bikes always used to keep me busy. There were an awful lot of bikes in Mosgiel. You'd see the old Mill whistle blow, they'd be like gnats coming out the gate." Ray Williams describes the scene in more detail.

There was one thing about the Mill . . . Factory Road was very dangerous around about 12 o'clock [midday] or 5 o'clock at night if you happened to be on a push bike going in the opposite direction when the Mill whistle blew. They'd come out the gate at about 6 to 12 abreast at times, out onto the road and flat out up the road, and there was a few crashes. They tried to stop them, make them go at two abreast. There was a traffic policeman out there in his car one day and he got out of his car and they come out of the gate. He grabbed a chap by the handlebar and of course it spun him off his bike and he injured his back and they bundled him into the car and took off and they never tried that again . . . But, [there would] be 300, close to 400 working in the Mill and everybody rode a bike. There would only be a dozen or so who lived handy and would be walking.

Horses were an obvious alternative or continuance measure, for a town as close to the country. Taylor notes that horses reappeared to some extent in city streets.<sup>93</sup> Jim Manley recalled that most of the Mosgiel carriers and the council refuse collectors used a horse and cart anyway. He remarked that the pace of life was a lot slower then.

For those lucky enough to own a car and who did not put it on blocks for the duration,<sup>94</sup> it was a frugal time. Ebbett notes that it became a challenge for every car or motorbike owner to get as much motoring out of their petrol allowance as possible.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> MBC File: Bus Service File, letter, 11 February 1944, Mayor to Transport Licensing Authority, Dn.

<sup>89</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16, 27 December 1941, pp.4, 6. There was no legal limit to how far people travelled by car (save for their own petrol supplies) but the government did not encourage such pleasure travelling. Rumours that Traffic police would be turning motorists back were unfounded.

<sup>90</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 November 1942, p.2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 26 December 1942, p.4; 27 December 1943, p.2. Over 7000 people left on Boxing Day 1943.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 2 April, 27 October 1942, pp.4, 2.; *Evening Star*, 26 July 1941, p.8.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, p.325.

<sup>94</sup> Interview, Jim Rowe. The 1927 Studebaker he bought late in the War had been on blocks for 2 years.

<sup>95</sup> Ebbett, p.113.

Sometimes frantic rushes for petrol occurred, as happened in Dunedin the night before the reintroduction of rationing in February 1940. A newspaper reporter saw people arriving at service stations with all manner of containers, from beer 'peters', and two gallon cans to 44 gallon drums, to hold the precious liquid.<sup>96</sup> After that the motoring public remained at the mercy of the government, who on some occasions halved the allowance of the coupon,<sup>97</sup> or banned its sale altogether, between December 1941 and March 1942. However, in Mosgiel, there were ways around the bureaucracy, by legal or more dubious means.

Some substituted motor spirits. Ebbett notes that some motorists added kerosene and mineral turpentine to make their petrol go further, while it was also possible (and legal, if licensed, and thus paying road tax) to run a car solely on kerosene. Once the engine had been warmed up on petrol it could be switched over to the rougher burning spirit.<sup>98</sup> Local man Bruce McMillan had an old Buick Car, and according to Ray Kingan, would do just this after warming the engine up. Later in the war Jim Rowe bought an old 1927 Studebaker and ran it in the same way.

With this old car that I had, we used to run the bloody thing on lighted kerosene. It used to be like a bloody destroyer going; with smoke pouring out of it, rattled and clanged and banged . . . it was a hell of a thing, but it went. It'd be a full box of petrol, that'd last you a month. Pour it in the carburettor to get it to go and then you didn't stop the bloody thing until you got home. We used to pile in all the kids and go over to Outram or Woodside or Brighton for picnics and that sort of thing, once in a while . . .<sup>99</sup>

Charcoal or coke gas producers were another alternative source of power. By 1943 there were 434 cars and 146 trucks registered as being fitted with gas producers in the South Island.<sup>100</sup> They seemed to be not an uncommon sight around Taieri roads. Jim Manley recalled "There were a lot of people with gas burners on their cars, and they used to . . . cut a hole in the mudguard and put this gas burner thing in and it would produce gas from coke. You could see the thing go along, blowing away like mad with the gas burning away. In the U.K. they used to have gas bags, but we never did. I don't remember seeing them here". Jim Rowe, being an apprentice mechanic, saw a number of local versions close up, which were home made.

A lot of guys round here made gas producers out of just a drum and a charcoal burner on the back and a series of pipes running backwards and forwards underneath the car, . . . to cool the gas and purify gasses on the side of it, then into the carburettor . . . Oh, a lot of them were home made things, just a pot belly stove thing as a burner and a gas receiver on the side. Cut big holes in the mudguards, and in the old days they had big sweeping mudguards up over the front wheels; used to cut holes in that and put the gas receiver into that before it went into the motor . . . There was an outfit in Dunedin that sort of made these kit things, and you could install them yourself, but a lot of it was home made. There was a hell of a lot of do it yourself . . .

His last remark emphasises the resourcefulness mentioned by Jock Phillips and admired amongst New Zealand society, even today. Akin to housewives coping with food rationing, men who wished to, found ways to deflect the impact of petrol rationing. Cars with the previously mentioned power alternatives were messy, temperamental,

<sup>96</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 February 1940, p.8.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 30 April, 1 June 1942, pp. 4, 4.

<sup>98</sup> Ebbett, p.114. Kerosene was inefficient and built up a lot more carbon in the compression chamber.

<sup>99</sup> Interview, Jim Rowe.

<sup>100</sup> *A to J of the HR 1943*; H-40, p.4. "Gas Producers in New Zealand".

difficult to drive and, as Taylor noted one engineer, put the driver back to about the year 1912 with regard to their certainties, but they usually worked.<sup>101</sup>

Simpler alternatives remained for the less mechanically minded. A few shady activities emerged. Ray Kingan remembers that some local farmers got in trouble for using their tractor petrol, allotted for essential war production, in their private cars. Taylor also cites examples of farmers being prosecuted for exactly the same thing.<sup>102</sup> One person interviewed, stated with a smirk that they “just happened to get a bit extra” every now and then to keep them going. In 1944, the Oil Fuel Controller warned of the circulation of counterfeit coupons.<sup>103</sup>

Some saved up their ration for a longer trip. George Allen remembered people buying petrol in small bottles and storing these up until they had enough to go to Brighton. Trading and combining coupons also stretched the ration further. Together they provided enough for Colin Frew to go on a holiday.

We had petrol ration tickets too. Used to be quite a bit of swapping going on with them . . . I remember a chap I knew, that was one of the holidays I got before the war really got going. I didn't have a car but I managed to be able to get a few coupons or something one way or another, and this chap I went on holiday with, he had a car, and he was able to save enough coupons too. So, between us, we got enough coupons to do a round trip up the east coast, round the top of the South Island and down the West Coast and down through Cromwell, home. So we must have been able to save a few coupons between us.<sup>104</sup>

Jim Rowe also saved up many months worth of petrol coupons, enabling he and a friend to ride his motorbike to Timaru (Caroline Bay) for a holiday near the end of the War.<sup>105</sup> The hand of government provided a welcome respite for motorists in some cases. Additional petrol rations were available for families to travel “on genuine holiday trips” to the much trumpeted Centennial Exhibition in Wellington over the summer of 1939-40.<sup>106</sup> Likewise, at the end of the conflict, a special victory petrol allowance meant coupons were redeemable at one and a half times their value.<sup>107</sup>

Aside from the petrol shortage, vehicle owners also had to worry about the wear and tear on their tyres and tubes. New Zealand imported all its tyres and after the Japanese conquest of rubber sources in 1942, they became scarce. By May of that year government restrictions meant private, or non-essential commercial vehicles were ineligible for new or retreaded tyres or new tubes.<sup>108</sup> The government also set a maximum speed limit of 40 miles per hour to save wear on tyres.<sup>109</sup> Scarcity made preservation and care of existing tyres essential. In 1944, the Automobile Association impressed upon members the necessity for regular testing of tyre pressure to prevent damage.<sup>110</sup> However, an article from *Radiator*, the journal of motor trade in New Zealand, maintained that the motorist with reasonably good tyres had nothing to worry

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<sup>101</sup> Taylor, p.753.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p.751.

<sup>103</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 July 1944, p.6. Subsequently coupons were required to be endorsed by the owner's signature and license plate on the back.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Colin Frew. This was the one holiday he took in the whole of the War period.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, Jim Rowe.

<sup>106</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 October 1939, 1 February 1940, pp. 2, 15. “. . . trips lasting at least 6 days.”

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 8 May 1945, p.13.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 1 May 1942, p.6.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 30 June 1942, p.4. The speed limit was 30 mph in cities, boroughs and town districts.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 5 April 1944, p.5.



about. It claimed in theory because of the limited petrol rations available, even a three quarter worn tyre could last nine years.<sup>111</sup> Even then some ingenious answers were forthcoming. Local resident Geordie Larsen, when finding he couldn't get new tubes for the tyres of his old Model T. Ford, used to stuff them with grass and reckoned they went alright.<sup>112</sup> Some defied the law, ignoring warrant of fitness requirements as one local man, convicted of driving a vehicle "of such constructional condition as to be liable to cause injury to any person", did in 1943.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, with at every turn and every problem Mosgiel residents usually found a way to adapt to the changing situation of the war supply shortages. They were able to deflect a lot of the impact from their basic day to day lives. The second part of this chapter delves beyond the mere existence part of the lifestyle of residents during the war, past the workplace and looks toward their free time. After all, man was put here to do more than simply survive. What impact did the War have on local leisure, entertainments and organised activities of individuals in the community?

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Just as the War did not have an overwhelming impact on the everyday functions of local households, neither did it present a great threat to local leisure activities. A few minor changes occurred, but nothing which could not adapt. There may have been less leisure time available for some, due to longer hours of work, but that which remained provided scope for individuals to entertain themselves, or to participate in various sports or clubs, since they were barely affected.

As mentioned briefly, entertainment in Mosgiel was, even for the times, rather elementary and remained essentially untouched by the War. People led simpler lives and had less expectations as to their entertainment or leisure time. Bill Borrow observed that is the biggest difference between then and today. To him, people nowadays want their entertainment made for them, whereas during the War, they made their own fun a lot of the time. Activities such as, reading, walking, visiting friends or fishing, bicycle riding, swimming at the Baths (in summer) or rabbit shooting, for the more adventurous, kept many people of all ages amused.<sup>114</sup> Others were content to sit home to listen to the radio, which by this time Phillips notes, "had arrived to sit proudly in the centre of the living room as a focus for family entertainments".<sup>115</sup> For locals going out on week nights, after the pubs had closed at 6 p.m., Matson's or Walker's billiard rooms, or the milk bar, were about the only other options apart from the pictures in Coronation Hall. Fay Nicholson recalls that they had two different films on during the week, one Tuesday and Wednesday, the other Friday and Saturday. Going to the pictures, either in Mosgiel or the nine theatres in Dunedin,<sup>116</sup> was one of the most popular activities. Bill Borrow, for example, remembers that the Coronation Hall would be full on a Saturday night for the pictures. Mark Lindsay, the author of a dissertation on Dunedin entertainment during the war, notes that one positive effect of the war was an increase in popularity and paid attendances by 21% between 1940-1

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<sup>111</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 26 August 1942, p.4.

<sup>112</sup> Interview, Jim Manley.

<sup>113</sup> Mosgiel Magistrate Court Criminal Record Book, 23 July 1943.

<sup>114</sup> Interview, Bill Borrow.

<sup>115</sup> Phillips, p.227.

<sup>116</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 3 May 1941, p.15. Obviously each theatre showed more than one film per week, providing quite a variety for avid cinema goers.

and 1943-4. New Zealanders attended an average of 19 screenings per year in 1941-2, rising to 24 per person in 1943-4, although this was not necessarily all war-related.<sup>117</sup> While there is no evidence to support this in Mosgiel, it seems a reasonable enough conclusion to draw that some similar increase would have occurred there.

The large community-oriented events continued unabated through the War, indeed there seems to have been a marked increase resulting from the numbers of events held for various patriotic purposes. Concerts and Community Sings proved very popular during these times and the War did little to interfere with this. Community Sings had been well supported in the Depression, and just before the outbreak of war the Mosgiel Business Men's Association inaugurated "Mosgiel's Own Community Sings", led by Ernie Cate (song leader), 'Baldy' McLean (humourist) and Charlie Skinner (pianist), which continued successfully throughout the War,<sup>118</sup> raising money for patriotic purposes and regularly booking the Coronation Hall.<sup>119</sup> Concerts, both formal and informal also pressed on during the War. Nan Taylor comments that New Zealand's real national music is that of its brass and pipe bands, where traditionally in public parks and gardens they constituted the centre of Sunday entertainment.<sup>120</sup> Both were represented in Mosgiel. Lindsay notes that many Dunedin bands, depleted in membership, had to suspend their activities from the early stages of the War,<sup>121</sup> but while the Pipe Band did require some help from the WAAF Drum Corps stationed at RNZAF Taieri, both the Taieri Pipe Band and the Mosgiel Municipal Brass Band (also the Otago Mounted Rifle's Band) continued providing community entertainment throughout the period.<sup>122</sup> Fay Nicolson recollected, "When I was a kid we used to like to go up the street on a Friday night because the Pipe Band played up the street on a Friday night, on a corner. And along further, which would be about opposite Glasgow Street now, the Salvation Army always played and sang there." Bill Borrow was a member of the Brass Band for much of the War. He recalled:

Sometimes on Friday nights there used to be a balcony on the Town Hall down here, out in front of the hall, and we'd play on that some Friday nights. A lot of people went up and down the street on a Friday night. It was quite busy. Farmers would come in and have a yarn, then go away to the pubs and all this even though the pubs were supposed to be shut . . . And we played Sunday afternoon concerts in the park. They used to have a band rotunda down there in Anzac Park, and we played for various other shows.

The bands remained an integral part of Mosgiel social life throughout the War, playing concerts for patriotic purposes, as well as other community events such as Anzac Day, civic occasions or race meetings at Wingatui.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> M. Lindsay, 'Being Grim and Gay: Dunedin Entertainment and Cultural Life 1938-43', pp.6-8. He notes that by 1938 New Zealand audiences were at last seeing first rate imported movies, along with ease of transportation and the increased British and American output, contributed to larger attendance figures.

<sup>118</sup> MDPC Correspondence: Mosgiel Business Men's Association, First Annual Report 1940. (Hereinafter MBMA).

<sup>119</sup> MBC File: Coronation Hall Lettings File, various correspondence, 30 May, 12 June, 1940; 3 April, 30 May, 24 July 1941; 6 July, 9, 24 Sept., 21 Oct. 1943; 4 May, 1 June, 5 Oct. 1944, for example.

<sup>120</sup> Taylor, p.1213.

<sup>121</sup> Lindsay, p.56.

<sup>122</sup> Kirk, p.302; MBC File: Taieri Pipe Band File; letter, 15 July 1940, Mr C. G. Lucas (Sec.) to TC.

<sup>123</sup> DJC Minutes, 5 March 1942.

Dances were probably the most popular social occasion in the weekend, for young and old alike. As Taylor notes, dancing was the most direct, simplest and cheapest way for couples to become acquainted and then to pass the time.<sup>124</sup> Colin Frew recalls, "Dances used to be pretty popular in those days. They used to have them pretty regularly every Saturday night". According to Jim Rowe, a circuit of organised dances had developed. Margaret Kenny explained that, "There'd be several around the Mosgiel halls, the Girl Guide Hall, the Scout Hall, Fire Brigade Hall, Coronation Hall, all those places, there'd be dances and then there was . . . Allanton. East Taieri and Momona were the main ones. . . . There were always plenty at the dances". Fay Nicolson remembered,

There was a dance at the Girl Guide hall every Saturday night. Loads of the Saturday nights there would be ones at the East Taieri Hall. There was always a dance at Momona and over at Outram. Then nearly every organisation held a ball during the year in the Coronation Hall . . . and you really looked forward to that. There'd be a Mill Ball, the Catholic Ball, the Fire Brigade Ball, the Businessmen's Ball, the Golf Ball, the Hunt Club Ball and the Brass Band Ball. They were really big occasions. It was mostly in the wintertime, not the summertime, so much. About one or so every three weeks . . . Women wore a long frock and men went in suits. They'd go to a dance in a sports coat, but to a ball they'd wear a suit . . . When you were young, you know, if you didn't get to that ball, you were just going to die, that's all there was to it.

Bill Borrow commented that these were great nights. A brief examination of Coronation Hall usage during this period emphasises that the annual balls and dances continued undiminished.<sup>125</sup> Scrutiny of the two local newspapers also shows ample opportunities for locals to attend dances in Dunedin, where the Town Hall dance was especially large, or around the various suburbs. The War did not diminish the amount of activity, in fact it seems to have increased it, however its main effect was to thin the ranks of some of the participants. Especially during the critical war period from late 1941 into the beginning of 1943, the large numbers of men of military age called into the forces left some women without dance partners. By 1942 in Dunedin, dance competitions evolved to encourage girls to dance among themselves due to the noticeable shortage of male partners,<sup>126</sup> although none of the locals who were interviewed mentioned this happening in Mosgiel. The shortage of men is emphasised, however, by a letter from Mayor Hartstonge to the Commanding Officer at Wingatui Camp, inviting his men to attend a patriotic ball in the Coronation Hall. He stated, "As there are so few young men left in this district . . . it would be appreciated if you could see your way to give the troops under your command extended leave on the night in question, so that those among them, who wish, may attend the dance".<sup>127</sup> The close presence of two military establishments of uniformed young men did help to deflect the temporary imbalance somewhat. Margaret Kenny recalled that "A lot of the local boys would be away overseas, but when there were camps and the like at Wingatui, those ones would all come to the dances then . . . on a Saturday night anyway". Most of the young and some of the older men in the area attended the dances, plus those military age locals on leave, unfit or in essential work, but the ladies may have made up the

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<sup>124</sup> Taylor, p.1060.

<sup>125</sup> MBC Subject File: Coronation Hall Lettings File.

<sup>126</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 January 1942, p.3. ". . . The contestants had to do the Destiny Waltz, Modern Waltz, Military Two Step and Quickstep and the judging was by popular vote".

<sup>127</sup> Fire Protection File: letter, 7 October 1942, Mayor to The O. C., Wingatui Military Camp.

majority at many events in 1942 thanks to the Japanese threat. More aspects of this impact will be discussed in the next chapter.

Mark Lindsay observes that an “entertainment vacuum” emerged in Dunedin during the War.<sup>128</sup> However, it seems that the residents of Mosgiel did not notice a similar impact. Not having as much variety of entertainment as Dunedin there was less to be affected. With their, perhaps, simpler tastes compared to Dunedin, or Auckland city dwellers for that matter, the residents of this small town appeared to be quite happy with the continuation of what was available before war’s outbreak. If they did wish to sample something different, a play for example, they could easily travel into town. Alternatively, local people of all ages participated in the town’s various organised sporting or interest clubs. How then, did the War impact on the individuals who were part of these?

Sport has played an important part in New Zealand society since colonial times, by building a feeling of shared community.<sup>129</sup> As a respectable outlet for physical activity in the growing sedentary urban communities<sup>130</sup> combined with increased leisure time, sport flourished past the turn of the century and into World War Two. In Mosgiel this was definitely the case, as we have seen there were limited options for entertainment in the town. Most of those interviewed played one or more sports in their youth. The onset of the War did impact on local sporting clubs and the individuals who were part of them to some extent, but generally they continued on with their activities as much as possible. In contrast to Britain, where Longmate noted that organised sport of all kinds suffered and Lewis, that it languished,<sup>131</sup> sport continued to hold its integral place in the community. Early in the war, a mild debate arose about the place of sport in such a time of crisis. Writing to *The Otago Daily Times*, ‘Veteran’, for instance, recommended a ban on sport for single men over 21 years, who, should rather have enlisted in the forces.<sup>132</sup> Sentiment such as this, which does not appear prominent, was roundly quashed by editors and various members of the government. The Minister of Internal Affairs (W. E. Parry), for example, felt that no good purpose would be served by the abandonment of recreative games.<sup>133</sup> The *O.D.T.* considered that youths and those who, for whatever reason, could not go overseas should be allowed to maintain their “healthy recreation”, building up the country’s discipline, vitality and manliness to meet the challenge of war.<sup>134</sup> Sports bodies such as the Otago Rugby Football Union echoed this.<sup>135</sup> In 1942 the *Evening Star* espoused the same message, while observing that reasonable participation in sport did not hamper the 1914-18 war effort. Its editor also pointed out the extinction of many clubs during the Great War which had not been revived in peacetime, and noted the efforts of the Otago

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<sup>128</sup> Lindsay, pp.48, 56.

<sup>129</sup> S.A.G.M. Crawford, “Muscles and Character are There the First Object of Necessity: An Overview of Sport and Recreation in a Colonial Setting - Otago Province, New Zealand.”, *The British Journal of Sports History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, September 1985, pp. 112-13.

<sup>130</sup> Phillips p.91.

<sup>131</sup> Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, pp. 463-7; Lewis, p.197.

<sup>132</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 February 1940, p.7. “Our cheers should be for the soldiers, not those . . . sportsmen . . . who have not the backbone to enlist.”

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 31 May 1940, p.7.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 19 February 1940, p.6.

<sup>135</sup> ORFU Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1940-41, p.5.

Provincial Council of Sport to prevent a repeat of this.<sup>136</sup> Despite any other wartime problems faced by grass roots sport, the wider community was supportive of, and interested in it.

New Zealand's premier sport in the 1940's was rugby, and locally this proved no exception. The Taieri Rugby Football Club, founded in 1883, faced most of the difficulties common to its fellow sporting clubs arising from the conflict. The obvious drain of player personnel into the armed forces probably produced the biggest impact. At the 1941 pre-season Annual Meeting, the President, Mr A. W. McCunn, highlighted this problem, mentioning that 30 playing members of the club were overseas or in camp. He asked those remaining to "pull together and uphold the prestige of the club".<sup>137</sup> Wartime trials such as this were met with a spirit emphasised by the fervent local support for the team that year. The *Otago Daily Times* sportswriter mused that,

If enthusiasm and faith in the merits of a team could win matches, the Taieri senior rugby fifteen could undoubtedly have been unbeaten for several seasons. Each Saturday, wet or fine, a gallant band of supporters cheers the country team on to greater efforts, and the side can do little wrong in the eyes of its supporters. This keenness is most commendable in view of the fact that Taieri's ranks have been greatly depleted lately and the selectors are finding great difficulty in keeping their teams together.<sup>138</sup>

The promotion of junior players enabled the club to field a senior team for that season. The *O.D.T.* sports column reported,

Favourable comment was made at the Taieri - Southern match on Saturday on the play of J. McLeod, the Taieri first-five eighth, who has been promoted from the Fourth to the First Grade. The young player showed exceptional pace off the mark and with more experience should develop into a first class inside back. Although of slight build, his tackling was fearless and effective.<sup>139</sup>

Throughout the war years, however, the ORFU harboured concerns about the physical well being of the many younger players moving into the senior ranks.<sup>140</sup> Tony Lynch, in his dissertation on Otago rugby in the 1940's, notes that older men around the Dunedin clubs returned to the playing fields to keep the game alive.<sup>141</sup> After the 1941 season Taieri, not blessed with these resources, decided to concentrate on Third Grade and lower where it could foster the younger playing talent.<sup>142</sup> Lynch notes an informal arrangement allowed the club's few remaining senior players<sup>143</sup> to join Zingari-Richmond for the duration.<sup>144</sup> The presence of newly formed teams from RNZAF Taieri (1940) and the OMR at Wingatui Camp (1942) meant Senior Grade games still continued near Mosgiel for local patrons to watch.<sup>145</sup> In the lower grades the club

<sup>136</sup> *Evening Star*, 11 April 1942, p.6. "In the last war many clubs were allowed to go out of existence altogether. Their revival was often beyond the powers of the most enthusiastic. The lesson has not been lost on sport's controllers."

<sup>137</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 21 March 1941, p.7.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 19 June 1941, p.4. Its playing record was: Played 15, Won 4, Drew 3, Lost 8; Mitchell, p.21.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 1 May 1941, p.4.

<sup>140</sup> *Evening Star*, 12 May 1942, 26 Sept. 1944, pp. 7, 7.

<sup>141</sup> Lynch, p.7.

<sup>142</sup> B. Mitchell, *Taieri Rugby Football Club 1883-1983*, p. 21-23. *Evening Star*, 8 April 1942, p.3.

<sup>143</sup> ORFU Committee Minutes, 7 April 1942. The ORFU were notified that three Taieri senior players; R. Barnes, K. Giles and K. Waldren were available to play senior football.

<sup>144</sup> Lynch, p.5.

<sup>145</sup> ORFU Committee Minutes, 20 March 1940; 7, 27 April, 1942.

flourished, with the Third Grade side claiming a hat trick of titles in 1944-6, the Sixth Grade team claiming one in 1943 and the Fourth Grade team one in 1945.<sup>146</sup> Ray Williams played during this time. He remembers, "We used to go in for rugby, but Taieri couldn't get a First Grade team during the War. For three years we played Third Grade and some of the jokers that played in the team came back from overseas, Mick Geary, Bert McCunn, and some of those . . . and for three years in a row we won the competition at Carisbrook." The continuation of lower grades enabled the young players to participate in the game they loved and provided plenty of entertainment and interest for local supporters and spectators.

Other nuisances were the blackout, which Lynch notes prevented week night practices for two years, resulting in a decline in overall playing standards,<sup>147</sup> a shortage of football bladders<sup>148</sup> and the club's eviction from the Recreation Ground pavilion, which was reserved as the EPS Aid Station in 1942-3. A tin dressing shed moved onto the ground sufficed adequately for the few Taieri teams in this period, however.<sup>149</sup> Some transport problems for Dunedin clubs travelling to Mosgiel, owing to petrol shortages and railway restrictions, were noted by the ORFU in 1944, but must have been overcome since all games continued to be played that season, and their results dutifully recorded in the *ODT*.<sup>150</sup> The war proved more than a passing problem for Taieri RFC, but not insurmountable, unlike most country areas of Otago where the game virtually ceased.<sup>151</sup> It rode out the storm by adapting to the changed circumstances where it could and relying on its strong base of local community support, both to keep players in the game and watching until the crisis had passed.

Unlike its oval ball counterpart, the war seems to have had less impact on local soccer. Mosgiel AFC dominated the game in Otago for ten years from 1937 to 1947, winning the Dunedin title for nine of those years and showing its strength in the contribution of eight players to the 1939 Otago team.<sup>152</sup> Jim Rowe, who played in one of the club's lower grade teams early in the War, recalls that "The First Grade Mosgiel team, that was a really good team, I think a good few of them ended up going overseas; the Stevenson brothers, Steven the butcher, Stenhouse . . . in that group". Even with the loss of some players Mosgiel continued to field a team in the senior grade, when by 1942, five other Dunedin clubs had dropped out of the competition due to "wartime difficulties".<sup>153</sup> Their replacement by military teams, lowered the standard of club play<sup>154</sup> and allowed Mosgiel to run up large scores in most of the games. This is in stark contrast to 1916 when the Otago Football Association decreed that, ". . . no person eligible for military service in the Expeditionary Forces be permitted to take

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<sup>146</sup> Mitchell, pp. 21-23. The Third Grade team played 44 games in the three years, losing only 3.

<sup>147</sup> Lynch, p.8. The lights were allowed on by the 1943 season, with the cessation of the blackout.

<sup>148</sup> S. O'Hagan, *The Pride of Southern Rebels*, p.104.

<sup>149</sup> MBC Reserves Committee Minutes, 13 April 1942; Mitchell, p.21. This eviction also applied to the other tenants in the pavilion, the Taieri Cricket and Hockey Clubs.

<sup>150</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 April 1944, p.4.

<sup>151</sup> Lynch, p.9; O'Hagan, p.104.

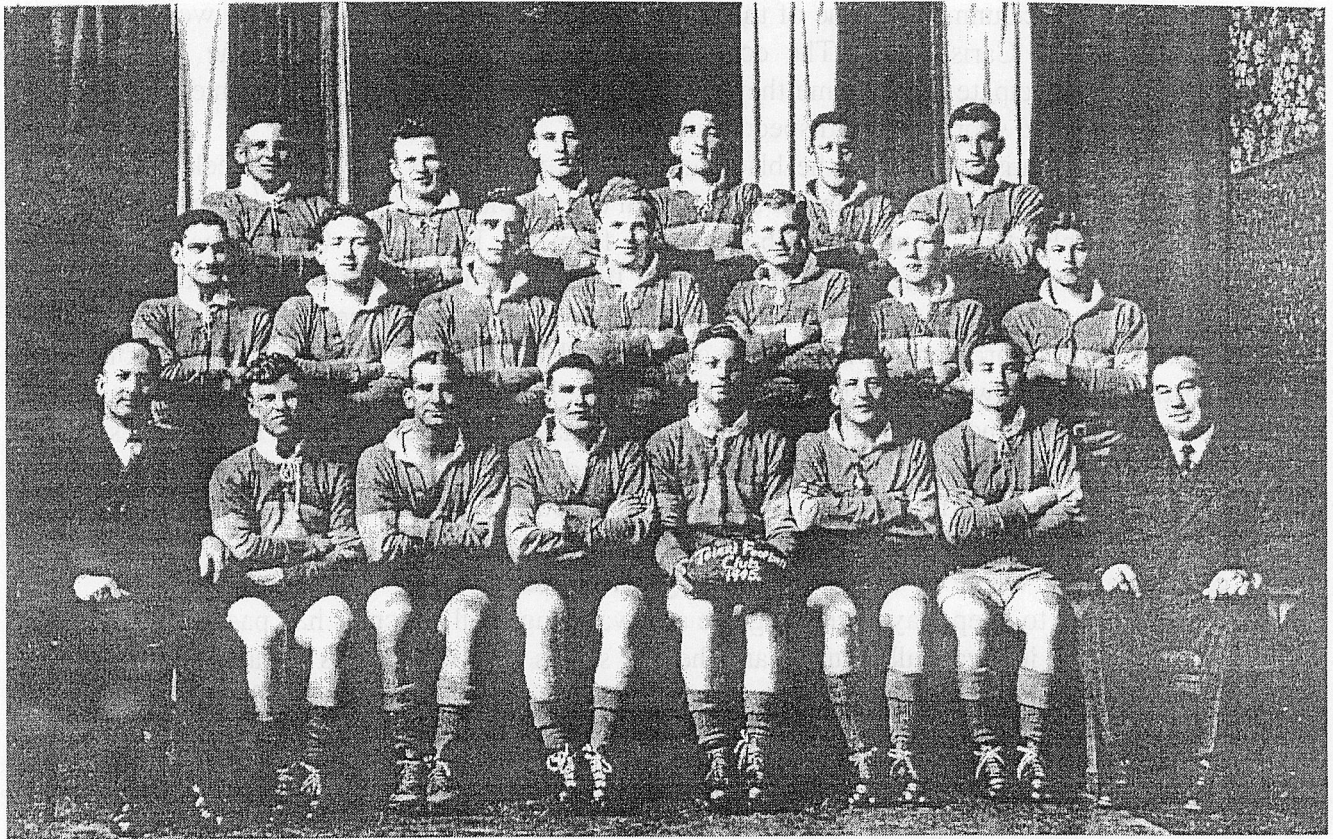
<sup>152</sup> Mosgiel Reflects, p.50. The Chatham Cup is a nation wide club knock out competition.

Mosgiel lost to Waterside of Wellington on both occasions.

<sup>153</sup> *Evening Star*, 18 May 1942, p.5.

<sup>154</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 April 1941, p.7. Wins of 7-2, 8-1 or 7-1, for example, were common, almost mandatory, for the local team. Ibid, 5 May, 9 June 1941, pp.7, 7; *Evening Star*, 24 May 1943, p.5.

finished with the Third Grade side claiming a further 4 titles in 1944 & the Sixth Grade team claiming one in 1943 and the Fourth Grade team one in 1942. Ray Williams played during this time. He remembers, "We used to go in for rugby, but Taiter couldn't get a First Grade team during the War. For three years we played Third Grade and some of the jokers that played in the team came back from overseas. Mick



#### TAIERI R.F.C. THIRD GRADE COMPETITION WINNERS 1945.

Back Row: L. Barnes, L. Costello, R. Williams, G. Johnstone, J. McLeod, E. Gordon.  
 Middle Row: R. Graham, T. French, F. Geary, R. Pilling, D. Wallace, G. Thompson, W. Hemdry.  
 Front Row: E. Kerr (President), S. Costello, G. Paull, E. Crozier (Vice Captain), F. Blackie (Captain), A. McCunn, J. Logie, R. Bell (Coach).  
 Absent: J. Tansley (Coach)

Source: Mitchell.

part in matches under the jurisdiction of the association” and the club was subsequently disbanded.<sup>155</sup>

Other sports did not fare as well against the press of war, although most toiled on with younger players, as the rugby club did. The Taieri Cricket Club, with a proud history dating back to 1878, were forced to admit at the beginning of the 1941-2 season that, “With present war conditions and many of our senior members serving with the forces, everything is left to the juniors to carry on until the others return”.<sup>156</sup> The club continued on in the Second Grade competition, usually suffering heavy defeats,<sup>157</sup> although an Air Force team kept senior games in the local area. As with many sports, the determination of club stalwarts kept the club alive.<sup>158</sup> Golf suffered throughout the War, with the cancellation of numerous tournaments and depleted numbers. The Taieri Golf Club opened their links (on the site of the present Gladfield course) in 1936 with a membership of 50 men and 30 women. By the end of the War it had only eleven members who “somehow managed to keep the course operating”.<sup>159</sup> They grazed sheep to maintain the grounds, which Taylor notes in light of the petrol shortages for lawnmowers, was not that uncommon.<sup>160</sup> Stocks of golf balls were, for some stages of the War however, unobtainable.<sup>161</sup> The Taieri Bowling Club also faced reduced membership and the disruption to activities due to the War. In 1940 the club withdrew from the Dunedin Fours competition because of the petrol shortage and the long hours that many members were working at the Mill. Efforts to procure club blazers and a spiked green roller in 1939 and 1940, respectively, went unfulfilled until after the War because of supply difficulties.<sup>162</sup> A number of sports, then, simply attempted to mark time until the War gave all its members and freedoms back to them.

Not all clubs suffered so, however. While the aforementioned major sports faced problems, many minor sports continued along as before. The very nature of their unpopularity amongst men of military age saved them from much of the disruption caused by reduced memberships. Local women’s sport, though not having as many participants or receiving as much media attention as men’s had been, continued uncurtailed throughout the conflict. Margaret Kenny played basketball (now netball) for Taieri, during the earlier years of the War. They caught the train into town to play their games. The Taieri Ladies Hockey Club fielded teams untroubled in Intermediate and B grades throughout the war period. Isobel Williams recalled that “We played hockey on the Oval and it used to smell; it was something shocking in those days . . . You’d catch the bus and go up to the station and get the train in, and get the train out, get the 20 past 4 train out . . . covered in mud”. Margaret Kingan played badminton on a Tuesday night at the Baptist Church Hall, “just for interest, instead of sitting around”. About once a month they would travel into town to play clubs there.<sup>163</sup> A women’s baseball competition was initiated by the 1941-2 season, featuring local

<sup>155</sup> W. C. Anderson, *Soccer by the Silverstream*, p.16. ; Mosgiel Reflects, p.50. It was not reformed until 1921.

<sup>156</sup> MBC File: Taieri Cricket Club File; letter, 11 October 1941, I. Hendry (Acting Secretary) to TC.

<sup>157</sup> For example; Carisbrook ‘C’ 172, defeated Taieri 53 and 43. *Evening Star*, 30 November 1942, p.6.

<sup>158</sup> T. Wenlock (ed.), *The Taieri Cricket Club Inc.: 50th Jubilee 1930-80*, p.3.

<sup>159</sup> Mosgiel Reflects, p.51. The club house was heated by a coal range and lit by kerosene lamps.

<sup>160</sup> Taylor, p.325.

<sup>161</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 January 1943, p.2.

<sup>162</sup> *100 Years Drawing the Shot 1886-1986: A History of the Taieri Bowling Club*, pp.23-4.

<sup>163</sup> Interview, Margaret Kingan.



involvement.<sup>164</sup> The Taieri Ladies Baseball Club practised on the Recreation Ground throughout the rest of the War, sharing it with the cricketers. This caused the Council some concern about the risk of accident and it advised “for scouts to be placed in suitable positions on the ground” to warn of the unexpected approach of cricket balls.<sup>165</sup> Other minor sports pressed on in this period; the Taieri Croquet Club, for instance.<sup>166</sup> A few of the more elegant residents around the area even managed some skiing. Vera Crozier remembers that “Some of them went up to the Rock and Pillar [Ranges]. My sister did, but in those days there was just a small group, not many skiers in those war days”. In 1943, the new sport of wrestling was established in Mosgiel to cater to the youths of the town. The “Ray Tourell Wrestling Class” ended the season with a membership of 12. Towards the end of the 1944 season the first Taieri Novice Amateur Wrestling Championships were held, leading to the formation of the Taieri Physical Culture and Wrestling Club in 1945.<sup>167</sup>

The War’s impact on sport in Mosgiel was nowhere near as grim as it could have been, and the sporting community benefited from a more enlightened public attitude regarding its continuation. The obvious loss of many of the area’s local sportsmen of military age meant some teams were not up to the usual standard or carried on in lower grades. However, the point is that they did carry on providing for those players and spectators who remained. Research by this author could not find any club which felt the impact of war so strong or pressing that it had to suspend its activities. Some may have struggled, but they kept going, determined their activities would continue for when the servicemen came back. Alternatively other sports, namely women’s, continued on much as before. Transport and equipment difficulties may also have caused some nuisance value, but adaption to the new conditions did not prove hard, so that overall, sport in all its forms continued unabated.

By no means all organised leisure activities in Mosgiel took place on grass fields or in gymnasiums, but a similar mild impact was felt on the various clubs and associations in the town. In spite of the loss of members and a shortage of some items, practically all were able to carry on their regular activities. They were affected less since there were proportionally more young Mosgiel men of military age in sports clubs, such as the rugby club, than in non-athletic clubs and societies, such as the local Red Cross or Poultry and Caged Bird societies. Most regularly scheduled community events continued to take place throughout the duration of the War, although petrol restrictions forced the curtailment of similar events in far flung Central Otago.<sup>168</sup> The Taieri Horticultural Society persisted with their shows in this period, as did the Taieri Poultry Pigeon and Cage Bird Society.<sup>169</sup> In 1943, its fifty-fifth annual poultry show was reported as attracting good entries and being quite successful.<sup>170</sup> Likewise, the Taieri Competitions Festival provided a popular outlet for young performers, dancers, and singers each year of the war. Lindsay notes that its counterpart, the Dunedin Competitions Society, emphasised the importance of their capacity to alleviate stress

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<sup>164</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 9 January 1942, p.6.

<sup>165</sup> MBC File: Taieri Baseball Club File; letter, 6 October 1942, TC to Mrs G. R. Lucas (Secretary).

<sup>166</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 May 1941, p.10.

<sup>167</sup> *The History of the Taieri Amateur Wrestling Club: Fifty Years of Wrestling 1943-1993*, pp.5-6. Mosgiel resident Ray Tourell was the Otago middleweight champion from 1936-1950.

<sup>168</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 February 1940, 2 April, 3 June 1942, pp.6, 4, 4.

<sup>169</sup> MBC File: Coronation Hall Lettings File.

<sup>170</sup> *Evening Star*, 28 June 1943, p.6.

and strengthen public morale. The Dunedin competitions flourished through the war years and received substantial public support and attendances.<sup>171</sup> Bill Borrow recalled of Taieri, that possibly a few entries would drop off, but it wasn't cut short. No doubt local residents gave full support to the local performances. The final demonstration concert of the 1942 Taieri Competitions Festival, for example, packed the whole of Coronation Hall.<sup>172</sup> Drama also burgeoned during wartime. Bill Borrow remembers,

At the start of the War they had what was called 'The Mosgiel Players', that became the Dramatic Society after the War. As far as I know, they had productions during the War. Mainly 'The Mosgiel Players'. They were good productions too, the early drama days, oh, there were some big productions and you were playing to full houses . . . people did go to concerts and that sort of thing in those days, more so than nowadays.

Other organisations pressed on, even with a few of their number in the forces. The Odd Fellows Lodge (M.U.I.O.O.F.), the Rotary Club and the Businessmen's Association continued with their regular meetings and good works in the community.<sup>173</sup> Lodge attendances were reported to be increasing since the "past officers and the younger section of members are realising the difficult times and doing their bit".<sup>174</sup> The Rotary Club (only formed in 1938) did, however, lament that having members serving in the forces handicapped it.<sup>175</sup> The activities of the local branches of the Red Cross Society and the St John Ambulance Brigade increased substantially during wartime. Interest in the latter, quickened with the news of the bombing raids over Britain in 1940,<sup>176</sup> and the 1941 Annual Report noted that as the war progressed, greater demands were being placed on members' time.<sup>177</sup> Both organisations provided scope for youth involvement, with the Mosgiel Cadet Ambulance Division<sup>178</sup> and the North Taieri Junior Red Cross,<sup>179</sup> keeping young people's interest. Other youth organisations, their members not of military age, proceed relatively unaffected, to offer outlets for local children to spend their leisure hours. The 6th Dunedin (Mosgiel) Scouts grew to such an extent through the War that by 1948 there were four scout patrols and two senior patrols.<sup>180</sup> They also proved a valuable asset to the community through their heavy involvement in collecting for the waste paper drives and other patriotic appeals.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, such was the interest from girls of the district, in 1942, The First Mosgiel Girl Guide Company was reformed after dwindling interest during the Depression cut it down to the size of a lone patrol. In 1944 a Brownie troop, for very young girls, also began, while a local Girls Brigade (10th Dunedin) company operated at the Mosgiel Presbyterian Church throughout the war period.<sup>182</sup> Under the auspices of the various local churches, youth groups, Sunday schools and Bible classes offered other outlets to the young people of the area, without any notable impact

<sup>171</sup> Lindsay, pp.54-5.

<sup>172</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 October 1942, p.6.

<sup>173</sup> MDPC Correspondence; Mosgiel District Overseas Letter, Nos. 2 and 3; 19 July, 23 August 1943.

<sup>174</sup> *Evening Star*, 6 September 1941, p.6.

<sup>175</sup> *The Rotary Club of Mosgiel: Silver Jubilee Booklet 1938-1963*, p.4.

<sup>176</sup> St. John (Otago) Annual Report 1940, p.25.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 1941, p.26.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 1942, pp. 22, 28.

<sup>179</sup> Red Cross (Otago) Annual Report 1944, p.11; Interviews, Vera Crozier, Mavis Ewart.

<sup>180</sup> Kirk, p.343.

<sup>181</sup> MBC Minutes: 16 Dec. 1940, 30 July 1941; War File: Letter, 23 June 1943, TC to W. Gillon.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, pp.345-6.

evident from the War. Likewise, the Mosgiel, Taieri and Janefield Country Women's Institutes (CWI), having obviously no male participants in them, were not notably inconvenienced throughout the war years. They did, however, turn more of the efforts of their groups toward patriotic purposes for its duration.

Although some members may have been called up or worked long hours the majority in these organisations were able to pursue their interests untroubled. Indeed, a number which did not cater for men of military age, had few difficulties. Children's groups and the CWI's continued on very much as before. This was one area of life that the impact of the War or the government could not bend out of shape. Local people who wished to join any one of the clubs the town had to offer, could still do so. The organisations and in most cases many of the personnel remained unchanged. Although the War was a dark cloud threatening over the activities, leisure time or activities in Mosgiel did not change particularly much because of it. The people of the community needed their usual outlets for their interests, energy and enthusiasm and were still able to get this despite the War.

In conclusion then, it seems the War had only a limited impact on the homes and lifestyles of Mosgiel residents. The prospect of shortages and rationing were met by pragmatism, adaption and cunning. To begin with, rationing and coupons did not reach anywhere near the heights of the more publicised measures which took place in Britain. Food shortages did not prove to be the burden on the New Zealand household and housewife, that they were in Britain. Rationing, only began in 1942, and did not target the key New Zealand favourites, butter and meat, until 1943 and 1944. In comparative terms the impact on this country was very small. The tough experiences of the Depression and the low income of a number of people at that time meant many were used to a poor quality diet and indeed some residents were unaffected, since the food they usually ate remained unrationed. Even then, many Mosgiel residents fared better than other New Zealanders, since its proximity to the country provided greater sources of food than reliance on urban grocery shops. The natural ingenuity and 'make do' common sense attitude of the housewife, cushioned other impacts that shortages might bring, to food, clothing and assorted household items in her household. The close and neighbourly nature of the small town allowed the easy swapping of coupons or trading of food to ease the pinch. Coal and petrol did prove more of a problem, but few people in the town owned a car, and most happily went about their lives relying on train, or bicycle with little change. For those with a car the same pragmatic 'make do' attitude persisted and owners adapted to the regulations through thrift, or circumvented them by legitimate or more questionable means; by ingenuity or cheek.

Lifestyles or leisure out of the home were not drastically affected either. Entertainment and pastimes continued much the same as before the outbreak of the conflict. The simple tastes of the times, were able to be satisfied, with most residents seemingly quite happy with the continuation of their staples: the newspaper, the radio, concerts, community sings and dances. The disappearance of young men into the forces, especially after Pearl Harbour, did leave some girls without dance partners, but this had to be accepted, besides which, the presence of the two military camps made up for this somewhat. Sport and interest clubs proceeded relatively smoothly, compared to the disruption evidenced in Britain. Some of the main sporting clubs felt the impact of members away in the forces as well, not being able to field senior teams for the duration. They continued to function, however, for those who wished to play, and concentrated on the young. Other interest clubs and associations suffered similarly from a drop in membership, but the majority in these clubs continued with their

activities much the same as usual. A great many, which did not cater for men of military age, had few difficulties. Not one club was forced to disband, due to the War's impact, however, since the general community supported the clubs and events, determined to keep them going until the conflict was over and their teammates and club members had returned and life could return to normal.

Thus, in general, the pragmatic and resourceful people of Mosgiel rolled with the blows that the War inflicted, to keep their households, lifestyles and pastimes as normal and unaffected as possible. Observing this chapter, it appears that they very nearly succeeded.

## Chapter 8:

# Morale and Morals.

Having seen how war impacted on physical and economic levels, how did the presence of the war overseas affect the town psychologically? Though Mosgiel was physically isolated a long way from the battle fronts, especially from where many of its own troops were fighting in the Middle East, modern communications and media kept it well up to date with the progression of the war. Interest in war news was generally high in New Zealand. The greater spread of the war zones in comparison to World War One, notably the Pacific war, meant it preyed upon people's minds more than in 1914-18. With New Zealand near a battle zone and with relatives and friends at the fronts, it put added pressure onto the local people. This chapter focuses on the impact of the war news and the fear of Japanese invasion. It also concentrates on what effect the conflict had on social conventions and values, since the disruption and restlessness engendered by war meant some communities found traditional customs and norms were overturned. In some situations, both in New Zealand and overseas this led to public perception of a moral breakdown caused by the War. In general terms, then, the question may be asked, what impact did the war have on morale and on morals, on rhythms and patterns of Mosgiel life?

In wartime, morale is an oft-used but contentious word. Modern governments and the military are intently interested in the mind-set of their people and the extent to which this might affect their participation in a total war effort. Tom Harrisson writes that the term 'morale' is often misused by the press and leaders. It is not a mysterious entity in itself but rather the effect of varying combinations of ecology, sociology, economics and politics.<sup>1</sup> These things, from the weather to war news, job satisfaction to family problems or inadequate leadership to a lack of entertainment, form a way which people feel at a particular point in time. The Funk and Wagnall *Standard Dictionary of the English Language* defines this as "a state of mind with reference to confidence, courage or hope". Harrisson notes that the contemporary British government did not have a clear idea of this and identified morale primarily with cheerfulness. The stereotypical patriotic citizen was supposed to laugh publicly, make the V-sign and so on.<sup>2</sup> Many did not do this though. Arthur Marwick records that social psychologists make a useful distinction between 'active' and 'passive' morale. High 'active' morale, shown by heroic gestures and the painting of cheerful slogans, and captured in newsreels, for example, was confined to a small minority. The vast majority managed to muster sufficient 'passive' morale, a grim, often baffled, unshowy willingness to carry on with their activities.<sup>3</sup> As the Director of the British Ministry Home Intelligence Division wrote in 1941, morale must be "ultimately measured not by what a person thinks or says, but by what he does and how he does it".<sup>4</sup> Obviously there is a difference between morale in the blitzed London of 1940 and distant

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<sup>1</sup> Harrisson, pp.289-90.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.282.

<sup>3</sup> A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War*, p.68

<sup>4</sup> I. McLaine, *Ministry of Morale : Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II*, p.9.

Mosgiel, but the principle is still the same. How then did Mosgiel people feel about the war and war events, how well did their stamina hold and what, if anything did they do about it?

Immediately war was declared towards midnight on Sunday, 3 September 1939, all major sections of the community voiced support for the government. Taylor notes that many different streams of feelings were united at this point of crisis and a great many local bodies, trade associations, churches, sports and other groups proclaimed their unswerving loyalty to the Crown and government.<sup>5</sup> However, the joyously fervent scenes which occurred around the country at the beginning of the First World War were not repeated. On the evening of 5 August 1914, the *ODT* witnessed these scenes in Dunedin:

Vivid recollections of the stirring days of the Boer War were brought before the general public again last evening when a great patriotic demonstration took place on the streets shortly after 10 o'clock. Headed by the Salvation Army Band, a crowd of several thousand persons marched to the Town Hall where the City Council was holding its fortnightly meeting. The English and French national anthems were sung lustily, and vociferous cheering was indulged in for some time, after which the crowd commenced to call for the Mayor. The Mayor, who was received with enthusiastic cheering and with the singing of 'God Save the King' made a brief speech, all patriotic utterances in which were received with further cheering.<sup>6</sup>

The following evening a public meeting at the Garrison Hall was held amid a great deal of enthusiasm ". . . especially by those towards the back of the hall, who waved flags and cheered themselves hoarse during the interval of waiting for the proceedings to begin . . . the audience . . . expressed the firm desire to 'hang Kaiser Bill on a sour apple tree'".<sup>7</sup>

Attitudes such as this were replaced by a grim acceptance of duty and necessity in September 1939. No such overt patriotic gatherings were reported in the press this time. F. L. W. Wood explained that most New Zealanders, schooled by the Munich crisis, were at home tuned to the radio news reports.<sup>8</sup> As well, memories of huge casualty lists after four long years of dirty trench fighting in the First War and the hardship of the Depression only just gone, had blunted the spirits of many people in the community. It was not really a surprise since tension had been built up over a number of years. The rise of Hitler and his increasingly aggressive behaviour had, especially after Munich, provided a disturbing preview of the direction of world politics, but the thought of going to war again chilled many local residents. They received the news with different reactions. Mavis Ewart was shocked when her husband told her. Ray Williams was listening to the radio with his family when they heard. It was more of a shock to his parents, since they had sons of military age.<sup>9</sup> One woman described in Lauris Edmond's book what were probably similar emotions all around the country. Unfortunately celebrating her eighteenth birthday in Westport on this fateful night, she recalled,

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<sup>5</sup> Taylor, pp.32-3.

<sup>6</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 August 1914, p.8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 7 August 1914, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, p.10. The British ultimatum to Hitler expired at 9.30 pm New Zealand time. A formal message from the British government did not arrive until shortly before midnight and a cable allying itself to the cause was sent by the New Zealand government at 1.55 am on Monday, 4 September. *Ibid*, pp.7-9.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Ray Williams. He recalled listening to "old 'Chambermaid' Chamberlain".

We were a subdued party waiting for news of Britain's ultimatum to Hitler. Eventually we heard the historic announcement from England's Prime Minister. "We are now at war with Germany".

Everyone looked at everyone else. My mother burst into tears; she had three sons and four daughters. Gone were any attempts at being cheerful; we discussed quietly what might happen and when. All thoughts of the end of year exams and matriculation seemed unimportant. We wondered how soon we would be in uniform.<sup>10</sup>

Vera Crozier's family did not have a radio and only heard the news when the next door neighbour banged on the window late at night to tell them. Alan Kenny, working on a farm up at Middlemarch, did not hear it until the Monday morning, when a workmate listened in to their battery radio. Most people were initially shocked but then wondered what the future would hold. As Taylor noted, the New Zealand public accepted the War itself without protest but, in contrast to 1914, it felt widespread dull resentment towards it.<sup>11</sup> In some homes in the working class town of Mosgiel this appears true, especially in those which had experienced the First World War. Jim Manley recalls the tart feelings evoked by the announcement in his mother and step father, a returned soldier.

I was only about six and we were in Dryden Street then . . . I remember the news came over the radio that war had been declared and mum said something about 'Here we go again', y'know, turning all the boys into gun fodder sort of attitude, which was quite right in some ways . . . She always reckoned that they should get all the heads, all the politicians who caused it, put them in a paddock and then let them go at it and see how they got on . . . I think that was the general feeling, y'know, it was all money and political hogwash that caused it all . . .

This seems slightly incongruous with the right-leaning attitude of the *Otago Daily Times* on 4 September: "Naturally enough it was heard with abhorrence; but also with fortitude in the knowledge that Great Britain is prepared and that the British Empire is at one in its attitude and preparedness towards the right of the world to be free from aggression . . . the attitude of the people of Dunedin and of the country is that the Dominion owes it to the Empire and that [the conflict] . . . should not be the cause of undue anxiety".<sup>12</sup> However, the grief and emotions of the first war had made a strong impression. Edmond notes a number of her correspondents saw the two wars as strongly connected personal events.<sup>13</sup> So it seems clear there was initially a strong impact in many minds as a terrible review of the old memories of 1914-18 occurred. However, after the initial realisation that the country was at war, residents took a more settled attitude to a conflict which in its initial stages had little impact on the country. Newspaper editors remarked on the lack of feeling the early months produced. Taylor explains that the War was remote, confusing and undramatic; apart from a few weeks of petrol rationing, life was unchanged.<sup>14</sup>

Pulses raced when the first local volunteers travelled to Burnham Camp for initial training and then later when they prepared to be sent overseas. With typical understated humour, locals at that time joked that the volunteers for the First Echelon of the Expeditionary Force had only joined up to get away from their wives and the

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<sup>10</sup> Edmond, p.247.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, p.69.

<sup>12</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 September 1939, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> Edmond, p.vii.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, p.69.

responsibilities of family, work or money problems.<sup>15</sup> There were, however, emotional scenes as they departed from Dunedin Railway Station on both occasions. The *ODT* described the events at the initial departure to Burnham of 300 men on the morning of 5 October 1939:

. . . The crowd was not allowed onto the platform until the men were entrained. Men, women and children strained at the barrier waiting to rush and make their farewells . . . There were many touching scenes and many a woman wiped the tears from her eyes as she bade farewell to her son, husband or lover . . . To those who remembered the last war, the familiar scenes of farewell brought back poignant memories and to those too young to remember was given some idea of what war-time partings were really like. It was a big wrench to many of the crowd when the whistle went and the train began to move out of the station to the strains of "The Girl I Left Behind".<sup>16</sup>

Similar feelings were repeated when, after returning for final leave, they left bound for Egypt at the end of December 1939. Thousands of Dunedinites who had gathered in the city since the early morning cheered them off.<sup>17</sup> Then they were gone. The First Echelon of the Expeditionary Force sailing on 5 January from Lyttleton and Wellington, slowly followed by the Second and Third Echelons in May and August 1940, respectively.<sup>18</sup> With the initial excitement over and a number of the local young men away to the other side of the world, life returned very much to normal for most. There was little that those left at home could do besides pray, think positive thoughts or engage in constant correspondence. At this stage they simply had to carry on with their lives, playing the part of interested spectators.

Akin to most others up and down the country, local people settled into following the war through the media. Geographically isolated, New Zealanders, aside from the odd censored personal letter from a relative at the front, depended heavily on newspapers and radio for information. Book shops sold detailed maps of the important war zones for those who liked to delve further into the broadcasts and headlines. Hyndman's in Dunedin, for example, shrewdly advertised new stocks of "Map No.8 - The Mediterranean, North Africa and Abyssinia, Turkey, Syria and Iraq", in May 1941, as fighting raged in Crete, East Africa and Iraq.<sup>19</sup> Bill Borrow recalled this mild interest in places new.

We used to listen to the war news, but of course it wasn't as up-to-date as it was now . . . and the thing was locating places. We used to have a map up on the wall, go and have a look and see where this place was. But we were pretty detached from it really. We were still, I think, bound up in your own place to a certain extent. If anything big happened, yeah well that was different, but we didn't put pins in the map and say where the front is and all that sort of thing.

The radio news was popular and a number of local people recalled having heard momentous war events via this medium. Almost 90% of New Zealand homes in 1940 were equipped with a radio and this brought the war into almost all of them.<sup>20</sup> Laurie Barber considered that at their breakfast tables and late at night, the country listened with hushed breath to the BBC news.<sup>21</sup> Jim Manley recalled that his step father would

<sup>15</sup> Interview, Ray and Isobel Williams.

<sup>16</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 October 1939. Burnham Army Camp is near Christchurch.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 29 December 1939, p.6.

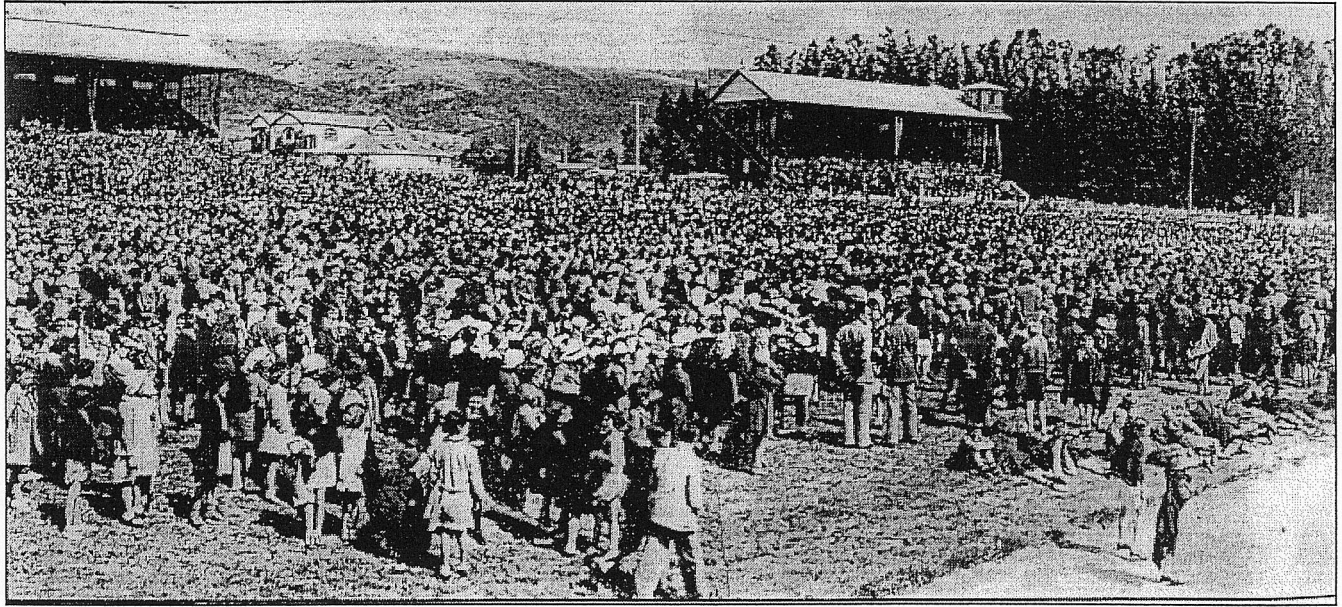
<sup>18</sup> W. G. McClymont, *To Greece*, pp. 21, 30, 56-7. Precise dates: 5 January, 2 May, 27 August.

<sup>19</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 May 1941, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 16 May 1940, p.6. The total given for all New Zealand at 31 March 1941 was 345, 710 sets.

<sup>21</sup> Barber, p.55.





Dunedin Schools Centennial Celebration. (Above) The Centennial Schools Day at Wingatui racecourse. Over 10,000 school children from all over the Dunedin area converged on the racecourse for an organised fun day. This was part of the New Zealand Centennial celebrations in February 1940.

*Otago Daily Times.*

New School Buildings. (Below) A scene at the opening of the new buildings at the Mosgiel District High School in June 1940.

*Otago Daily Times.*



always listen to the nine o'clock evening news, and remembered the sound of Big Ben's chimes. A woman interviewed by Lauris Edmond, reflected what probably occurred each day in many houses throughout the country. "There was that piece of music and that voice, a fine voice - 'This is the BBC, London; here is the news' - the signal for a chill to strike, to stop the family in its tracks; for Dad to become tense and pale and speak no more until that voice said '. . . that is the end of the news from London'".<sup>22</sup> George Allen followed the war news on the night shift at the Woollen Mill. An engineer who owned a radio, listened to the news at nine o'clock and midnight and word of its contents would gradually pass throughout the factory.<sup>23</sup>

Newspapers were the other major source of war news, providing more detailed analysis of events than radio bulletins, which were simply rebroadcasts of the BBC news, could.<sup>24</sup> Both Dunedin papers available for Mosgiel residents to read, the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star*, were dominated by war news. When the shortage of paper forced smaller editions,<sup>25</sup> local and children's feature pages and sport were trimmed to allow the fullest coverage of the War to continue. This produced a few complaints, especially at the curtailment of the *ODT* children's feature, 'Dot's Little Folk', but the wider audience seems to have accepted the overriding importance of news stemming from the conflict.<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that the press ignored or devalued local news, and they reported many events and issues of interest to Mosgiel. The opening of the new District High School in 1940 or the new Post Office buildings in 1941;<sup>27</sup> the crash of the Union Airways airliner on Flagstaff after take off from Taieri aerodrome in 1943,<sup>28</sup> the campaign for a district nurse in the area,<sup>29</sup> the 1940 Wingatui children's day,<sup>30</sup> or various snowstorms and Taieri River floods<sup>31</sup> were all interesting stories in their own right, but the War news had the excitement and proved an attractive selling point. Sometimes the war produced thunderous headlines (as evidenced overleaf), but usually only an array of hopeful smaller items, with the traditional emphasis on news from Britain even more evident as it battled for its freedom. Local readers received all sorts of messages.<sup>32</sup> David Atwool argues that the media played a crucial role in shaping public opinion about the War. Being fed the editor's perception of what constituted news, through the size and wording of headlines, directed the local audience's impression of events. He goes as far to state, with some validity that, "To a large extent the media, by telling New Zealanders about

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<sup>22</sup> Edmond, p.235.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, George Allen.

<sup>24</sup> D. Atwool, *Enemies and Allies: Stereotypes Portrayed in New Zealand During the Second World War*, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, p.755. The *ODT* shrank to 8 weekday and 12 Saturday pages in early 1942.

<sup>26</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 January 1942, p.6. ". . . One does not notice very considerable reduction in items less calculated to bring goodness and happiness as Dot's Little Folk does."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 14 June 1940, 31 May, 5 June 1941, pp.6, 18, 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 6 Feb. 1943, p.4.; R. MacPherson, *Airways : The First Fifty Years*, p.24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 3, 25 Nov. 1942, pp.4, 2; *Evening Star*, 29 May 1943, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 21 February 1940, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 5 July 1943, p.4; 9 May 1940, 8 April 1944, 22 Feb. 1945, pp.8, 4, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Messages of American sympathy for the Allies in the early stages of the War, of an imminent 1941 German invasion of Britain "in a matter of hours", of Singapore's seeming invincibility, or of an impending Soviet invasion of Japan in 1942, as examples which were variously proved fallable or eventually vindicated. *Ibid*, 3 November 1939, 29 April, 2 June 1941, pp. 5, 4, 6 for example; *Ibid*, 20 March 1941, p.8. The report came from the Japanese Embassy in Berlin; *Ibid*, 17, 22 December, 1941, pp. 6, 5; *Ibid*, 24 February 1942, p.5, *Evening Star*, 23 February 1942, p.8

overseas events, 'created' the Second World War for them'.<sup>33</sup> Also constrained by Government press censorship, the stories, editorials and news items which Mosgiel people heard or read tended to be less than objective, understandably favouring the Allied version of events. Many residents experienced in the news items and propaganda battles of the First World War, or even those disillusioned with government promises in the Depression, probably knew that the news was not always the literal truth; however, it was really the only option available. More often than not the editorials were of a war-related topic; either assessment of the latest battle front news or comment on the local war effort and activities. Historically Nationalist supporters, the conservative press enjoyed taking the Labour government to task over its conduct of the country's war effort.

Certain war events reported in these mediums left impressions etched in the minds of those people being interviewed. Bill Borrow recalled being particularly struck by the news about the evacuation of Dunkirk, that the normally rough English Channel had been as smooth as a mill pond throughout the whole operation. It was a popular topic of conversation, giving a lift to people after the dismal news of the Allied retreats. These memories were as varied as the people interviewed. Colin Frew simply remembered hearing when the Russian winter stopped the German advance dead in its tracks. Bill also recalled marvelling at the advances in technology which the war produced, emphasising how isolated New Zealand seemed from the world.

The Air Force; we couldn't get over how quick these new planes were appearing, y'know. Like all we saw down here were Tiger Moths, plenty of them flying around training, the odd Harvard and that sort of thing. Then you start to read about all these planes being developed and how quick they were in developing them and where was the money coming from for them? That was a bit amazing I think . . . Communications, too, that was about the tape recorder era starting . . . It just astounded us out here to hear of those developments over there.<sup>34</sup>

Jim Manley felt the same about the new innovations. "I remember hearing in the news when the Mosquito's first got built, because you know, they were a new sort of revolutionary aeroplane. They were extra fast and built out of plywood and when these Mosquito's came in, they just seemed to make all the difference to the war effort".<sup>35</sup> Jim Rowe recalled the shock of Dunkirk and the fall of Tobruk as low points. He also remembered the Battle of the River Plate, involving the *Graf Spee* and the New Zealand cruiser *Achilles* amongst others, very well. Other's memories of war events were more relevant to them personally, involving people that they actually knew and will be included slightly later, below.

Thus, the media made quite an impression on the local populace. As the only way to follow the progress of this new and crucial chapter of history unfolding, it became an integral part of their lives. However, while listening to broadcasts or reviewing the headlines captured the imagination of many, the war news really did not produce any great impact on normal local routines. Colin Frew remarked that "We were concerned with what was happening because we wanted the Allies to win", but felt that the country wasn't really involved in the war too much.<sup>36</sup> For the most part,

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<sup>33</sup> Atwool, pp.4-6.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Bill Borrow.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Jim Manley. The De Havilland Mosquito, a twin engined two seat fighter-bomber first flew in combat late in 1941.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Colin Frew.

everyday war news from the distant battle fronts sparked little impact upon the pattern of everyday Mosgiel life. Even the progress of the 2NZEF might seem remote for those without friends or relatives to take a personal interest in. Rather, locals followed the War like some grotesque adventure serial with nightly instalments, or perhaps test cricket, tuning in to find out how their team had done for the day. In day to day terms a swing either way to the Allies or the Axis would not really affect the town, or New Zealand as a whole, unless perhaps, its own troops were involved right in the front line. Professor F.L.W. Wood describes it being viewed as a fascinating drama, but one which, if it affected New Zealand, did so with uncontrollable fatality.<sup>37</sup> People carried on with their lives, many having experienced a world war twenty years previously. They still went to their jobs, ate their dinner, went to the pub or cleaned their teeth, even when the Germans had taken Brussels, or crossed the Dneiper, or sent flying bombs over London, since they could do nothing about it. Perhaps a few joined the Home Guard after Dunkirk (however, the lack of real urgency and impact is evident in Chapter 4), but the only time that war news really made an impact on the general community was the creeping Japanese threat of 1942.

Before this occurred, until April 1940 New Zealand had a very comfortable war. Her troops were miles and months from the threat of battlefield danger and the general community could adopt the policy of business as usual.<sup>38</sup> The continued advertisement of cruise trips to America and England in the local press emphasises the unperturbed attitude that the inactivity of the 'Phoney War' prompted.<sup>39</sup> The fall of France evoked surprise mingled with dismay, according to Taylor, but this soon passed from the headlines and some critics suggested that Britain was better off without such a weak willed ally.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned, it produced some activity, including the rather leisurely formation of the Emergency Reserve Corps, and increased contributions to patriotic funds, but generally life in New Zealand remained undisturbed in comparison to the feverish activity in Europe. A "Careless Talk Costs Lives" advertising campaign and a "Sacrilege" National Savings campaign - emphasising the damage wrought by German bombs on British churches and hospitals - seem strangely out of place in such a relatively peaceful environment.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the cruel hand of war did not really reach New Zealand until the movement of substantial numbers of New Zealand troops into action in Greece during March and April 1941 and a month later in Crete. Over 6000 casualties were suffered in both battles by those initial volunteers, some of whom had parted from the Dunedin Railway Station amidst the crowds on that late December day in 1939.<sup>42</sup> With the ensuing release of these casualty figures a correspondent for the *Press* wrote that New Zealanders, having followed it in the media, now felt that they were part of the War.<sup>43</sup> Bill Borrow was one who echoed this, once the 2NZEF had gone into action.

Oh yeah, that really showed it up then. Oh yes, because I think a lot [of people] thought that when the New Zealander's went away they were just going to be part of something else; back row chaps, y'know. But, no they certainly led the way in a lot of things . . . The thing that brought it home to us

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<sup>37</sup> Wood, p.207.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pp.126-7.

<sup>39</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 October 1939, 4 January 1940, pp. 1, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, pp.112-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Evening Star*, 5, 9 April 1941, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>42</sup> McClymont, p.487; Taylor, p.303. These included 932 killed, 1354 wounded and 4036 prisoners.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, p.294.

was the number of wounded coming back from the Army in the Middle East and that sort of thing. People just sort of realised then, it wasn't a holiday, things were happening over there alright.

Yet, even the impact of this was muffled by distance and the rapid completion of the campaigns. To this end Wood wrote that, "A faint sense of unreality persisted, only to be dissipated, and that temporarily, in the months following the disaster at Pearl Harbour"<sup>44</sup> Returned Spitfire pilot Maurice Costello emphasised that local people never really appreciated the reality of war. "See, the average New Zealander, apart from those who had people overseas in the Force and everything, they never really realised what the war was like. The English did . . . [But here] they wouldn't know . . ." <sup>45</sup> Thus, the isolated and relatively quiet life that New Zealanders had experienced leading up to the beginning of the Pacific war continued to be enjoyed, apart from the few adrenalin filled months from early to mid-1942. Japan's southward progression brought anxious moments to people accustomed to following international events which generally did not physically affect them. How then did local people feel about the arrival of war on their doorstep?

Prior to the escalation of Asian-Pacific tensions into war, there was suspicion of Japan rather than fear. However, peace in the area grew thin due to its increasingly aggressive nature, its entry into the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940, and repeated assertions of its plans for the 'Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere' in a vaguely defined Asian-Pacific area meant its entry into war was not, in the final tense months, unexpected.<sup>46</sup> As early as January 1940, Fraser had bluntly stated that Japan was a potential enemy, so in that regard the general public were not unprepared.<sup>47</sup> The scale and audacity of Japan's initial strikes did shock the mass of New Zealanders, but was eased somewhat by the comforting thought that, as Wood writes, despite the disaster at Pearl Harbour, "there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the Pacific war was America's war, and that, in the long run, American power was beyond reckoning".<sup>48</sup> Notably, perhaps because of the differing proximity to the rapidly expanding war zone, public reaction was less violent in New Zealand than Australia.<sup>49</sup> The government and the press emphasised the need to, as Semple pleaded, "pull together", but stressed that there was no need to panic.<sup>50</sup> Even by the end of 1941, Laurie Barber notes that there was still a widespread belief throughout the country that General Yamoshita would be stopped on Malaya.<sup>51</sup> The *ODT* pointed to low recruiting figures for the N.M.R. and the Home Guard as examples of a continued public apathy about this new menace.<sup>52</sup> However, events did not improve and the British fell back to Singapore. By 19 January 1942 its editor admitted "it would be foolish to pretend that British people are not profoundly disturbed by the war developments on the Malay

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<sup>44</sup> Wood, p.129.

<sup>45</sup> Alison Parr, *Silent Casualties: New Zealand's Unspoken Legacy of the Second World War*, p.156.

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, pp.314-5. The Tripartite Pact ensured mutual help from the three members if attacked by any power not involved in the European War or Sino-Japanese conflict. Or in other words the United States.

<sup>47</sup> Wood, p.208.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp.209, 206.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.209.

<sup>50</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19, 12 December 1941, pp. 4, 4. Bill Semple, the Minister of National Service.

<sup>51</sup> Barber, p.116.

<sup>52</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 December 1941, p.6.

# -CALM YOURSELF

*Mrs. JACKSON*



Now, Mrs. Jackson, it doesn't help anyone if you get all jittery. Your job just now is to get your nerves in hand. Thousands of women like you are taking Clements Tonic, and finding it helps them to keep calm and confident. Clements Tonic feeds the body with those strength-giving elements—Phosphates, Iron, Calcium and Quinine—which enrich blood, brain and nerves. After a bottle or two of Clements Tonic you will feel wonderful in mind and body and have "nerves of steel."

## CLEMENTS TONIC

Calm Yourself Mrs Jackson. Most residents of Mosgiel had few reasons, save for loved ones overseas, to get 'all jittery' about the War.

Source: *Otago Daily Times*

peninsula".<sup>53</sup> Having been lead to believe in the invincibility of Singapore on numerous occasions by the press,<sup>54</sup> it must have shocked most ordinary people to hear that it had meekly fallen. The *ODT* described it as "a blow of particular severity", but eked comfort from the justice of the cause and the potential capacity of the Empire and its allies.<sup>55</sup> Yet, J. G. Barclay, the Minister of Agriculture stated more dramatically that it had reached the time to kill or be killed and Prime Minister Fraser compared the situation to that of England after Dunkirk.<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to guess at the feelings of local people as the Japanese tide moved ever closer after their succession of victories. On 22 December 1941, the *ODT* published an American hypothesis on possible notable events in the Pacific to discover the fortunes of either side.

The Wall Street Journal's Washington correspondent today asks the question: "Who is winning the war in the Pacific? To know the answer watch for these events. If Singapore falls (Washington thinks it will not) Japan has won a big victory. If Manila falls (mixed confidence and worry here) the Japanese have won a medium victory. The same for Hong Kong and Penang. If Wake Island and Midway fall, the Japanese have won a little. More important the United States failure to reinforce these citadels would be a confession of weakness on the sea and in the air. This is the big test. Watch for it. Any base lost, Guam or Singapore, must be retaken . . .

With newspapers as their only source of incisive analysis on the progress of the war, some local people may have followed this summation and would have been getting rather more anxious if they had progressively ticked off each event. By March 1942, it added up to a sorry looking scorecard for the Allied side.

Around these few months, perhaps the darkest point of the War for the Allied cause, did local Mosgiel people feel real fear? Opinions are divided, but although taking into account the advantage of hindsight, most locals interviewed seemed to have kept the same stoic, solid outlook on the War which helped them through numerous other crises. Perhaps a southern sense of isolation contributed to a less apprehensive attitude than possibly, the residents of closer Pacific targets such as Auckland or Wellington. Colin Frew emphasised this, commenting, "I don't think anybody was really worried. Not down this end anyway. Perhaps further north they might have been. But down here we weren't concerned about Japanese air raids". Jim Rowe stated that in his opinion, people weren't really afraid.

. . . I don't think so, I mean they might have been fearful, y'know, apprehensive, but I don't think there was ever any real fear, that you could feel or sense, you know; I mean it never got to that stage or anything. I mean everybody thought the British Empire, Navy and all that was invincible. As it turned out it bloody nearly wasn't of course . . . Older people certainly were apprehensive, there's no doubt about that, and the blackout thing, people used to get a bit bloody excited over that . . .

Ella Cameron agreed, commenting that in hindsight they should have been more scared than they actually were. Bill Borrow also had no doubt that the Allies would win, although was thankful that Americans arrived in New Zealand when they did. On the other hand, former Home Guardsman Ray Williams recalled that there was always an element of uncertainty when it came to the somewhat mysterious Japanese enemy.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 19 January 1942, p.4.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 17, December 1941, p.6; 12 January 1942, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 17 February 1942, p.4.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 3 February 1942, p.4; Ibid, 7 April 1942, p.2.

Oh there was a lot, I think, were worried about them, that anything could happen, because our coast is wide open to any attack in any direction. You could get them coming in . . . Even now to try and protect our coast is almost impossible. They could protect Auckland, I think they've got enough population up there, but you get further down, all the way down the coast along way down here, you'd never stop them coming in. That's why they formed us as a guerilla outfit . . . because if they did come in you'd have people back here that knew their way around the hills and attack at night . . .

It seems a few people were afraid and feared the worst. Ebbett records that the mother of one woman schoolteacher she interviewed, instructed her to leave her position in Hawkes Bay and shift back to the security of the family home in Dunedin the minute that Singapore had fallen.<sup>57</sup> She did not, but local woman Vera Crozier who worked in Dunedin did something similar. She recalled "They started to build air raid shelters in the Octagon. 'Oh the Japs are coming. They're all saying the Japs are coming. I'm not going to be in Dunedin when the Japs come'. So anyway I was able to get this job in the Mosgiel Post Office . . . I wanted to be close to home when the Japs came".<sup>58</sup>

Fearfulness at this level appears to have been more isolated locally, since there was no recorded mass panic action along these lines. Perhaps more locals thought about this, but the course of the war had not yet reached what would be perceived as critical proportions by the New Zealand public (such as the invasion of Fiji, New Caledonia, or Australia, or the destruction of the American Pacific Fleet for example) meaning that similar actions were still thought unnecessary. A small comfort zone still remained, as did the faint sense of unreality as Wood mentions above. Probably more prevalent was still a belligerent attitude, such as demonstrated by local WWSA member Fay Nicolson's comments. "I think different groups of people had different duties to do if it had come to the crunch. Everyone seemed to be . . . prepared. If the Japs had come, God knows but, you know, we wouldn't have all stood and waited to see what they were going to do, I don't think. We'd have had instructions from somebody what you'd have to do". Rumour no doubt contributed to some of the fear, with the public frustrated by government censorship<sup>59</sup> and faced with a little understood and at times over-exaggerated enemy.<sup>60</sup> The editor of the *ODT* launched a scathing attack on the presence of 'rumour mongers' in Dunedin in March 1942, where "The most extravagant absurdities are accepted by timorous and unthinking people as truth, and the enemy's game - to create alarm and spread disquiet - is played without his having a part in it at all".<sup>61</sup> Fay recalled one such rumour which circulated, namely that if the Japanese conquered New Zealand they would separate all the men into either the North or South Island, and all the women and children into the other. However, it does not seem likely that many people in Mosgiel actually believed this would happen, since the war situation never progressed to a point where invasion of New Zealand was a reality. The solid and sensible local people, protected by virtue of their isolation, their very small - if any - strategic worth, and buffered by the comfort of distance still had, at the darkest point, enough faith in the Government, the Army and most of all the Americans, to reasonably discount the prospect of an attack on Dunedin. There may have been worry or apprehension as is natural for any community involved in a war, perhaps more so for the elderly or women living alone and definitely more overall than

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<sup>57</sup> Ebbett, p.138.

<sup>58</sup> Interview: Vera Crozier.

<sup>59</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 March 1942, p.4.

<sup>60</sup> J. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, p.9.

<sup>61</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 March 1942, p.4.



in 1914-18, but it does not appear that the residents of Mosgiel lived in absolute terror or fear of an imminent Japanese invasion. They continued about their lives; their business, their work, sport, and recreation activities much the same as before December 1941. The community lived through the closer Pacific war and gradually became used to it.

The heartening presence of local military activity around the area and in the streets on occasions no doubt made Mosgiel feel more secure than other small coastal towns or lonely outposts. Ebbett records one woman on a lonely farm near Timaru, who "died a thousand deaths" imagining hordes of Japanese creeping towards the house, while waiting for her husband to return from a late night Home Guard call out.<sup>62</sup> It appears much less likely that the same fear would have been felt by local residents. The military authorities also put on displays of strength to show locals the country's military might and giving an increased impression of security. To most residents, unfamiliar with military equipment or versed only in the accoutrements of 1914-18, it probably looked impressive, although in reality it hardly reached the standards of the modern Nazi or Allied armies. As early as April 1940, a local RNZAF parade in Dunedin assured residents of their comforting presence,<sup>63</sup> reinforced on later occasions by fly overs of Taieri Station aircraft.<sup>64</sup> At possibly the darkest point of the War, in the weeks following the fall of Singapore, an impressive military parade featuring local Territorial units, the 5th LAFVR Regiment, the 9th (Taieri) Independent Mounted Rifles Squadron and the Mosgiel Home Guard Company amongst others, occurred in Dunedin on 14 March 1942. Two months later in May a further parade, featuring Bren gun carriers and Beaverette armoured cars for the first time, offered further reassurance of the region's seeming military strength at such a crucial time.<sup>65</sup> By the end of 1942, a mechanised parade and display featuring 25 pounder artillery guns and heavy Stuart and Valentine tanks, used in the battles in North Africa, emphasised the Army's growing power.<sup>66</sup> The United Nations Flag Day (15 June), held in the Allied nations, also emphasised the synthesis and overall strength of their cause. In Mosgiel, residents lining the Gordon Rd route waved flags of the Allied countries as a parade of local ERC units, headed by the 5th LAFVR Band and the Taieri Pipe Band marched by.<sup>67</sup> It must have proved cheering in reminding the crowd, not necessarily by what was on show in front of them but by the spirit of the occasion, that the full power of the United Nations, and namely the United States, was on their side. Other promotional events, such as the visit of the US Navy destroyers *Fanning* and *Dunlap*,<sup>68</sup> the first ever flight over the city by a famed Lancaster bomber, or the visits of Governor General Newall, Patrick Hurley- the U.S. Minister to New Zealand - and General Freyburg, all faithfully reported in the local press, continually gave solace to local people that neither the country, nor the Empire or its Allies had

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<sup>62</sup> Ebbett, p.143.

<sup>63</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 April 1940, p.7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 13 May 1941, 10 October, 1942, 29 June 1943, pp. 6, 2, 6; *Evening Star*, 14 March 1942, p.6.

<sup>65</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 May 1942, p.4. The parade included 12 armoured cars and 5 Bren carriers.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 15 December 1942, p.2. These tanks were being replaced in the British Army.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 15 June, 1942, p.4. "The procession traversed Gordon Rd. into Glasgow St., then Forfar St. and returned to Gordon Rd., via Bush Rd. At the Town Hall the salute was taken by Captain C. H. Bleach."

<sup>68</sup> G. McLean, *Otago Harbour: Currents of Controversy*, p.165.

abandoned them to the mercy of Japan.<sup>69</sup> Official days of national prayer also added to the feelings of the righteousness of the cause.<sup>70</sup>

Many fears were eased - somewhat prematurely - with the news of the crushing American naval victory in the Battle of Midway.<sup>71</sup> It must have encouraged local people to hear the Australian Prime Minister Curtin declare on 10 June that he no longer believed the Japanese could invade Australia.<sup>72</sup> Even with the enemy presence in New Guinea much closer than when Singapore fell, there was much more calm in New Zealand, as it became accustomed to the closer war, no doubt heartened by the arrival of large numbers of American troops and the growing presence of the U.S. Navy in the area.<sup>73</sup> After a hard slog on Guadalcanal, the tide seemed to have turned noticeably as the Allies took the offensive in the Pacific, in North Africa and on the Russian Front, by late 1942. Thus, the country drifted back to its quiet life.

If locals did not live in fear, how then was their morale, or in other words their attitude to the War? It seems that Mosgiel residents, like most of those in New Zealand had very much a 'passive' morale as mentioned above by Marwick. This unflappable, stoic, almost grim attitude to keep on with life as normally as possible, enabled the residents of the town to cope not only with such things as ration problems or manpower demands, but depressing or frightening war news as well. Goodwin Watson, in his contemporary book *Civilian Morale*, described good morale as "the stamina with which people stand up under punishment and by the energy with which they strive to meet their ideals".<sup>74</sup> He defines this as being made up of five factors, in each of which, Mosgiel measures up well.<sup>75</sup>

The first essential is a positive goal, to have something to look forward to. Obviously the successful completion of the War, the safe return of local servicemen and building a thriving community in the new social welfare state were goals which the town aspired to. Unlike the futility and hopelessness suffered by many residents during the Depression, the War offered a sense of purpose and chance to move into better times once it had finished. The second fundamental factor in morale is togetherness. Morale is stronger in people who feel themselves part of a larger group sharing a common goal. The social support of the group encourages and controls those who might waver. Mosgiel, being a small homogeneous rural town, where nearly everyone knew each other, certainly felt a shared sense of living and community feeling as documented on many occasions during this and previous chapters. Residents generally felt that they and their neighbour were in the War together, suffering and celebrating the same. Events such as the United Nations Flag Day, stressing the unity and magnitude of the Allied cause, also gave greater perspective to the struggle for local people. Indeed, Bill Borrow felt that the War brought about a great community spirit. The third factor is an awareness of some danger in which group members feel themselves involved. Obviously the threat of Japanese invasion loomed as a dangerous proposition in 1942. Other smaller hazards such as Dunkirk, Greece and Crete or other Allied reversals, also helped to generally stiffen resolve and motivate effort to a lesser

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 12, 14 June 1942, pp. 4, 2.; *Evening Star*, 3 April 1941, p.7; *ODT*, 28 May 1942, p.4. Ibid, 1 July 1943, p.2

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 22 March 1941, 14 November 1942, pp.8, 4; *Evening Star*, 6 September 1941, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 8 June 1942, p.5.

<sup>72</sup> L. Meo, *Japan's Radio War on Australia: 1941-1945*, p.60.

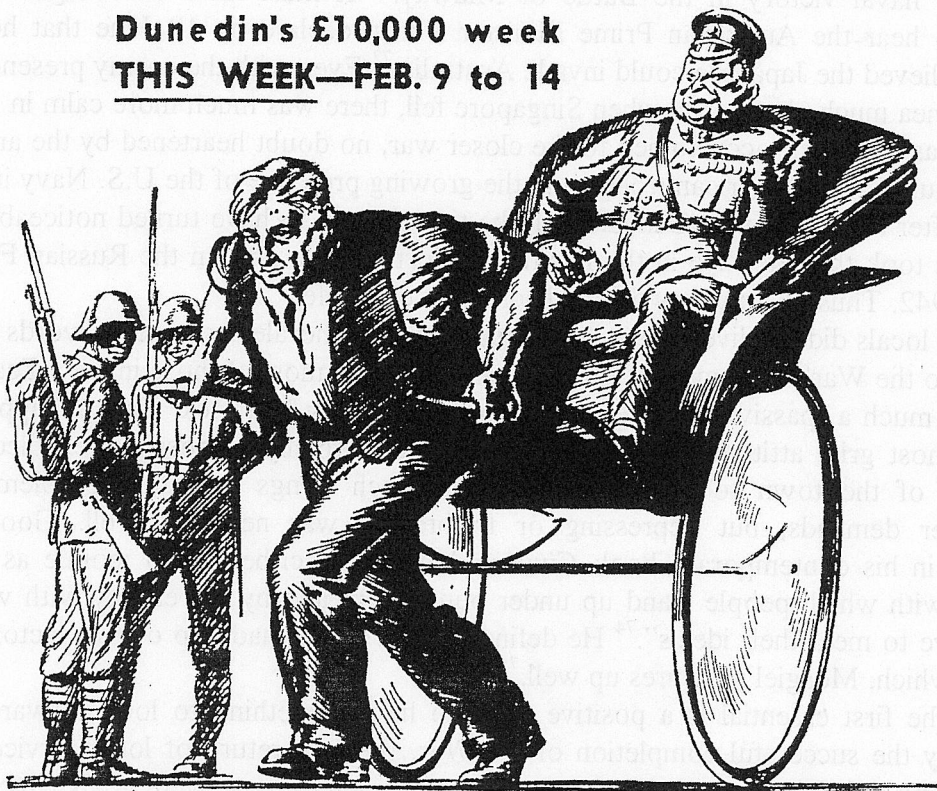
<sup>73</sup> Taylor, p.364.

<sup>74</sup> Watson, p.30

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, pp. 33-4, 37, 40, 44.

# NEW ZEALAND WAR SAVINGS

Dunedin's £10,000 week  
**THIS WEEK—FEB. 9 to 14**



**WOULD YOU SOONER PULL YOUR  
WEIGHT IN DUNEDIN'S £10,000 WEEK  
OR PULL A JAPANESE RICKSHAW?**

DUNEDIN  
HAS TO LEND  
**£10,000**  
THIS WEEK

*Remember*

You are asked to  
**LEND ONLY**  
not to give as our fighters  
are giving.

Bank every pound you can to keep the Rickshaw  
Scavengers from New Zealand.

**WAR WEAPONS NEED MONEY—YOUR MONEY.**

OUR FIGHTERS ARE DOING THE DEFENDING WITH-  
OUT BANK INTEREST—YOU DO THE LENDING AND  
GET 3% INTEREST.

Those with National Savings Accounts are expected to make  
at least one extra liberal deposit THIS WEEK.

Those who have not already done so are expected to open  
a National Savings Account this week.

*In plain language, it is a case of*  
**YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE.**

**OPEN A WAR SAVING ACCOUNT THIS WEEK  
IN THE DUNEDIN SAVINGS BANK**

Main Office: DOWLING STREET. Branch Offices: South Dunedin and the Gardens.

By 1942 the government constantly reminded local people of the enemy on their doorstep. War savings campaigns such as this became a common event in newspapers.

Source: *Otago Daily Times*

degree, in spite of some apparent apathy in the earlier and later stages of the War. The fourth factor in the analysis of morale is the conviction that we can do something to improve matters, or find some recourse able to meet the threat. In the case of Mosgiel, although it had a lot to be desired, the local Emergency Reserve Corps or the Territorial Army provided scope for many citizens, young or old, men or women and of varying ability to, in some small way, be part of the town and the nation's war effort. Other efforts such as voluntarily entering the workforce, working longer hours, or contributing in some way to patriotic purposes enabled others to do something. Finally, morale is dependant upon a sense of advance. We need to be encouraged that we are progressing towards overcoming the obstacles, since it is the victories we have already achieved which sustain or confidence in the future. The fine fighting record of the 2NZEF, the Battle of Britain, successes in North Africa, the Coral Sea and Midway, the tenacious defence of the Soviets, and most of all the entry of the United States onto the Allied side are all examples of how locals managed to eke out some hope of the elusive light at the end of the tunnel, even when things seemed very serious. Thus, although this is a very basic and generalised analysis, it fits Mosgiel, representative of any small town in New Zealand, rather well. Its compact size and corresponding close community and its isolation offered advantages over cities such as Auckland. In this light it is not unreasonable, when combined with the overall findings of this chapter, to state that the town generally had good morale, throughout all the twists and turns in the progress of the War.

Having fostered this general good feeling and assurance, it was put to good effect. Contemporary psychologist and author J. T. McCurdy wrote that "... morale is meaningless, or at least ineffective, unless it promotes action".<sup>76</sup> In this case morale and patriotism were channelled into patriotic efforts. The formation of the Mosgiel District Patriotic Society (MDPS) in 1940 gave vent to the public wish to contribute through its works.<sup>77</sup> This mainly focused on the old favourite of fund raising, since obviously nearly everyone felt an Allied victory and support for local servicemen were worthy causes. As in 1914-18, the public were cajoled into dipping into their pockets time and again for this almost sacred cause.<sup>78</sup> Early in the war specific appeals, such as the "London Distress Fund", "Spitfire Fund", "Soldier's Parcels Fund",<sup>79</sup> and the "Sick, Wounded and Distressed Fund"<sup>80</sup> were well supported, but in 1942 these gave way to the soberly named All Purposes Fund. Many groups around the town found innovative ways to raise money for the cause. Community Sings were very popular, being revived from the First World War and depths of the Depression, and provided a means to raise both morale and money.<sup>81</sup> A Woman's Institute play in Coronation Hall, a St John Ambulance Street Day, Fire Brigade card parties, bottle drives, badge sales and shop days were examples of other ways in which the community felt they could

<sup>76</sup> J. T. McCurdy, *The Structure of Morale*, p.141.

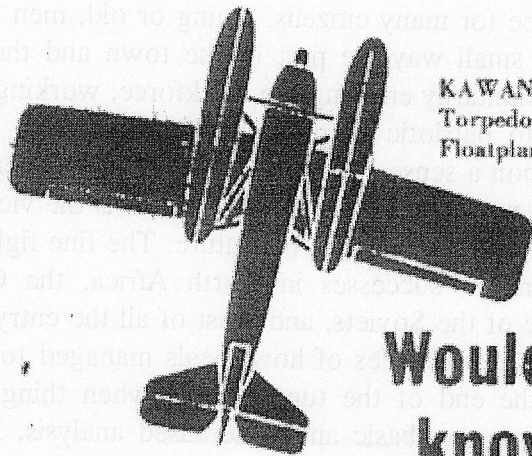
<sup>77</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Mosgiel District Patriotic Council (Hereinafter MDPC Minutes), 29 August 1940. The separate committee for Mosgiel only was expanded into the MDPCC, covering North Taieri and Whare Flat as well, after this date.

<sup>78</sup> S. Johnson, *The Home Front: Aspects of Civilian Patriotism in New Zealand during the First World War*, pp. 29, 45-50.

<sup>79</sup> Mosgiel District Patriotic Committee Correspondence File (Hereinafter MDPCC File): Statement of Account; Amounts Collected and Paid to Dunedin to 28 February 1941.

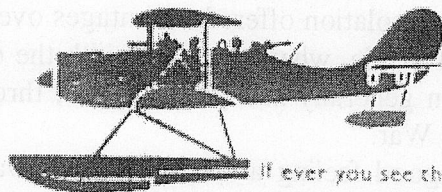
<sup>80</sup> Mosgiel Woollen Mill Ltd. Minute Book: 21 May 1940. This was a Red Cross and St. John appeal..

<sup>81</sup> Lindsay, p.36. ; MBC Minutes, 6 July 1942, 4 October 1943, for example.

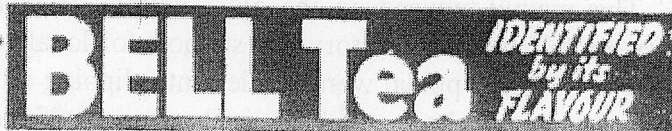


KAWANISI KAWA  
Torpedo Bomber  
Floatplane

Would you  
know it?



If ever you see this coming over, you will know it is the Torpedo Bomber Floatplane of the Jap Naval Air Service. Can you identify enemy planes? It's rather hard to do, but it's easy to identify Bell Tea--the flavour is so full and refreshing. So stick to Bell Tea and get more cups per pot.



By 1943 most New Zealanders, including Mosgiel residents, had grown used to the Pacific war. What was distasteful in 1942 could be used in advertisements the following year.

Source: Otago Daily Times.

A. T. McCarty, The Structure of War, p. 141.  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Mosgiel District Pastoral Council (Hereinafter MDPC Minutes), 29 August 1940. The separate committee for Mosgiel only was expanded into the MDPC, covering North Taieri and Wairarapa as well, after this date.  
S. Johnson, The Home Front: Aspects of Christian Pastoralism in New Zealand during the First World War, pp. 29, 48-50.  
Mosgiel District Pastoral Committee Correspondence File (Hereinafter MDPCCF File), Statement of Account, Accounts Collected and Paid to Dunedin to 28 February 1941.  
Mosgiel Woolmen With Ltd. Minute Book, 21 May 1940. This was a Red Cross and St. John's appeal.  
Lindsay, p. 36. MDPC Minutes, 4 July 1942, 4 October 1943, for example.

contribute to the cause.<sup>82</sup> This diverse community involvement in patriotic affairs is the same as Lindsay found occurred in Dunedin.<sup>83</sup> The Government also heavily promoted the buying of War Bonds, playing on the guilt and anxiety of the public, with themes such as “Your money or your life”,<sup>84</sup> or “Would you rather pull a Japanese rickshaw?”, (facing page 16) after the outbreak of the Pacific War.<sup>85</sup> As well as giving money, a number of local people contributed their labour to other patriotic activities. Under the auspices of the Otago Provincial Patriotic Council (OPPC), a number of women around the town volunteered their spare time by hand knitting pullovers, mittens, scarves and socks for the armed forces.<sup>86</sup> Bill Borrow noted that a lot of local women did this, and recalled them knitting in the train, using either khaki or Airforce blue wool. Others did important work in packing Red Cross or OPPC comfort parcels for overseas troops and prisoners of war.<sup>87</sup> Another prominent aspect of the MDPS which contributed to the morale of the community was their organisation of farewell and welcome home ceremonies for local servicemen and women. Groups of departing men were honoured with the presentation of embossed wallets, usually at a dance and social function.<sup>88</sup> Colin Frew recalled, “Nobody ever went away from Mosgiel or the Taieri without getting some sort of send off. Used to be a great time down the Taieri, down the Plain there. It was like a great big family . . . you know. People used to look forward to it when they sent their local soldier to war”. A similar gusto was displayed at official functions held for the return of the furlough drafts,<sup>89</sup> and the end of the War. The MDPS and the Mosgiel Businessmen’s Association also combined to cheer local servicemen and women overseas, by producing a local newsletter with contributions from various Mosgiel clubs, churches and organisations and typed out by local schoolgirls, to be sent to them.<sup>90</sup> These activities, enabled the townspeople to feel that they were in some small way contributing to the War effort and at the same time keeping up their own morale.

By the later stages of the War, however, it appears that this enthusiasm had worn thin. In September 1943, there were complaints that Mosgiel fundraising exercises were not being supported as well by the public,<sup>91</sup> and in 1944, the OPPC reported a sharp decline in the number of volunteers available to knit patriotic wool for the Forces.<sup>92</sup> Inherent in this is the more relaxed attitude following the Allied turn to the offensive in the conflict. The Bell Tea advertisement on the facing page, taken from an *ODT* in May 1943, reveals an almost blase attitude to the Pacific war.<sup>93</sup> What may

<sup>82</sup> MBC Minutes, 4 August 1941; 8 November 1944; MDPC Minutes, 9 July 1941; *Ibid* 26 April, 1944.

<sup>83</sup> Lindsay, pp. 71-3.

<sup>84</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 10 February 1944, p.7.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 10, 13 February 1942, pp. 6, 6.

<sup>86</sup> For example, MDPCC File: Letter, 23 Jan. 1940, Sec. MDPC to OPPC. “This is to notify you that the following articles were sent to your office yesterday; 12 pullovers, 37 prs mittens and one scarf from patriotic wool. 2 pr mittens and 2 pr sox, donations”.

<sup>87</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 6 June 1941, p.4.

<sup>88</sup> For example, *Evening Star*, 26 Nov. 40, 5 Mar., 5 June 41, pp. 11, 1, 3; *ODT*, 19 Mar. 40, p.11; MDPC File: Mosgiel District Overseas Newsletter No.2, 19 July 1943.

<sup>89</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 13 August 1943, p.6; 8 March 1944, p.7.

<sup>90</sup> MDPCC File: Circular Letter, 26 February 1943; Mosgiel District Overseas Newsletter, No.s 2-4, 19 July, 23 August, 22 September 1943.


<sup>91</sup> Mosgiel District Overseas Newsletter No.4, 22 September 1943. There was “no inclination to spend”.

<sup>92</sup> MDPC File: Circular Letter, 15 March 1944, Sec. OPPC to All Zones.

<sup>93</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 15 May 1943, p.3.

DATE STAMP.

*Mosgiel's* **Victory Celebrations**

**V-E DAY**  **WEDNESDAY,**  
**9th MAY, 1945**

**Combined THANKSGIVING SERVICE**  
CORONATION HALL, 10.30 a.m.

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**PROCESSION** Commencing 1.45 p.m.

ASSEMBLY POINT: Gordon Road, opposite Souter's Buildings

ROUTE: Along Gordon Road to Burns Street, King Street and Bruce Street to Gordon Road, thence back along Gordon Road to the Recreation Ground, via Wickliffe Street.

NOTE: Children will join procession as it reaches Gordon Road at Dr. Shaw's on its return. They should all assemble at Dr. Shaw's on Gordon Road at 2 p.m.

Judging of Decorated Vehicles, Lorries, Cars, Bicycles, Tricycles, Prams, etc., will take place in the Recreation Ground.

PRIZES WILL BE GIVEN.

**Recreation Ground** 2.30 till 5 p.m.

GAMES, SPORTING ITEMS, COMMUNITY SINGING, SIDE SHOWS, Etc.


**RETURNED SOLDIERS** are requested to parade.

Procession will be repeated at 7 p.m. (same assembly and route as in morning).

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**DANCE** At 8 p.m. in Coronation Hall.

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 Citizens are asked to display Flags, Bunting, Decorations, and lighting of dwellings and buildings.

Talbot Printing Co., Mosgiel.

*15 Mr. Kay 2/5/45*

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At long last, the end of hostilities in Europe. This poster details Mosgiel's V.E. Day celebrations. The German surrender had been anticipated for a number of days before this, allowing time for these posters to be printed as soon as word came through. Plans for the celebrations had been discussed as early as September 1944.

*MBC V.Day Celebrations File.*

have been bad taste only a year before, obviously did not seem out of place in 1943. Even the Mosgiel Borough Council had, by this time, turned to the discussion of postwar redevelopment.<sup>94</sup> Any remaining feelings of danger it seems, had passed. Indeed, the press discerned a return to a certain home front apathy about the War,<sup>95</sup> aggravated by the dogged resistance of the Germans and Japanese in prolonging the conflict.<sup>96</sup> Fighting men returning from the front, complained in the local press that the civilian population did not know what war was and that it showed “a lack of realism in their reaction to the news from the battle fronts . . .”.<sup>97</sup> People simply wanted a conflict which had continued longer even than the ordeal of the First World War, to finish.

In comparison to the grim feelings of September 1939 and perhaps those in early 1942, the atmosphere at the end of the War was jubilant and unrestrained. The pressures of six years of change, uncertainty, sorrow and pride came to an end. The Patriotic Society had drawn up plans to mark the ‘Armistice Day’ as early as September 1944,<sup>98</sup> when the Allied armies had liberated Brussels and driven into the Netherlands. Despite some delay, the inexorable decline of the Third Reich concluded in May 1945 and produced happy scenes on the streets of Mosgiel. At 4.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 May, the town received the news of victory. By 5.00 a.m. a large number of residents had gathered in Gordon Rd., marching, cheering and singing with the aid of an impromptu tin-can band for two hours. The crowd proceeded to the Mosgiel Woollen Mill where the whistle blew in celebration, accompanied by local church bells.<sup>99</sup> Fay Nicolson recalled the scenes of excitement:

When we first heard the that the War was finished, they heard it over at the Taieri Aerodrome first. There were a few Airforce blokes that excited that they jumped on what must have been the fire engine . . . and they charged over to Mosgiel and they shouted it out to everyone that the war was finished. Ten of us young ones, . . . we went down to the Mill and told, I think it was Jack Walker, to blow the whistle like that, because the War was over and we were all so excited and . . . he sort of believed us. But he didn't want to take the risk of blowing the whistle like mad in case us young ones were having him on. And we were trying to tell him ‘no it's true because the Airforce guys came over on a fire engine’. I believe they got told off for that too, taking the fire engine, but in their excitement that's what they did and they drove up and down the street shouting out to people. But old Jack waited until it was official and then they blew the whistle like mad.

Ray Williams thought he remembered that the pub doors opened at about 5.00 in the morning, no doubt adding to the occasion. The next day official celebrations including church services, a procession of decorated vehicles and bicycles, a games and carnival afternoon at the Recreation Ground and an evening dance took place. Isobel Williams recalled :

. . . I was playing hockey at the time and we had a float. We had a battleship and we were all dressed up in sailor's uniforms, all the girls, and old Baldy McLean was supposed to be the captain in charge of the boat, and we were on that and paraded up the street, . . . we got a prize for that, that was great . . . and then when VJ Day came we had it as a shipwreck . . . They were big parades we had.

<sup>94</sup> MBC Minutes, 5 April 1943.

<sup>95</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 10 March 1944, p.4.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 17 April 1944, p.4. “. . . a mood of public disappointment observable in the public mind, in the press, in conversation and in recent literature in relation to the campaigns in Italy”.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 10 February 1944, p.4.

<sup>98</sup> MDPC File: Letter, 29 September 1944, TC to Mrs Williamson, Hon. Sec., Taieri Women's Institute.

<sup>99</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 May 1945, p.6.



Symbolically, most sections of the community participated in the procession and events, to celebrate the end of a war which had affected each one to varying degrees. Headed by the 5th LAFVR and Taieri Pipe Bands, the afternoon procession around the town included the Fire Brigade, the WWSA, Scouts and Guides, returned servicemen, members of local lodges and business houses, floats of various sporting clubs and community associations and two from the Woollen Mill.<sup>100</sup> Nearly all the respondents interviewed, remembered VE Day and the parade, such was the impact of the event itself and of what it symbolised. For example, nearly fifty years on, Jean Nicolson could recall that they blew 'hip hip hooray' on the Mill whistle - two short puffs and one long. The Mayor commented that "... Mosgiel and District excelled itself on this memorable occasion making the day a most worthy one".<sup>101</sup> It celebrated the release from worry over most of the town's servicemen overseas in Italy with 2NZEF or in the RAF. Although the war against Japan had still to be resolved, substantially less New Zealand personnel were involved. August 15 heralded VJ Day, when the news broke over the radio at 11 am. Following a church service that evening, official celebrations mirroring those of May took place the next day.<sup>102</sup> The great burden was over. The War had ended.

With all the feelings that were shared and experienced as a community during the war; of great events, of worry and of celebration, a number of local residents suffered rather more personal experiences. For them, the heartening news of victory was overshadowed by the loss of those dear to them during the conflict. This was a continuing burden to remain with them as part of the real and ever lasting impact of a war which for others, had proved only a minor irritation. Their experience of the War had not been about the battles or campaigns, the fact the Japanese were approaching too close or the Allies had invaded somewhere, but about the servicemen and women, relatives or friends, whom they knew personally. Perhaps some of the strongest and harshest memories were learning of, and grieving over, the bad news.

Many of those interviewed knew of local people who had become casualties. Bill Borrow personally knew quite a few of the people whose names are on the 1939-45 section of the memorial monument in Anzac Park. He went to school with some or was friends with others. George Allen noted that he had plenty of friends who were killed at the War, although luckily, no relatives. Colin Frew recalled that "There was one or two chaps that were killed, that I knew. There was Ivan Thomson; went to Sunday school with him. Then there was Johnny McLellan, he was killed. Bill McIntosh, he was another one. Went to school with him, played football with him. Erroll Weddell, he was a grocery assistant in Wilson's grocery shop. Oh, and there were one or two others, I just can't recall them." Some people linked the death of the person they knew, with a specific battle or incident. Ray Williams had a cousin who was killed on the island of Vela Lavella. "He went to swim ashore from a row boat, but a sniper got him".<sup>103</sup> Fay Nicolson remembered hearing that the son of close family friends, who used to work at the Lawrence Post Office exchange, had been executed by the Japanese after digging his own grave. She and her parents both cried when they

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 10 May 1945, p.11. The Home Guard and the EPS (for all intents) had been disbanded in 1943.

<sup>101</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 12 May 1945, p.4.

<sup>102</sup> Taylor, p.1265; MBC Subject File:Victory Celebrations File: Notice for insert, 13 August 1945, signed by Mayor.

<sup>103</sup> Interview, Ray Williams.

heard this. Jim Rowe recalled that his cousin was a crew member on the S.S. *Doric Star*, when it was sunk by the *Graf Spee* at the beginning of the War, making him one of the first New Zealand prisoners taken. He also knew of two Mosgiel friends, Seat McCartney and another, who were killed in the first battle of El Alamein when a shell exploded right on top of their trench. Sometimes news was hard to get. Margaret Kingan recalled this experience.

Probably the worst event was . . . I had a brother who was taken prisoner in the desert and they held them prisoners for so long, but they didn't have prison camps to accommodate them. So, they decided that they would ship them across to Italy and his ship was torpedoed. They said it was torpedoed by a British ship because the ship wasn't marked as such, that it was carrying prisoners. I know Mosgiel's not a very big place, but there was my brother and two other ones lost on that ship, the boy McIntosh . . . It was just about the end of the War before they really released what had happened to him. The only thing we were told was that he went missing, not what happened. But it was just about the end of the War before they said what happened to those boys.<sup>104</sup>

Most of those residents interviewed, will never forget them. They can easily recall names of people close to them, although fifty years past.

Thirty men from Mosgiel Borough lost their lives during the War. Their names are given in Appendix 1. This totals 1.4 % of the 1936 population of 2105. In comparison, all New Zealand armed force deaths - 11, 625 - add to only 0.6% of her total population.<sup>105</sup> Thus, Mosgiel bore a heavy burden in the conflict. In noting this impact, it does not take into account the suffering of families whose loved ones became prisoners of war, were wounded, or even posted missing for a period of time. The largest number of P.O.W.'s from Otago and Southland was recorded in March 1943 at 1056.<sup>106</sup> The trouble of meeting a spouse or fiancée, or boyfriend who may have been away for up to five years, also proved difficult. As evidenced throughout Alison Parr's book *Silent Casualties*, adaption to civilian life meant a hard road for some couples and families. Women told of their husband's nightmares, his trouble readjusting to even sitting still through a meal, tempers and mood swings, illness, and general disillusionment with a post-war life which did not live up to wartime expectations.<sup>107</sup>

The impact of these casualties appears to have been widely felt throughout community. In a close knit settlement everyone knew people overseas and if not actually suffering a bereavement, then knew friends or neighbours who did. It must have been the hardest part of living through the War for some; waiting and hoping that the dreaded day and bad news would not arrive. Isobel Williams emphasised this.

So many people in Mosgiel had a relative or a friend, or whatever, serving overseas. And you worried and worried and wondered. We were younger, you didn't worry as much, but the older folk they did, the mums and dads and things. [They] dreaded that, dreaded the telegram person coming round, or the postmaster in those days used to come around and tell them . . . if there was something happened . . . A neighbour of ours, plenty happened and it was quite sad you know. They wandered round to tell you the bad news.

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<sup>104</sup> Recently her older brother met a man in Birchleigh Retirement Village (Mosgiel) who was in the same group of prisoners as her younger brother was. This man had been waiting in line to board the unlucky ship when it reached its quota, so he and the remaining prisoners were sent back to camp, unintentionally saving his life.

<sup>105</sup> *Yearbook* (1936); *Yearbook* (1950). Author's calculations.

<sup>106</sup> Red Cross Annual Report 1945, p.12.

<sup>107</sup> Bracy Gardiner (ed.), *It Wasn't Easy: Memoirs of Wartime Women of the South*, pp.12, 33; Parr, pp.133, 136, 138, 143.

A nurse interviewed by Lauris Edmond, commenting from her experiences, noted that both parents suffered deep anxiety over their children at war and this often caused premature illness or even death.<sup>108</sup> A medical report by Hamilton doctors in May 1945, concluded that anxiety over the fate of P.O.W.'s and of relatives in war theatres was exacting a toll on the health of the general community.<sup>109</sup>

For the unlucky ones, the anguish began with the arrival of a telegram, in a message very clipped and to the point. An Invercargill woman recalled the process of mounting worry.

Would life ever be the same again? The worst fear was realised when the news came of my sister's husband having died in hospital in Cairo. I remember the dreadful suspense as telegrams arrived - first 'seriously ill', then 'dangerously ill', then the final blow. The Post Office in wartime had a system of notifying a close relative first, my father in our case, and the poor man had to come and break the news to us. I shall never forget that night. Then followed the horror of having to tell her little daughter and coping with day-to-day life afterwards.<sup>110</sup>

Vera Crozier recalled this process in the events which happened one Sunday night at her job on the Mosgiel telephone exchange. Having received an official Urgent Government Message from Dunedin of the death of family friend John Blackie, she passed the operator onto the off duty Postmaster.

. . . Then the next thing was I heard the Postmaster passing the telephone exchange [on his bike] and then I knew that he was on his way, dressed in his Sunday suit, they always got dressed up, the Postmasters . . . and then went with the message . . . I knew that the Blackie's would be at church, but that particular night only Mrs Blackie went to church and then when she came home from church, it would have been about 8 o'clock, just before we were closing. Well, when she went down Lanark St., she saw Mr Steel Blackie, her husband, just standing by himself at the little front gate. He never used the front gate because a farmer always used the big gate, and Mrs Blackie knew as soon as she saw him standing there. . . and they never, ever got over it.<sup>111</sup>

Little wonder one woman in Edmond's book called telegrams her "waking nightmare".<sup>112</sup> On receiving the news, the grief began. Vera continued:

When they were told that their husband was dead, it was a very sad situation and you didn't go out for weeks, you didn't go out for months. You just couldn't . . . you just couldn't get over it. If a person is sick or they die here, you can accept it easier, but for a soldier to leave here as a young man or a wee bit older and they never come back . . . Its just not a natural way.

In those days, I think, people weren't involved so much in organisations like Rotary . . . and church groups and women's clubs. A person would have their family and a few friends, very sincere family friends. You got most comfort from them. And of course in those days most families went to church as a family. In those days the minister knew all the family . . . Nowadays everybody rushes around and you haven't got much time to yourself to grieve as you would like to.

Isobel Williams comments that you rallied around as well as you could. Later, official notification was printed in the local press. Ebbett writes that people were cautious

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<sup>108</sup> Edmond, p.51.

<sup>109</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 May 1945, p.4. The story was entitled 'Home Front Casualties'.

<sup>110</sup> Edmond, pp.88-90.

<sup>111</sup> Mr Blackie was an MBC Councillor. This occurred early in 1944; the condolence mentioned in MBC Minutes, 3 April 1944.

<sup>112</sup> Edmond, p.105.

about inquiring after another women's relatives, since there may have been names on the list they had missed seeing.<sup>113</sup> Especially following major battles, such as Greece and Crete, or the tough North African struggles at Sidi Rezegh (December 1941), the First and Second Alamein (July and November 1942), or Cassino (1944). The papers were filled with long lists of the names of 2NZEF servicemen, their rank, home address and next of kin - usually a parent or spouse. Many were posted missing to begin with, and in the preceding weeks after official notification had been received, reclassified into the various categories.<sup>114</sup> Numerically, there were hardly many names from Mosgiel mentioned amongst the vast ocean of Otago and Southland soldiers, but they appear to have popped up fairly regularly. It even had some effect on those who were not directly affected. Jim Manley recalled his family always received the *Weekly News* magazine, which had its glossy middle pages covered with rows of men staring out from photos who had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Seeing their faces, meant more than a nondescript name, it brought the reality home. The *ODT* and *Evening Star* printed photographs with captions for all local Otago casualties. For those who did not know the bad news, even in a small town like Mosgiel, it helped to spread the word.

The Council tried its best in a difficult situation to honour the local families of those casualties, mentioning their death in meetings, flying official flags at half mast and sending official letters of condolence, on behalf of the town. Sometimes, however, they accidentally offended. One occasion gives some idea of the ongoing grief which beset a local family. On 23 November 1943 the Mayor sent a letter to the Mr and Mrs T. A. Milner of Mosgiel, extending his deepest sympathy on the loss of their son on overseas service.<sup>115</sup> The reply, only two days later, accents the plight of the family in this case.

On behalf of Mrs Milner, family and myself, we thank you for your letter of sympathy to us on the presumption (*sic*) of our son's death on active service. He has been missing since April 10th of this year, also his plain (*sic*) and crew. However he may still be a prisoner of war and may turn up yet, we are still hoping (*sic*).

Yours faithfully,  
T. A. Milner<sup>116</sup>

Sadly, as it turned out, their son became one of the names on the memorial in Anzac Park. The impact on the family, relatives, friends and acquaintances can only be imagined. This, however, emphasises the effect on the town in general. So many vital individual parts of the community were lost in the War. The death of Sergeant-Pilot Vincent Kirby, for instance, went further than that of his immediate family. In his involvement in Mosgiel as a teacher at Mosgiel District High School, as a member of the Taieri senior rugby team and as player and secretary of the Taieri Cricket Club, he

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<sup>113</sup> Ebbett, p.146.

<sup>114</sup> These categories included; Killed in Action, Wounded, Prisoner of War, Missing-Believed Killed, Wounded and Missing, Missing-Believed P.O.W., Wounded and a P.O.W., Died as Result of Wounds, Died as a Result of Sickness, or Accidentally Injured as some of the more common examples. For some, usually Airforce or Naval personnel, their bodies were never found and their death could only, after a certain length of time, be presumed, as in the case (below) of A. Milner.

<sup>115</sup> MBC File: Condolence File: letter, 23 November 1943, Mayor to Mr and Mrs T. A. Milner.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, Letter, 25 November 1943, T. A. Milner to 'The Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of Mosgiel'.

touched many lives.<sup>117</sup> Erroll Weddell, killed in action in Italy in 1944, was another. Prominent in local scouting, his service was commemorated in the memorial Scout Hall, opened in 1947, which bears his name.<sup>118</sup> Not only immediate relatives, but friends, club and team mates, especially in a small and relatively insular town like Mosgiel were affected. By 1943 the *ODT* reported that Taieri RFC had lost 5 members of the 1939 senior team, two others from the previous team and eleven wounded from those who played senior rugby in the pre-War period. It headlined the story "An Impressive Record".<sup>119</sup> The loss of all 30 local men and their potential contributions to the town of their unfulfilled lives, in terms of work skills, social and recreational interaction, and the marriages and children they never had, are legacies of the War which lasted a great deal longer than VJ-Day. Other servicemen played a part in the life of the town, in the sports teams or business community, but did not actually live in the town, so are not counted amongst the Mosgiel district's 30 casualties. However, for those involved with them, their loss was felt just as heavily. The people of the surrounding Taieri Plains, of Outram and Allanton, suffered their own grievous losses, commemorated on their own monuments.

The sacrifices of the local servicemen were honoured, along with those of the previous generation in the traditional Anzac Day services. Even by the first Anzac Day of the Second World War, a new Mosgiel name had been added to those who had given their lives in 1914-18. Gunner T. L. Kennedy of the 4th Field Regt., 2NZEF had died of sickness in Abbassia at the beginning of 1940.<sup>120</sup> The commemoration of the day proved a poignant occasion throughout the War, especially in 1941, with the 2NZEF in action in Greece at the time. In 1942, although no military parade occurred in Dunedin due to the War situation, Mosgiel proceeded with its ceremony, boosted by members of the local RNZAF and 5th L.A.F.V. Regiment, plus the usual local ERC formations, bands, clubs and organisations.<sup>121</sup> Some deaths and accidents, however, obviously did occur in and around Mosgiel during the conflict. A council surfaceman was killed by a fall of shingle at the North Taieri gravel pit in 1943, while a Holy Cross College student drowned in the same year while trying to rescue a boy.<sup>122</sup> The deaths of 21 people in the 1943 Hyde railway disaster also shocked people,<sup>123</sup> as did a non-fatal crash involving the early afternoon Mosgiel passenger train,<sup>124</sup> but these were different to the usually violent deaths of servicemen a long way from home. Perhaps the closest comparison came with the deaths of trainee pilots at RNZAF Taieri, but even then these were accidents, involving mainly unknown people, and were not the same as being killed due to enemy action.

Thus, although the impact of the War news appears to have been limited, the actual physical cost of war in terms of the casualty numbers was a blow to this small community. For many the impact was brief and passed as they celebrated the end of

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<sup>117</sup> Otago Education Board Report 1942; Taieri Cricket Club File: List of Secretaries 1931-45; *Otago Daily Times*, 20 May 1943, p.4.

<sup>118</sup> Kirk, p.343.

<sup>119</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 May 1943, p.4. This included H. Morrison, G. Murray and H. Reynolds, who did not live in Mosgiel, and thus do not appear on the local memorial.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 19, 20 February 1940, pp.8, 10 (photo).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 28 April, 1942, p.6.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 13, 17 May 1943, pp.2, 2. The student was on holiday in Wellington at the time.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 5, 7 June 1943, pp.4, 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 7 September 1943, p.2. A goods train shunted into the back of the 2.40 p.m. train for Mosgiel in the Caversham tunnel. None of the 80 passengers onboard were hurt.

hostilities and got on with their lives. For the parents, spouses, relatives and friends, however, the impact was never ending.

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If the morale of the town did not seem to have been affected by the War news, how then, did the War affect its morals; in other words, its social norms and conventions? A number of books have been written on the War and social change. Authors generally found that the disruption, splitting and uprooting of many families, especially in Britain, combined with the heightened emotions and new situations which war provokes, led to public concerns about a perceived social decline. Increased crime, drunkenness, promiscuity and juvenile delinquency and other social ills were blamed on the disruption caused by the War. In America an air of anxiety developed over the discerned decline in family values. Michael Adams notes that delinquency, youth promiscuity and divorces continued to rise throughout the War. A favourite radio talk show topic in that country by 1945 was "Are we facing a moral breakdown?".<sup>125</sup> This decline in conventional morality may indeed have been an impact of the War, in other countries and even around the larger cities of New Zealand, but in general did not appear to afflict Mosgiel in such an overt way.

To contemporary New Zealanders, conservative by modern standards, the War introduced a perturbing change in social conventions in reports from other countries. Nancy Taylor notes that by 1942, lurid reports of excess, of soldiers drinking in the streets, of grog dens and young girls in rowdy night clubs were heard from Australia.<sup>126</sup> Soon reports from Auckland and Wellington began to echo these.<sup>127</sup> In New Zealand, serious crime, like murder or armed robbery, did not seem to be a big factor. Generally, most of the concerns of much of the older public were centred on liquor, and incidents of juvenile delinquency which both received over exaggerated and sometimes sensationalist press coverage. A press report referring to wartime Wellington remarked upon,

. . . a mushroom growth of vice and a congregation of undesirable persons. At one stage the position was most serious . . . This was a natural result of the addition of considerable spending money, and carefree spenders . . . The sale of illicit liquor was a contributing cause of grave concern . . . While the war continues, with associated unsettlement, the position concerning social evils is not likely to revert entirely to apparent unavoidable peacetime minimums. Competent observers see a further danger that persons who have chosen a way of life or livelihood which to them seems easy may find it hard to settle down to law abiding lives and work.<sup>128</sup>

Police anti-vice squads had been necessary to clamp down on illicit liquor sellers, brothel keeping and prostitution, both in Wellington and Auckland, where the majority of troops - New Zealand and American - were stationed and took leave. The sly-grog trade flourished with the coming of these troops.<sup>129</sup> In small town Mosgiel, despite the proximity to the two military bases, nothing like this was necessary, although locals routinely defied the liquor laws.

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<sup>125</sup> M. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*, p.132.

<sup>126</sup> Taylor, p.1016.

<sup>127</sup> For example: *Otago Daily Times*, 18 June 1942, 18 Sept. 1943, 4 May 1945, pp. 2, 4, 4; *Evening Star*, 9 Dec. 1942, 21 July, 1 Oct. 1943, pp. 5, 4, 5.

<sup>128</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 April 1944, p.6.

<sup>129</sup> Taylor, pp. 1022-3, 1035-6, 1049-50.

hotel after closing.<sup>139</sup> Despite public perturbation about liquor, the number charged with drunkenness throughout the country actually fell during 1939-45.<sup>140</sup> Locally, only two people were convicted in the Magistrates Court for being drunk in a public place in the whole War period.<sup>141</sup> Colin Frew recalled drunks, mostly young fellows, came in to warm themselves up or get a pie at the bakery during the night shift., but were never any trouble. The introduction of tougher new liquor regulations in 1942, opening hotels one hour later and between 2 and 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoons, plus restrictions on conditions of sales to servicemen, did not seem to be much of an inconvenience to the regular after hours practice.

Neither did the War have any impact on the common, but illegal, practice of drinking at dances.<sup>142</sup> Although the issue received more press, because of events in larger centres, it still proceeded almost unaffected throughout the conflict and beyond. Continued reference was made in Mosgiel Borough Council meetings to drinking at dances and on the streets in their vicinity, especially since the majority who attended those functions were youthful.<sup>143</sup> However, it seemed perfectly reasonable to those who participated, since many other, and older, citizens had done it previously. Police again, many times, turned a blind eye and let a group of young men off with a warning. Jim Rowe recalled one occasion.

. . . We went to the Oddfellows Hall dance and had this 5 gallons of beer and that was a lot of beer in those days, this 5 gallon keg, but you'd group up and buy it I think. Anyway, you weren't supposed to have it within a mile of the dance hall in those days, and we used to park this old truck [with the keg on the back] around in Wickliffe Street. Old Ted Phillips was the cop then and there was a whole gang of us, all under age too, of course, only about 16 and 17 years old and he caught us. We didn't get pinched for it, but he might have confiscated the beer . . . and I think we might have got the keg back to send it back to the brewery.

Bill Borrow remarked that in his experience there wasn't too much drinking done by young people, but for those who wished to have the odd beer, there were tricks.

We went over to the Outram Show once, the Taieri A. & P. Show . . . and we took a wee 5 gallon keg, a wooden keg, with us, of course we were just juniors then. I remember we stuck this thing up in a pine tree that'd been cut down in this hedge, macrocarpa hedge, and we stuck a keg up there and we'd nip out from the dance, it was a pretty wild dance they used to have in those days . . . and Ted Phillips, the policeman in Mosgiel, we saw him coming and we had this keg . . . [so] one of the girls in the party had a long white frock, and one of the jokers got this girl up and sat her on the keg with her long dress there over this tree trunk and old Ted came around there; "Hi boys. Everything alright boys?". "Oh, yes Mr Phillips".

Margaret Kenny remembered some people brought alcohol into a Coronation Hall dance in soft drink bottles. Some stashed their beer in hedges outside the dance hall. Fay Nicholson recalled that her husband-to-be Gary and his friend Jim Rowe used to hide their bottles of beer under the steps of the Magistrate Courthouse, since they

<sup>139</sup> Mosgiel Magistrate Court Criminal Record Book.

<sup>140</sup> Taylor, p.1044; Phillips, p.75. He notes that the numbers convicted for drunkenness had fallen dramatically since 1914.

<sup>141</sup> Mosgiel Court Record Book; 8 December 1939, 5 February 1941.

<sup>142</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 October 1939, p.9. Although passed late in 1939 this law seems not to have been forced by the outbreak of war, but through a gradually building moral fear of the effects of easy exposure to alcohol this would bring young people, particularly girls.

<sup>143</sup> MBC Minutes; 1 Sept. 1941, 8 June 1942, 6 Sept. 1943; *Otago Daily Times*, 5 May 1942, p.2.

reckoned it was the safest place. However, she stated that there weren't as many people drunk in those days. Nonetheless, it seems that drinking at, or in the vicinity of, dances was a relatively commonplace occurrence, especially since 24 people - or nearly 10% of all convicted offences - were convicted for this in Mosgiel during the War.<sup>144</sup> Like the after hours sessions, it continued on in spite of any moral paternalism from the government and local authorities, or publicised notions of efficiency or patriotism. Thus, for the local drinking public, the War made little difference as they continued quietly, much the same as before, except that the beer was weaker and the spirits scarcer.<sup>145</sup>

The other great public opinion hobby horse during the War was the problem of juvenile delinquency. Youthful drinking was but one symptom of what many saw as a growing and disturbing problem. A belief that the young were unduly affluent and had too much free time was widely linked with generalised complaints of delinquency.<sup>146</sup> The editor of the conservative *ODT* not surprisingly felt that children were allowed to "run wild" in the streets, enjoying excessive freedom, whilst indulging in the vices of idleness and self will at home.<sup>147</sup> Local newspapers published reports from around the country of respected public figures decrying the problems of undisciplined youths who did not want to work, of school boy impudence, increased truancy, petty thefts, vandalism and stone throwing, lack of parental control and lowering moral standards, and the effects of films and radio serials.<sup>148</sup> It is interesting to note that these same problems are still prevalent today. Richard Titmuss, focussing on Britain, emphasised the effect of absent fathers and preoccupied mothers, through worry and work, in disrupting the home routine and discipline.<sup>149</sup> Other historians such as John Costello and Michael Adams agree, noting that in many cases young people felt excluded from the war effort, or were reacting to dull or oppressive working conditions.<sup>150</sup> These problems were manifest in the much publicised 'juvenile' problem. In actuality, the great majority of children and teens were quite unaffected, but a much publicised few fell into conflict with the law. In the national Scout Week recruiting campaign of 1942, an advertisement alluded to the growing fear: "Parents and civic authorities alike are appalled at the rapidly growing increase in juvenile crime among the youth of the community. Parents, where is your boy between the Danger Hours of 6 to 9 at night? How does he spend his Saturdays and Sundays? Scouting will thrill him and hold his interest".<sup>151</sup>

A rash of vandalism swept through Dunedin in 1942-3 and was described to the Dunedin City Council as having reached "serious dimensions". This "larrikinism", involved trampling shrubs and flowers, attacking trees, breaking windows, removing plumbing fixtures, destroying fences, damaging seats and play ground equipment,<sup>152</sup> and more seriously, breaking street lamps,<sup>153</sup> playing with matches, and making false

<sup>144</sup> Mosgiel Court Record Book. The 24 totalled 9.7% of the 248 record<sup>ed</sup> offences in Mosgiel, 1939-45.

<sup>145</sup> Bollinger, p.56.

<sup>146</sup> Taylor, p.1130.

<sup>147</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 May 1942, p.4. It being a generally conservative right-wing paper.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 6 April 1944, p.4; 11 March 1944, p.4; *Evening Star*, 21 July 1943, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 24 October 1942, p.4; 24 October 1942, p.4; 13 May 1941, p.6; 19 April, 5 August 1944, pp.4, 4.

<sup>149</sup> R. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp. 412-13.

<sup>150</sup> Costello, p.280.; Adams, pp.128-9; Reynolds, p.268.

<sup>151</sup> Boy Scouts Association of New Zealand Special Scout Week Magazine, Feb. 20-22 1942, p.15.

<sup>152</sup> *Evening Star*, 7 July, 1, 16, 17 Sept. 1942; 3, 4, 10 Nov. 1943, 15 Aug. 1944.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 10 January 1942, p.10.



emergency telephone calls.<sup>154</sup> Boys also broke into the Caversham Tunnel air raid shelter and two Dunedin EPS depots, stealing tinned supplies and equipment.<sup>155</sup> In contrast, Mosgiel did not seem to suffer any greater event of juvenile crime than seems usual. The odd incident occurred, like scribbling on the war memorial,<sup>156</sup> breaking a window at the Rec. Ground Pavilion,<sup>157</sup> damaging a Post Office mailbox,<sup>158</sup> or shoplifting a few bottles of soft drink,<sup>159</sup> but nothing like the plague of adolescent mischief in Dunedin or more especially, larger cities. The DCC Electricity street lighting file for Mosgiel from 1941-64, makes no mention of any vandalism damage or broken light bulbs during this period,<sup>160</sup> although lights were broken at North Taieri on one occasion in 1940,<sup>161</sup> and telephone insulators in 1943.<sup>162</sup> Only four incidents of petty theft and two of defacing public property were referred to the local Children's Court during the war period. Others recommended for minor traffic offences, such as riding a bike without light, but it hardly lends itself to any assumptions of increased delinquency. There were plenty of local youth groups, church groups and sports clubs in the town to keep children occupied and interested and prevent dalliances with trouble through boredom. Convention dictated that women with younger children did not go out to war work, and the lack of anonymity in a small town also probably proved an effective regulator to any more dubious activities.

In line with this general trend, more serious criminal activity did not seem to increase at all during the conflict. Indeed, in contrast to London, where Scotland Yard set up anti-looting squads,<sup>163</sup> and were forced to combat an upsurge in more daring violent crime,<sup>164</sup> Taylor records that throughout the country, more serious offences decreased. Crime rates fell heavily during the war and this was noticeable in 1941, since potential criminals were in the Army, the police increased their patrols, and the courts proved stern.<sup>165</sup> The Patients and Prisoners Aid Society attributed the decrease to military discipline and the sobering attitude the war brought.<sup>166</sup> Whatever the reason, the War again proved to have little effect on the usual behaviour in Mosgiel. Any crime, as it had been pre-War, was very tame as one might expect. Traffic offences constituted 55% of all convictions heard in the local Magistrate's Court. The largest group of these, 41, - or 16.6% of all convictions - were for the relatively trivial offence of riding a bike without a light. There followed; driving without a current warrant of fitness, 26 (10.5%); speeding (over 30 m.p.h.), 19 (7.6%) and driving without a license, 14 (5.6%). Incidents such as driving without due care and attention occurred only five times, carelessly riding a bike, four times, or failing to report an accident involving injury once in the whole War period. Of the 45% of cases brought

<sup>154</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 August 1942, 2 January 1943, pp.4, 4.

<sup>155</sup> DCC: TC 33 EPS File: S/2, Letter, 18 Oct. 1943, Drainage Eng. to Sec. Dn. Drainage & Sewerage Bd; S/3, Letter, 25 Feb. 1943, Hon. Sec. Supplies Unit to Sec. EPS, Dn.

<sup>156</sup> MBC Subject File: Anzac Commemoration File; Note, 8 March 1944, TC to Borough Foreman.

<sup>157</sup> MBC Minutes; 16 December 1940.

<sup>158</sup> Mosgiel Court Book, 12 September 1941.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 23 May 1941.

<sup>160</sup> DCC E: 20/5/3; Street Lighting - Mosgiel 1941-64.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*: Correspondence File; 118-P, Letter, 4 Feb. 1941, Inspector of Police to City Elec. Eng.

<sup>162</sup> Mosgiel Court Book, 29 Jan. 1943. The 3 boy culprits were not convicted, but admonished and discharged.

<sup>163</sup> C. Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality*, p.142.

<sup>164</sup> C. Whiting, *Britain Under Fire: The Bombing of Britain's Cities 1940-45*, pp.36-8.

<sup>165</sup> Taylor, pp. 504, 1044-5.

<sup>166</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 March 1942, p.4.

by police, few were for any serious crimes. Only five convicted assaults took place in the six years of war, and these sprang from only two incidents. Ray Williams remembered there were some instances of fisticuffs in the town, but these were harmless.

They used to get the odd fight at a dance, but there was only two, there'd be two having a fight. There wasn't gangs, one gang onto one person . . . They'd have a bit of an argument and the two of them would have a fight and you'd stand back and watch until there'd be a winner and that was it; all back into the dance again. There might have been a bloody nose or something like that, but it was never that bad.

Drinking on licensed premises after hours resulted in the largest number of convictions, with 31 examples (28.4%), followed by liquor near a dance hall, 24 (22%). Petty theft accounted for five (four heard in juvenile court), wilful damage three, conversion of a bicycle three, offensive language four, and disorderly behaviour one. A burglary at Mosgiel Junction in 1943 emphasises the limited nature of crime in this small and close community. The offenders got away with seven jars of jam, some linen, tea and some apples, hardly a worthwhile haul.<sup>167</sup> Bill Borrow mentioned that they had very little worry about burglaries in those days, even though there were more hard up people around then, than today. To emphasise this he tells of a typical routine for many travellers.

Everyone seemed to ride a bike in those days, and anyway, there was a big ditch opposite the railway . . . and the ditch would be three or four feet deep, you know. And everyone slung their bike in there and there was literally hundreds of bikes there, sitting there all day, no locks or anything. Just chuck it in the ditch, or up against the railway fence if you were in a hurry and leave it there, and it was always there at night. [I] never, ever heard of a bike getting pinched. If you heard of one getting pinched, it was pinched down the street by somebody running for the train, running late and they'd grab a bike and shoot away down and leave it at the railway station . . . No, we didn't think theft was possible in those days.

One person interviewed, recalled gaining entry, with a few mates, into the cheese factory late at night after the Momona dance had finished. Although they had been drinking, they simply ate a few of the cheeses there until they had their fill, then left. There was no thought of damaging equipment or anything similar.

Most convictions had nothing at all to do with the War, some belying the rural nature of the town; allowing stock to wander or laying poison near a public place, for example. Two youths over 16 were charged for failing to apply to be enrolled the General National Military Reserve,<sup>168</sup> but other than this and a court case against a breach of the lighting regulations, there was nothing to distinguish this period of time from 1949-55 instead of 1939-45. Local police correspondence records show a few wartime references, such as an alien (Chinese) notification of change of abode - as required under regulations -, the discovery of an airman's flying boot and human leg at Brighton, or the notification of A.W.O.L. servicemen or in the vicinity, but nothing very revealing as to any substantial wartime impact.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 17 April 1943, p.4.

<sup>168</sup> Mosgiel Court Book, 20 June 1941.

<sup>169</sup> Mosgiel Police Station Register of Correspondence 1942-5, 15 Sept. 1943, 19 Dec. 1944, 6 Feb. 1945, 17 Dec. 1943.

The problems of visiting servicemen, while seemingly extreme in northern centres, again did not prove as great in sparsely populated Mosgiel. Even in Dunedin it was quite tame, especially compared to major centres. In 1944, the *ODT* mentioned disapprovingly the impudence of boys begging for chewing gum off Allied - probably American - sailors in the Octagon.<sup>170</sup> This is in comparison to Auckland and Wellington, where Taylor notes that organised gangs of children set up shoeshine stands or pestered Americans for money and souvenirs.<sup>171</sup> In Mosgiel there seems to have been even less impact, since there were not the same opportunities. For example, the men from the 2nd Regiment of the Canterbury Battalion who visited Wingatui in 1941 were hardly as exotic or as wealthy as the US Marines at Paekakeriki or Warkworth. New Zealand soldiers only received 7 shillings a day, so by necessity did not go giving it away. In any event, the small town activities of such children would soon be reported back to their parents, unlike anonymity of a large city.

More worrisome was the spectre of young girls' liaisons with servicemen. In Britain, the phenomenon of mid-teenage promiscuity was of particular concern to the authorities.<sup>172</sup> Girls could leave school at fourteen, and there were plenty of servicemen to provide an escape from wartime deprivations. By 1943, London and other large cities were crowded with Americans, Canadians, and other foreign troops. Taylor mentions reports of young girls in Auckland and Wellington, drinking on the streets with groups of servicemen, teenage promiscuity and even cases of juvenile prostitution.<sup>173</sup> In 1943, the Reverend F. de Lisle, addressing the Dunedin branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, remarked that in Auckland the immorality among young girls, in particular, was most alarming, and it was a common sight to see teenage girls throwing themselves at visiting servicemen.

In Dunedin however, he noted, the position seemed to be better.<sup>174</sup> The Reverend's assessment about the south appears generally to have been correct. Despite demands for repressive measures be taken against young girls congregating in towns which Allied servicemen were visiting,<sup>175</sup> it seems unlikely that anything of this nature occurred in Mosgiel, even with its close proximity to RNZAF Taieri and the Wingatui Racecourse Camp. Perhaps there were a limited number of illicit sexual liaisons, but the author found no evidence of this, noting that a scandal of this nature would have quickly been hushed up. In any case there was hardly the comparable opportunity for this as in a large city. Most leave passes were for only a few hours, or if any longer then the troops or airmen would usually head to the much brighter lights of Dunedin. Only a limited number of Americans visited the south, and these, usually sailors or some Marines on sick leave, rarely ventured out of Dunedin. They were well pampered and entertained, so as not to be aimlessly wandering the streets and tempted to go patrolling for girls.<sup>176</sup> Even the girls were probably dissimilar, with Auckland girls perhaps being more worldly wise than those from Mosgiel. Most young girls in the town were under close parental supervision, besides which, the threat of gossip was a

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<sup>170</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 11 March 1944, p.4.

<sup>171</sup> Taylor, pp.631-2.

<sup>172</sup> Reynolds, p.268.

<sup>173</sup> Taylor, pp.1049-50.

<sup>174</sup> *Otago DailyTimes*, 26 May 1943, p.2.

<sup>175</sup> *Evening Star*, 1 October 1943, p.5.

<sup>176</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 27 March 1943, p.4; *Evening Star*, 1 July 1943, p.4. They were well taken care of by the Visiting Servicemen's Hospitality Committee of Otago.

good regulator. In the way of small towns, news of miscreant activities would often find its way back to household.

Especially in small towns, traditional social convention remains stronger. Residents commented that people were friendlier and more honest in those days. It probably seemed so in a town of just over two thousand, where nearly everyone knew each other, or at least their families. It was in most respects, despite the War, a more ordered and secure society than today. People had simpler tastes and expectations and more people followed the path society expected of them. It was a time when the nation had a real sense of purpose and everyone seemed to be working towards it. Jim Rowe felt that "The war really welded the country together . . . the whole of New Zealand I believe acted wonderfully well, and its a great shame that it couldn't be a bit like that today". This same closeness and friendliness meant it was also easier to see and censure those who went against the common values of the community, who indulged in such things as petty crime or youthful promiscuity, than in a large city. Thus, moral standards and norms were more likely to stay same, than in a society disrupted by the War like Auckland or London. Its lack of impact in Mosgiel kept pre-war notions stronger, keeping continuity from the 1930's or even beyond. Convention went back to well before the turn of the century. The 1936 Census records that over one quarter (25.8%) of the Borough residents were aged over 50 years old, including 45 men and 61 women aged over 70.<sup>177</sup> These people grew up amidst the generally very moral and regulated Victorian society. Many of these older views, it seems likely, stayed more prevalent longer in a small community like Mosgiel. Jim Manley, for example, remembers as a boy a number of the older residents who were very strict and dour Scots people. Even some of the younger people in the town had been brought over from Scotland to work in the Mill. Possibly the stong influence of the Presbyterian church - with over half the town affiliated to this faith - also had some effect on the town.<sup>178</sup> So there was plenty of traditionalism around to stifle any high-spirited or vulgar antics or ideas arising at this time.

Many of the social conventions were still strong. Reynolds notes that one example of social change in Britain was the increase in female pub-going, which had usually been a male preserve.<sup>179</sup> In contrast, in New Zealand, this male exclusiveness generally continued throughout the War.<sup>180</sup> Fay Nicolson emphasises the strength of this custom when describing the local celebrations on V-J Day.

I remember Josie Rowe, she went into the pub and I think Josie would have been say 22 years and they didn't stay in there a long time, but they had a drink you know, to say that they had a drink to say that the war had finished . . . There were people laughing and crying. It was just that they were really really happy, especially those with people overseas. . . [Then] Coming out the door she met her father and of course he was at the pub every day of his life. He got such a shock to see his daughter there and gave her such a dressing down for being in the pub, yet she was 22. I mean, women didn't usually go to the pub in those days really. It would be seldom that a lady went.

In 1941, the Taieri Minister's Association protested against the Council allowing the use of the Rec. Ground for sports events on Sundays by RNZAF Taieri personnel. The

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<sup>177</sup> 1936 Census; Vol. IV- Ages and Marital Status, Section 12.

<sup>178</sup> 1945 Census; Vol. VI - Religious Professions, Sect. 11, 12. For those specifying their religion on the Census form, 58% specified Presbyterian, Anglicans claimed 12.5% and Roman Catholics 11.5%.

<sup>179</sup> Reynolds, p.269.

<sup>180</sup> Phillips, p.78; Lynch, p.53.

Council relinquished without a protest and the grounds were put off limits.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, the initial outcry when married women went to work in the Mill for the War effort, are two other examples of the more traditional views prevalent at the time. For all the changes wrought in the conflict, most values and customs continued on the same as before.

Thus, it appears that the War had only a limited impact on the morale and the morality of the people of Mosgiel. Many local people were shocked when they heard of the commencement of hostilities, but after fearing the grim struggles ahead, life seemed unchanged for a long time. Since the War was so distant, locals followed it through the media. Newspapers were dominated by war news. This was followed with interest and many locals recall events, but it really did not make any great impact on normal local routines. People carried on with their lives, since a change of fortunes either to Ally or Axis made no difference to Mosgiel. The only time it did was when Japan's proximity made it too threatening to ignore as they did with Germany. Faith in the British and Americans was put to the test after Singapore, but even then most locals did not really fear an invasion. Mosgiel's southern isolation and limited significance meant it had practically no chance of being a target. The increased American and local military presence heartened the community and they gradually became used to the close war without any real disruption to their lives. Their morale seems to have held up well according to Goodwin Watson's premise, much as most small towns would have, and this became focussed into patriotic war effort. With the pressure off, Mosgiel drifted back into its quiet life. However, for those who had lost someone in the six years of war, things could never go back to the way they were. This impact weighed far more heavily on the community than any other anxiety about invasion or war news. Being a small town, the deaths of those 30 men was felt more harshly than in a larger city. In a closely knit town the impact went beyond just the affected family into the community. This was the only real impact of the battle front to affect the town; not news of glory or victory, of Japanese threat or American thrusts. The real impact was in the potential lives and deeds which Mosgiel had taken from it.

Similarly, it appears that the morals and social conventions were not greatly affected by the War in any great form, in contrast to other communities, both in New Zealand and overseas. Despite its proximity to two military bases, Mosgiel's small size again, made it of little interest to most of the troops nearby. On the rare occasions leave was granted, servicemen headed to the much brighter lights of Dunedin, preventing many of the problems which larger cities found sprang up when the troops were in town. The problems of drunken soldiery and the associated juvenile promiscuity and crime did not occur in Mosgiel, nor did the large outbreaks of juvenile delinquency as evidenced in other cities, and even Dunedin. The small size of the town and its close community meant, it was hard to get up to no good without someone finding out about it. Secondly, the lack of actual war impact on the town and, it appears, the stronger values and conventional social norms inherent in smaller towns meant anyone at risk was less affected by the disruption and restlessness engendered by the conflict in other larger and more anonymous towns and cities. Apart from the pain of the casualties, the war overseas had little other impact on Mosgiel. It got the best of both worlds; a common sense of purpose and the excitement of being involved, but with few of the fears of attack or moral problems associated with it.

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<sup>181</sup> MBC Minutes, 7 April 1941.



Welcome Home. Mosgiel and district returned servicemen and women are welcomed home with the gift of a Mosgiel Woollens rug at the Recreation Ground, in early 1946.

Photo: Mosgiel RSA.

## Chapter 9:

# Conclusion.

Graeme Dunstall in *The Oxford History of New Zealand* writes that;

The Second World War . . . had few long term effects in demographic and material terms . . . [and] the basic social pattern was disrupted only temporarily. In many respects the war merely accentuated the uniformity and drabness of life inherited from the depression of the 1930's.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis supports Dunstall's interpretation of the impact of the Second World War, at least for Mosgiel. For the most part residents had a relatively comfortable war in comparison to many larger centres, just as New Zealanders enjoyed a reasonably comfortable war in comparison to many combatant countries closer to the battle fronts. Despite increased government intervention and supply difficulties, most aspects of society were not overtly disrupted for locals living on the home front. The comments, for example, expressed by a British visitor to Dunedin in 1942, that by contrast to Britain "life in New Zealand is pleasant and untrammelled", emphasise this.<sup>2</sup> In reality, most local people faced only inconvenience, not suffering, throughout this period. With the exception of the commercial sector, in many areas where the War's influence touched the town it appears to have had relatively little impact.

It had only limited effect upon the homes and lifestyles of residents. Shortages and rationing were met with pragmatism, cunning and the hard lessons of the Depression experienced only a few years earlier. Rationing only began in 1942 and did not target New Zealander's key favourites, butter and meat, until 1943 and 1944 respectively. Mosgiel's proximity to rural food supplies and the natural ingenuity and 'make do' commonsense of its housewives cushioned the impact of the War on the 'kitchen front'. Lifestyles and social activities were not drastically altered, although the absence of local men in the armed forces prompted many clubs and organisations to concentrate on their juniors and many women to find their dance partners from new sources. Adaptation proved the key and this allowed households to stay relatively unaffected.

Despite the close proximity of RNZAF Taieri and Wingatui Military Camp, the military presence does not appear to have had much influence on Mosgiel, even if it temporarily added a new dimension to the town. These installations were more concerned with performing their duties than with the neighbouring town or its inhabitants. Most of the excitement and danger of the years of flying training or FAFAI exercises remained hidden from locals by a cloak of official secrecy and barbed wire. Residents accepted the situation and for most (over the age of 10), the novelty of

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<sup>1</sup> G. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 451.

<sup>2</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 January 1942, p.9.

aircraft overhead, army trucks on the roads or uniforms on the streets soon waned. Mosgiel's small town status deterred most servicemen from spending more than only a brief visit, when the brighter lights of Dunedin beckoned. Its low interest value for the troops (and the lack of Americans) also meant that few if any moral standards or social conventions were upset. The problems of drunken soldiery and juvenile promiscuity or delinquency, as evidenced in other centres, did not get a chance to bloom here. The small size of the town and close knit community also proved prominent in Mosgiel avoiding those problems.

Morale proved steady, with no real fears evident of Japanese invasion due to its isolation and limited significance, while the close military presence heartened the community. War news dominated the media, but this did not have any great effect on everyday life or local routines. The deaths of 30 servicemen from the area was, however, a significant blow to this small locale which felt their loss as a community more acutely than in the country's anonymous larger cities.

Civil defence measures also, had only a muted effect on the life of the town. The local and central government created a formidable paper army for the community, however, since it never saw action residents knew little about it and those who belonged to it, and bothered attending, sacrificed only a few hours a week. When the EPS died a quiet death in 1943 it left little impact on Mosgiel. Local Home Guardsmen did at least win uniforms and minor recognition for their part in training and toiling in defence of their country, though most of their efforts went unseen, or unappreciated by their fellow residents. The air raid precautions blackout had slightly more consequence, with the whole town being compulsorily involved for eighteen months. However, locals quickly became used to shielding their homes and vehicle lights, and to the darkened streets, such as they were. In such a small and closely knit community as Mosgiel, it proved only a nuisance for locals; a world away from the fear and comments it provoked in larger cities around the country.

Overall, however, the economic effects on the town on local businesses and labour became by far the most conspicuous impact. This is understandable with the realisation that modern total war is basically a struggle between the productive capacity of the combatant nations. This impact manifested itself in the form of greatly increased governmental presence and influence over businesses, such as the Woollen Mill, or in the shortages of supplies of the factors of production; whether stock, plant or labour. The regulations, controllers and increased administration, designed to foster the nation's limited resources, reached into most local businesses from the overwhelming presence of the Mill to small corner shops. Whether enforced trading hours, price fixing, zoning, restrictions on production, manpowering of staff, impressment of vehicles, the administration of rationing or increased wartime taxation, the business community appears to have suffered a greater impact than any other group in Mosgiel. The indirect effect of supply shortages also impacted heavily on some retailers and manufacturers, while dealers in non-'essential' goods felt the press of war as many of their stocks became unobtainable. On top of this small businessmen called up for military service, such as Arthur Chadwick, led to other flow-on effects. Owners, managers and proprietors were forced to adjust to the changed business environment as best they could. It hit some very hard and affected most to various extents; only a few gained from it. Total war, in short, had a widespread impact on the business community. However, in qualifying the impact it must be noted that proportionally not many felt the economic implications from the owner's side of the counter or the manager's seat. The majority of the town's population were simply wage workers. In



the town as a whole, many were more concerned with irksome extra overtime, worried about the upcoming manpower interview or trying to stretch the meat ration than the fact that war taxation cut into excess profits, the army had impressed the factory's truck or that there were no stocks of Swiss watches to sell. In this way economic problems had a lot of effect but little impact on much of the town.

The local labour force also faced a large number of changes, which had a prominent impact on the residents of Mosgiel. The war effort's insatiable appetite for labour culled the local unemployed and opened the way for certain traditional social customs to be put aside. It also changed some attitudes about women's roles and abilities. Married women moved into the work force and into jobs vacated by servicemen in increasing numbers. It became acceptable locally for those without children to take up employment. Some women were able to take up jobs in traditionally male dominated areas, thrusting them into new situations and experiences, although on a rather limited scale compared with that witnessed in larger cities. On the other hand work at the Mill had long been the domain of women and the War reinforced the public worth of their jobs, due to its essential nature. For younger men, military service proved a substantial effect, while many older or 'essential' men felt the pressure of longer hours and less holidays. Eventually the pressure of the war effort led the ever present government to intervene with the implementation of manpower. Labour registration and direction held local people in their jobs or forcibly pushed some into new employment, such as the Woollen Mill. By the end of the War servicemen had returned, many women had retreated back into the home, hours of work had dropped and controls over labour movement had almost ceased. Nonetheless, the War years had a noteworthy impact on many workers and people of the town.

In the end, however, the disruption of workers and business proved to be only a portion of life in wartime Mosgiel. Most areas of society were not greatly affected, since the town and its people managed to deflect much of the War's impact prevalent in various communities, whether in New Zealand, Australia or Britain. How did this occur?

Most New Zealanders never saw a German or Japanese during the War. The actual direct impact of the War did not affect that many except those with family members or friends overseas. For the majority the impact was most likely indirect. 'The War' meant shortages and red tape, the blackout, patriotic dances and the BBC nine o'clock news. For some it also meant Home Guard parades or changes to the work environment. But, unless they had loved ones overseas, the War was a long dull, but not terribly painful, ache. It produced, perhaps, a few minor sidelights such as a date with a uniformed airman, attending a military parade, seeing a Bren gun carrier along the road, or the delirium of VE Day, but people tried not to let the conflict or its impact affect them. Locals attempted to carry on with their usual pre-war lives and routines as much as possible. They rolled with the blows it presented and attempted to deflect its impact when they could.

The same spirit which drove people to volunteer for the armed forces enabled those at home to cope with the disruptions brought by war. In many ways this is a study of the people of those times. Local residents were hardy, many from pioneer stock, descended from some of the first families who settled the Taieri Plains. They appear to have been more self-sufficient and had less expectations as to their quality of life than today's society, enabling them to cope better with deprivations, longer hours, lower quality food, shortages of consumer items and simpler entertainment. People

also accepted authority more readily than today, meaning the red tape of total war proved less strain. Mosgiel residents were not saints yet, as Taylor notes of most New Zealanders, they had a readiness for sacrifice if it meant winning the War.<sup>3</sup> They accepted, up to a point, the necessity of the conflict impinging upon their lifestyles. Adaption proved one key in learning to cope with the more frequent irritations of wartime.

Nancy Taylor concluded that:

Through all of this [disruption], New Zealanders carried on, doing what was required of them, adjusting to shortages and changed working conditions, enjoying normal pleasures where they could, picking up good things where they could: improved job opportunities, especially for women, overtime, cost-plus contracts, war quickened romances, the American bonanza, the brief happiness of leave.<sup>4</sup>

With the exception of the non-existent American presence this describes how Mosgiel managed to deflect much of the impact of the War. Like most of their countrymen or women, the townsfolk became familiar with the War and its various effects. They gradually became used to using their ration books, the authority of manpower office or the blackout, for in reality they could do little about it. Instead, they kept up their hopes, activities, interests and entertainment to keep lives going as well as they could.

Locals proved to be very pragmatic. They accepted the shortages and regulations, but adapted to most situations rather than needlessly suffer deprivation. They 'made do' with ingenuity or hard earned experience from the Depression. Home made gas producers for cars or stuffing grass into a tyre are good examples of this attitude. Alternatively, sports clubs carried on through determination of locals not to see them fall as many had in 1914-18. These stoic southern people continued on as best they could, not allowing the War to get on top of them. Many people had seen or experienced worse in their lifetime than drilling with the Home Guard, adhering to the blackout or a lack of sugar. Most disliked aspects of life during wartime but it did not provoke public anger. They resorted only to muttering under their breath. Residents usually managed to adapt, or ignore, the red tape. Many locals turned a blind eye to some laws, especially involving the sale of alcohol. As they read stories of the ingenuity of New Zealand soldiers, many civilians at home - at least in the country areas - were doing the same. Jock Phillips, in *A Man's Country*, notes this adaption to various situations was a strong part of male and even female culture then. One or two instances of government control did affect residents, mainly manpowering to mill, but by and large, locals picked their way through the problems of the home front.

The size and location of Mosgiel also proved significant in further dissolving the impact of the War. Its geographic location protected it from any real fear of invasion, probably increasing local lethargy for the civil defence measures. Its close proximity to the main railway line and flat terrain for bicycling, proved a bonus as the petrol restrictions began to bite. For shopping, Dunedin's stores were within easy reach, providing more choice and increasing the chance of finding that scarce item, compared to other country towns isolated in a sea of farmland. On the other hand, the close presence of the Taieri Plains proved a treasure trove in topping up food supplies for many locals.

Probably the most important advantage in deflecting many of the effects of total war was the closely knit nature and semblance of the town. Mosgiel was a very

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor, p.1288.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

similar, singular society where everyone knew each other. Nearly all - except the handful of Chinese - were of European stock and were working class. Most had the same morality and similar ideas and interests. The wartime spirit of co-operation was already in existence in the town long before Hitler or even Bismark had come to power. Other small towns such as Westport or Taumaranui probably found the same. The closely knit nature of the community deflected many of the wartime impacts which caused problems in Auckland, Melbourne or London. Local residents could walk about in the blackout without fear, swap ration coupons with neighbours and they found that most of the troublesome aspects of the military presence occurred only in Dunedin.

Kate Darian-Smith notes that the War caused great social upheaval in Melbourne, as the established norms were turned upside down and the existing social and economic structures were threatened.<sup>5</sup> The strength of social norms and feeling of community in the town meant that this did not occur in Mosgiel, despite the inroads made by manpowering and longer hours. Some minor adaption was required with the question of married women working at the Mill, but after some initial doubts it became widely accepted. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that many reports of social disturbance occurred in centres where Americans were present. Mosgiel nor Dunedin had few of the problems with delinquency that Wellington or Auckland did. This suggests, perhaps, that the Americans played a large - if unintentional - part in disrupting societal norms and conventions in communities further north.

The closeness of the community in Mosgiel also kept morale strong and helped somewhat to cushion the news of aircraft crashes, war setbacks or even the blow of casualties. Probably the casualties were the main impact of the War. They lasted after cupboards were restocked, the lights on, jobs were restored and the airmen had left.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the wartime problems mentioned above were actually spaced out so that they did not all affect the town at the same time. Petrol rationing did last for nearly all of the conflict, but most others did not take up the full six years. The labour force pinches only really became prominent in 1942, as did the implementation of food rationing which progressed in steps into 1944. The blackout spanned only from mid-1941 to mid 1943, while the Home Guard and the EPS were active only from late 1940 to early 1943 until the Japanese threat had passed. Similarly manpowering did not reach its full range until 1944. It would have been far more difficult for residents if they had occurred all at once.

Thus, in conclusion, it appears that the township and its community managed to deflect or obviate many of the worst effects of the War. Phillips notes that at the end of the War New Zealand remained a small town society.<sup>6</sup> Mosgiel, too, remained as such, managing to avoid overt disruption and change through its favourable social and geographic advantages. Overall, in the context of the town as a whole, the War's impact had only a limited and muted impact. Whether this is true of other New Zealand communities during the War requires further analysis into this much neglected area. Generally in most cases it was 'all quiet on the home front' for Mosgiel during the Second World War.

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<sup>5</sup> Darian-Smith, p.235.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, p.275.

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*British Journal of Sports History*, vol. 2, 1985.

## Appendix 1.

Roll of Honour

Men of Mosgiel and the surrounding area who gave their lives in the Second World War.

Allan, W. M.  
Allcock, W. L.  
Bain, D. D.  
Beale, F.  
Blackie, W. J.  
Bremner, G. R.  
Brown, J. R.  
Bruhns, H.  
Campbell, G  
Fairmaid, A. H.  
Gillon, M. A.  
Gordon, F. H.  
Hoseit, W.  
Kennedy, T. L.  
Kirby, V. X.  
Miller, P. R. S.  
Milner, A.  
Muir, A.  
McCartney, J. S.  
McIntosh, W. W.  
McLellan, J. G.  
McLeod, G. B.  
McLeod, C. G.  
Partridge, J. L.  
Pascoe, F.  
Pickering, E. J.  
Sherwood, G.  
Smeaton, W. R.  
Thompson, J. I.  
Weddell, E. J.