

Name: Herbert Francis (Bert) THOMAS



Service No: WW 11 18563

Armed Force: NZ Army

Enlistment: 5th Nominal Roll 1st Jul 1941-30th Sep 1941

Training: Burnham

Embarkations: 8th NZ Infantry Brigade & 29th (Mixed) Battalion NZEF 2nd Embarkation.

Rank/s: Lance Corp/Military Police

Served: Fiji, Pacific Islands

Birth: 3 Feb 1913 Esk Valley, South Canterbury

Death: 23 Aug 1990 Waimate

Burial: Timaru Cemetery (RSA Section)

CIVILIAN LIFE

Address before Enlistment: Esk Valley, St Andrews, South Canterbury

Next of Kin on Embarkation: Mr W & Mrs M Thomas, Esk Valley, St Andrews, South Canterbury.

Brother: Cecil Lawrence Thomas (WW11 No 68991)

Relationship Status: Single

MILITARY DECORATIONS

Medals and Awards: 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-45, NZ War service Medal

MILITARY SERVICE BIOGRAPHY:

Stories my dad told me from his experiences in the pacific

My dad and my uncle served in the pacific islands during WW11 their names were Herbert Francis and Cecil Lawrence Thomas from the 29th battalion.

They were based in Fiji mainly and dad loved the Fijian people, he said that they were friendly and trustworthy and always had a smile.

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

The jungle over there was very thick and it was hard to see the enemies. It was very hard on the nerves as they could be close enough to touch and you wouldn't know they were there. He told me that one time him and to others were sent on a scouting mission checking the area, and they almost ran into a large group of Japanese they immediately hid where they were and the Japanese troop passed by and one of the soldiers stopped to urinate and peed all over dad, he couldn't move and was teased when they got back to their base.

Another time it was decided to have a rugby match between the Kiwis and the Fijians the game started and the Kiwis were well ahead in the first half thinking they had it in the bag. But at halftime the Fijians got together and talked, they then all took off their boots and played barefoot, Dad said the kiwis couldn't get near them that they were so fast barefoot that they won the game by a large margin.

Dad said that the Japanese were a bad enemy as to surrender in their culture, was a loss of honour and they would rather die than surrender they also didn't respect anybody who did surrender.

The other thing I learned was about my uncle when I got his war records I was surprised to see that he had spent 6 months in the infectious skin diseases ward in Auckland. I thought this was very odd as he never had any skin issues at all. When I shared these thoughts with a close friend he said he knew what that was about. The infectious skin diseases ward was where they put soldiers with shell shock, this made sense as he did have shell shock and had it until he died. It's a shame that the army were not honest enough to tell the family this.

Thank you for reading this.

Su Dunstan daughter and niece.

WAR SERVICE IMAGES:

The 29th Battalion was an [infantry battalion](#) of the [New Zealand 3rd Division](#), raised for service during the [Second World War](#). Serving in the Pacific, the battalion mainly undertook garrison duties and labouring tasks in Fiji and New Caledonia, but saw brief combat against the Japanese in the [Treasury Islands](#) in late 1943. In late 1944, the battalion returned to New Zealand and was broken up to provide reinforcements for the [New Zealand 2nd Division](#) in Italy. It was eventually disbanded in January 1945.



Unloading heavy gear in Fiji

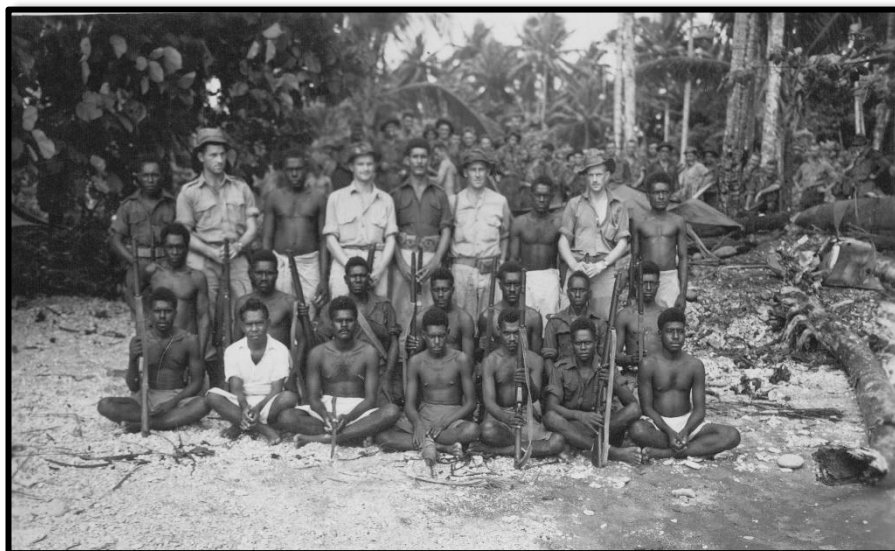
Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

Formation:

In 1941, and anticipating the entry of the [Japanese Empire](#) into the [Second World War](#), the [New Zealand Military Forces](#) raised a formation initially known as B Force, later to be designated the [8th Brigade](#), for garrison duty in [Fiji](#).^[1] It had been considered for several years that New Zealand would assume responsibility for the defence of the Fijian colony, which lacked the military capability to defend itself, in the event of war.^[2] The infantry component of the brigade was to consist of the 29th Battalion in addition to [30th Battalion](#).^[1] (Source Wikipedia)



29th Battalion in Fiji. A village where Japanese once lived



These boys did great work behind the Japanese lines.

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years



29th Battalion making a road in Fiji



Some of the lucky ones.

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

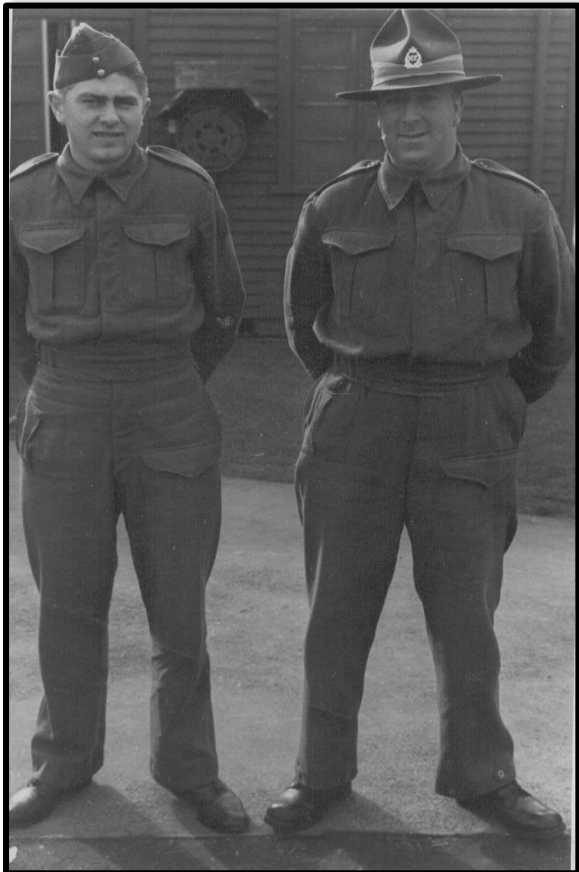


Back row- O E Newman, A McKenzie.
Front row- C W Tremain, G McClatchy B F (Bert) Thomas

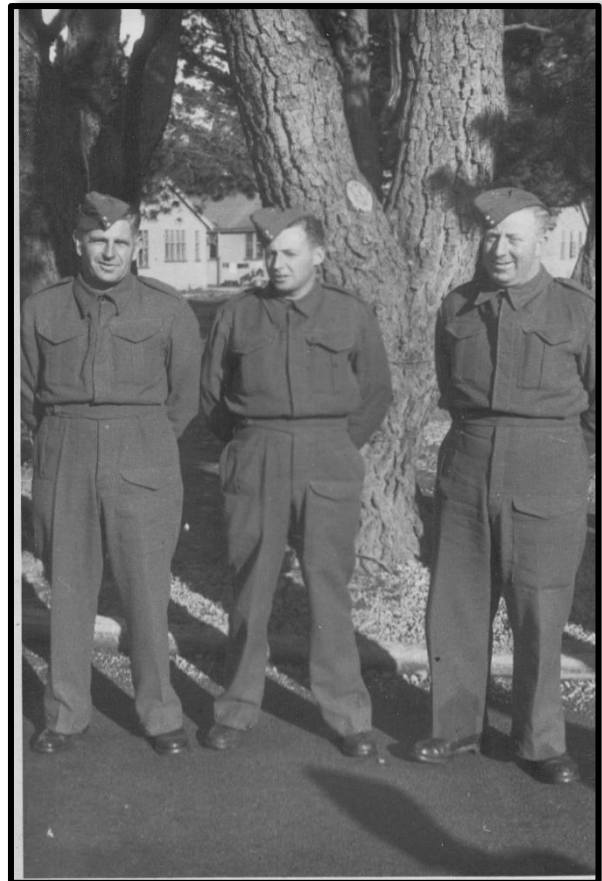


Bert Thomas second from left. Other unknown

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years



Bert Thomas on right



Bert Thomas on right



Bert Thomas standing third from left. Alister Pye left front row.

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

USEFUL WEB LINKS FOR REFERENCE:

1. [Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph](#)
 - o A comprehensive database of New Zealand service personnel.
2. [New Zealand War Graves Project](#)
 - o Contains images and information about New Zealand war graves and memorials around the world.
3. [New Zealand History - NZ Wars and Conflicts](#)
 - o Provides detailed accounts and images of New Zealand's involvement in various wars, including WW1 and WW2.
4. [Archives New Zealand - War History](#)
 - o Access to war-related records and images held by Archives New Zealand.
5. [Te Papa Tongarewa - Collections Online](#)

Features war-related collections, including personal stories and photographs of New Zealand soldiers

DATA SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

All information and images included in this document have been sourced from various archives, databases, and personal contributions. The primary sources include:

- Your Name here
- South Canterbury Genealogy Society
- Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph
- New Zealand War Graves Project

The content is provided for educational and research purposes. If you have any questions or require further information regarding the sources or usage rights, please contact SC Genealogy directly.