



FRENCH MEMORIAL

An architectural competition has been launched by the French Embassy in Wellington, with support from the NZIA and other partners. The ties forged between France and New Zealand during the First World War will be commemorated with an architecturally designed monument in Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in the capital. The memorial, a gift from the French Government, will mark the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the end of the war in 2018.

Last December, six New Zealanders were invited to France to attend a joint symposium to agree a design brief for the competition. Head of the delegation Rhys Jones (CNZM), writer Elizabeth Knox, playwright and columnist Dave Armstrong, historian Monty Soutar and film producer Robin Laing were joined by Stephen McDougall, a director at Studio Pacific Architecture. McDougall commented: "During the visit and since, I have been struck by the impact of WW1 on the French, France, New Zealanders and New Zealand... There are still many keepsakes held within New Zealand families, whose ancestors were part of the war. The sheer loss of life means it is still within our consciousness – even today. The New Zealand soldiers who died still lie in French soil; they were not brought back." More than 100,444 New Zealand men signed up to fight in the First World War (1914–1918) and more than 18,000 were killed and 41,317 were wounded. It was also the first major conflict in which Māori soldiers served under the New Zealand Army.

The group was chaperoned by the French Ministry of Culture, along with a French sculptor and photographer, who offered their experiences throughout the visit. "We visited two weeks after the Paris bombing and the week

of the climate change conference and there were 40,000 extra people in Paris, so it was a very intense week," he explained. "But we covered a huge amount of ground, visiting places where New Zealand soldiers had been involved during the war."

Memorials visited by the group included the National War Museum in Paris; the New Zealand Memorial at Grevilliers; the battle site and memorial at Verdun; the circuit of remembrance, symbolising the battle of the Somme; and the Carrière Wellington museum in Arras and its tunnel system with individual quarries named after soldiers' home towns – New Zealanders named them Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch and Dunedin. "We saw 40,000 white crosses representing casualties from both sides; we visited pock-marked battle sites and, also, the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, designed by architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.

"The challenge for architects entering the competition might be to gain a sense of the landscape where New Zealand soldiers fell but within the confined urban space of Pukeahu Park, surrounded by traffic," suggested McDougall, "and to gain the multiplicity of depth required to fully understand the implications of what happened in France, to commemorate those soldiers, as well as to celebrate the relationship between France and New Zealand."

The shortlisted entries will be announced on 3 August and the winner will be announced on 11 November – frenchmemorialatpukeahu.org

01 Pock-marked battle sites.

02 The Carrière Wellington museum, Arras, has a tunnel system with quarries named after soldiers' home towns.

03 A total of 40,000 white crosses represent allied casualties at Verdun.

06 The New Zealand Memorial at Grevilliers.

05 Ploughed landscapes, where new techniques are still surfacing artifacts from the war.

06 Museum of the Great War, Meaux.

REFERENCE

For further information and to view more of Stephen McDougall's photographs, as seen above, visit frenchmemorialatpukeahu.org