

**Rifleman Claude Cecil Coleman**<sup>©</sup>  
**Regimental number: 25/857**  
**3rd Battalion, 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade**

**born: 5 February 1894 – died: 4 July 1916**

Rifleman Claude Cecil Coleman was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on 5 February 1894.<sup>1</sup> By 1911, his parents, Frederick William and Ellen Coleman, were residing in Mercer, Raglan District, Waikato Region, New Zealand, where Frederick was a saddler.<sup>2</sup> That region was originally known to the Māori people as Whaingaroa (“the long pursuit”). European settlement in Raglan District dates back to the 1850s.<sup>3</sup>

Claude’s mother died in the last quarter of 1915.<sup>4</sup> Her death and her son’s enlistment in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force occurred within a month or so of each other.

The Great War was a world away, yet many New Zealanders heard the call. On 9 October 1915, Claude (formerly a ship’s steward) enlisted in “A” Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd New Zealand Rifle Brigade.<sup>5</sup> He was 5’6” tall and had a dark complexion, hazel eyes and dark brown hair.

In March 1916, Claude embarked for the Middle East, arriving in the Suez on 13 March. A month later, he embarked for France. In June and July 1916, soldiers in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade were part of the raids on German lines near Armentieres, France.<sup>6</sup> In June 1918, it was noted “. . . that although we were engaged in stationary trench warfare, the casualties were somewhat heavy. They were caused almost entirely by shell-fire, which was intermittently active both on the trenches and on the town.”<sup>7</sup>

With wounds to his back and to the left side, Claude was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Bailleul, France, on 1 July 1916. He succumbed to his injuries on 4 July 1916.<sup>8</sup>

Bailleul had become an important hospital centre not just for No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for the 1st Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.<sup>9</sup> In July 1916, No. 1 CCCS received 2,810 admissions, of whom 70 died.<sup>10</sup>

Claude was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension (Nord), Section II, Row E, Grave 93.<sup>11</sup> This cemetery contains 4,403 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 17 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and 154 German burials from both wars.<sup>12</sup>

In 1921, his father, who was living in Clevedon, Papakura, Auckland, received his son’s medals.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “NZDF Personnel Files,” *Archives New Zealand* ([archives.govt.nz/world-war-one](http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Claude Cecil Coleman

<sup>2</sup> “New Zealand, Electoral Rolls, 1853–1981,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Frederick William Coleman, Electoral Year: 1911, District: Raglan, Region: Waikato

<sup>3</sup> “Raglan, New Zealand,” *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raglan,\\_New\\_Zealand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raglan,_New_Zealand): accessed 16 March 2017)

<sup>4</sup> “New Zealand, Death Index, 1848–1964,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Ellen Coleman, Registration place: Mercer, Auckland, Folio number: 2667

<sup>5</sup> “NZDF Personnel Files,” *Archives New Zealand* ([archives.govt.nz/world-war-one](http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Claude Cecil Coleman. Unless otherwise stated, all information about Claude’s military career comes from this source.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Official History of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, Part 1. – In The Trenches, New Zealand Electronic Text Collection* (<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1-NZRI-t1-body-d5-d1.html>) Page: 104

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "NZDF Personnel Files," *Archives New Zealand* ([archives.govt.nz/world-war-one](http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Claude Cecil Coleman

<sup>9</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)

<sup>10</sup> "War Diaries – 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *Library and Archives Canada* ([collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam\\_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec\\_nbr=2005082](http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2005082): accessed 23 August 2016)

<sup>11</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017), entry for Coleman, Cecil Claude, Service No: 25/857

<sup>12</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)

<sup>13</sup> "NZDF Personnel Files," *Archives New Zealand* ([archives.govt.nz/world-war-one](http://archives.govt.nz/world-war-one): accessed 31 August 2016), entry for Claude Cecil Coleman