

NZ Conscientious Objectors

Alfred And Russell Gregory

BY LINLEY AND CLAIRE GREGORY, THEIR GRANDDAUGHTERS AND DAUGHTERS

There was a riot in Dargaville the day the New Zealand government declared that NZ was joining England in the first World War. This was in response to a person making speeches about pacifism on street corners, who was organised by Alfred and Mary Gregory.

During the war Alfred Gregory was asked to place a poster promoting the recruitment of soldiers in his Dargaville drapery shop window. He refused to do this and was charged under the Military Service Act 1916. He was convicted and fined five pounds, although he could have been penalized more or put in prison for up to a year. Because he now had a conviction that could have incurred time in prison, he was removed from his office as a Borough Councillor. (He was later re-elected despite opposition to his views.) He refused to pay the fine as he would not co-operate with the war machine in any way. To ensure the authorities were paid the fine, they decided to auction his shop's goods.

On the day of the auction, Charles West came to Dargaville to load his boat with kauri logs for his sawmill at Helensville. His father, John West, was with him and as normal went to see his F/friend, Alfred Gregory. On his way to the shop he discovered that Alfred's stock was going to be auctioned to pay for his fine. The townspeople were eagerly awaiting the sale hoping to buy goods very cheaply. At the auction when the first item was held up, John West bid five pounds. This meant the auction was over as the cost of the fine was covered.

After the war when Alfred and Mary's son Russell was a pupil at Dargaville High School, the headmaster decided that the school would have military training. To be excluded from this training, Russell had to appear in court the next time the magistrate was in Dargaville. He was given exemption. The following day the school was told that military training would

not now be going ahead. The experience turned out to be an advantage for Russell as when World War II was declared he already had exemption from service!



Conscientious objectors memorial stone in Tavistock Square, London.