

The Giblin Brothers – Maurice, Guy, Wilf and Louis

In 1850 the widowed Elizabeth Giblin emigrated from England to Nelson with three of her adult sons and a daughter-in-law from Cambridgeshire. Two sons settled in Motueka (William and Daniel) and one, Frederick, in Stoke.

Frederick Giblin and his wife Mary Ann Martin had married in England and went on to have a family of six. They farmed in Stoke on a property known now as Woodstock. He later purchased two neighbouring properties in Suffolk Road and developed them into one of the largest orchards in Stoke. There he grew not only apples, but also raspberries, gooseberries, currants and tomatoes on a commercial scale, some being canned at the Stoke Cannery at the top of Polstead Road. Frederick was a member of the committee which oversaw the building of St Barnabas Church and both he and Mary Ann are buried there.

Frederick and Mary Ann had five children, Josiah, Elizabeth, Frederick, Ann and David. David Giblin attended Stoke School and helped his father on the farm, before undertaking agricultural contract work with a team of horses. In 1890 he married Mary Phoebe Taylor and in 1895 they bought a property on Suffolk Road (bordering the present day Ngawhatu Lane), much of which was planted in orchard. The Giblins raised a family of seven boys in Stoke.

All the boys attended Stoke School and five went on to Nelson College, where they were all active in cricket and hockey¹ and members of the college cadets. In World War One the oldest four, Maurice, Guy, Wilfred and Louis, served with the New Zealand Forces. Only three of them returned home, two of them wounded. The three youngest Giblin boys were too young to go to war. They were Jeffrey (born 1898), Vernon (born 1901) and Alan (born 1903).

Maurice Martin Giblin: born 29 August 1891, Stoke – Service No: 24360

Ernest Guy Giblin: born 10 December 1892, Stoke – Service No: 12032

Wilfred Robert Giblin: born 17 September 1894, Stoke – Service No: 6/1538

Louis Herbert Giblin: born 15 September 1896, Stoke – Service No: 30934



Portrait of the Giblin brothers from the family album – Lois and Guy at rear, Jeff, Maurice and Wilf in front.

Wilf Giblin was the first of his family to embark for war. He was part of the Canterbury Infantry Battalion which left New Zealand on 14 February 1915. The ship arrived in Suez in Egypt on 26 March and the troops were transferred to Zeitoun. “Of all the horrible places this beats all,” he wrote to his mother on 5 April 1915.² “It is nothing but sand.”

Wilf’s diary³ and a letter home to his mother⁴ recorded that the ship he was to have left Alexandria from for the Dardanelles on 11 April was condemned as being “full of bugs, in a horrible mess. There were no conveniences at all – wasn’t [a] fit place for pigs to be put in!”

The men had to wait another six days before leaving on 17 April. As luck would have it, the delay meant Wilf’s ship did not arrive in time for the men on board to be part of the initial fateful landing at Gallipoli. Instead they arrived mid-afternoon of 25 April and watched the “fierce bombardment” from the safety of the ship until they could be landed on the evening of 2 May. Even then they came under heavy fire. Just three days later Wilfred left on a destroyer to go further along the peninsula to Cape Helles, where he took part in the first Battle of Krithia, an attempt by the Allies to advance in the Battle of Gallipoli.

There on 8 May Wilf was “smashed up at 10.30am after crossing the ‘Daisy Patch’,” a piece of open meadow land. A bullet struck his left arm close to the shoulder, breaking and shattering the humerus bone. His diary recorded that he lay for three or four hours exposed to Turkish fire before another New Zealander was able to drag him into a dugout. After dark he was helped to a dressing station behind the line but when standing in line, another man was hit in the leg by a bullet and it was decided to move further back behind the line to another dressing station. Reaching there around midnight he was treated and returned to the Hospital Base at Cape Helles and loaded onto a hospital ship the next day, which returned him to Egypt.⁵ From the Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis, he wrote to his mother⁶ that it was “my luck to stop a bullet” during “pretty heavy fire”.

After six weeks Wilf went to a temporary hospital at Lunar Park, Heliopolis, where he spent a further six weeks. While he was there his arm required an operation and he was told he was going back to New Zealand. “Of course I felt totally pleased,” he wrote to his mother from the hospital on YMCA letterhead.⁷ “[I] have been pretty crook and feel terribly weak. We had a three day heat wave about a week back, it was blue murder, can’t stand the heat at all.” However, he left on board the Tahiti and arrived back in September 1915.⁸

Wilf was taken straight to Wellington Hospital and then was transferred on 11 September to Nelson Hospital, where he celebrated his 21st birthday on 17 September. He recalled that because his own uniform had been slashed to attend to his wounds, he arrived home “wearing a New Zealand mounted hat and [a] Tommie’s [English] coat with a bullet hole in the back”.⁹

When Wilf was discharged from hospital he was required to attend as an outpatient every day for several weeks. He travelled by train, walking to the Stoke Station from his home, travelling to Bishopdale and then walking to the hospital, repeating the journey home in reverse. He was discharged from the Army on 14 February 1916.

After his release from the Army he worked for a while at the Stoke Orphanage before and then for a Nelson tomato grower. In 1921 he married Kathleen Percival before settling on a property in Suffolk Road where they had an orchard and market garden. Wilf and Kathleen had two sons and a daughter.

In 1990 Wilf received the New Zealand 1990 Commemoration Medal in Recognition of Services at a special service for World War One veterans at Anzac Park. As the Nelson's sole surviving Gallipoli veteran, he also unveiled a plaque to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Gallipoli and laid a remembrance wreath.¹⁰

Wilf died On 30 June 1990 aged 95.¹¹

Guy Giblin

Guy worked as a carpenter in the Nelson and Murchison areas before enlisting in January 1916. He left on 1 May 1916 with the 12th Reinforcements, New Zealand Field Engineers, No.2 Field Company and arrived in the Suez on 9 June 1916. In August he was posted to Sling Camp in England for 10 days before being transferred to the France and the Western Front.

On 10 September he was on the Somme laying a railway line from Longueval to Delville Wood for the purpose of running shells for the heavy artillery. A gunshot wound to his back fractured his spine. Critically injured, Guy was transferred to No.1 New Zealand General Hospital at Brockenhurst, Hampshire in England but never recovered and died there on 3 October 1916, aged 24. He is one of 93 New Zealand soldiers buried at St Nicholas Churchyard at Brockenhurst,

Maurice Giblin

Maurice left the country with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade as part of the 8th Reinforcements, 4th Battalion, H Company on 23 September 1916, bound for Devonport, England. He saw service as a platoon sergeant in France, where he was wounded in the neck by shrapnel on 5 May 1917.¹²

After the war he took part in the Army of Occupation in Germany, where he was billeted by a German family named Shafer in Dellbruck, in the north Rhine/Westphalia region. He later moved to Wiesdorf, by the River Rhine, north of Cologne, before returning to New Zealand in June 1919.¹³

Once home he bought a 15-acre property on Wensley Road, Richmond and developed an orchard on it. In 1920 Maurice married Mabel Edith Robson and they had two sons, Keith and Alex. The couple moved to Monaco after Alex took over the

running of the orchard, although Maurice continued working part time on it until ill-health forced his retirement.

Maurice died on 27 May 1958.¹⁴

Louis Giblin

Louis was a bank clerk and the last of the brothers to leave for the war. He embarked from Wellington on 30 December 1916, following news of the death of his brother Guy. He initially served in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, part of G Company of the 20th Reinforcements. Louis arrived in Devonport, England in March 1917. In May he proceeded to France and fought in the Battle of Passchendaele in September and October 1917.

Louis wasn't injured during his war service but he did have his share of illness.¹⁵ He suffered measles at the end of November 1917. In the middle of 1918 he suffered slight trench fever and had a recurrence of measles in January 1919. On his way home the following month on board the *Hororata* he contracted influenza. He recovered in the ship's hospital.¹⁶

Upon his discharge from the Army in April 1919, Louis returned to his banking career, working for the Bank of New Zealand in Murchison, Taranaki and Auckland. He married Marjorie King in 1928 and had one daughter, Joy.

Louis died 10 March 1990, aged 93.¹⁷

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Giblin family information courtesy of Giblin Family notes provided by Dorothy Giblin, daughter of Wilfred Giblin.

² Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 5 April 1915.

³ Wilfred Giblin, Personal Diary, copies of part provided by Dorothy Giblin.

⁴ Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 16 April 1915.

⁵ Wilfred Giblin, Personal Diary, copies of part provided by Dorothy Giblin.

⁶ Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 21 May 1915.

⁷ Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 6 June 1915.

⁸ Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 6 June 1915.

⁹ Wilfred Giblin, personal letter home to his mother, dated 6 June 1915.

¹⁰ 'Focus on Gallipoli', Nelson Evening Mail, 26 April 1990, p.3.

¹¹ Rev. Leicester Kyle, address given at Wilfred Giblin's funeral service, 3 July 1990.

¹² Maurice Giblin, Military Service Record, Cenotaph Database,

<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph>

¹³ Maurice Giblin, notes written by Keith Giblin and supplied by Dorothy Giblin.

¹⁴ Maurice Giblin notes, written by Keith Giblin and supplied by Dorothy Giblin.

¹⁵ Louis Giblin, Military Service Record, Cenotaph Database,

<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph>

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¹⁷ Louis Giblin notes, written by Joy McKelvey and supplied by Dorothy Giblin.

This researched Family History and the biographical notes were compiled with the help of the family by Karen Stade in 2014.