



Anzac Day – Arthur Grigg MP

Parliamentary Information Service



Members of Parliament who served overseas in WWII

Allen, J.M. (National, Hauraki) †

Grigg, A.N. (National, Mid-Canterbury) †

Hargest, J. (National, Awarua) †

Hultquist, A.G. (Labour, Bay of Plenty) †

Lyon, W.J. (Labour, Waitemata) †

Macdonald, T.L. (National, Mātaura)

Macfarlane, R.M. (Labour, Christchurch South)

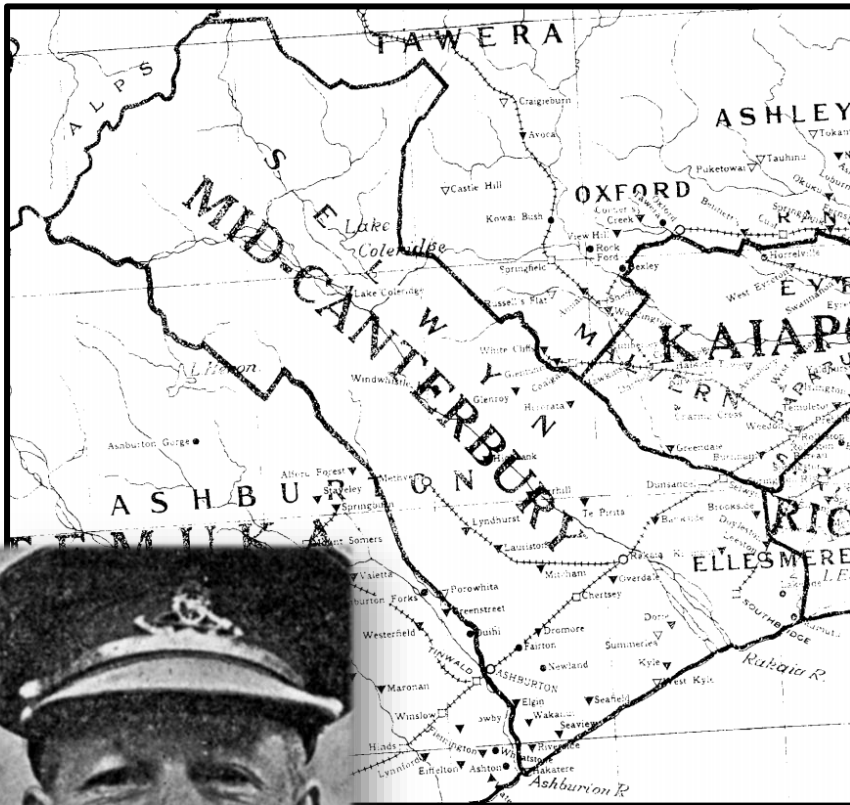
Moncur, A.F. (Labour, Rotorua)

Skinner, C.F. (Labour, Motueka)

Of the nine members of Parliament who served overseas during the Second World War, five did not return home. Three of these five men died in November 1941: Gordon Hultquist (MP for Bay of Plenty), Jack Allen (MP for Hauraki), and Arthur Grigg (MP for Mid-Canterbury). At the opening of Parliament, a month later, the House paid tribute to their service. The speeches concluded with Fred Frost (MP for New Plymouth) stating:

The nation to-day is face to face with its gravest crisis, and it seemed to me, as I listened to the tributes paid to our fellow-members, that it is appropriate that so great a sacrifice should have been made by honourable members of this House. We are the people who determine the destinies of the nation in peace and in war, and therefore it is right that, when great trials fall upon the nation, those who legislate for it should be in the forefront of the tribulation. I am sure that is the desire of the New Zealand Parliament in particular—not to ask anything of the people which Parliament is not willing to undertake itself. In these gallant comrades whom we have honoured today, and to whose loved ones we have given our sympathy, we have seen exemplified that spirit of true democracy whereby Parliament shares with the people the trials and the sorrows which they are called upon to face. Whatever may be the outcome—and the outcome must be the triumph of things we believe in – we have before us, in the memory and the work and example of these fallen comrades of House, an inspiration to go on and maintain the things for which they lived and for which they died.

Arthur Grigg MP (National, Mid-Canterbury electorate)



**Major A. N. Grigg, M.P.
for Mid-Canterbury, killed
in action.**

Arthur Nattle Grigg was born in 1896 and became a farmer following completion of his education. He served in both World Wars.

Arthur Grigg served in World War I with the Royal Field Artillery, gaining the rank of Captain and winning the Military Cross.¹

In 1938, Grigg won the Mid Canterbury seat for the National Party. He left with the Fifth Field Regiment in the Second

Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.² In August 1941 Grigg was promoted to the rank of Major and appointed second in command of the regiment.

Grigg was killed on 29 November 1941, when General Rommel's panzer force overran the 5th Infantry Brigade headquarters at Sidi Azeiz. He is buried at the Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery in Egypt and is commemorated at the Ashburton War Memorial.³

Portrait, *Weekly News*, 17 December 1941

[https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-](https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C25072#gallery)

[cenotaph/record/C25072#gallery](https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C25072#gallery)

¹ Killed in action, *Evening Post*, 10 December 1941, p9 <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/EP19411210.2.93>

² Arthur Nattle Grigg. Online Cenotaph. <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C25072>

³ Arthur Nattle Grigg. Online Cenotaph. <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C25072>

Grigg's widow, Mary Grigg, succeeded her husband in the Mid-Canterbury seat, becoming the fourth woman elected to the House of Representatives⁴, and the first woman to represent the National Party.⁵

W.E. Murphy's *The Relief of Tobruk* recounts the death of Grigg and the capture of fellow MP James Hargest:⁶

The ammunition lorry was hit as soon as it halted and burst into flames and the ammunition began to explode. No more than two or three rounds remained at the gun and the explosions alongside were so violent that Grigg ordered the crew to take cover. But he took no heed of the fire himself and went over to the one gun which could still fire and found this, too, nearing the end of its ammunition. Scouting round, he soon found a few more rounds and brought them up. In the whole position only this one gun now flashed its defiance and, with crew members hit by the fire aimed at this solitary centre of opposition, Grigg took over as gun loader. Dust and smoke made the gun sights useless and Grigg slipped out to the side where he could see—and be seen. There he stood calmly directing the layer, undaunted by the blazing fury of fire which each round attracted as the tanks picked up the gun flash through the smoke, until he fell gravely wounded and E Troop's last gun ceased fire...

Then Rommel himself appeared on the scene, neatly dressed and shaven, and called for Hargest, also congratulating him, though annoyed that he did not salute. Hargest was allowed under guard to visit the nearby ADS, where he sat for a few moments beside the now-unconscious body of his friend and parliamentary colleague, Grigg. As he walked away into captivity fact and feeling interacted painfully in his mind. 'So great was my misery', he writes, 'that I envied Arthur his quiet sleep in the sun.'



Sidi Azeiz, Libya, with smoke from attacked World War II New Zealand trucks in the background. Alexander Turnbull Library, ref. 1 DA-14383-F

<https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22781928?search%5Bpath%5D=items&search%5Btext%5D=1+DA-14383-F>

⁴ Women members of the New Zealand Parliament, 1933 onwards. New Zealand Parliament.

<https://www.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/mps-and-parliaments-1854-onwards/women-members-of-the-new-zealand-parliament-1933-onwards/>

⁵ Jean Garner. Grigg, Mary Victoria Cracroft, Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 2000. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5g22/grigg-mary-victoria-cracroft>

⁶ WE Murphy, *The Relief of Tobruk*. <https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Tobr-c19.html#n339>