



Anzac Day – Gordon Hulquist 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.

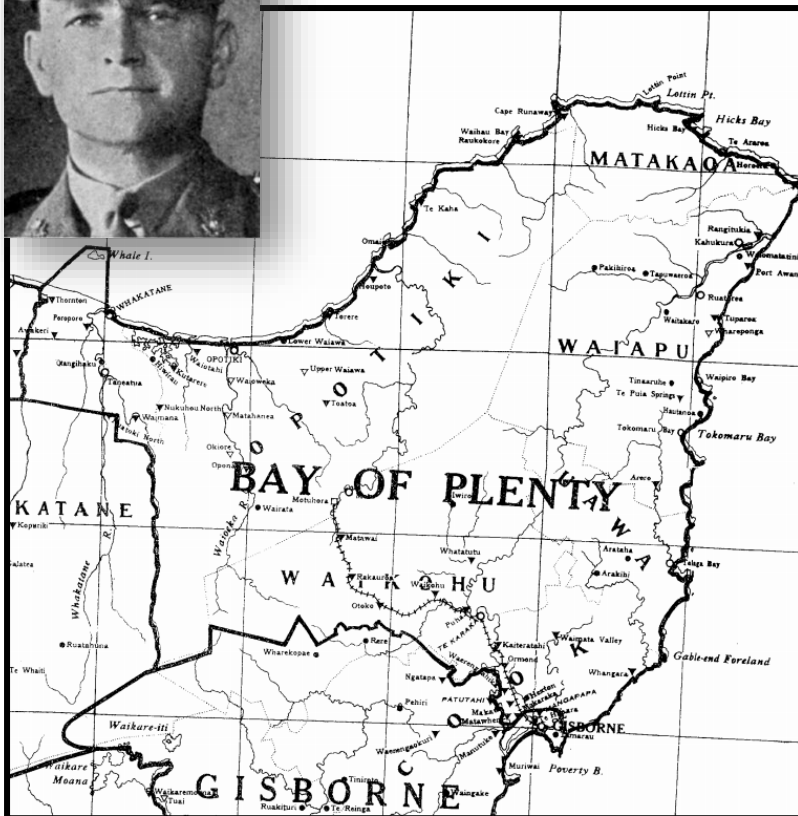
Axel Gordon Hultquist

Axel Gordon Hultquist, more commonly known as Gordon, was born in Banbury, Western Australia and came to New Zealand in 1907 at the age of four years (his father was Swedish and was a Salvation Army officer).

He was educated in Hamilton (including Hamilton High School) and Auckland (Seddon Technical College) and then became an apprentice electrician in Christchurch, where he became involved in union work and in the Labour Party organisation for the Avon MP, D.G. Sullivan.¹

Hultquist moved to Auckland around 1925 and "... became a foreman with Allum Electrical Company and was on executive of the Auckland Electrical Workers Union and Grey Lynn Debating Society".

He was president of the Grey Lynn branch of the party for three years and was an executive member of the Labour Representation Committee for four years.



Bay of Plenty electorate in 1939.

In 1935, he stood for the Bay of Plenty electorate which he won and held in 1938.²

He entered the House of Representatives at the general election in 1935 and retained the Bay of Plenty seat three years later.³

He was married to Elsie Hultquist. On his enlistment their address was in King Street, Whakatane, and his occupation was listed as both a member of Parliament and an electrical engineer.⁴

¹ Hultquist, Axel Gordon, 1904-1941. National Library. Soldier M.P. dies. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22384226>; Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, Bay of Plenty. Camp News, 14 November 1941, p.6.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/WWCN19411114.2.17>

² Hultquist, Axel Gordon, 1904-1941. National Library. Soldier M.P. dies. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22384226>

³ Soldier M.P. dies. Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, Bay of Plenty. Camp News, 14 November 1941, p.6.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/WWCN19411114.2.17>

⁴ Axel Gordon Hultquist. New Zealand War Graves Project. <https://www.nzwargraves.org.nz/casualties/axel-gordon-hultquist>

Service during World War II



Captain C A Borman and Lieutenant A C Hultquist (MP for Bay of Plenty), both Signals officers, in the snow at Servia Pass, Northern Greece. Taken 1941 by an official photographer. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/23155176>

During World War II, Hultquist enlisted in Whakatane as an officer and was attested for service on 30 October 1939. On 8 December, he entered camp and soon after joined a signalling unit.

He left New Zealand in August 1940. Lieutenant Hultquist served in the Army (New Zealand Corps of Signals) through the Greek and Crete campaigns. He obtained a commission as a second lieutenant in April 1940 and then the full rank of Lieutenant while on active service.⁵

Hultquist wrote accounts of his war experiences which were published in the *Bay of Plenty Beacon*. In one account, he describes his time in Greece and Crete:

At 6 p.m. we arrived back on the shores of old Egypt. When we left it nearly three months previously we had said we hoped we never would see Egypt again. Here we were, glad to set foot on soil where we could get a little rest and recover from the strain we had experienced. We had been through a great experience. We had done our best. None of us felt that we had anything to be ashamed of. We had been beaten by overwhelming odds, but had made the enemy pay dearly for any gains he made. Our losses, killed, wounded, missing, and prisoners of war in Crete (alone), were 15,000. The Hun losses were 13,000 killed and wounded...

I do not think there can be any argument about our going to Greece: We did our duty and our best to assist an ally, with regard to Crete, well, I am not qualified to write. Whether we should or should not have attempted to hold the island is not for me to say. It was disappointing to see so few British planes at the beginning and none towards the end of the show, but I suppose they found it impossible to operate with any promise of success...

Immediately we landed we were given a hot cup of tea and chocolate and cigarettes and biscuits. Then away to a camp and a hot meal, ... it was even a luxury to sleep on the soft sand under cover of a tent—we'd got used to sleeping on the hard ground and on rocks...

The Hon. Peter Fraser who has been in Cairo and Alexandria in close touch with the naval and military authorities concerning our evacuation from Crete, inspected us last Friday, and spoke well to us.

⁵ Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, Bay of Plenty. Camp News, 14 November 1941, p.6.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/WWCN19411114.2.17>; Axel Gordon Hultquist. New Zealand War Graves Project. <https://www.nzwargraves.org.nz/casualties/axel-gordon-hultquist>; Death of Bay member. Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, M.P. Opotiki News, 4 November 1941. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OPNEWS19411104.2.9>; Hultquist, Axel Gordon, 1904-1941. National Library. Soldier M.P. dies. <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/22384226>;

Unfortunately the parade was a smaller one than he would have met had he visited early in February last. Many chaps are sleeping their last long sleep in Greece, others lie there wounded, I hope being cared for by the medical people we left there... Many others failed to escape from Greece, and are either in hiding or are prisoners of war. The same applies to Crete. It was not possible to get everyone away. We can only trust that those who are alive in Greece and Crete will someday return to us. May that day be not far distant...

By the way, I lost everything in Greece and Crete, even the bottom set of my false teeth... I had put them in my overcoat ... I had to throw my overcoat away when climbing a particularly steep mountain ridge, and forgot all about my teeth. I hope they hurt the gums of the Hun who finds them as much as they hurt me. I regret that I lost the photo of my wife and daughter. When hurrying out of Galatos, I took it out of my kit and put it in my shirt, but I must have failed to realise that I had got a bit thinner round the waist, and it slipped through my trouser leg, and now a Hun might have it. Razor, spare sox, hankies, everything went...

Bay of Plenty Beacon, 18 August 1941, p.6.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/BPB19410818.2.36>

Death

Hultquist died on 1 November 1941, while on active service in Egypt, after a severe bout of influenza. He was 37 years old. He is buried at El Alamein War Cemetery in Egypt.⁶

A media article reported the following excerpt from a report made by Captain Borman, commander of the section in which Hultquist served, and which was sent to the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser by Major-General B.C. Freyberg.

"In Greece and especially in Crete, in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties, he showed unflinching energy in maintaining communications. This together with his gallant behaviour on the evacuation beaches, caused me to report most favourably on his conduct on my return to Egypt".⁷

He was the second MP to die on active service in World War II after the death of Captain W.J. Lyon. He left behind his wife, Elsie, and a daughter, Mavis (aged 13 years). Announcing his death, the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser said,

"I desire on behalf of the Government and members of Parliament to express deep regret at the untimely death of our late colleague,...he was only 37 years of age. He had taken part in the hard campaigns in which the New Zealand Division distinguished itself against overwhelming German odds in Greece and Crete, adding lustre to the World War fame of the Anzacs".

The Leader of the Opposition, Sidney Holland, was "... greatly distressed to learn of the death of Lieutenant Hultquist". He noted that Hultquist was "... a keen young member of Parliament and his cheerful personality will be much missed".⁸

⁶ Death of Bay member. Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, M.P. Opotiki News, 4 November 1941.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OPNEWS19411104.2.9>; Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, Bay of Plenty. Camp News, 14 November 1941, p.6. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/WWCN19411114.2.17>

⁷ Gallant behaviour: Late Lieut. Hultquist. Commander's report. Gisborne Herald, 10 November 1941.

⁸ Lieut. A. G. Hultquist, Bay of Plenty. Camp News, 14 November 1941, p.6. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/WWCN19411114.2.17>