Today I would like to pause and pay our respects to:

4/78A Lt Acland Withiel **Thomas** **MC**

Acland was born on August 20, 1888, in Auckland, New Zealand. He was the eldest son of Sir Algernon Phillips Withiel Thomas, a distinguished University Professor, Geologist, Biologist, and Educationalist, and Emily Sarah Nolan Thomas.

Raised in Epsom, Acland attended Auckland Grammar School before studying at Auckland University College (AUC) as a non-matriculated student from 1909 to 1911. As the son of one of the College’s first four professors, Acland grew up in an intellectually stimulating environment.

When World War I erupted, Acland was in England and quickly joined the first eager batch of New Zealanders to enlist at the High Commission in London. His enlistment records list him as an architect and civil engineer, and he was assigned to the British Section of the New Zealand Field Engineers.

On April 29, 1915, while transporting water to troops on the front line in Gallipoli, Acland was struck by a bullet that fractured his right thigh and left wrist. His injuries were severe, leading to his declaration as unfit for duty. He was among the first wounded servicemen to return to New Zealand aboard the Willochra in July 1915.

By August 1916, Acland had recovered sufficiently to re-embark for overseas service. This time, he served as the officer commanding the Signalling Company attached to the 15th Reinforcements. In France, he earned the nickname “trench cyclist” for his habit of riding a bicycle through the trenches to ease the strain on his injured leg.

In April 1917, Acland transferred back to the Engineers. Despite sustaining another injury in early August, he returned to his unit by the end of the month. His leadership and bravery were particularly noted on October 1, 1917, at Crevecoeur, France. Under heavy fire, Acland and his party of Engineers built a footbridge and repaired a traffic bridge crucial for horses and transport. He ordered his men to retreat while he continued working alone, actions that earned him the Military Cross (M.C.) for gallantry.

In November 1918, on the last day the New Zealand Division was in action, Acland was injured for a third time while removing charges from mined bridges beyond Le Quesnoy. A shell fragment lodged in his left knee, and an oversight during an X-ray examination led to gangrene, necessitating the amputation of his leg in 1919.

One of Acland's greatest regrets was his unheeded report about a pillbox at Bellevue. He had noted it was unprotected by wire and could be occupied. Unfortunately, the pillbox was later used by the Germans to inflict hundreds of casualties, stalling the New Zealanders' advance at Passchendaele.

After the war, Acland returned to Auckland and established an architecture firm on Shortland Street.

In 1920, he married Blanche Smith Peterkin, with whom he had two daughters. The couple divorced in 1929. In late 1931, Acland and his daughters moved to Norfolk Island, where he published the Norfolk Island Times.

Acland returned to Auckland after his father's death in December 1937.

He married Elizabeth Peters in 1938 and lived in Takapuna and Milford, continuing his work until his death 30 Nov 1962, aged 73.

Acland Thomas is remembered for his contributions as an architect and engineer and his extraordinary bravery and service during World War I.

He has been laid to rest at Waikumete Cemetery and Crematorium, Glen Eden, Auckland, Service Person Ash Burial Area K, Row 1A, Plot 170.

RIP Acland

Thank you for your service

E kore warewaretia

Will never forget