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## 1916: Dig for Victory by David Hair

**Publisher: Scholastic NZ September 2016**

**RRP \$19.00**

The third book in the *Kiwis at War* series focuses on the Western Front, in particular the battles of Armentieres and the Somme.

By choosing to write about the NZ Pioneer Battalion (made up of leftovers of the Gallipoli-ravaged Otago Mounted Rifles, combined with Maori contingents to form part of the NZ Division), author David Hair has moved away from the fighting soldiers to the men who maintained and extended the trenches. He has created the opportunity to explore Maori-Pakeha attitudes to this war, as well as to each other.

Disliked by his sergeant, who picks him for every unpleasant task, and bullied by the older Wally Kidman, Otago lad Leith McArran learns to keep a low profile. Through these characters, plus Leith's friends Prof Murdoch and Tamati Baines and Leith's brother Calum and his friend Ces Tyler, the reader experiences the harshness of army life and the unpleasantness and constant danger of trench warfare.

Time spent exploring Cairo and visiting the Aotea Club where Leith dances with Sister Burlace (from Di Menefy's 1915: Wounds of War), and time spent drinking and chatting in French taverns provide some light relief from the horrors and hardships experienced. Being the object of bullying becomes minor compared to the treatment of a deserter. A spy in their midst adds another reality of war.

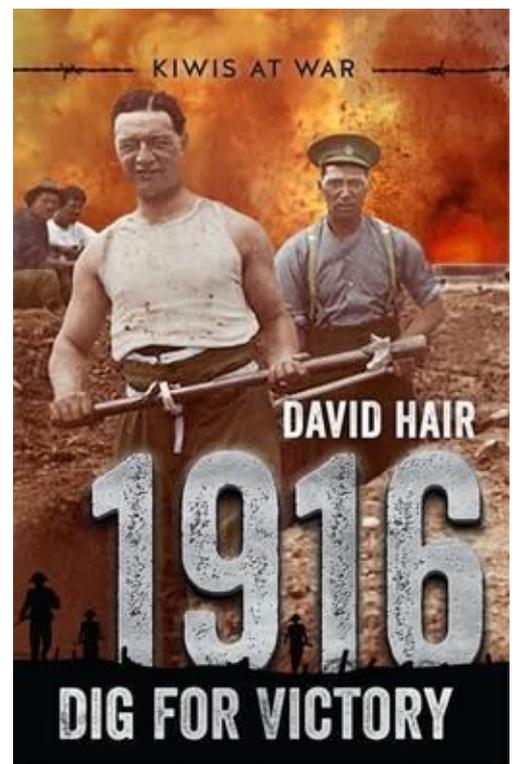
Detailed yet very readable, *1916: Dig for Victory* is a book for those interested in war, in particular WWI, those interested in NZ history and the development of NZ race attitudes, as well as attitudes towards Britain and Europe. It deserves a place in every library and school.

Congratulations once again to Scholastic for initiating this centennial series.

**Author's website:**

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**Reviewed by Chris Wright**



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