

# BRIEFCASE HISTORIES

## DEBATING THE PAST

According to the New Zealand Yearbook, Hamilton had a population of approximately 4000 in April 1914 (we say around because Maaori were usually not counted in these statistics). By 1918, the population was about 8000.

Over 200 men from Hamilton died serving New Zealand in World War One. That total accounted for about 5% of the 1914 population (or about 2.5% of the 1918 population). If Hamilton were to lose 5% of the population today, it would be about 8500 people! Countless others were injured, and others from Hamilton were killed fighting for nations such as Australia and Great Britain.

In 1919, after the War, the **Hamilton Beautifying Society** set about creating a Memorial Park to honour the people from Hamilton that had lost their lives. They called it Soldier's Memorial Park, and the city committed to building a cenotaph where the names of each person lost could be recorded so that they could be honoured forever.

While progress on the park started very quickly, progress on the cenotaph was very slow. People appeared to be enthusiastic about it at first, but the issue became more controversial as time wore on. As the years kept ticking by, it became harder and harder to convince people to spend money on the cenotaph, and more people became apathetic to the idea of the borough paying to build it.

The cenotaph finally came together and was built in time to be unveiled at the 1926 ANZAC Day commemorations. However, not many people today know it was difficult to get the cenotaph built.

**IN YOUR GROUPS, PRETEND YOU LIVE IN HAMILTON IN 1920. ONE GROUP WILL ARGUE THAT THE CITY NEEDS TO BUILD A CENOTAPH. THE OTHER GROUP WILL ARGUE THAT THE CITY SHOULDN'T BUILD THE CENOTAPH.**

Have a look at the newspaper clippings supplied to your teams, and identify three reasons to back up your point.

**Remember - you are not the person you are in 2022.** You are a person in 1920 who has had to live through the impact of the war and has had to live through the Influenza pandemic. You are trying to get by without today's luxuries.