



Mission accomplished: Dr Louise Malone and Peter Peckham at the unveiling of the William Malone statue in Stratford yesterday.

Photo: CAMERON BURNELL

Stratford hero of Chunuk Bair honoured

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A statue commemorating a Taranaki Gallipoli hero was unveiled in Stratford yesterday.

Lieutenant Colonel William George Malone, of Stratford, led the Wellington Battalion in the 1915 attack on Chunuk Bair ridge in Gallipoli.

Lt Col Malone, one of New Zealand's outstanding soldiers, died along with several hundred of his men during the battle.

Between 200 and 300 people, including many war veterans,

politicians and local dignitaries, gathered on the corner of Broadway and Page streets at 11.30am for the ceremony to reveal the bronze statue, which was created by Fridtjof Hanson.

The occasion brought an end to a 20-year mission for former Royal Navy officer and head of the Malone Quest committee, Peter Peckham.

Mr Peckham said he felt compelled to honour Malone, one of the country's unsung heroes, after attending a Dawn Service at Chunuk Bair.

The landscape there is steep broken country and the invasion

had been poorly executed, he said. "It's the most inhospitable bit of land I can imagine to invade."

Mr Peckham said he felt relieved and it was marvellous to see the statue in place.

"I've worked like buggery to do it," the 86-year-old said.

Malone's great grand-daughter Louise Malone, of Auckland, attended the ceremony and said she felt very honoured.

The occasion also held special significance for retired territorial army brigadier Tim Brewer and his family who also served in the fifth Wellington, West Coast and Taranaki Battalion.

Mr Brewer's son William is in the battalion and his great grandfather, Charles Lepper, was with Malone when he was killed.

"Charles wrote a letter home, where he detailed [that] of the 100 members of the battalion who took part in the invasion only five were left alive."

A former commanding officer of the 5th Wellington West Coast and Taranaki Battalion Group, honorary colonel Martin Devlin, said Malone would now be immortalised in New Zealand military history.

"His personal bravery should have earned him the highest

award for bravery many times over," he said.

He said it was disappointing it had taken so long for Malone to be appropriately recognised.

The distinctive "lemon squeezer" hat later adopted by the New Zealand Army was created by Malone while he was in command of the 11th Taranaki Rifles.

He had also been a prominent figure in Taranaki politics. He helped establish the Stratford County Council, sat on the Hawera County Council and Taranaki Hospital and Charitable Aid Board. He was also chairman of the Ngaere Road Board.