

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the people of Niue offered a contingent to serve with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF). This offer was taken up in mid-1915 when difficulties were being experienced in obtaining enough reinforcements for the NZEF's Māori Contingent. Men were also recruited from the Cook Islands at this time. A recruiting office was established on Niue and volunteers were medically examined during the first two weeks of October 1915.

The 150-strong contingent sailed for New Zealand on 13 October 1915. In New Zealand the Niueans underwent training at the Narrow Neck Camp in Auckland. They sailed for Egypt in February 1916 with the 3rd Maori Reinforcements.

In April 1916 the Niueans sailed for France with the rest of the newly-formed Pioneer Battalion, which incorporated the Maori Contingent. The sick men left in Egypt were invalided back to New Zealand. The Niueans saw some service on the Western Front with the Pioneer Battalion, but late in May the decision was made to withdraw them to the United Kingdom, send them back to New Zealand and discharge them from the NZEF. This decision was prompted by the numerous and serious cases of sickness amongst the Niueans.

The men were returned to New Zealand on nine different troopships; with the first large group sailing in mid-June 1916. Some Niueans received further medical treatment in New Zealand before returning to home and being discharged from the NZEF during the course of 1916 and 1917. In total 16 men from the contingent of Niueans recruited in 1915 died while serving in the NZEF. In addition, several more men died after being discharged from the NZEF as a result of health problems related to their military service.

Note: *My Heart is Crying a Little: Niue Island involvement in the Great War 1914-1918* by Margaret Pointer (published, Suva, 2000) is the best source of information on the Niuean contingent.

REPORT ON THE POSSIBLE INCLUSION ON THE FIRST WORLD WAR ROLLS OF HONOUR OF THREE NIUEAN SOLDIERS: PRIVATES ALOTAU, MITIPAUNI AND MUIMATAGI

Executive Summary

1. This report deals with the cases of three Niuean men who died within a few years of being discharged from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force [NZEF]. All these men died within the dates specified for inclusion in the official rolls of honour. In each case it is clear that their names should be added to the appropriate First World War rolls of honour for the reasons set out below:

Private Alotau, 16/1030, was discharged from the NZEF in May 1917 as being no longer physically fit for war service because of illness contracted on active service. He died of military tuberculosis-pulmonary enteritis on Niue in January 1920. In 1923 it was determined that his death was due to his war service. His family was issued with the memorial plaque and scroll presented by the government to the next of kin of NZEF personnel whose deaths were attributable to their war service. He is included in the *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour* published in 1924, but not on

the National War Memorial and Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] First World War rolls of honour.

Private Mitipauni, 16/1096, was discharged from the NZEF in September 1916 as being no longer physically fit for war service. He died of pulmonary tuberculosis on Niue in March 1917. His family was issued with the memorial plaque presented by the government to the next of kin of NZEF personnel whose deaths were attributable to their war service. He is included in the *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour* published in 1924, but not on the National War Memorial and CWGC First World War rolls of honour.

Private Muimatagi, 16/1098, was discharged from the NZEF in September 1916 as being no longer physically fit for war service because of illness. He died of pulmonary tuberculosis on Niue in January 1919. His son was issued with the memorial plaque presented by the government to the next of kin of NZEF personnel whose deaths were attributable to their war service.

Background

2. Rolls of honour are compiled to record the names of those who lost their lives in a conflict. Usually they are restricted to military personnel, but some rolls include civilians who meet particular criteria, such as members of the merchant navy. In 1924 the New Zealand government published: *The Great War, 1914-18, New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1924). The *NZEF Roll of Honour* is divided into three sections:

Section I -- killed in action, or died from wounds inflicted, accident occurring, or disease contracted while on active service;

Section II -- died after discharge (up to 31 December 1923) from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force from wounds inflicted or disease contracted while on active service; and

Section III -- died from accident occurring, or disease contracted, while training with or attached to the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces [sic.] in New Zealand.

3. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] First World War roll of honour covers a shorter period, 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921. The graves of Commonwealth military personnel who died as a result of their service between these dates are cared for by the CWGC as war graves. New Zealand is a signatory to the CWGC Royal Charter and it is unclear why the roll of honour produced by the New Zealand government in 1924 included deaths between 1 September 1921 and 31 December 1923. The roll of honour maintained at the National War Memorial, however, uses the same dates as CWGC roll. All of the men dealt with in this report

died within the dates covered by the CWGC and National War Memorial rolls of honour.

General Considerations

4. Research into cases of servicemen or servicewomen who may have been incorrectly omitted from First World War rolls of honour is complicated by the purging of papers from military personal files from this period and by the destruction of most First World War pension files. In many cases war pension files included military medical records and correspondence transferred from the pensioner's personal file. As a general rule, the decisions made by the New Zealand military authorities during or immediately after the First World War as to whether an individual should be on the roll of honour or not should be left to stand. This position reflects the strong possibility that when they made their decision the military authorities had evidence available to them that is no longer extant. An exception to this rule should only be made in cases where one or more of the following considerations apply:

- a. there is no evidence of an eligibility review taking place;
- b. there is significant evidence that has been overlooked or was not available in the past; and
- c. that the next of kin of the deceased received the New Zealand government commemorative plaque and scroll.

Private Alotau, No. 16/1030

5. **Summary of Service:** Alotau attested into the NZEF on 29 September 1915, but did not commence duty until 14 October 1915. After training in New Zealand he sailed for Egypt on 5 February 1916 as a member of the 3rd Maori Contingent. He arrived in Egypt on 15 March 1916 and later served in the United Kingdom and France. There are no medical records on his file as these were put on his war pension file, which has since been destroyed. It is, however clear from his NZEF personal file that Private Alotau suffered from serious health problems during his military service. He was invalided back to New Zealand on 9 January 1917. Alotau was discharged from the NZEF on 9 May 1917 as being no longer physically fit for war service on account of illness contracted on active service.

6. **Circumstances of Death:** Alotau died at Alofi on Niue on 21 January 1920 from "Exhaustion Military tuberculosis – pulmonary enteritis". At the time of his death Alotau had been receiving medical treatment for 14 months. His death was reviewed by the New Zealand military authorities in 1923 and at that time it was determined that Alotau's death was due to war service. He is included on the 1924 *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour*. Alotau's family received the memorial plaque

and scroll given by the New Zealand government to the next of kin of all NZEF personnel whose death was attributable to their war service.

7. Conclusion: Alotau is included on the *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour*, and his death was recognised in 1923 as being due to war service. He died within the time limits for inclusion in the National War Memorial and CWGC First World War rolls of honour. His name should, therefore, be added to these rolls.

Private Mitipauni, No. 16/1096

8. Summary of Service: Mitipauni attested into the NZEF on 29 September 1915. After training in New Zealand he sailed for Egypt on 5 February 1916 as a member of the 3rd Maori Contingent. He suffered from serious health problems during his military service. Mitipauni had cervical adenitis and on 22 April 1916 underwent an operation to remove glands in his neck. Private Mitipauni was invalided to New Zealand returning on 6 June 1916. He was discharged from the NZEF on 10 September 1916 as being no longer physically fit for war service.

9. Circumstances of Death: Mitipauni died at Mutalau on Niue in 24 March 1917 from "Pulmonary Tuberculosis". At the time of his death Mitipauni had been receiving medical treatment for four months. His death was noted by the New Zealand military authorities, and Mitipauni was included on the 1924 *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour*. On 19 December 1930 Mitipauni's family were issued with the memorial plaque and scroll given by the New Zealand government to the next of kin of all NZEF personnel whose death was attributable to their war service.

10. Conclusion: Mitipauni is included on the *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour*, and his family were issued with the memorial plaque and scroll. There is compelling evidence that he died as a result of his military service, and as this occurred within the required time frame his name should be added to the National War Memorial and CWGC First World War rolls of honour.

Private Muimatagi, No. 16/1098

11. Summary of Service: Muimatagi gave his age as 20 years when he attested into the NZEF on 29 September 1915, but did not commence duty until 14 October 1915. After training in New Zealand he sailed to Egypt on 5 February 1916 as a member of the 3rd Maori Contingent. He arrived in Egypt on 15 March 1916 and on 31 March 1916 was admitted to hospital suffering from enteritis [inflammation of the small intestine] and general debility. On 15 May 1916 he was transferred to the Aotea Convalescent Home and on 11 June he was invalided back to New Zealand. Private Muimatagi arrived in New Zealand on 17 July 1916 and was admitted to the Epsom Convalescent Home. He was discharged from the NZEF on 10 September 1916 as

being no longer physically fit for war service. There is a comment on his history sheet that he was suffering from "Deficient Stamina -- under age".

12. Circumstances of Death: Muimatagi returned to Niue where he died at Mutalau of "Pulmonary Tuberculosis" on 7 January 1919. At the time of his death Muimatagi had been receiving medical treatment for eight months. In 1931 Muimatagi's son was given the memorial plaque presented by the New Zealand government to the next of kin of NZEF personnel who died as result of their war service. Normally a memorial scroll was also issued to the next of kin, but the evidence on Muimatagi's file, although rather inconclusive, suggests that for some reason no scroll was issued in this case. Private Muimatagi is not any of the appropriate rolls of honour.

13. Conclusion: Unlike Alotau and Mitipauni, Muimatagi is not included on the *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Roll of Honour*. The evidence on his NZEF personal file and elsewhere, however, shows that the circumstances of his death were very similar to those of the other two soldiers. Even more tellingly Muimatagi's son was given the memorial plaque. These facts and that Muimatagi died within the time limits for the National War Memorial and CWGC First World War rolls of honour strongly indicate that his name should be added to these rolls.

Overview of Cases

14. There is sufficient evidence to warrant the inclusion of Private Alotau, No. 16/1030; Private Mitipauni, No. 16/1096 and Private Muimatagi, No. 16/1098 on the appropriate First World War rolls of honour.

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16 September 2015