

28th Māori Battalion

Ngārimu VC

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"No infantry had a more distinguished record, or saw more fighting, or alas, had such heavy casualties."

*Lieutenant-General Bernard Freyberg, Commander of the 2 NZEF,
commending the 28th Māori Battalion.*

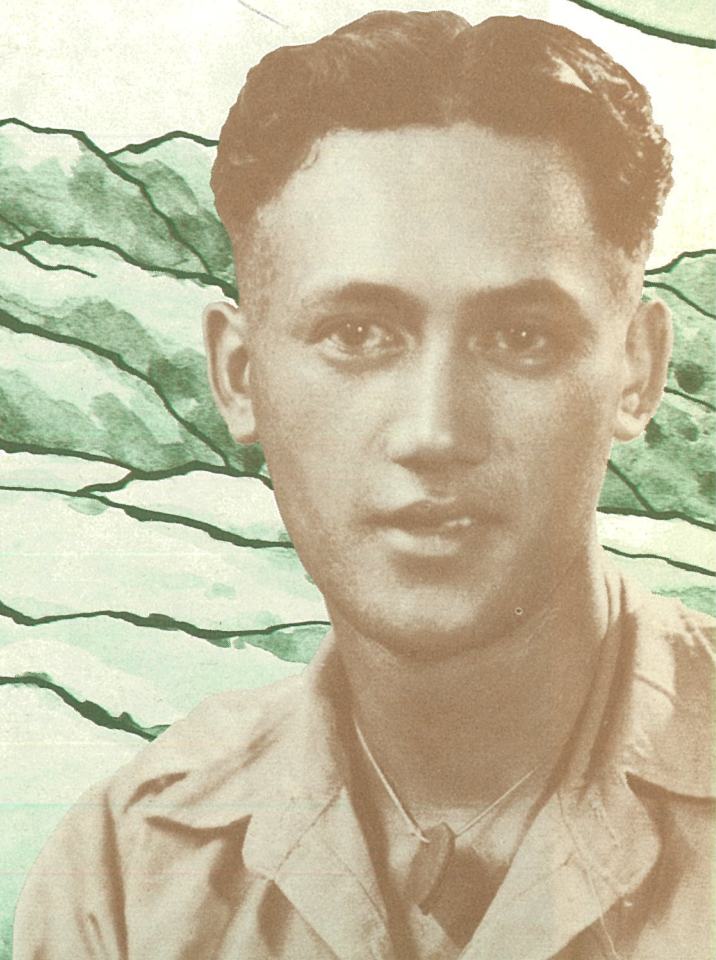
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The MAORI BATTALION Remembers II

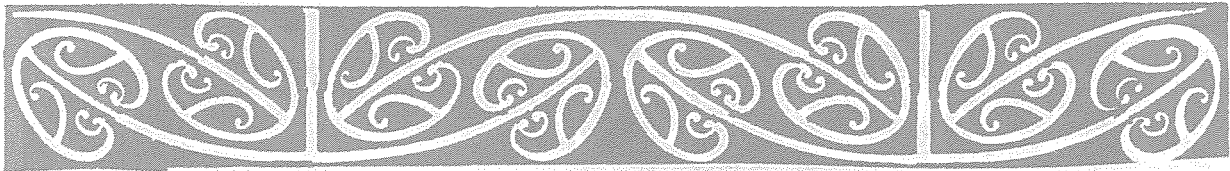
Hikurangi

Point 209

Battalion HQ



Ko Hikurangi te Maunga Ko Ngarimu te Tangata
Ko Ngati Porou raua Ko Whanau-a-Apanui nga Iwi



NGARIMU

On the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Forces, the King has approved the award of the

VICTORIA CROSS

to Second-Lieutenant Moana Nui-a-Kiwa NGARIMU, 28 NZ (Maori) Bn, for most conspicuous gallantry and outstanding leadership during the action at TEBAGA GAP in the MATMATA Hills, TUNISIA, on 26 March 1943. 2nd Lieut NGARIMU commanded a platoon in an attack upon the vital hill feature, Point 209. He was given the task of attacking and capturing an underfeature forward of Point 209 itself and held in considerable strength by the enemy. He led his men with great dash and determination straight up the face of the hill undeterred by intense mortar and MG fire which was causing considerable casualties. Displaying courage and leadership of the highest order he was himself first on the hill crest personally annihilating in the process at least two enemy MG posts. In the face of such a determined attack the remainder of the enemy fled but further advance was impossible as the reverse slope was swept by MG fire from Point 209 itself.

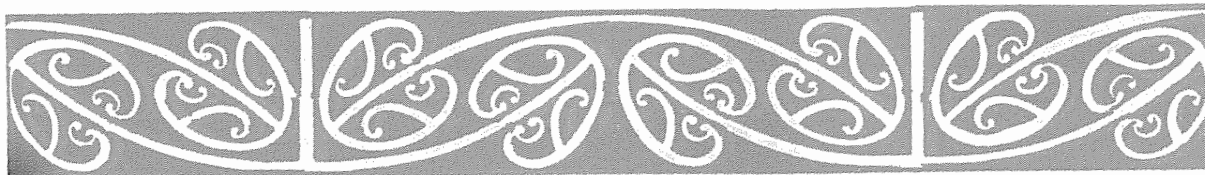
Under cover of a most intense mortar barrage the enemy counter-attacked in an attempt to retain their dug-in positions. 2nd Lieut NGARIMU ordered his men to stand up and engage the enemy man for man. This they did with such good effect that the attackers were literally mown down, 2nd Lieut NGARIMU personally killing several. During this encounter he was twice wounded, once by rifle fire in the shoulder and later by shrapnel in the leg and though urged by both his Co. Comdr and Bn Comdr to go out of the line he refused to do so saying that he should stay a little while with his men.

During one of these counter-attacks the enemy by using hand grenades succeeded in piercing a certain part of the line. Without hesitation 2nd Lieut NGARIMU rushed to the threatened area and those of the enemy he did not kill he drove back with stones and with his tommy gun. During another determined counter-attack by the enemy, part of his line broke. Yelling out orders and encouragement he went to his dislodged men, rallied them and led them in a fierce onslaught back into their old positions.

All through the night, between attacks, he and his men were heavily harassed by MG and mortar fire, but 2nd Lieut NGARIMU watched his line very carefully, cheering his men on and inspiring them by his gallant personal conduct. Morning found him still in possession of the hill feature but only he and two unwounded other ranks remained. Reinforcements were sent up to him.

In the morning the enemy again counter-attacked and it was during this attack that 2nd Lieut NGARIMU met his death. He was killed on his feet defiantly facing the enemy with his tommy gun at his hip; and as he fell he came to rest almost on top of those of the enemy who had fallen to his gun just before he fell to theirs.

The hill feature that this officer had so gallantly defended was strewn with enemy dead and was a bold witness of the great courage and fortitude with which 2nd Lieut NGARIMU had fought and died.



THE VICTORIA CROSS

The Victoria Cross awarded for gallantry is the highest order of its kind and is worn before all other decorations. It consists of a Maltese Cross in bronze, 1½ inches across with the Crown surmounted by a Lion in the centre and beneath it the simple inscription for valour.

Because of the prestigious nature of this award sworn statements by others who witnessed the action are necessary to support the recommendation.

Here are two such statements by: Pte B. Waihi and Lieut S. F. Jackson.

67385 Pte B. WAIHI of 28 NZ (MAORI) BN, 2 NZEF on oath states:-

" Mr NGARIMU was my Pl Comd. When we got up to the top of the hill on the attack of 23 Mar 43 our officer was there before us. He got two MG posts. We were attacked a lot of times by the enemy after we got to the top of the hill but Mr NGARIMU always told us to stick to our posts. Once some of my sec broke during the night but Mr NGARIMU rushed up to us and yelling out to us to follow him led us back to the top of the hill again. We ran out of hand grenades and our officer told us to use stones. We got a pretty rough time all of that night but our officer was always there telling us to hang on. Whenever the enemy attacked he was always there leading us. He was wounded twice but he wouldn't go out. He was killed in the morning standing up firing his machine gun while the enemy was attacking.

Sgd Pte B. Waihi.

Sworn before me this fourth day of April at GABES.

Sgd C.L. BENNETT. Lt-Col

28 NZ (MAORI) BN.

25892 Lieut S.F.JACKSON of 28 NZ (MAORI) BN 2 NZEF on oath states:-

" When the attack of 26 Mar 43 on Point 209 began I was Pl Comd of the same coy that 2/Lieut M.NGARIMU belonged to. During the actual assault on the hill feature of Point 209 our Coy Comd was wounded and evacuated. I was then placed in charge of the Coy. I established my Coy HQ just in the rear of Mr NGARIMU's Pl. I then went up forward to the crest where Mr NGARIMU and his men were lying. I found that Mr NGARIMU^u had been wounded in two places, a wound in the shoulder and one in the leg. I ordered him to go out to the RAP but he insisted that he should stay until morning. During my converstaion with Mr NGARIMU the enemy made one of his many counter-attacks. Mr NGARIMU immediately stood to and engaged the enemy who were only a few yards away from him. After he had used his grenades I saw him pick up some stones and he used these as grenades. At the same time he rushed up to the top of the hill firing his tommy-gun at the enemy who could be clearly seen. When I rejoined him at the top of the hill he pointed to some enemy dead lying around. He was counter-attacked many times during the night but he was always there to lead his men. I did not actually see him killed the next morning but when w e went to get him we found him lying near four of five German dead right at the top of the hill".

Sgd. S.F.JACKSON.Lt.

Sworn before me this fourth day of April at GABES.

Sgd C.L.BENNETT Lt-Col
28 NZ (MAORI) BN.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DESERT

NGARIMU VC

THE Living and the Dead
Who Supported Him

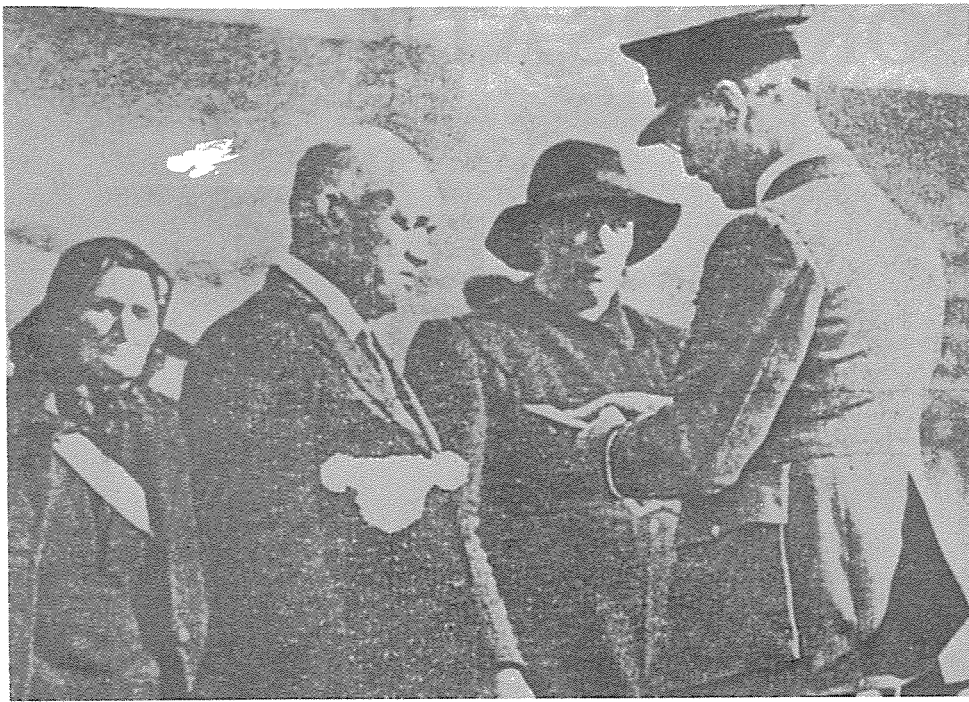


As a specimen of the photographer's art this is not a particularly noteworthy example —as a record of things that happened in North Africa in WWII it is commonplace, but as a token of high endeavour, of loyalty to a group, of Maori potential fulfilled, it is unique.

Here are the graves of men who 24 hours earlier fought to the death beside their commander. He was able by sheer force of example to lead men often described as a "hard bitten lot —difficult to control". Moana Ngarimu was not a superman; the men he led were not supermen — they were trained in the skills of war and they were inspired.

This is a rare photo taken shortly after the burial of Moana Ngarimu and the men who fell with him at the Battle for Tebaga Gap. The snap was probably taken by Padre Father Heenan and is from the album of Charlie (YM) Bennett. Bully Jackson remembers the following as being with him on the occasion: Tunoa (Rev) Wanoa, Peter Tamepo, Frank Henderson, Henry Mackey, Bill Ruru and Wally Dunn.

Harry Lambert



GOVERNOR GENERAL SIR CYRIL NEWELL presents VC to parents of Maori hero. Mr and Mrs Hamuera Ngarimu received the Cross won by their son, the late Second Lieutenant Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. In making the presentation, His Excellency expressed New Zealand's admiration for the magnificent courage of Lieutenant Ngarimu. By the award of the Victoria Cross, said the Governor General, the King had honoured not only Lieutenant Ngarimu, but also his battalion. The Maori Battalion, he said, would be remembered with gratitude and praise by free men and women throughout the world.



Four Maori Battalion Officers who also received decorations, Charles Bennett, Fred Baker, Rangi Royal, Ben Porter.

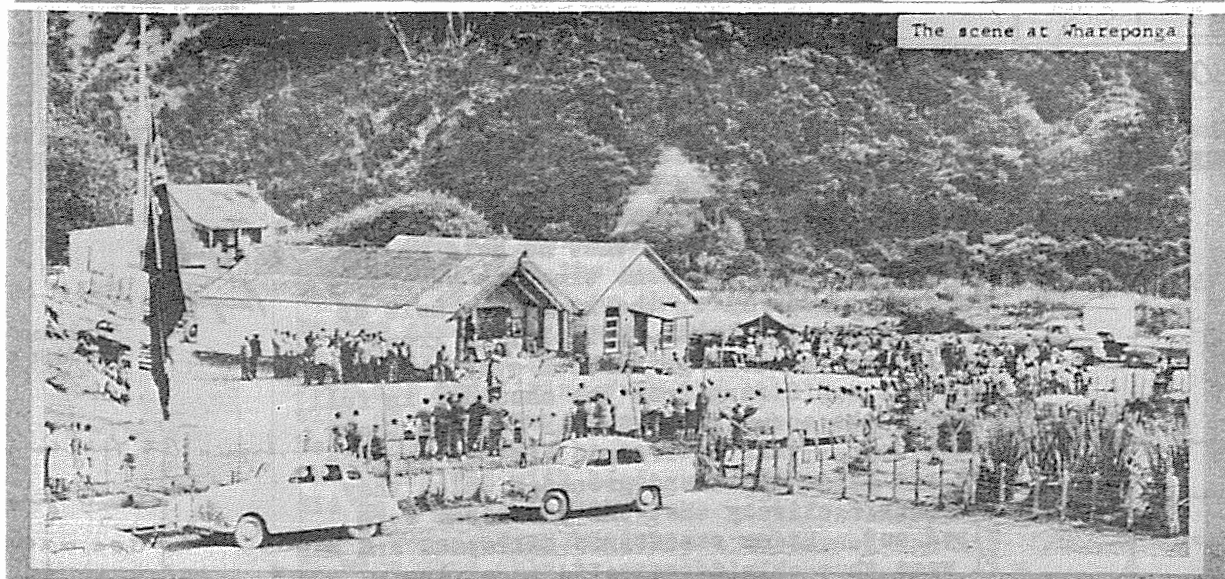
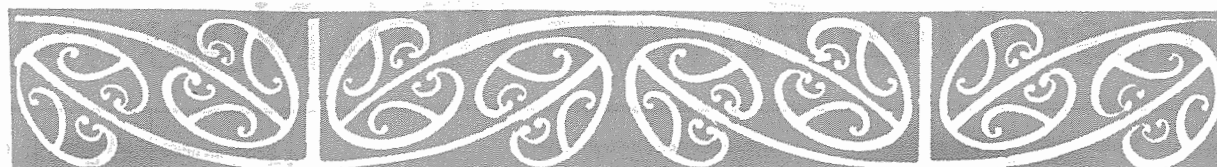
PERFORMERS AT NGARIMU HUI



Women take the stage to render an action song.



Action during a vigorous rendering of a haka.



The scene at Whareponga



First Maori V.C. Honoured



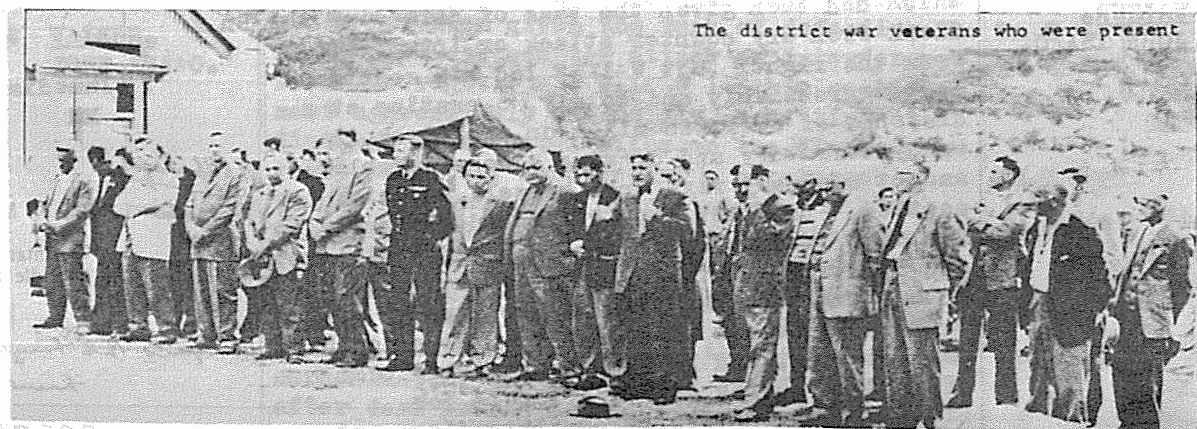
At the Ruatoria Returned Servicemen's Association's Anzac service at Whareponga, a tablet was unveiled in the church in memory of the first Maori V.C., Second Lieutenant Moana-Nui-a-Kiwi Ngarimu.

Addressing the assembly was the former commanding officer of the Maori Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel A. Awatere, who recalled memories of the courage and gallantry that Ngarimu displayed in action, and was responsible for him being the first of his race to win the Victoria Cross.

Left: A picture of Second Lieutenant Moana-Nui-a-Kiwi Ngarimu V.C. with his decorations.

Right: Lieutenant Colonel A. Awatere addressing the assembly.

(Pictures by Eastland Photographers).



The district war veterans who were present

