

CISWW1

COOK ISLANDS SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR ONE

Private VAVIA TUORO

My speech for the commemorating of the Cook Islands WW1 Soldiers, held in Auckland 2015.

By Mata Tumu-Makara

Cook Islands Soldiers of World War One Personal Profile

Name: Vavia Tuoro (Tuoro Vavia)¹

Father: Tuoro the son of Tetumuenua (Teiomarama) and Vaviatane (Akemata).

Mother: Teuira the daughter of Taunga and Pareuariki

Country of birth: Mitiaro, Cook Islands

Village: Atai

Date of birth: 18th March 1895

Date of death: late 1950s to 1960 in Rarotonga.²

Occupation: Self Employed (Laborer)

Enlisted in the New Zealand Army

Company: 11th Maori Battalion, Rarotonga Company

Reg. No. 19345

Rank: Private

Embarked for Suez, Egypt: 16th November 1916

Arrived: 24th January 1917

Embarked for New Zealand: 14th December 1918

Arrived: 28th January 1919

Somes Island Wellington: 29th January 1919

Discharged: 20th March 1919

Decorated: 21st June 1924

¹ See the third paragraph on page 5 for a discussion about his name.

² For further research in the future.

Kia Oraana. On behalf of the Mitiaro Community, Nga Ui Ariki e toru, Te au Tavini o te Atua, Member of Parliament, Mayor and his councilors, we would like to express our gratitude to the Honorable Alfred Ngaro, Cook Islands Consulate Rosie Blake and the committee for making us proud Cook Islanders today as we commemorate our tupunas who fought in WW1.

In the early 1800s the people of the Cook Islands were engaged constantly with tribal and inter-island warfare over land, women, possessions, status and revenge for killing another person or animals. The tribal and inter-island warfare were cruel and many had died in some of the battles. In 1821 the Gospel came to the shores of the Cook Islands for the first time through the work of the Reverend John Williams, Orometua Papeiha and Vahapata under the direction of the London Missionary Society. Their purpose was to 'take the glorious Gospel of the blessed God' to all people of the world.³

On the 22nd July 1823 the Gospel arrived on the island of Mitiaro (Nukuroa) and Orometua Taua from the island of Tahaa in French Polynesia (Tahiti) became their first pastor. There were other Tahitian Orometuas placed on Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Rarotonga and Mangaia. In return Orometuas from those islands were sent out as messengers of peace to Manihiki, Penhryn, Pukapuka, Rakahanga and Palmeston. The Gospel had a positive impact on the people and ceased to engage in tribal and inter-island warfare.

³ Cited by Mata Tumu-Makara, 'The Cook Islands Church Mission Heritage: Relaunching the Global Mission Activities of the Church.' (Auckland: Laidlaw-Carey Graduate School, MTh Dissertation, 2011.

Furthermore they joyfully took the Christian message throughout the islands of the Pacific. The Cook Islands church sent out over 446 known men and women to Samoa, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Tahiti, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea from 1830-1913, one other in 1963. One of the Orometuas that served in Papua New Guinea who was from the island of Mitiaro was Makara and his wife Pati. They left the Cook Islands on the 2nd October 1902 and both died there in 1906.⁴

Makara was survived by his father Taunga, his mother Pareuariki, his three brothers Muringa, Ota, and Tavana and four sisters Tererui, Tetairoa, Tungane and Teuira i te uti o te ra (Teuira). The only siblings that had issues were Tererui and Teuira. Teuira married Tuoro or Tuoroia and they had eight children. The fifth child was Vavia.⁵ He was born on the island of Mitiaro on the 18th March 1895. He grew up in a Christian home where faith in God and hard work was valued. He was 11 years old when his uncle Makara and aunty Pati died in Papua New Guinea. Vavia was a hard worker. According to his 'Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer' he was self employed before he enlisted in the army at an 'apparent age' of 19 years old in 1916.⁶ Vavia's warrior genes, Christian upbringing, and as

⁴ Tumu-Makara. 'The Cook Islands Church Mission Heritage,' 2011.

⁵ The complexity of Vavia's name in the two family genealogies are that Papaia was noted in Taunga Tumu's genealogy but no Vavia. Taunga Tumu. 'The Family Tree of Tumenua Makara and Tangata Kauri' Compiled, 2011. And in Tereva Makara's genealogy Vavia was mentioned but no Papaia. Tereva Makara. 'Makara and Akeoiu Family Tree,' Mitiaro: Makara Reunion, 2003. According to Tautua Tautua the longer version of Vavia's name was Vavia Papaia. He was known by some as Vavia or Papaia. This conversation with Tautua Tautua (grand nephew to Vavia) took place at 13 Santos Place, Onehunga Auckland, New Zealand. 5th April 2015. However, according Mama Ina Tekaa (her family lives next door to Teuira and Tuoro) Papaia is another brother of Vavia. She remembers that Papaia lived in Atiu. She remembered seeing Papaia when he came with the Atiu people to pick oranges on the island of Mitiaro to be shipped by the *Maui Pomare*. Conversation took place at 31 Anglesea Street, Ponsonby Auckland 3rd March 2015. This was also supported by Pativai Tutini who remembered that day when Papaia came from Atiu to pick oranges. Tutini is a grand nephew of Vavia. Conversation took place at 31 Anglesea Street, Ponsonby Auckland on the 9th May 2015.

⁶ He was 21 years old in 1916 not 19 years. The war records are attached to this speech.

a hard worker helps to prepare him emotionally, spiritually and physically well in the next chapter of his life, World War 1.

There were 500 Cook Islanders sent to fight in that war which began in 1914.⁷ The first groups of Cook Islanders (45) along with Niuean soldiers were sent from New Zealand to France with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) in 1915. In July 1916, the second group of Cook Islanders (120), including Private Vavia Tuoro, left the beautiful shores of Rarotonga for New Zealand for four months training at Narrow Neck Camp in Auckland.⁸ And during the two months of their training, the Niuean soldiers withdrew from France and the Cook Islands soldiers suffered from the cold. There was an urgent call for more New Zealand soldiers to go and fight in France.

Private Vavia Tuoro's chance came in November 16th 1916 when he left the shores of New Zealand for Suez, Egypt with the '11th Maori Reinforcements' and later known as the 'Rarotonga Company' with the intention of joining their brothers, after the winter months, in France. These soldiers never made it to France because the British needed more good soldiers in Egypt to fight against the Ottoman Turks in Sinai and Palestine.⁹ The young, enthusiastic, courageous, energetic, strong, and God fearing Cook Islands warriors were what was needed.

⁷ Quoting the Honorable Alfred Ngaro at the Cook Islands ANZAC celebration held at the Atiu Hall in Mangere Auckland New Zealand. 26th April 2014.

⁸ www.nzhistory.net.nz cited on 5th April 2015.

⁹ www.nzhistory.net.nz cited on 5th April 2015.

The Cook Islands soldiers were described as ‘formidable workers, physically strong and quicker than anyone else.’¹⁰ Their duties were to unload supplies from surfboats on the Mediterranean Coast and carry ammunitions for the Royal Artillery Eastern Force Ammunition Unit. The good work however caused much friction with the Egypt Company who was doing similar jobs. The Rarotonga Company was reassigned to more responsible role; handling ammunitions, keeping the dumps concealed to prevent attacks and clearing stockpiles of captured ammunition.

The Cook Islands soldiers who survived in France joined the Rarotonga Company in the Middle East in February 1918. The Middle East climate was suitable for the Cook Islands soldiers but still very vulnerable to malaria and measles. The young healthy Mitiaro soldier could not withstand these diseases which were evident in his medical certificates highlighting that he was constantly going in and out of the hospital. And at one time he stayed in the hospital for over a month trying to recover. These diseases were more life threatening than handling ammunitions.

In December 14th, 1918 Private Vavia along with the survived Cook Islands soldiers returned to New Zealand because of the influenza epidemic. They were quarantined at Somes Island Wellington harbor. Vavia was discharged from the army and returned to the Cook Islands along with most of the Cook Islands soldiers on the 22nd March 1919. He was decorated on the 21st June 1924. Vavia never married and he never had any children but he comes from a big family that has links to the islands of Ngaputoru (Atiu, Mauke & Mitiaro).

¹⁰ www.nzhistory.net.nz cited on 5th April 2015.

Vavia lived on Rarotonga after the war, with few occasional visits back to his home land, Mitiaro.

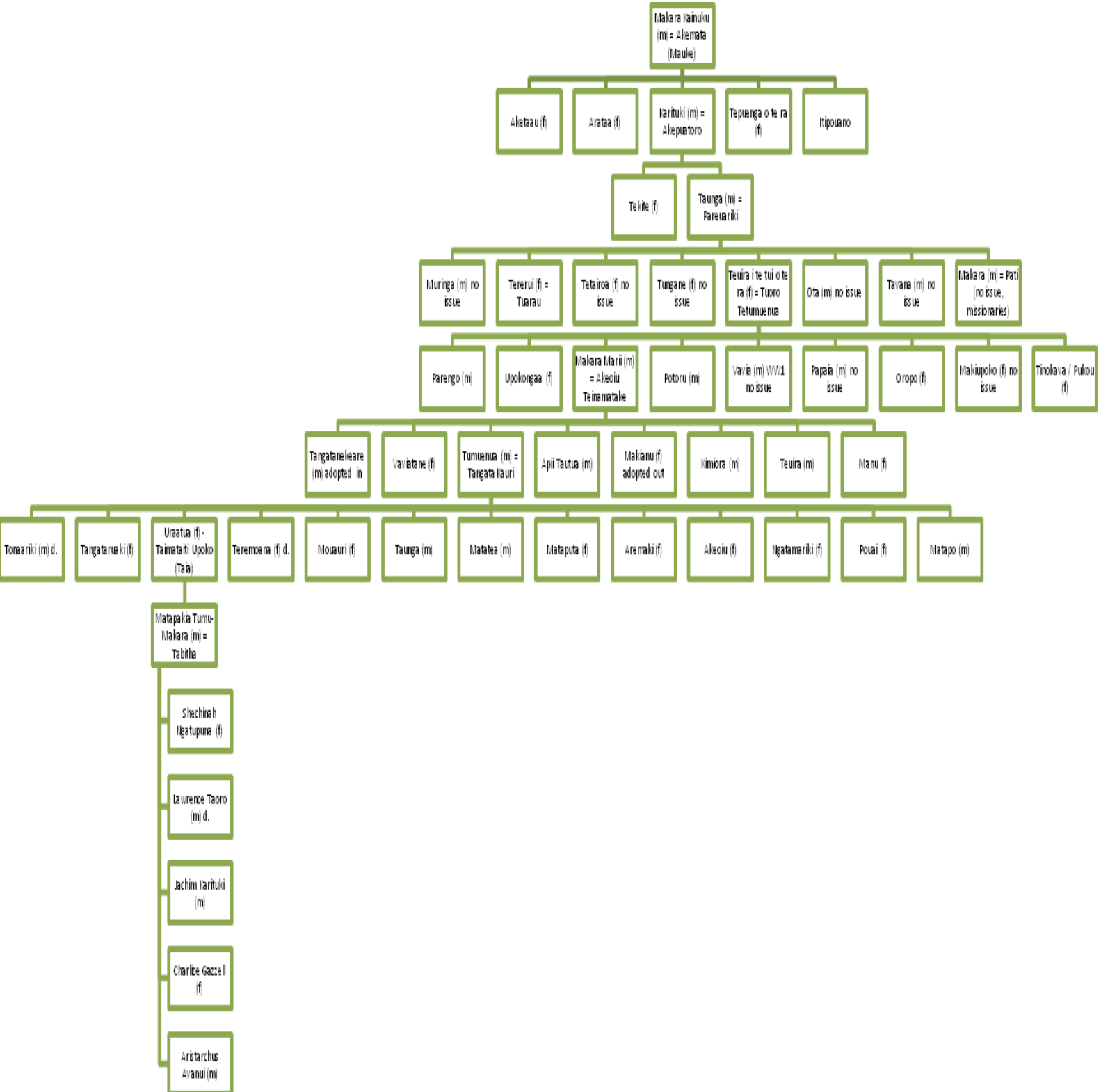
One of Private Vavia Tuoro's grandnephews Tautua Tautua (age about 8 years at the time) remembered one of those visits in the 1950s. Vavia was a proud soldier and he always wore his army uniform where ever he went. He wanted to take Tautua to Rarotonga but his older brother Makara Marii would not allow it. Tautua came to Rarotonga in the early 1960s, Vavia had already died.

There is one minor issue about Private Vavia Tuoro. The name recorded on the WW1, 1914-1918 Roll of Honours recorded his name Tuoro Vavia that is Tuoro is the first name and Vavia the surname and his father's name was Vavia Tuorio. This was supported by WW1 records; History-Sheet and Certificate of Discharge. However, three of the WW1 records; Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer, Hospital and Convalescent Home Certificate and Certificate of Medical Examination shows that his name was Vavia (first name) and Tuoro (surname). These evidences along with his family genealogies confirmed that his name should read **Vavia Tuoro**.

In conclusion, the 'vaerua' of his ancestors as warriors, missionaries and his high work ethics helped Private Vavia Tuoro to survive the war and to return home to the Cook Islands. He was a man of faith, courage and a proud soldier.

Private Vavia Tuoro, your efforts to bring peace in the world and as the only WW1 soldier to identify yourself as a Mitiaro will always be remembered. Lest we forget.

Private VAVIA TUORO'S GENEALOGY ON HIS MOTHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY.



WAR RECORDS¹¹

19345.

[Army Form B. 108]

ACTIVITY FORM—ACTIVE SERVICE.

Regiment or Rank: Pte. Name: Tuoro Vavia. (I)
 Enlisted * : 1/11/16 of Service * : Duration of War Service reckons from * 9/7/16
 Date of promotion to present rank : _____ Date of appointment to lance rank : _____ Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.s. : _____
 Extended : _____ Re-engaged : _____ Qualification † : _____

Report Date	From whom received	Record of Promotions, Reductions, Transfers, Casualties, &c., during Active Service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other Official Documents. The Authority to be quoted in Each Case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other Official Documents.
27/12/16	Nom Roll	Disembarked ex "Malwa"	Suez	27/12/16.	
27/12/16	Nom Roll	Marched in & Posted to Train. Units & Depots.	Moascar	27/12/16.	(P.I. II TR 3/15)
27-1-17	o/c train	Marched out to El Sheikh	do	27-1-17	B.213 (P.I. II TR 4/20)
1/2/17	do.	Posted to strength from M.Z. M.R. B. Side	Moascar	1/2/17	B.213 (P.2-19/118)
14/4/17	do.	Marched out to Kantara	do.	14/4/17	B.213 (P.2-27/162)
	o/c Paro boy	Admitted to Hospital	The Field	9-5-18	B.213 11/5/18 (P.I. II 21/46)
	776088	Admitted - Myalgia	do	9-5-18	A.36 Y3530 11/5/18
	3651	Hosp Admitted - do	Gaza	12-5-18	M3034 Y2524 12/5/18
	4451	Hosp Admit from 3651 - do	Kantara	18-5-18	FILE Y2625 18/5/18
	2760	Hosp Admit from 4451 - do	Abbassia	19-5-18	Y2625 20/5/18 (P.I. II 21/46)
	2061	Hosp Admit from 2760 - do	Heliopolis	23-5-18	Y2708 24/5/18
	do	Disembarked to do.			

Report Date	From whom received	Record of Promotions, Reductions, Transfers, Casualties, &c., during Active Service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other Official Documents. The Authority to be quoted in Each Case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other Official Documents.
1-6-18	o/c Troop	Posted from Hosp	Moascar	25-6-18	
		Detach to D.M.C. Rest Camp	do	27-5-18	(P.I. II 29/4)
8-6-18		Rejd from D.M.C. Rest Camp	do	5-6-18	B.213 (P.I. II 50/304)
29-6-18		Admitted to Hosp	Ismailia	25-6-18	B.213 (P.I. II 54/302)
25-6-18	2061	Hosp Admitted - measles	Moascar	25-6-18	M3034 Y3124 (P.I. II 51/353)
8-7-18	do	Left to D.M.C. Rest Camp	do	8-7-18	Y3204
20-7-18	o/c Troop	Rejd from Hosp ex D.M.C.	Ismailia	18-7-18	B.213 (P.I. II 60/367)
3-8-18	do	Left to Paro boy	do	30-7-18	B.213 (P.I. II 64/391)
3-8-18	o/c Paro boy	Posted from Troop	The Field	31-7-18	B.215 (P.I. II 92)
25-10-18	do	sick to Hospital	do	18-10-18	A.36 (P.2 49/106)
27-10-18	No. 1672	Adm 19/10/18 transferred	do	20-10-18	A.36 Y 3324
21-10-18	24 th St	Adm from 36 th St	Kantara	21-10-18	W3024 Y 3048
23-10-18	24 th St	Discharges to duty	Kantara	23-10-18	W3024 Y 3048 (P.I. II 49/106)
26-10-18	ing Regt	Posted from Hospital	Ismailia	23-10-18	P.2 560
DEC 14 1918		Embarked for "MALTA."	Switz	DEC 14 1918	Nom Roll

Lodger Initial

PC
 14.3.19
 THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

¹¹ Retrieved from the 'archives.govt.nz' on the 1st April 2015.

Reinforcement: *11th Maori*

HISTORY-SHEET.

Service despatched [B.F.] Form No. 34
 Authority to Head

Unit: *4th Coy*
Wg Coy
Maori Coy

No. *19345*

Occupation:
 Last employed:
 Name, relationship and address of next-of-kin resident in New Zealand, insurance name and address of nearest relative in New Zealand

Address:

Dear Sir,
 As it is hoped that it may shortly be possible to issue the British War Medal and Illuminated Certificate of Service, it is desired to give you an opportunity of agreeing with the information held by this office concerning yourself, and which will be contained on the medal and certificate or other documents yet to be issued, as medals and documents once issued can only be altered at the recipient's expense.
 Will you please, therefore, check the particulars on the back hereof and return this form complete to me as early as possible after appending your signature in the space provided at the foot.
 Yours faithfully,
 J. W. HUTCHEN,
 Officer in Charge.

Service

Wounds

Sick	PR	19.5.18	Kapitiara	Adm 44 th St. Hosp 18.5.18 <i>Myalgia</i>	
	PR	26.5.18	Barro	Sick to Hosp 27.5.18 Adm 27 Gen Hosp 19.6.18 (a12216)	
	PR	20.5.18	Barro	Adm No 27 th Gen Hosp Abbassia Jero. Sal.	
	PR	1.7.18	Maori ear.	Adm 2 Aust St. Hosp 4 measles 25.1.18. Sal.	
	PR	21.10.18	Kapitiara	Adm 24 St Hosp 21.10.18 P.W.D.	
	PR	10.3.19	14.12.18	Levy	Port for NZ per Malta

Killed in action ...
 Died of wounds* / sickness*
 Missing ...
 Prisoner ...
 Injuries in or by the Service ... *In termination of period of engagement*

Discharge ...
 Provisional: (Date.)
 Final: *20.3.19.* (Date.)
 Intended address: *Rarotonga*

Pension ...

* Strike out words not required.

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

ATTESTATION OF

No. 19345 NAME: Vavia Tuoro Maori Reinforcements.
Regiment or Unit:

Questions to be put to the recruit before enlistment.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What is your name? ... | 1. <u>Vavia</u> |
| 2. Where were you born? ... | 2. <u>Mitiaro, Cook Islands</u> ✓ |
| 3. Are you a British subject? ... | 3. <u>yes</u> |
| 4. What is the date of your birth? ... | 4. <u>18th March 1895</u> ✓ |
| 5. What is your trade or calling? ... | 5. <u>Labourer</u> |
| 6. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? | 6. <u>No</u> |
| 7. What was the address at which you last resided? | 7. <u>Rarotonga</u> |
| 8. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? | 8. <u>No</u> |
| 9. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? | 9. <u>working for self</u> |
| 10. Are you married? | 10. <u>No</u> |
| 11. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? | 11. <u>No</u> |
| 12. Do you now belong to any military or naval force? If so, to what corps? | 12. <u>No</u> |
| 13. Have you ever served in any military or naval force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. | 13. <u>No</u> |
| 14. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? | 14. <u>yes</u> |
| 15. Have you been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where | 15. <u>No</u> |
| 16. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the military or naval forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds | 16. <u>No</u> |
| 17. Are you willing to be vaccinated or revaccinated? | 17. <u>yes</u> |
| 18. Are you willing to serve in the Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand under the following conditions, provided your services should so long be required: For the term of the present European war and for such further period as is necessary to bring the Expeditionary Force back to New Zealand and to disembark it? | 18. <u>yes</u>
<u>Present of Kin.</u>
<u>Tuoro Vavia father</u>
<u>Mitiaro</u> |
| 19. Have you ever been ill? If so what was the nature of the illness? | 19. <u>No</u> |
| 20. Have you ever had a fit? | 20. <u>No</u> |

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before your return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, Vavia, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Signature of Recruit: Vavia

Signature of Witness: [Signature]

Oath to be taken by recruit on attestation.

I, Vavia Tuoro, do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, his Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Military Forces, according to my liability under the Defence Act, and that I will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me, God.

Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer

The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at RAROTONGA, N.Z., on this 1st day of July, 1916.

Signature of Attesting Officer: [Signature]

DESCRIPTION OF Clavin Lucro ON ENLISTMENT

Apparent age: 19 years _____ months.

(To be determined according to the instructions given in Regulations for Army Medical Service.)

Height: 5 feet 4 inches.

Weight: 150 lb.

Chest measurement { Minimum, 32 inches.
Maximum, 34 3/4 inches.

Complexion: Brown

Colour of eyes: Brown

Colour of hair: Black

Religious profession: Protestant

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.

*Tattoo. Hand & heart left arm.
Scar of burn left wrist
wound outer side left thigh.
Scar of old abrasion inner side right thigh near knee
base of left forefinger*

Medical Examination.

Sight: Right eye, <u>normal</u>	Is he free from hernia? <u>Yes</u>
" Left eye, <u>normal</u>	Is he free from varicocele? <u>Yes</u>
Hearing: Right ear, <u>normal</u>	Is he free from varicose veins? <u>Yes</u>
" Left ear, <u>normal</u>	Is he free from hæmorrhoids? <u>Yes</u>
Colour-vision: <u>normal</u>	Is he free from inveterate or contagious skin-disease? <u>Yes</u>
Are his limbs well formed? <u>Yes</u>	Is there a distinct mark of vaccination? <u>Yes</u>
Are the movements of all his joints full and perfect? <u>Yes</u>	Is he in good bodily and mental health and free from any physical defect likely to interfere with the efficient performance of his duties? <u>Yes</u>
Is his chest well formed? <u>Yes</u>	Are there any slight defects, but not sufficient to cause rejection? <u>No</u>
Is his heart normal? <u>Yes</u>	
Are his lungs normal? <u>Yes</u>	
What is the condition of the teeth? <u>Good.</u>	

Remarks.

Certificate of Medical Examination.

I have examined the above-named, and find he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

I consider him fit for service in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

Dec 17 '1916 G. Pearce Baldwin Medical Officer.

MAORI
REINFORCEMENTS
NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

(Form No. 1.)

PERSONAL RECORD of

(Surname) Varia (1)

(Christian name) Tuoro.

1st NZEF	Army P.O.
Registration No. <u>19345</u>	
2nd I.L.F.	

REGIMENT: Yarvis Pt Paratonga

GROUP: _____ NUMBER: _____

PREVIOUS PAPERS: _____

SUBSEQUENT PAPERS: _____

DISCHARGED

on termination of period of
Engagement.

20.3.19. EOB

✓

11th Maori Rpts. Kalla
16.11.16 28.1.19

[B.R. Form No. 207A.]

39916
18.2.19
28



NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.

N.B. - (1.) This certificate is issued without alteration or erasure of any kind.
(2.) Any person finding this certificate is requested to forward it to Headquarters, Military Forces, Wellington, N.Z.
(3.) Should this certificate be lost or mistaid no duplicate of it can be obtained.

No. 19345 Rank: Private Unit: 17 Karotongan Company
Name: Tuoro Paria

is discharged on the termination of his period of engagement.

Service abroad: 2 years 74 days.

DESCRIPTION OF SOLDIER ON ENLISTMENT.

Age: 21 1/2 years Height: 5 feet 4 inches
Complexion: Brown Eyes: Brown
Hair: Black Trade or occupation: Labourer

PERMANENT DISCHARGE Sent to S.I.
Date 19.2.19 Initials: W Signature: [Signature]
WELLINGTON, 20th March 1919 For Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Military Forces.

21.2.19

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

HOSPITAL AND CONVALESCENT HOME CERTIFICATE.

* Strike out word not required

The undermentioned soldier is hereby ordered to report as an in-patient at the Romes Island Hospital* Convalescent Home* on the 29th day of January, 1919, and is authorized to receive treatment. He is hereby ordered to report for instructions at the nearest Defence Office on the day he is discharged from the Hospital or Convalescent Home if he has not received another certificate of status from Base Records.

(Reg. No.) 19345 (Rank.) Plt (Surname) Moro (Christian name) V.

Date of issue: 12-2-, 1919

Signature: [Signature]
For Director of Base Records.

Attention is called to the conditions laid down in the Returned Soldiers' Handbook. The status of this soldier is a hospital or convalescent-home patient as from the day following the date of issue of this certificate.

[Signature]



Makara Marii Tuoro, brother of Private Vavia Tuoro.

References

1. Mata Tumu-Makara 'Oral History of Mitiaro,' Auckland: Tumu-Makara 2013.
2. _____, 'The Cook Islands Church Mission Heritage: Relaunching the Global Mission Activities of the Church.' (Auckland: Laidlaw-Carey Graduate School, MTh Dissertation, 2011.
3. Taunga Tumu. 'The Family Tree of Tumuenua Makara and Tangata Kauri' Compiled, 2011.
4. Tereva Makara. 'Makara and Akeoiu Family Tree,' Mitiaro: Makara Reunion, 2003.

Websites:

5. Archives New Zealand. www.archives.govt.nz
6. WW100 New Zealand. ww100.govt.nz
7. Auckland War Memorial Museum. www.aucklandmuseum.com
8. WW1 / NZHistory, New Zealand History online. www.nzhistory.net.nz
9. SFTP. www.soldiersfromthepacific.com