

Jacksons made their mark

... in league, rugby and on the battlefield

THEY DID IT THEIR WAY

IAIN GILLIES on local sporting legends.

THE 1908 Anglo-Welsh Lions rugby tour of New Zealand was in turmoil. The word was out that one of the team was in trouble because of information received that he had breached the rules of amateurism and could be sent home.

Who was the player who had committed this heinous act against amateurism?

The name being bandied about was Frederick Stanley Jackson ... or "Big Fred" to his mates.

It seemed almost laughable to his teammates that the officials in charge of the tour team would listen to such nonsense.

But was it nonsense? After all, there was a bit of a mystery about Fred's background.

And that mystery may never be solved, due to a beautiful Ngati Porou wahine (woman) who won the heart of the controversial Brit.

Fresh-faced 18-year-old Horowai Henderson from Te Araroa and the imposing prop met in Napier during that 1908 tour.

Even to this day Fred's family have not been able to confirm his true identity.

But what they do know is that Fred, a Boer War veteran, was a true international, playing rugby for the Anglo-Welsh Lions and league for New Zealand.



FAMILY LINE-UP: The Jackson family of Te Araroa produces many rugby greats. British and New Zealand rugby and league legend Frederick Stanley Jackson is pictured in the 1930s at McLean Park, Napier, with his three sons who played for the NZ Maori team — (from left) Everard Jackson, Bully (Sydney) Jackson and Tutu Wi Repa. Everard was also an All Black and played 11 matches from 1936-38 seasons.



boys also made their mark on the field. Everard Jackson was an All Black, Bully (Sydney) Jackson and Tutu Wi Repa were Maori All Blacks and Irwin Jackson was an Auckland premier player. Tutu's eldest son, Rongo Wi Repa, was in the 1960 New Zealand Maori team.

"To us he was just our grandfather," said Fred's grandson Moana Jackson this week.

"We have always been interested, of course, but his past life in England was something he simply chose not to talk about. I certainly don't think his contemporaries up the Coast knew or cared."

Some sources claimed Fred was born in Cambourne and educated at the Cambourne School of Mines.

Others claimed he was born in Swansea, Wales, while the Manchester Evening News reported in 1900 that this rising star in the rugby world was educated at Llandovery College and may have served in the Boer War.

It stated he was a former professional with Swinton Rugby League Club, that he had been born in Wales under the name of Gabe and educated at Monmouth. Again, there are no records substantiating this. No records of his birth could be found in searches made in more recent times.

In 2008, The Telegraph's writer Brendan Gallagher told readers in England: "The most mysterious player in Cornwall's history is backrow forward Frederick Stanley Jackson, the star of their 1908 County Championship and Olympic team, who was selected for the Lions tour of New Zealand."

Even today there is something of a mystery about the whole affair and a book, "Rugby's Greatest Mystery: Who really was F. S. Jackson?" by Tom Mather (London League Publications Ltd) has been released.

Grandson Moana said Tom Mather uncovered some

INSET: The career of Fred's son Irwin, who played premier rugby in Auckland, was cut short by a knee injury.

interesting information, but unfortunately reached some dubious conclusions, too.

"Certainly some photos he sent us of men he claimed were Fred's brothers were clearly not correct," Moana said.

But there was no mystery about Fred's prowess on the rugby field.

The 16st 11b prop was a Cornish rugby union player with 16 caps for Cornwall.

He had played in the forwards for Cambourne Rugby Football Club, Plymouth and for Leicester RFC.

He was Leicester Tigers' leading scorer in the 1906-07 season.

A powerful, accurate kicker, he was the star of Cornwall's championship winning team in 1908 when he led the way in the 17-3 win against Durham in front of 17,000 spectators at Redruth Rugby Football Club's Recreation Ground.

Not only was he an excellent player who loved the game, he was a young, hard-working man who made many friends and was popular with his teammates.

He was generally regarded by the press as being the best forward in the touring side and it came as a shock when it was revealed that the Rugby Football Union was to investigate whether he had played professional sport.

When it was decided that Fred was to be sent home, his teammates were shattered.

He was accused of playing for the Swinton Club under the name John Jones and representing Swansea under the name Gabe.

Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, from where much of this information came, stated: "Leaving his close friend and Leicester teammate John Jackett in tears on the wind-swept dockside, he sailed from Wellington to Sydney on the Maitai, but then decided he could not return to England and slipped back to New Zealand



LEICESTER DAYS: Fred Jackson was with Leicester Rugby Football Club from 1905-07. He is in the middle row fourth from left.

unannounced, reportedly to marry a Maori lady who had captured his affection."

Fred's grandson Gary Jackson said: "We don't know how he survived after jumping ship.

"When he first arrived back in New Zealand he worked in the coal mines on the West Coast of the South Island. There was talk he went to a mining college."

Fred arrived at Te Araroa to the hospitality of Horowai's father, fellow Brit, Everard Hannon Henderson, whose wife was Kamaea Ngatoko.

But life was never going to be easy for Fred. There was one big obstacle to his union with Horowai.

She was already engaged.

So Fred and Horowai eloped and were married in Hastings.

While in Hastings they stayed with Paraire Tomoana and his wife Kuini. Paraire was a Ngati Kahungunu rangatira who composed "Po Karekare Ana" among other waiata. Kuini (nee Ryland of Te Araroa) was Horowai's cousin.

They were a big part of the Jackson family's life. Everard was staying with them in 1936 when he first heard he was selected for the All Blacks.

When Fred and Horowai returned to Te Araroa to farm family land, there was a bit of resentment, said Gary.

However, events ran their natural course.

"We were told that riding home from the pub one night my grandfather was beaten unconscious and thrown in a creek," said Gary.

"Luckily someone found him

and fished him out.

"Naturally he went seeking utu (revenge). It wasn't long before he sorted out the culprits and earned the respect of the people of the East Coast."

Moana said Fred and Horowai were strong members of the community, being involved in council affairs, dairying and starting the local tennis club.

"Fred coached the East Coast rugby team for four years and helped East Coast rugby in many other ways," Moana said.

"He chose the pohutukawa as the team monogram, apparently because it looked like the English rose."

Fred certainly did not go into hiding. He decided to show that he could play rugby league as well as anyone and the thought of capturing the signature of one of the world's best rugby players was like dangling gold bars before the eyes of the rival code.

League and union have always been less than friendly in Auckland and league rejoiced when they persuaded Fred to play their game.

He was hailed as a saviour and certainly did not let the code down, playing for both Auckland and New Zealand in 1910.

He captained Auckland against the touring Great Britain Lions and also played against his country of birth in the test match for New Zealand, kicking four goals to show that his goal-kicking ability was still world-class.

The Jacksons had a strong sense of family and that was strengthened when Bully, Everard and Tutu joined C Company, of 28



CHAMPIONS: Frederick Stanley Jackson (centre, standing) is seen here with members of the Cornwall rugby team who won the English county championship in 1908. Fred's mate John Jackett, who captained the team, is sitting in front of him. They were Lions teammates on the NZ tour when Fred was sent home.

Maori Battalion.

Born leaders, Bully and Tutu made the rank of major, and at Burg el Arab Lieutenant Everard Jackson was injured by friendly fire during a night exercise and lost his leg.

Fred and Horowai, who also had a daughter, Mary, moved from Te Araroa to live with son Irwin in Auckland in the 1950s and Fred died there on April 15, 1957. Tutu's youngest son, Morgan, still farms at Hicks Bay.