

# Hokowhitu a Tu

By Adrian Hillary

Veterans of the Maori Contingent and Pioneer Battalion of the First World War get together.

*Maori Battalion! march to victory,  
Maori Battalion! staunch and true,  
Maori Battalion! march to glory,  
Take the honour of your people with you.*

*You will march, march, march to the enemy,  
And will fight right to the end,  
For God! For King! and for Country! aue!  
Ake, ake, kia kaha e!*

When in 1940 Corporal Anania Amohau composed this rousing martial tune, which forever remained the proud regimental song of the Maori Battalion of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) in the Second World War, most of his contemporaries in the Army were conscious of the fact that their Battalion, even at its very inception, had already had a predecessor from which both experience and traditions could readily be drawn: the Maori Contingent and Pioneer Battalion of the 1st NZEF had seen battle a quarter of a century earlier.



Before a Second World War broke out in 1939, there had been no such thing as the "First World War". The global armed conflict of 1914-1918 was universally known as "The Great War": after all, who could imagine that only two decades later there would be a second round to follow?

James Cowan, in his book "The Maoris in the Great War", published in 1926 by the Maori Regimental Committee, relates the passionate spirit of national pride with which Maoris from the North Cape to the South Island rushed to volunteer for service. Indeed, at the outbreak of the war in 1914 it

was not envisaged that Maoris would be mobilised, and it was only after relentless lobbying and intense pressure had been exerted by prominent Maori leaders, demanding that Maoris be given the opportunity of contributing to the war effort as of right, that the Government made provisions for the mobilisation of Maoris on a strictly voluntary basis. And volunteers kept inundating the recruitment centres in such great numbers that only a fraction of those eligible could in fact be accommodated and accepted for service.

James Cowan continues his comprehensive and detailed account of the Maori units in the 1st NZEF with an absorbing narrative of their training and departure for the front as the Maori Contingent and the Maori Reinforcements that were to follow, their exploits in Gallipoli and subsequent reorganisation as the Pioneer Battalion under which banner they fought in France and Flanders (Belgium), and their return home with flying colours when the war was over.

It is a pity that such a scholarly study



From left: Arthur MacKereth, North Auckland, (92) Alex Melles, Dannevirke (89) Joe Lockwood (87) Gisborne, Harry Wahapu (87) Cambridge, Richard Bell (96) Te Kuiti, George Nichols (86) Tauranga.