

AN OUTSTANDING AND INCREDIBLY RARE WW1 NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY GROUP TO A MAORI WHO WAS 3 TIMES WOUNDED. A PRE WAR RUGBY PLAYER WHO TOURED WITH THE FIRST OFFICIAL NEW ZEALAND MAORI TEAM IN 1910-13, HE ALSO PLAYED FOR THE NZEF 'ALL BLACKS' TEAM WHO TOURED FRANCE AND BRITAIN IN 1918-19, WINNING THE KING'S CUP.

MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.R. '36696 SJT C.W.TEPENE. 2/OTAGO:R.'; BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDAL '36696 SJT.C.W.TEPENE. N.Z.E.F.'. THE VICTORY MEDAL NUMBERED '35595' BUT ENTIRELY AS ISSUED.



M.M. London Gazette 14.5.1919. Recommendation No 2964, 2nd Bn,Otago Regiment:

"Operations at Bon Avis Ridge-29 September 1918. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On 29th September 1918, at Bon Avis Ridge he led his platoon with great dash and skill against the enemy machine gun positions putting several of these out of action and capturing many prisoners. Later, when consolidating in an exposed position though him self wounded, he risked his life in rescuing a wounded comrade under heavy rifle fire and machine gun fire. He was example of what a platoon commander should be and inspired everyone with whom he comes in contact."

Charles William Tepene, from Dunedin, a 33 year old labourer at the Burnside freezing Works enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 21st September 1916. Initially posted to 'D' and then 14 Company 3rd Battalion Otago Regiment he was first in the Field on 1st July 1917 having been appointed L/Cpl on 23rd May and Cpl 1st July. His subsequent service is as follows:

16/10/17 - Wounded – GSW left arm

8/12/17- Rejoined Battalion
 16/12/17 - Promoted Sergeant
 22/2/18 – Joined 14 Company, 2nd Battalion Otago Regiment
 1/4/18 – Wounded – GSW back
 1/6/18 - Rejoined Battalion
 29/9/18 – Wounded – GSW both forearms at Bon Avis Ridge where also won MM
 18/10/18 – 2/11/18 - Detached to Divisional Rugby team
 2/1/19 – 21/5/19 - Detached to Divisional Rugby team- UK
 12/6/19 – Attached NZEF Rugby team
 17/9/19 – Discharged

Pre War Tepene was a Forward in the Southern Rugby team, was selected to play for the first Official Maori All Blacks team in 1910 (then known as the New Zealand Maori's). Indeed not only this but he scored one of the tries in their first match, a 25-5 victory over Rotorua! He continued to play for them throughout 1910, 11 and 13, touring both inside New Zealand and Internationally.



At the end of WW1, 41 men soldiers toured with NZEF Rugby team of 1919, 18 of whom held or would be capped All Black players. Tepene was a Forward in both 'A' and 'B' teams the latter of which played 38 matches in GB and France in 1919, winning 33 matches, drawing 2 and losing just 3! Tepene is noted as scoring during the 13-0 win over Coventry Rugby Club in Feb 1919 but details of other matches is unknown. He also noted as playing with the 'A' team against Canada in the Kings Cup tournament and was clearly a talented player as only the "best" players had been selected for this team. Some rugby historians have dubbed King's Cup as the *'first Rugby World Cup tournament.'* And the 1919 team to have been *'Perhaps the greatest Rugby team ever to wear the Silver Fern of New Zealand'*.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_Army_rugby_team_of_1919



This is an exceptional New Zealand group, not only was he a pioneer rugby player but its very rare to have such a Gallantry group to a Maori who served his entire service in one of the non Maori battalions. Indeed Tepene's brother James, also a Sergeant, served in the Maori contingent as did most of the 3000 odd Maori's to serve in the NZEF. However like others Charles probably joined up with his work mates and felt no need to join an all Maori unit.



Condition NEF, with copy papers on CD, and photos of 1919 King's Cup and 1910 Maori 'All Black' teams, each with Tepene featured.