

28th Māori Battalion

Brief Active Service

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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.*

Look for further information:
[28th Māori Battalion \(28maoribattalion.org.nz\)](http://28maoribattalion.org.nz)

• Brief Active Service: A Long Convalescence •

Joined the Army in June 1941. The Unit was No 75, based at Kaeo Northland. signed up for active service in March 1942. Went to Papakura Camp for 2 months. Got call at night to get ready to move onto the train at 9.30 p.m. In Wellington we were told to get our gear on to the 'New Amsterdam' a Dutch troop ship. At 15.30 hrs took off to an unknown destination.

First port of call Hobart - then Fremantle, Bombay and then Tewfik in Egypt. Went ashore then prepared for a long trek across the Desert. We arrived at Mena and then Maadi, trained there for some time then in full Military gear on a Battle Inoculation march, 15 miles for 6 nights on way to Alexandria.

Boarded the boat or convoy for Italy. Landed at Taranto in the afternoon. Had a church service on arrival. The whole Battalion was briefed that night. After awhile moved on up hills and mountains, onward until we crossed the Sangro River at 0400 hrs which at that season and hour was very cold. Next we were fired upon by enemy planes, but no one was hit.

We went out to get pigs and turkeys from the villagers, this was No 8 Platoon of course. Our big boy Fred Tenamu was the Rock boy to put the pigs to sleep with one blow. Had a hangi on our way forward, everybody got their share, from 8 Platoon to O.C. I don't think the Heads were too happy, but they ate it. The convoy carried on and suddenly enemy planes straffed us. Our Bren Guns opened fire. That night we reached the front line. I and my section were briefed to go and find out where their forward guns were that night picked out a dug out. Got 2 Jerries who were killed by own fire. My Officer Lou Paul was killed too. We carried on, and Jerry opened fire again. We sent a runner back to report what was happening.

I was wounded near Castel, Frentano up on The Mountain. I was sent back to Bari Hospital, then to Helwan in Egypt, and their back to Rotorua Hospital and joined my mates and discharged in 1945.

801363 Mita Hape.



Boys at Castel Frantano

• IMPROPERLY DRESSED •

After the capture of Sollum was complete some of us were rummaging around for 'souvenirs'. On going around the corner of a building, Lo and behold a German came into sight. I cocked my Tommy gun and crisply called, "who goes there?".

The response was unbelievably swift 'Koua ahau epuhia'. What a surprise to hear a German speak Maori! Would you believe the so-called Maori, was none other than the one and only Micky Coates of 'C' company. Lucky for him I was no trigger happy Maori that day.

He was dressed like a German, looked like a German and spoke like a Maori.

He soon changed back into his proper uniform. for his own safety.

PAT EDWARDS
No. 7. Platoon 'A' Company