

= Haane Manahi =

Haane Te Rauawa Manahi DCM ( 28 September 1913 ? 29 March 1986 ) was a New Zealand soldier of Te Arawa and Ng?ti Raukawa descent who served in the Second World War as a member of the M?ori Battalion .

Born in Ohinemutu , New Zealand in 1913 , Manahi worked as a laborer before he volunteered for service in the newly raised M?ori Battalion of the New Zealand Military Forces following the outbreak of the Second World War . He participated in the Battle of Greece and fought in the Battle of Crete during which he was wounded . After recovering from his wounds he returned to the M?ori Battalion , and fought through the Western Desert and Tunisian Campaigns during which he was nominated for a Victoria Cross ( VC ) for his actions at Takrouna . Despite the support of four generals , his VC nomination was downgraded to an award of a Distinguished Conduct Medal .

In June 1943 , he returned to New Zealand on a three @-@ month furlough but when this was completed , was not required to return to active duty . After his discharge from the New Zealand Military Forces , he was employed as a traffic inspector . He was killed in a car crash in 1986 . After his death , representations by his Te Arawa iwi ( tribe ) were made to Buckingham Palace for a posthumous award of the VC . These representations were ultimately unsuccessful due to the period of time that had elapsed since the war . In 2007 , he eventually received a special citation for bravery from the Queen .

= = Early life = =

Haane Te Rauawa Manahi , the youngest son of a farm labourer , was born on 28 September 1913 in Ohinemutu , a village on the shores of Lake Rotorua in the North Island of New Zealand . Of Te Arawa and Ng?ti Raukawa descent ( and a little Scottish from his mother ) , he attended local schools in the area up to secondary school level . After leaving school , he worked in road construction and undertook farm work . He also spent time in the timber and building industries alongside his uncle , Matiu , who had served in the first contingent of New Zealand M?ori to be raised for military duty during the First World War .

= = Second World War = =

Following the outbreak of the Second World War , Manahi was one of the first men to enlist in November 1939 in the newly formed M?ori Battalion . The battalion was composed of a headquarters company and four rifle companies , which were organised along tribal lines . Manahi was assigned to B Company , made up largely of other men from Te Arawa . In May 1940 , after a period of training at Trentham Military Camp , the battalion embarked for the Middle East as part of the second echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force ( NZEF ) . En route , the convoy carrying the second echelon was diverted to England , where it would remain until January 1941 engaged in further training and defensive duties .

= = = Greece and Crete = = =

On 27 March 1941 , Manahi 's battalion , having spent two months in Egypt , arrived in Greece to assist in its defence against an anticipated German invasion . It initially took up defensive positions around Olympus Pass , and in the days following the beginning of the invasion on 6 April , rebuffed initial contact by the advancing Germans . The battalion had to withdraw as the flanks of the Allied positions were threatened . B Company was the last of the battalion 's units to abandon its positions , and together with the rest of the Allies , withdrew over the following days to Porto Rafti , where it boarded a transport ship for Crete .

On Crete , the Allies dug in for the expected airborne attack by German paratroopers . The M?ori Battalion was positioned near the town of Platanias , as a reserve for 5th Infantry Brigade which was tasked with the defence of Maleme Airfield . On 20 May , the attack commenced . Manahi was

returning to his trench , having just had breakfast , as planes and gliders flew overhead , discharging paratroopers . During fighting for the airfield , Manahi was wounded in the chest . Despite his wounds , he would remain with his company as it was forced to withdraw to the southwest in the following days and was eventually evacuated from Crete on 31 May .

= = = North Africa = = =

After a period of recuperation , Manahi returned to the normal routine of training for desert warfare and constructing defensive positions around the Baggush Box . In November he , along with rest of the 2nd Division , participated in Operation Crusader . This involved near constant fighting across Libya for well over a month , during which Manahi , with two others , captured and commandeered a German tank which had been stuck in B Company 's trenches . In early 1942 , the New Zealanders were withdrawn to Syria for a period of rest and garrison duty .

However , in late May 1942 Rommel and the Afrika Korps attacked into Libya . The 2nd Division was rushed back from Syria and dug in at Minqar Qaim . Encircled by the Germans , the division was forced to breakout on 26 June and withdrew to positions around El Alamein . Here , suffering regular artillery barrages , it dug in to await an expected attack . In late August , no attack had been launched and it was decided a raid for prisoners would be undertaken by two companies , one of them being Manahi 's B Company . This was successfully executed on 26 August . The next month , the battalion was taken out of the line for a brief period of rest before returning for the Second Battle of El Alamein . During the fourth stage of the battle , in what was codenamed Operation Supercharge , Manahi and his company was involved in a bayonet charge against well dug in Germans that had resisted a previous attack by another battalion .

By now , it was clear that the Germans were in retreat and the Allies pursued them into Libya and Tunisia . After a battle at Tebaga Gap , during which Moana @-@ Nui @-@ a @-@ Kiwa Ngarimu of the battalion 's C Company won the Victoria Cross ( VC ) , planning began for a push into Tunisia 's capital city Tunis . Before this could be achieved , a defensive line around Enfidaville needed to be broken .

= = = Takrouna = = =

By April 1943 , the 2nd Division had advanced into mountainous country overlooking Enfidaville . Takrouna was a hill , 300 metres high , held by soldiers of the Italian Trieste Division 's I / 66 ° Battalion as well as a German platoon . A village was situated on the summit of the hill with a prominent ledge to one side . The Mori Battalion was tasked by Major General Howard Kippenberger , commander of 2nd Division , with the capture of Takrouna , and B Company would make the main assault on 19 April , with C and D companies on the flanks . The initial attack petered out due to heavy gunfire from the enemy . Bennett ordered Manahi , now a lance sergeant , to take his platoon of 12 men to make a feint attack while the remainder of B Company linked up with C Company . The platoon split into two sections , with one under the command of Manahi . At dawn , they began their attack up a steep and at times near sheer slope and were successfully able to overwhelm the Italians defending the ledge , capturing 60 prisoners . The New Zealanders then dug in and prepared for a counterattack . Artillery and mortar fire killed half of the platoon , including its commander . This left Manahi in command .

With two attempts to contact the battalion having failed , Manahi made his way down Takrouna to locate reinforcements and supplies . Ignoring an officer 's advice that he abandon the ledge , he returned with a section from C Company as well as ammunition and stretcher bearers . A further platoon arrived to further consolidate his position . The expected counterattack then commenced , and this was successfully beaten off . It was only then , after having been on Takrouna for 16 hours that Manahi and what was left of his section withdrew , leaving the platoon to hold the position .

Despite reinforcements , a further counterattack launched by Italian soldiers of the Trieste Division on 21 April dislodged the New Zealanders and control of the ledge was lost . Kippenberger ordered the Mori Battalion to send reinforcements to rectify the situation . Manahi returned with a platoon to

recapture the lost position , and with artillery support the attack was successful and by midday the ledge was reoccupied by the New Zealanders . However , the village on the summit remained in the hands of the Italians . Later in the afternoon of 21 April , Manahi led an attacking party which , working with another party , captured the village and took 300 prisoners . After the battle , he assisted with the recovery of the bodies of his dead comrades .

Manahi 's exploits quickly became known throughout the division , and within a few days of his actions a nomination for the VC had been prepared by the commander of his battalion . Brigadier Harding , commander of 5th Infantry Brigade , endorsed the nomination as did four generals ( Kippenberger , Freyberg , Montgomery and Alexander ) . General Henry Maitland Wilson , commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Middle East Forces , likewise endorsed the award after considering the evidence . However , when the nomination reached the Army Council in London , the award was downgraded , most likely by Lord Alanbrooke , to an immediate Distinguished Conduct Medal ( DCM ) which was duly gazetted on 22 July 1943 .

The decision was a disappointment to many in the 2nd Division . Reports that Manahi 's men had killed Italians attempting to surrender were thought by some historians to be a factor in the downgrading of his award . The official New Zealand history of the M?ori Battalion stated that the surrendering soldiers were " shot , bayoneted or thrown over a cliff " but only after an Italian grenade had been thrown into a building in which wounded New Zealanders were sheltering . However , these reports may not have emerged until after the downgrading , and at the time the killings were alleged to have occurred , Manahi himself was reportedly dealing with an advance by Italian soldiers against the ledge . Another factor in the downgrading may have been the recent VC nomination for Ngarimu , just three weeks earlier . The subsequent nomination of Manahi , a M?ori like Ngarimu and from the same battalion , may have led to a perception that VCs were being too easily awarded .

= = Return to New Zealand = =

The surrender of the Axis forces in Tunisia in May left the Allies in control of North Africa . The 2nd Division withdrew to its base in Egypt and it was announced that 6 @,@ 000 of its personnel would return to New Zealand for a three @-@ month furlough . Manahi , as one of the original members of the M?ori Battalion , was among those selected and shipped out on 15 June 1943 . However , Manahi was not to return to the war for it was later decided that the M?ori soldiers on furlough would be exempt from active duty .

On returning to Rotorua , Manahi entered a carpentry course and then began working at the Rotorua Hospital as a carpenter . Once the war was over , he was selected for the New Zealand Victory Contingent , destined for England to celebrate the Commonwealth 's role in the war . As part of the contingent , he participated in the Victory Parade in London on 8 June 1946 . This fulfilled his last military obligations , and he was discharged in August 1946 .

= = Later life = =

Following his discharge , Manahi returned to the work force . Employed by the Ministry of Works , he became a traffic inspector which involved traveling around the Bay of Plenty . A keen sportsman , he became involved in swimming coaching as well golf and fishing . When his wife died in 1976 , he moved away from Rotorua to nearby Maketu , on the coast . He still commuted to Rotorua to spend time at the local branch of the New Zealand Returned Servicemen 's Association ( RSA ) . On the evening of 29 March 1986 , on the way home from the RSA , he was involved in a car crash . He received severe chest and abdominal injuries and was rushed to Tauranga Hospital where he died later in the evening . His tangi ( funeral ) was held at the marae ( tribal meeting area ) in his home village of Ohinemutu , and was attended by members of the Maori Battalion . Survived by two sons , he was buried at Muruika cemetery .

= = The Manahi VC Committee = =

The situation regarding Manahi 's VC recommendation during the Battle of Takrouna still rankled with many members of the M?ori Battalion but while he was alive , Manahi 's modesty and unwillingness to bring any attention to himself meant that he was not interested in changing the situation . Following his death , the Manahi VC Committee was established by his former comrades and iwi to lobby for an upgrade to his award .

The committee lobbied the New Zealand government to make representations to Buckingham Palace regarding the posthumous grant of the VC to Manahi . The Queen 's father , King George VI , had ruled in 1949 that no further awards from the Second World War ought to be made . The New Zealand government was reluctant to make a formal approach and it took until 1997 for Prime Minister , Jenny Shipley to formally broach the subject with Buckingham Palace . The feedback indicated the elapsed time since the events of Takrouna was likely to be a barrier to awarding Manahi a VC .

Finally , in 2000 , Manahi 's iwi , Te Arawa , lodged a claim with the Waitangi Tribunal , and was supported in doing so by the New Zealand RSA . Te Arawa alleged the failure of the New Zealand government to give full consideration of the award of a VC to Manahi constituted a breach of the Treaty of Waitangi , which required the government to act in good faith regarding grievances of M?ori . In December 2005 the tribunal reported that there was no breach of the treaty . While not making any formal conclusions or recommendations , the tribunal suggested that the Manahi VC Committee work with the New Zealand government in making an approach to Buckingham Palace . In October 2006 , after further dialogue with Buckingham Palace , the New Zealand Minister of Defence , Phil Goff , announced that Manahi would be recognised by the presentation of an altar cloth , a personal letter from the Queen acknowledging his gallantry and a sword . The award was presented by Prince Andrew to Manahi 's sons , Rauawa and Geoffrey , at a ceremony in Rotorua on 17 March 2007 . The sword was later presented to the Chief of the New Zealand Defence Force , Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae , along with a patu ( war club ) in memory of Haane Manahi .