



LONGCAST

- 10 December 22 – Navy Club (Saturday)
- 16 December 22 - Ngapona Assn Christmas Lunch at Birkenhead RSA
- 18 December 22 - Neptune Service, DNB at 1000
- 25 December 22 – Christmas Day
- 26 December 22 – Boxing Day
- 27 December 22 – Christmas Day observed

Hi Folks

NGAPONA ASSN – CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our Christmas lunch this year will be at the Birkenhead RSA on Friday, 16 December. This will be an excellent meal, but we need to know numbers for the caterer. Thanks to those who have already replied, but we need some more. Just reply to this email with names and numbers attending.

BRITISH TESTING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS - MEDAL

The UK Prime Minister announced on 21 November that all military and civilian personnel in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji who took part in the British testing of nuclear weapons between 1952 and 1958 will be given a medal

Gerry Wright is asking nuclear veteran to contact him by e-mail

gerrywright@xtra.co.nz

A reunion is planned for the end of April 2023 and a newsletter will begin once he

has 50+ e-mail addresses.

NEW ZEALAND VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS

Bill Henry "Willie" Apiata, VC (born 28 June 1972)



Willie Apiata was born in Mangakino, New Zealand. His father is Maori and his mother is Pakeha. His parents separated, and he has not had contact with his father for several years. His early childhood was spent at Waima in Northland before the family moved to Te Kaha when he was seven. He attended Te Whanau-a-Apanui Area School in Te Kaha, which he left at the age of 15.

Apiata affiliates to the Ngāpuhi iwi (tribe) through his father, but also has a very strong affiliation to Te Whānau-ā-Apanui from his time in the eastern Bay of Plenty.

Apiata's home marae are Tukaki Marae at Te Kaha and Ngati Kawa Marae at Oromahoe, just south of Kerikeri. In September 2011 Apiata was married to Sade, a chef in the army, but they have since divorced. They have two sons together, and he has a son from an earlier relationship.

He enlisted in the New Zealand Army on 6 October 1989 in the Territorial Force Hauraki Regiment of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. He unsuccessfully attempted to join the Special Air Service (SAS) in 1996. From July 2000 to April 2001 he served in East Timor as a member of New Zealand's third Battalion Group as part of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor. On his return he became a full-time soldier. His second attempt to join the SAS in November 2001 was successful.

Lance Corporal (now Corporal) Apiata was, in 2004, part of a New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) Troop on patrol in Afghanistan, which laid up in a defensive formation for the night. At approximately 03:15 hours, the Troop was attacked by a group of about twenty enemy fighters, who had approached by stealth using the cover of the undulating ground in pitch darkness. Rocket-propelled grenades struck two of the Troop's vehicles, destroying one and immobilising the other. The opening strike was followed by dense and persistent machine gun and automatic rifle fire from close range. The attack then continued using further rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun and rifle fire.

The initial attack was directed at the vehicle where Lance Corporal Apiata was stationed. He was blown off the bonnet by the impact of the rocket-propelled grenades striking the vehicle. He was dazed, but was not physically injured. The two other vehicle crew members had been wounded by shrapnel; one of them; Corporal A, was in a serious condition. Illuminated by the burning vehicle, and under sustained and accurate enemy fire directed at and around their position, the three soldiers immediately took what little cover was available.

Corporal A was discovered to have sustained life-threatening wounds. The other two soldiers immediately began applying basic first aid. Lance Corporal Apiata assumed command of the situation, as he could see that his superior's condition was deteriorating rapidly. By this time, however, Lance Corporal Apiata's exposed position, some seventy metres in front of the rest of the Troop, was coming under increasingly intense enemy fire. Corporal A was now suffering serious arterial bleeding and was lapsing in and out of consciousness.

Lance Corporal Apiata concluded that his comrade urgently required medical attention, or he would likely die. Pinned down by the enemy, in the direct line of fire between friend and foe, he also judged that there was almost no chance of such help reaching their position. As the enemy pressed its attack towards Lance Corporal Apiata's position, and without thought of abandoning his colleague to save himself, he took a decision in the highest order of personal courage under fire.

Knowing the risks involved in moving to open ground, Lance Corporal Apiata decided to carry Corporal A single-handedly to the relative safety of the main Troop position, which afforded better cover and where medical treatment could be given. He ordered his other colleague, Trooper T to make his own way back to the rear.

In total disregard of his own safety, Lance Corporal Apiata stood up and lifted his comrade bodily. He then carried him across the seventy metres of broken, rocky and fire swept ground, fully exposed in the glare of battle to heavy enemy fire and into the face of returning fire from the main Troop position. That neither he nor his colleague were hit is scarcely possible. Having delivered his wounded companion to relative shelter with the remainder of the patrol, Lance Corporal Apiata re-armed himself and rejoined the fight in counter-attack. By his actions he removed the tactical complications of Corporal A's predicament from considerations of rescue.

The Troop could now concentrate entirely on prevailing in the battle itself. After an engagement lasting approximately twenty minutes, the assault was broken up and the numerically superior attackers were routed with significant casualties, with the Troop in pursuit. Lance Corporal Apiata had thereby contributed materially to the operational success of the engagement.

A subsequent medical assessment confirmed that Corporal A would probably have died of blood loss and shock, had it not been for Lance Corporal Apiata's selflessly courageous act in carrying him back to the main Troop lines, to receive immediate treatment that he needed.

Apiata was re-deployed to Afghanistan with the NZSAS in 2009 when the New Zealand government opted to return troops to that country. Responding in the aftermath of the January 2010 attacks in Kabul.

Around 18 July 2012, Apiata left full-time military service to teach adventure skills to young people at the High Wire Charitable Trust. He did not resign from the Army and remains with the NZSAS Reserve Forces.



Apiata was photographed by French photojournalist Philip Poupin in Afghanistan in 2010.

Apiata's medal ribbons, as they would appear on the left breast of his uniform



Victoria Cross for New Zealand

New Zealand Operational Service Medal

East Timor Medal

United Nations Mission in East Timor Medal (UNAMET)

New Zealand General Service Medal for Afghanistan

NATO Medal for the Non-Article 5 ISAF Operation in Afghanistan

Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal

Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal

New Zealand Defence Service Medal

Apiata is also entitled to wear the emblem of the US Navy and Marine Corps Presidential Unit Citation on the right breast of the uniform



Regards

Jerry Payne

Editor

HMNZS Ngapona Assn

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