The story of tiny Niue's involvement in the Great War has captivated people since an account was first published by Margaret Pointer in 2000. In 1915, 160 Niuean men joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force as part of the Maori Reinforcements and set sail to Auckland and then Egypt and France. Most had never left the island before, or worn shoes before. Most spoke no English.

Most significantly, they had no immunity to European disease. Within three months of leaving New Zealand, over 80 per cent of them had been hospitalised and the army authorities withdrew them.

Margaret Pointer became involved in research to trace the lost story of Niue's involvement in World War I while living on the island in the 1990s. The resulting book, Tagi Tote e Loto Haaku: My Heart is Crying a Little, was published in 2000. Her research has continued since, and Niue and the Great War contains much new material together with new photographs. This moving story has now been set in a wider Pacific context and also considers the contribution made by colonial troops, especially ‘coloured’ ones, to the Allied effort.

AUTHOR

Margaret Pointer is a graduate in history from Victoria University of Wellington and for many years taught at secondary school level. In 2015 Otago University Press published her Niue 1774–1974: 200 years of contact and change. Margaret lives in Wellington and visits Niue frequently.