

Frederick George McKee

Frederick was born in Wellington on 25 July 1892. His parents were Arthur McKee and Martha Gore McKee. The family moved to Riwaka, by Motueka in 1903.¹ Arthur McKee had opened up the "Apple-lands" in the Tasman area which became the heart of the apple growing horticultural industry in the Tasman District. McKee's Domain in Ruby Bay is named after Arthur McKee.²

Fred attended Motueka High School then finished his secondary education at Wellington College.³

Frederick enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 15 August 1914 and gave the family address as Richardson Street, the Port, Nelson.⁴ Shortly after the McKee family shifted to Tasman.⁵ He was unmarried and worked for his father as a fruit farmer.⁶

Fred commenced with an initial rank of private, and his army serial number was 6/308. He served in the 12th (Nelson) Company, with the Canterbury Infantry Battalion, New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He departed on the troopship "Athenic" on 16 October 1914.⁷

He saw action in the Dardanelles campaign, at Gallipoli and The Nelson Mail, printed extracts from his diary:

"Sunday April 25th. A perfect morning. Weighed anchor at 6.15am and moved out...One unending roar of guns is quite distinct now and fairly shakes the ship. The day is very warm and quite calm.

Monday 26th April ...The landing place was very like Tasman Bluffs in parts, straight up and down, in others with steep scrub-covered spurs and in places twice or three times the height".⁸

He was in action on 7 May:

"It was a brilliant charge but costs us a lot of casualties, more than the landing did...It was here I got three bullets through my clothing and equipment".⁹

He was to suffer from dysentery, as did many others, on Gallipoli and was initially sent to hospital in June 1915, then returned before being fully fit and finally on 20 July 1915, he left for medical treatment in Egypt.¹⁰

Fred served next on the Western Front in France in 1916, where he was promoted to Sgt. Major in March 1916. He wrote to his family on August 2, telling them that he was still in the land of the living.¹¹ He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant 1 March 1916.¹² He died at the First Battle of the Somme on 20 September 1916, attempting to take a strong German position.¹³ He is commemorated in the New Zealand memorial at Caterpillar Valley, by the village of Longueval, Somme, France. His grave remains unknown.¹⁴

The McKee family eventually had three boys at war, Fred, Frank and Artie. Frank was wounded on the same day that Fred died. Both Frank and Artie survived the war.¹⁵

Endnotes

1 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24

- 2 Dunn p25.
- 3 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24
- 4 McKee, Frederick George. Cenotaph Database Record
- 5 McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel Record, History sheet
- 6 McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel Record History sheet
- 7 McKee, Frederick George. Cenotaph Database Record
- 8 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24
- 9 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24
- 10 McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel Record. Statement of Service
- 11 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24
- 12 McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel Record. Statement of Service
- 13 McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel Record. History sheet.
- 14 McKee, Frederick George. Kete Database Record.
- 15 Hell let loose. Subject Files World War 1 p. 24

Sources

McKee, Frederick George. Military Personnel record, Archives New Zealand, URL: www.archway.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=10925216 , accessed 6 February 2014.

McKee, Frederick George. Cenotaph Database record, Auckland War Memorial Museum URL: <http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/9729.detail?Ordinal=15&c-su> , accessed 5 February 2014.

McKee, Frederick George. Kete Database record, URL: http://ketetasman.peoplesnetworknz.info/first_world_war_centenary/documents/show/403-mckee-frederick-george, accessed 5 February 2014.

Hell let loose in the trenches. Nelson Evening Mail, 22.4.2000. Nelson Provincial Museum Subject Files World War 1 p. 24

Dunn, Annabel, 2006. Ed. Exploring selected reserves in Tasman District. [Nelson], Tasman District Council.

This researched Biography was compiled by Anna Wilkinson, Nelson Provincial Museum, in 2014.