

George Augustus O'Shea

George O'Shea was born 5 December 1889¹ at Wakefield, the son of Thomas and Mary O'Shea² nee Mahoney.³ The family was Roman Catholic.⁴ He is known to have at least three siblings, Katherine Ann, Eileen Francis and Mary Agnes as their marriages are recorded in St Mary's Church register.⁵

He was working at Pongaroa as a grocer's assistant when war broke out.⁶ He enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 17 August 1914,⁷ with the Wellington Infantry Battalion, as a private, army serial no. 10/95 and departed with the Main Body on 16 October 1914.⁸

He served in the Balkan theatre of war in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. He was encamped at Zeitoun near Cairo and was absent without leave twice, being 9 January and 8 March, for which he earned himself detention and had his pay docked.⁹

He was wounded on 25 May, and then wounded a second time on 9 August 1915. He was sent to the British Red Cross hospital later that month. After he rejoined his battalion he was again hospitalized. He contracted meningitis and died of the illness, on 11 January 1916 at no.4 Auxiliary Hospital at Cairo.¹⁰

The Nelson Provincial Museum holds a framed portrait of George wearing an Indian turban. According to an inscription written on the reverse of a photograph he borrowed the turban from a soldier in the bed adjacent his to have the photograph taken and he died the very next day of his illness. The inscription records his death as "13th January 1916" which differs from his military records. As well his birth date is inscribed as "5th December 1888" but his military record states his birth year as 1889 but unfortunately his birth was not listed in the index of the St Mary's Catholic church, in the Wakefield Registry Office records 1875-1956 nor entered in the Nelson Provincial Museum indexes of the Colonist or Nelson Evening Mail newspaper births, deaths and marriages. His Cenotaph database record gives his age as 28 at the time of death in 1916.¹¹

George was buried in Cairo War Memorial Cemetery¹².

He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War and the Victory medals.

Endnotes

- 1 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, Attestation Form.
- 2 O'Shea, George Augustus. Cenotaph Database Record.
- 3 O'Shea, Mary, St Mary's Church record.
- 4 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, History sheet.
- 5 O'Shea, Mary, St Mary's Church record.
- 6 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, Attestation Form.
- 7 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, Attestation Form.
- 8 O'Shea, George Augustus. Cenotaph Database Record.
- 9 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, Statement of service.

- 10 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, History sheet.
- 11 O'Shea, George Augustus. Cenotaph Database Record.
- 12 O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, History sheet.

Sources

O'Shea, George Augustus. Cenotaph Database record, Auckland Memorial Museum.
Url:
http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/11720.detail?Ordinal=1&c_surname_search=o'shea&c_firstname_search=george+augustus , accessed 16.6.2014.

O'Shea, George Augustus. Military Personnel Record, Archives New Zealand, URL:
<http://www.archway.archives.govt.nz/ViewFullItem.do?code=21382910> , accessed 16.6.2014.

St Mary's Church, Manuka Street, Nelson, Records, 1844-1913. Index compiled by Nelson Provincial Museum.

New Zealand's roll of honour. New Zealand Herald. 15 January 1916, p.9.

Personal items. Nelson Evening Mail. 18 August 1915, p. 4.

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