

## Frederick Starnes

Frederick Starnes was born on 11 October 1888 at Motueka. He was the son of Thomas Steven Briggs Starnes and Sarah Jane Starnes. The Starnes resided at Lower Moutere in the Tasman District.<sup>1</sup>

He was a farmer before enlisting and worked for his father on their Lower Moutere farm. The family was Presbyterian. He enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force as a single man on 12 August 1914 at the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. His serial number was 6/359 and he served with the 12<sup>th</sup> (Nelson) Company, Canterbury Infantry Battalion. He embarked on 16 October 1914 with the Main Body from Wellington which was destined later for the Suez Canal, in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> He was in command of the 3rd Platoon, of the 12<sup>th</sup> (Nelson) Company.<sup>3</sup>

He saw action in Egypt with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.) 1914-1916, at Gallipoli in the Balkans in 1915, on the Western Front 1916-1918 and the Asiatic war theatre in 1918.<sup>4</sup>

He had been promoted to Captain in March 1916, and was appointed 12<sup>th</sup> (Nelson) Company commander in May 1917, at the rank of Major.<sup>5</sup>

At the 1916 First Battle of the Somme, when the New Zealanders took over the Flers section late in September 1916, Captain Starnes was commanding the Canterbury Reserve Company. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canterbury had attacked a ridge on 19 September, but a German counter attack had driven them back and there were concerns of encirclement. Captain Starnes and his men arrived with the Reserves. The captain led from the front and rallied the men. The counter attack regained the lost ground and he was recommended for a Victoria Cross but was awarded an immediate DSO.<sup>6</sup>

The Nelson Evening Mail reported on 9 December 1916:

“He led them forward again, rallying the gloomy ones, careless of his own life but eager to uphold the honour of New Zealand; his men followed him under a kind of spell.”

He was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, the British War medal, the Victory medal, the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and the Order of the British Empire (OBE). The DSO was awarded for gallantry in the field and devotion to duty. He was twice mentioned in dispatches.<sup>7</sup>

After the war he returned to New Zealand being discharged on 16 February 1920.<sup>8</sup> He married twice firstly to May, and then to Beatrice Taylor.<sup>9</sup> He and Beatrice lived at Tauranga. He died on 12 October 1973, at Tauranga.<sup>10</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Starnes, Fred. Military Personnel Record. History sheet
- 2 Starnes, Fred. Cenotaph Database
- 3 Colonist 17.8.1914, p2.
- 4 Starnes, Fred. Military Personnel Record. History sheet
- 5 Starnes, Fred. Military Personnel Record. Statement of service.
- 6 Gray, p233.
- 7 Pro Patria project.
- 8 Starnes, Fred. Military Personnel Record. History sheet

- 9 Fred Starnes. Ancestry.com.  
10 Starnes, Fred. Military Personnel Record. Notification of death.

### Sources

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Captain Starnes and his D.S.O. The Nelson evening Mail, 9.12.1916, p4.

List of infantry. Colonist 17.8.1914, p2.

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