



Club member who made the supreme sacrifice 1914-1919

# The Story Behind the Name

## The 'O'NEILL' Brothers



**JAMES GORDON**



**WILLIAM**



**James Gordon O'NEILL**

**21 August 1993 - 8 August 1918**

Club members who made the supreme sacrifice 1914-1919

# **The Story Behind the Name**



## **2nd Lieutenant James Gordon O'NEILL**

**21 August 1893 - 8 August 1918**

### **PRE-ENLISTMENT:**

- James Gordon O'Neill was born on 21 August 1893 at Cooktown, Queensland to parents James Henry and Edith (nee Williams) O'Neill, Gordonvale, Queensland
- His father James had a previous marriage and had 3 children William (Willie) born 22 January 1886 in Cooktown, Anne Jane 28 October 1887, Lizzie Florence 22 June 1889. When his father's first wife Elizabeth (Lizzie) Angelina died in 1890, he married Edith Williams on the 23 February 1892.
- Father and son shared the same Christian name so Edith, referred to her son as Gordon
- His step-brother was William O'Neill and he later enlisted and paid the supreme sacrifice in France
- He was a single farmer in the Gordonvale, Cairns district
- His next of kin was listed as his father, James O'Neill, Gordonvale

### **PREVIOUS MILITARY SERVICE**

- O'Neill mobilised for War Service in August 1914 and served at the Australian Expeditionary Force
- He embarked at Carins, Qld, on 8 August 1914 on the 'Kanowna' for Thursday Island (War Station) Garrison Duty.
- While there, the soldiers were called to enlist for duty outside Australia but he did not enlist for that overseas service to Rabaul (German New Guinea).

### **RIFLE SHOOTING:**

- James Gordon O'Neill was a regular member of the Mulgrave Rifle Club
- After the war, Mrs O'Neill donated a beautiful gold medal to the Mulgrave Rifle Club in memory of her two boys, William and James Gordon. They were active members of the Club when war broke out, when they enlisted and made the supreme sacrifice. The medal was shot for in due course, and the member fortunate enough to win the medal had something to be proud of, seeing that it comes from the mother of such sterling boys as Willie and Gordon.



## 2nd Lieutenant James Gordon O'NEILL

21 August 1893 - 8 August 1918

### SERVICE:

- Service Number: 1994
- James O'Neill enlisted on 27 January 1915 in Cairns as a Private with 9th Battalion, 5th Reinforcement
- On 16 April 1915 he embarked with his Unit on HMAT Kyarra, from Brisbane, aged 21 years
- He spent time in hospital with mumps in Cairo in January 1916
- He was transferred to 47th battalion at Serapeum and Taken on Strength.
- He re-joined his Unit at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli on 22 June 1915
- On 9 November 1916 he was promoted Temporary Corporal then on 20 February 1917 he was promoted Corporal, and on 27 February 1917 he was appointed Lance Sergeant.
- On 18 July 1917 he was admitted to hospital then re-joined his Unit 21 July 1917
- On 2 February 1918 promoted to 2nd Lieutenant
- On 5 April he proceeded overseas to France via Southampton with 47th Battalion
- On 26 May 1918 he was taken on strength by 48th Battalion from 47th Battalion
- On 20 July 1918 he was detached for duty with the 13 FC Engineers, 48th Battalion
- His War Service was in Egypt, Gallipoli and France
- 2nd Lieutenant James Gordon O'Neill was killed in action on 8 August 1918 in France, with the 48th Battalion aged 24 years

### CEMETERY &/OR MEMORIAL:

- Heath Cemetery (Plot II, Row G, Grave No. 12), Harbonnieres, France
- Memorials: Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour Panel number 146
- Cairns Cenotaph
- Gordonvale War Memorial
- Gordonvale Presbyterian Honour Board

### MILITARY HONOURS & AWARDS:

- 1914-15 Star
- British War Medal
- Victory Medal





## 2nd Lieutenant James Gordon O'NEILL

21 August 1993 - 8 August 1918

### ESTABLISHING A LEGACY

As Australia grieved for the fallen soldiers of World War I, a determined group of women in the far north Queensland town of Gordonvale set about making sure their boys would never be forgotten.

### Gordonvale Memorial Hospital

Gordonvale Memorial Hospital was originally erected as an 8 bed hospital in memory of those who died in service or were killed in action during World War I.



Official Opening of the Gordonvale Memorial Hospital

Gordonvale Memorial Hospital was originally erected as an 8 bed hospital in memory of those who died in service or were killed in action during World War One.

Mrs O'Neill was the person most involved in organising the construction of a War Memorial Hospital in Gordonvale. Her two sons Act Sgt William O'Neill, and Second Lieutenant James Gordon O'Neill were killed in action.

Fund raising for the original hospital started in September 1920 using both donations and government resources. The building was constructed by the Public Works Department and included a maternity ward.

When it was officially opened by Lord Stonehaven, the Governor-General, in July 1926, it was fully equipped with the latest appliances purchased with funds raised by the Committee.

The original building was subsequently demolished to make way for more extensive structures.



The modern Gordonvale Memorial Hospital has a marble plaque, removed from the original hospital, on the left wall of its entrance with a comprehensive history in a separate plaque below. Within the hospital foyer are several photographs of William and James O'Neill.

The original plaque was found in a filing cabinet and unveiled at the entrance to the hospital on the 24th April 2015.



## Private Ernest ALLEN

8 October 1883 - 25 April 1918

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## KILLED IN ACTION - 8 AUGUST 1918

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Thu 29 Aug 1918


**Gordonvale Soldiers' Memorial Hospital**

### Establishment of the Hospital

World War I claimed many young Australians. On the cenotaph at Gordonvale, the local soldiers who did not return are honoured.

James and Edith O'Neill lost two boys and along with Mrs W Griffin who had also lost a son, had a meeting in 1920 to establish a cottage hospital as a memorial to the young soldiers.

It was quite a journey from Gordonvale to the Cairns Hospital and some of the injured or sick did not make it or were worse for the delay to treatment.



Lord Stonehaven, Governor-General of Australia 1926-1930

A committee of Gordonvale's like-minded ladies was formed and fundraising began. Over a five year period, the committee raised over £4,000, a remarkable effort.

The committee built an 8-bed hospital including a one bed maternity ward, first-aid section, nurse's quarters and kitchen. Beds were donated by residents of Gordonvale.


On 16 July 1926, then Governor General of Australia, His Excellency Lord Stonehaven unveiled two newly erected concrete gate posts that contained memorial tablets inscribed with 'Gordonvale Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.' One has been restored in recognition of the contribution of the young men and women of Gordonvale and the community spirit that led to the establishment of the Gordonvale Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. This memorial was unveiled on Friday 24 April, 2015 by the Hon. Curtis Pitt, Member for Mulgrave.

Let Us Forget.

The Hon. Curtis Pitt MP  
Treasurer and Member for Mulgrave  
Queensland Government

Bob Norman  
Chair  
Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Board

Julia Hartley-Jones CBE  
Chief Executive  
Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service



The Gordonvale Soldiers' Memorial Hospital was a project that required a great deal of fund raising which was led by Mrs Edith O'Neill. She was the mother of James and William O'Neill who both lost their lives fighting at the front. This was an amazing achievement to honour those who so readily gave so much.