

**Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery,
East Sussex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



2267 2ND CORPORAL

J. A. O'NEILL MM.

AUSTRALIAN PROVOST CORPS

25TH NOVEMBER, 1919 Age 31

Father & Son United

Sacred Heart Of Jesus

Have Mercy On His Soul

John Albert O'NEILL

John Albert O'Neill was born at Alberton (listed on Attestation Papers as "West Albert"), South Gippsland, Victoria in 1888 to parents Christopher and Ellen O'Neill (nee Nolan).

John Albert O'Neill attended State School at Alberton West, Victoria.

John Albert O'Neill was a 26 year old, single, Labourer from Alberton West, South Gippsland, Victoria when he enlisted on 1st June, 1915 at Claremont, Tasmania with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2267 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr C. O'Neill, Alberton West, South Gippsland, Victoria. John O'Neill stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been a member of the Rifle Club at South Gippsland.

Private John Albert O'Neill was posted to 6th Reinforcements of 12th Battalion for recruit training.

Private John Albert O'Neill embarked from Adelaide, South Australia on 23rd June, 1915 on HMAT *Wandilla* (A62) (The War Gratuity Schedule in the Service Record file for Private John Albert O'Neil recorded he embarked on HMAT Borda (A30)) with the 12th Infantry Battalion, 6th Reinforcements.

Private John Albert O'Neill proceeded from Alexandria to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli per *Kingstonian* on 11th September, 1915. He was taken on strength of 12th Battalion at Gallipoli on 17th September, 1915.

Private John Albert O'Neill disembarked at Alexandria on 6th January, 1916 from H.M.T. *Lake Michigan* (after the evacuation of Gallipoli).

Private John Albert O'Neill proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 29th March, 1916 on Troopship *Corsican*. He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 5th April, 1916.

Private John Albert O'Neill was recommended to be Mentioned in Despatches on 1st August, 1916. He was recommended along with other members of the 12th Battalion - Private Edward Harding, 2845; Private Wilfred Stone, 3089; Private Albert Arthur Reader, 168; Private Victor James Chilcott, 2823 "*For conspicuous gallantry & devotion to duty during operations 23-25th July, 1916 at POZIERES. They were stretcher bearers during the whole of this period & with great courage & coolness carried many wounded men across shell swept areas to dressing station.*"

Private John Albert O'Neill was recommended for the Military Medal on 1st March, 1917. Private Samuel John Clarke, 2229 & Private John Albert O'Neill, 2267, both from 12th Battalion were recommended for the Military Medal by C. O. (Commanding Officer) 12th Battalion "*for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Private CLARKE & O'NEILL, were stretcher bearers and were untiring in their efforts to carry back wounded men over exceedingly heavy country, the rapid advance of the battalion making this a very long and arduous task. Private CLARKE was previously recommended for work at MOUQUET FARM.*"

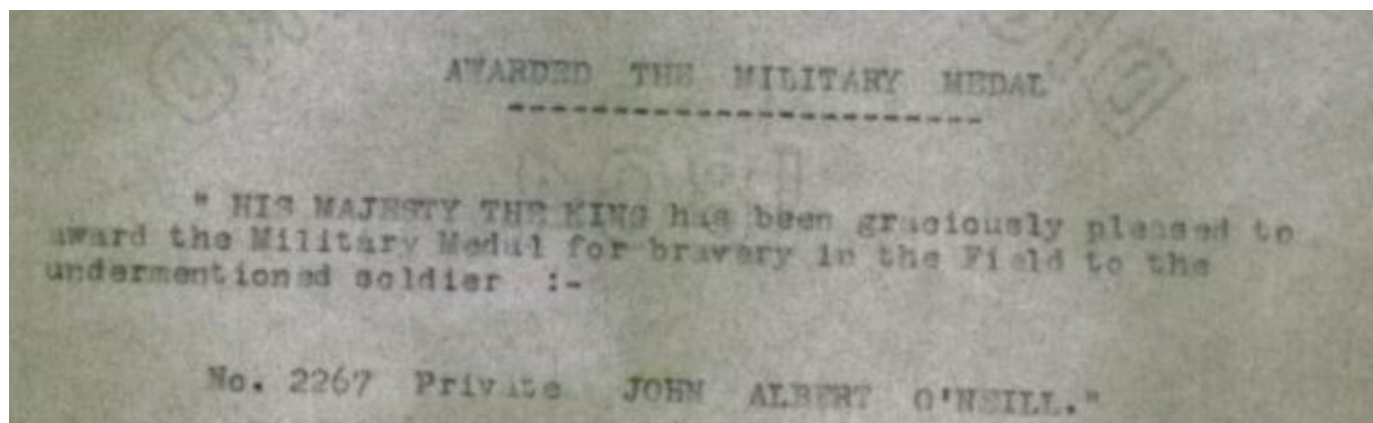
Private John Albert O'Neill was awarded the Military Medal. (London Gazette – 11 May 1917 & Commonwealth of Australia Gazette – 27 August 1917).

The Military Medal (MM) was a military decoration awarded to personnel of the British Army and other arms of the armed forces, and to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land. The award was established in 1916, with retrospective application to 1914, and was awarded to other ranks for "acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire". (Wikipedia)



Military Medal (MM)

Mr C. O'Neill was advised by Base Records on 7th September, 1917 that his son Private John Albert O'Neill had been awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the Field.



Private John Albert O'Neill was wounded in action in Belgium between 19 & 20th September, 1917. He was admitted to 6th Australia Field Ambulance on 20th September, 1917 with Shrapnel wounds to left arm. Private O'Neill was transferred & admitted to 10th Casualty Clearing Station on 20th September, 1917 then transferred & admitted to 16th General Hospital at Le Treport, France on 21st September, 1917 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to left arm. He was marked for transfer to England on 26th September, 1917 & embarked for England on Hospital Ship *St. Denis* on 27th September, 1917.

12th Battalion

The 12th Battalion was among the first infantry units raised for the AIF during the First World War. Half of the battalion was recruited in Tasmania, a quarter was recruited in South Australia, and a quarter from Western Australia. With the 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions it formed the 3rd Brigade.

.....The 12th served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.

After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the 12th Battalion returned to Egypt and, in March 1916, sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in bitter trench warfare. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. After Pozieres, the battalion fought at Ypres in Flanders and then returned to the Somme for winter.

In 1917 the battalion took part in the brief advance that followed the German Army's retreat to the Hindenburg Line. For their valorous actions near Boursies during this advance, Captain J. E. 'Jim' Newland, commanding A Company, and Sergeant J. W. Whittle were each awarded the Victoria Cross. The battalion subsequently returned to Belgium to participate in the offensive that became known as the Third Battle of Ypres.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 12th Battalion

HALFWAY HOUSE – 19th September, 1917:

Moved to Halfway House. Move complete by 11.55. Men all resting in afternoon & evening.

FRONT LINE – 20/21st September, 1917:

For operations, see report attached.

Report of Operations near POLYGON WOOD 20/21st September, 1917:

The objective assigned to this Unit for the attack on 20/9/17 was the "BLUE LINE", approximately the W. edge of POLYGON WOOD.....

No record was kept of prisoners captured – probably about 40.

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Total Casualties: 1 Officer killed, 1 missing, and four wounded.

Other ranks

	<i>A. Coy.</i>	<i>B. Coy.</i>	<i>C. Coy.</i>	<i>D. Coy.</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Killed</i>	3	5	5	3	16
<i>Missing</i>	6	4	4	2	16
<i>Wounded</i>	34	29	38	37	138
					170

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private John Albert O'Neill was admitted to 2nd Military Hospital, Old Park, Canterbury, England on 27th September, 1917 with G.S.W. to left arm (slight). He was transferred to 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford on 3rd October, 1917 & discharged to Depot at Weymouth on 19th October, 1917.

Mr C. O'Neill, West Albert, South Gippsland, Victoria, father of Private John Albert O'Neill, was advised by Base Records on 12th October, 1917 that Private J. A. O'Neill had been admitted to London General Hospital, England on 30th September, 1917 suffering from gunshot wound to left arm – mild.

Private John Albert O'Neill was marched in to No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth, Dorset, England on 19th October, 1917. He was marched out from No. 2 Command Depot at Weymouth on 26th November, 1917 & marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire on 27th November, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire. Convalescing Units were also located near the Training Units in Wiltshire.

Private John Albert O'Neill was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Sutton Veny from furlough on 13th December, 1917. He was medically classified as B1 A3 (fit for overseas training camp in 2 – 3 weeks).

Private John Albert O'Neill was marched out from Sutton Veny to Provost Corps at Tidworth, Wiltshire on 1st August, 1918 & was attached to Australian Provost Corps for duty from 12th Battalion & from No. 1 Command Depot on 1st August, 1918.

Private John Albert O'Neill was transferred to Australian Provost Corps on 26th August, 1918 from 12th Battalion & attached for duty. He was taken on strength of Australian Provost Corps on 26th August, 1918.

Australian Provost Corps

The Anzac Provost Corps was formed in Egypt in June 1916. The corps was made up of men who had served in fighting units in operations against the enemy. In camps and rear areas, the military police conducted patrols, escorted prisoners of war and visiting dignitaries, maintained discipline and ran the military detention centres. In the field their duties included route reconnaissance, water discipline, guarding stores and investigating spies and saboteurs. This badge was worn from February 1917 but was replaced in February 1918 when the name of the Corps was changed to the Australian Provost Corps.

(Information from The Australian War Memorial)

Private John Albert O'Neill was reported to be still with his Unit – Australian Provost Corps at Tidworth, Wiltshire on 31st January, 1919.

Private John Albert O'Neill was promoted to 2nd Corporal with Australian Provost Corps at Tidworth, Wiltshire on 10th February, 1919.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was on leave from Tidworth from 23rd April, 1919 until 29th April, 1919.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was eligible for 15 days extra disembarkation leave from 31st July, 1919.

Mrs Ellen O'Neill, Stacey Bridge, Victoria, mother of 2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill, wrote to Base Records on 2nd August, 1919 asking for "any information re the welfare and whereabouts of my son 2267 Private J. A. O'Neill, M.M. & Bar, Provost Corps.." Base Records replied on 6th August, 1919 stating it was "anticipated that he will be returning home very shortly, and upon receipt of advice to the effect that he has embarked for Australia, you will be promptly advised."

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was on duty with Provost Corps at Tidworth on 1st September, 1919.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was marched out to A.I.F. Detention Barracks at Lewes on 11th September, 1919.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was eligible for 15 days extra disembarkation leave from 30th September, 1919.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was admitted to Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, Sussex, England on 3rd November, 1919 dangerously ill with acute Bronchitis.



Mrs Ellen O'Neill, Stacey Bridge, Victoria, mother of 2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill, was advised by Base Records on 13th November, 1919 that Second Corporal John O'Neill had been admitted to Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, England on 3rd November with acute Bronchitis. Mrs O'Neill was advised on the same day by Base Records that Second Corporal John O'Neill was dangerously ill.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill died at 2.15 am on 25th November, 1919 at Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, Sussex, England from Morbus Cordis, Mitral Regurgitation & Heart failure. A communication from the Commandant, A.I.F. Headquarters stated the cause of death of 2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was "*valvular disease of the heart.*"

A death for John A. O'Neill, aged 30, was registered in the December quarter, 1919 in the district of Brighton, Sussex, England.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was buried on 28th November, 1919 in Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England – Plot number ZHO. 102 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of 2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill - *Coffin was Elm with brass mountings. The deceased was*

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accorded a full military funeral. The coffin, draped with the Australian flag and surmounted with wreaths, was borne on a Gun Carriage to the cemetery. A firing party from 34th Brigade Royal Field Artillery, was in attendance. The pall-bearers were 6 of deceased's comrades from the Australian Provost Corps at Lewes. A detachment from the same Unit under the O.C., Major G. L. PHILLIPS (MBE) followed the coffin to the graveside. Three volleys were fired over the grave and the Last Post was sounded.

Wreaths sent bore the following inscriptions:-

In remembrance from Officers and Staff A.P.C. Headquarters, LONDON.

With heartfelt sympathy from his comrades, A.I.F. Detention Barracks, LEWES.

With deepest sympathy and regards from Officers and Staff A.I.F. Detention Barracks, LEWES.

A token of respect and deepest sympathy from Officers and Staff, A.I.F. Detention Barracks, LEWES.

John Albert O'Neill requested in his Will that his personal estate be bequeathed to his mother – Mrs C. O'Neill, South Gippsland, Victoria.

Mrs E. O'Neill, Stacey Bridge, via West Alberton, Victoria, was advised on 8th April, 1920 that that Military Medal awarded to her son, the late 2nd Corporal J. A. O'Neill had been transmitted to Military Commandant, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne on 12th March & he would arrange for the medal to be handed to her. The 1914/15 Star was also available to be forwarded.

2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to 2nd Corporal O'Neill's mother (father deceased) - Mrs E. O'Neill, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent December, 1922). The Memorial Plaque was signed for by D. F. O'Neill, brother of the late J. A. O'Neill. He had written on the receipt slip that Mrs Ellen O'Neill was deceased. Base Records wrote to Mr J. F. O'Neill, Staceys Bridge, via West Alberton, Victoria, on 5th January, 1923 stating it was noted that his mother was deceased & would like to know if there were any brother older than himself & if so that the Memorial Plaque should be handed over to the eldest brother.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Corporal John Albert O'Neill – service number 2267, aged 31, of Australian Provost Corps. He was the son of Christopher and Ellen O'Neill, of Stacey's Bridge, Gelliondale, Victoria, Australia. Awarded M.M.

Corporal J. A. O'Neill is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 185.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

J. A. O'Neill is remembered on the Alberton Shire Roll of Honour which is held by the Yarram & District Historical Society.



Alberton Shire Roll of Honour (Photo from Monument Australia)

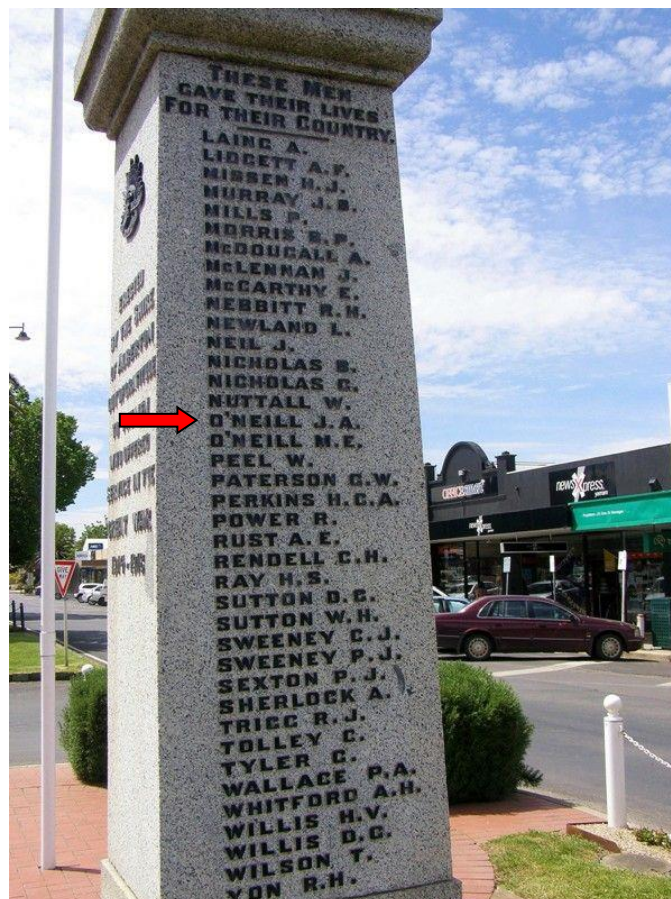
O'DAY, J. R.
 O'CALLAGHAN, J. T.
 O'ROURKE, M. G.
 O'NEILL, D. F.
 O'NEILL, S. J.
 *O'NEILL, M. E.
 O'NEILL, J. G.
 O'CONNOR, C. T.
 O'CONNOR, T. E.
 OLIVER, L. L.
 O'CONNOR, A. M.
 *O'NEILL, J. A. (Enlist. in Tasmania)

J. A. O'Neill is remembered on the Yarram War Memorial (also known as the Alberton Shire Soldiers' Memorial), located on Commercial Road, Yarram, Victoria.



Yarram War Memorial / Alberton Shire Soldiers' Memorial

(Photos from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)

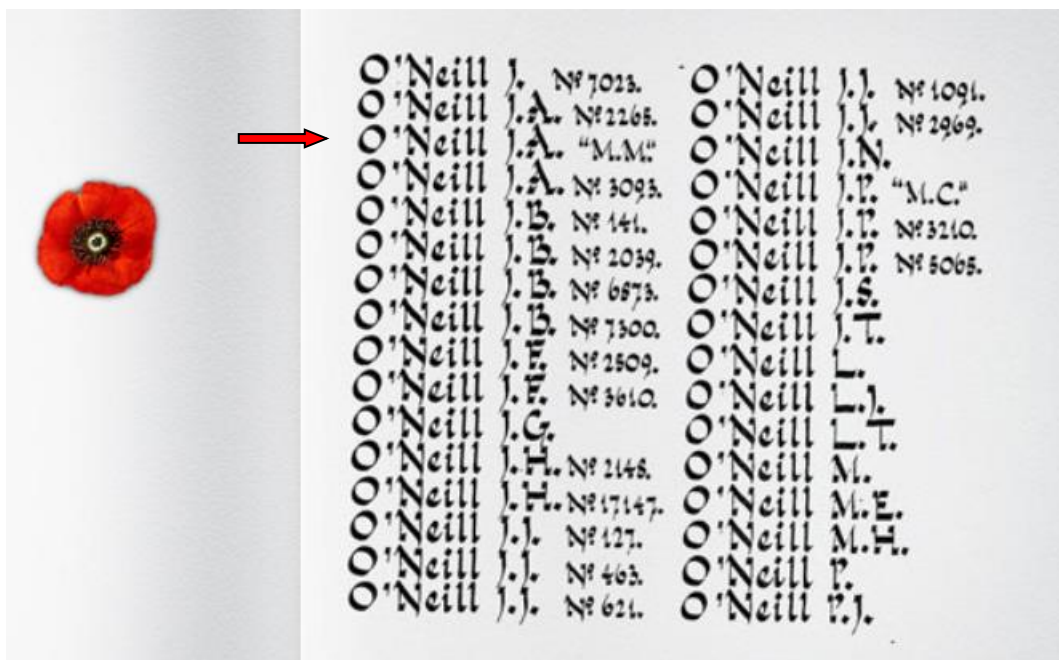


J. O'Neill is remembered on the Stacey's Bridge and District Roll of Honour which is held by the Yarram & District Historical Society.



Stacey's Bridge and District Roll of Honour (Photo by Kevin Cameron)

J. A. O'Neill is remembered in the Book of Remembrance at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, Victoria.





(67 pages of 2nd Corporal John Albert O'Neill's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives



Newspaper Notices

Mr Chris O'Neill, Stacey's Bridge, has received the following notification from the Department of Defence, concerning his soldier son:- "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award the military medal for bravery in the field to Private John Albert O'Neill." No particulars are so far to hand of this soldier's conspicuous bravery.

(Gippsland Standard and Alberton Shire Representative, Victoria – 14 September, 1917)

PERSONAL

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Mr and Mrs Chris. O'Neill, Stacey's Bridge, received word from the Base Records Office, Melbourne, that their son, Private J. A. O'Neil, has been admitted to the London General Hospital, suffering from gunshot wound in the left arm (mild). Private O'Neill has been very fortunate so far, having been through Gallipoli and seen much fighting in France, without a mark till now. He has received a medal for bravery.

(Gippsland Standard and Alberton Shire Representative, Victoria – 31 October, 1917)

DEATHS

O'NEILL – On 25/11/19, at Kitchen Military Hospital, Brighton, England, 2nd Corporal John O'Neill, M.M., eldest son of Ellen and the late Christopher O'Neil, of Stacey's Bridge, loving brother of Chrissie, Lillie, Mrs J. J. Morgan, Willie, Dave (returned) and Lizzie. R.I.P.

Father and son united.

(Advocate, Melbourne, Victoria – 13 December, 1919)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

2nd Corporal J. A. O'Neill does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Father & Son United

Sacred Heart Of Jesus Have Mercy On His Soul

Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England

The cemetery is on the Lewes road. It was opened in 1857, and now covers 44 acres. It climbs the hill Eastward, crossing a public road. A War Cross stands in the cemetery.

There are 275 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and a further 102 of the 1939-1945 war commemorated in this site. The 1939-45 commemorations include 3 unidentified Merchant seamen and 1 unidentified British soldier. There are also 40 Foreign National war burials here and 4 non-war service burials.

(Information from CWGC)



(Photos by julia&keld – Find a Grave)



(Photo from CWGC)

Photo of 2nd Corporal J. A. O'Neill's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, East Sussex, England.



(Photo by Terry Denham)



(Photo from CWGC)