

## LYONEL CLARE FYANS NEILL

**SERVICE NUMBER:** 37/1605 or /66441

**RANK:** Motor driver/ Air Mechanic/Cadet 3<sup>rd</sup> Class

**REGIMENT:** Royal Flying Corps

**UNIT:**

**DATE OF DEATH AND PLACE:** 30<sup>th</sup> October 1917, at sea, on the Australian troopship "Osterley"

**AGE:** 23

**CASUALTY TYPE:** Died of disease

**GRAVE:** The South Atlantic Ocean. Lat. 730 S Long.120 W

Lyonel was born in Dunedin on 14 June 1894, the son of Foster Fyans and Beatrice Victoria Robinson, nee Jones, Neill, who married in 1893 at Geelong. His grandparents, Percival Clay and Gertrude Emmeline nee Fyans had come from Australia to Dunedin in 1863 at the beginning of the Otago gold rushes. Grandfather set up a supplies store for the miners. This also included a liquor license: the firm later merged with Wilson and Co. to form Wilson and Neill Ltd.

Foster owned a property at Bushy Park, north of Dunedin. Lyonel went to the school at Waikouaiti, beginning on 18 July 1904 and leaving 12 September 1905.

In 1906 his father bought "Albury Park" farm in South Canterbury and Lyonel went to the Te Ngawai School. Also in 1906 Foster bought a Darracq car in Dunedin. The car is still used and owned privately.

It is thought Lyonel worked on his father's property and served 3 years in the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and later travelled to the England.

He married Marjory Eleanor Harper, born Dunedin, New Zealand in 1897, in the March quarter of 1915 at Brentford, Middlesex. Their son Fredric Fyans Neill was born in the June

quarter of 1916, also at Brentford. Their daughter Joan Walcott Neill was born in the December quarter 1917 at Epping, Essex about 17 days before her father's death. His mother Beatrice had died in London in 1916 aged 47 years. Foster Neill later married Josephine Barton Gillingham in 1920 at St Stephens Anglican church at Fairlie and two children were born. Philip Foster, born c 1922, died of polio 1943 aged 20: a medical student, he also studied music at Dunedin. Katherine born 1921 who on the death of her brother gave 1000 pounds for a music scholarship in his memory to be awarded by the University of Otago.

Lyonel worked with the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

Lyonel had applied to join the NZEF in September 1914 and was discharged as medically unfit in the November. About 1916 Lyonel joined the Royal Flying Corps, perhaps to train as a pilot. He was stationed at Farnham and the Hall Flying School, London.

On 17 October 1917 Lyonel boarded the "Osterley" to be sent home via Sydney to New Zealand. He had had a recurrent ear infection: (he may have had ear problems when he was a child). His death Certificate says "Meningitis and cerebral abscess, secondary to chronic suppuration of the Mastoid Antum" His wife Marge and the children returned to New Zealand after the war and one time were living in Wai-iti Road Timaru. A war gratuity was paid to Mrs Neill.

Lyonel was 5 feet 9 inches tall, had hazel eyes and black hair. He was an Anglican. He was awarded the British Army and Victory medals.

Roll of Honour Waikouaiti Memorial as N.F. Neill, St Clement Danes RAF Church London, the Albury and Fairlie memorials and the Commonwealth War Graves. Probate was filed at Dunedin 14 February 1919: sheep farmer of Albury