

201625 Private George Sinclair Shearer



George was born in Catherine Place, Kirkwall on 15th July 1884, the son of William Shearer, a tailor and journeyman from Eday, and Elizabeth Shearer (née Finlayson). George had three brothers and five sisters. His father had taken over a barber's shop and George was working as a saddler's apprentice in Kirkwall, when the 1901 census was taken.

George was a seaman, sailing with the North of Scotland Shipping Company between Kirkwall and Leith, when he married Mary Henderson on 15th October 1909 in Leith. He probably met Mary while she was working in a tobacconist/newsagent's at the docks, or in her father's seaman outfitters shop there. The couple had a son, George, in 1910, another, William, in 1915.

George joined 1/4th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers in Leith, probably during 1916, and was allocated the service number 9711. The servicemen in all the British Army Territorial Battalions were renumbered during 1917, when George was allocated a new service number 201625.

George travelled out to Egypt to join 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers, serving in the 52nd (Lowland) Division. The Division had arrived in Egypt in February 1916, after fighting on Gallipoli, where it lost heavily in action and from sickness.



George Shearer seated furthest left bottom row in the group above.

George Shearer probably joined 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers with the reinforcements that arrived to replace the 283 casualties the battalion lost when it tried to storm Outpost and Middlesex Hills during the Second Battle of Gaza on 19th-21st April 1917.

George was certainly present during the Third Battle of Gaza in November 1917, when his battalion was not heavily engaged in the frontal attack that eventually broke through the defences at Gaza. However, 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers lost a steady toll of casualties during the series of advances and attacks which followed to advance into Palestine and eventually drive the Turks out of Jerusalem. George was one of these casualties, when he was killed in action during fighting to drive the Turks out of the villages of Katrah and Mughar on 13th November.



George Shearer was aged 33 when he died in Palestine. He is buried in Grave O.2 in Ramleh War Cemetery, about 12 kilometres south-east of Jaffa, in Israel. There are three other Orcadian soldiers among the 3,300 Commonwealth Great War burials (964 unidentified) in the cemetery, although George probably did not know any of them.

Magnus Dearness from South Ronaldsay was killed in 1st Seaforth Highlanders' last action in the Great War, the capture of the village Beit Lid on 20th September 1918. Thomas Kent from Westray died on 26th September from the wounds he received there, while Thomas Louttit from Holm died from his wounds on 29th September.