Sergeant Gregory Dowling O’Neil MM (XC 1902-'07)

AWM ~ Roll of Honour
Gregory Dowling O’Neil MM

Service Number: 2859
Rank: Sergeant
Unit: 48th Australian Infantry Battalion
Date of death: 20 September 1918
Place of death: France
Cause of death: Killed in action
Age at death: 26
Place of association: Cottesloe, Western Australia
Cemetery details: Bellicourt British Cemetery, Bellicourt, Picardie, France

From “The Xaverian” 1918 p. 56

Sergeant Gregory O’Neil, MM — Poor Greg., after doing valiant deeds that won for him the Military Medal, was killed in action in France on 20th September. Old Boys of 1902-07 will remember him as the famous leader of the Opposition in Junior Debates. God rest his soul. The School’s sympathy go to Dr. and Mrs. O’Neil, of Cottesloe, W.A.

Service Records

From Sgt O’Neil’s service record, the following details:
13 July, 1917 — promoted to Lance Corporal, in the field, France
8 September, 1917 — promoted to Corporal, in the field, France
20 October, 1917 — wounded I/A
9 November, 1917 — ”His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the Military Medal for bravery in the field”
24 April, 1918 — promoted to Sergeant
20 September, 1918 — killed by shell fire during the advance

Men of the 48th Battalion (South Australia and Western Australia) watching the advance of the 45th Battalion (New South Wales) near Le Verguier, France, 18 September 1918. [AWM E03258]

The Canal de St. Quentin passes under the village of Bellicourt in a tunnel 5 Kms long, built under the orders of Napoleon I. The Hindenburg Line ran west of the village, and the barges in the tunnel were used to shelter German reserves. About 5 Kms south of Bellicourt, where the canal is open, is the village of Bellenglise, where another great tunnel or dug-out was made by the Germans.

On 29 September - 2 October 1918, the Battle of the St. Quentin Canal was fought. The 46th (North Midland) Division stormed the Hindenburg Line at Bellenglise and captured 4,000 prisoners and 70 guns. The Australian dead of this engagement fill most of the graves in Bellicourt British Cemetery.