

My Soldier Story



Anselm Beehan

By Damian Tuala

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Army Details

Anselm Jerome Beehan:

- *Age:* 22
- *Rank:* Second Lieutenant
- *Regiment:* New Zealand Rifle
Brigade, 3rd Battalion
- *Service Number:* 22909

Family Background

Anselm was the son of William and Annie Theresa Beehan of 86 Grafton Road, Auckland and the third youngest of eight children, five sisters and three brothers including himself.

Anselm wasn't the only one in his family who went to war, his youngest brother, Kyrle St James Beehan had also enlisted, and fortunately, Kyrle was able to survive the war, as he was wounded and was invalided back to Auckland. Anselm

Beehan's father, the Hon. W. Beehan was an honorary member of parliament, who died in 1917. This would have influenced the promotion of Anselm Beehan to a 2nd

Lieutenant, as back then, usually the advantage of being the child of an honorary parent of the country would mean that you would eventually climb high in the rankings.

Personal

Anselm was a young Catholic adult who was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on the 2nd of June 1895. He was an all round athlete taking an active part in all kinds of sports, but his favourite was rugby. Anselm Beehan played for the Auckland College Rifles Rugby and Football Club in Remuera before he enlisted. His name was kept on the College Rifles Auckland Roll of Honour.

Education

In 1903, Anselm Beehan attended our Catholic and Marist School, Sacred Heart College in Ponsonby and was educated there until 1904. When he left, he transferred to what is now among the six largest schools in the country, Auckland Grammar.

Work After College

After college, Anselm Jerome Beehan, for some time, was an employee of the National Bank. Afterwards, he became a member of the staff who worked in the office for the New Zealand Consolidated Dental Company. He was an office worker who kept records and accounts for his company, quite a tedious job. Later on when the war started but before he enlisted, his occupation was a WW1 Clerk, a rank even lower than an army Private, and even a member of the Royal Engineer Corps.

Enlistment

Anselm Jerome Beehan enlisted to be in the army at the age of twenty, on June 15th 1915, almost a year after the war started. In the enlisting papers is some information provided by Anselm himself about his physical description. He states that his complexion was medium, he was 5'7 and he had light blue eyes and dark brown hair. There was also a medical examination sheet that was to check Anselm's eye sight and if he had any allergies etc, and all questions were answered as "normal" except for one. The question was if there were any slight defects. The doctor who took the examination test wrote down "Physique not very good". Fortunately, this did not cause Anselm to be rejected.

Anselm enlisted in Trentham, Upper Hutt Wellington. He trained there and then was given the rank of Private. He remained in Trentham, Wellington until the 27th May 1916. During this time, Beehan quickly climbed up the ranks and became a Sergeant, and a few days before he departed, he was given the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. Anselm Beehan departed on the SS Willochra from the Wellington harbour. This vessel arrived at the port of Plymouth, Devon, England. This voyage actually embarked for Suez, Egypt, but it was later diverted to England at the request of the Imperial Government. Later on in the year of 1916, he was posted to the 13th reinforcements and was deployed to France, going through to the Battle of the Somme, one of the largest battles of WW1. Anselm was lucky enough to not be apart of the one million men who were killed and wounded during the five month period.

Date/Place of Death

Anselm Jerome Beehan died on the
27th March 1918 at the age of 22.

He was killed in action at
Hebuterne, France.

War Records

Anselm Beehan went from a low ranking Private to a 2nd Lieutenant in a matter of about one year. He fought in many battles, like the battle of the Somme, where he survived unscathed, the battle of Messiness, where he was slightly wounded and gassed and especially when he was killed at the battle between Hebuterne and Serre.

Anselm enlisted in the 7th Reinforcements when he went down to the Trentham Army Camp in June 1915. In early July that year, Anselm, along with 27 of his platoon, became sick with the measles. After his recovery he joined the 9th NCO's, this was when he rose to the rank of Sergeant. Later on, he was transferred to the 9th draft, where he became a 2nd Lieutenant, which was the rank he remained until his death. The following pictures are of a few sheets from Anselm Beehan's war records.

Anselm Beehan's Death

Anselm Beehan was killed in action leading the charge against the Germans between Hebuterne and Serre in 1918. He died alongside a fellow Officer, and three Privates from his regiment. He would have had to lead several men into a battle against the Germans, knowing that it was highly likely that there would be many casualties, but he led the charge with bravery, and he died fighting for his country with honour and valour.

Three things were brought to the 2009 Anzac Mass in memory of Anselm Beehan. It includes his sword which he used to lead the battle of Hebuterne, his bayonet, and a commemorative carving of Anselm Beehan, carved by Anselm's cousin Michael Beehan, remembering Beehan's role in serving our country.

Relevant Information

Anselm Jerome Beehan was awarded the British War Medal on the 27th of September 1921, and the Victory Medal on the 2nd of August 1922. Both of these medals were given to Mrs Annie Theresa Beehan of 86 Grafton Road, Anselm's mother. His brother, Kyrle St James Beehan, died in 1960, forty-two years after the war.

Anselm Beehan is buried in the Grevillers (New Zealand) memorial, in France. His name can be seen in the Auckland War Memorial Museum, World War 1 Hall of Memories, on the Roll of Honour for College Rifles, Rugby Union Football Club, on the Roll of Honour Monument in Auckland Grammar School, and finally, on the Roll of Honour here in our Sacred Heart College.

In Memory of
Second Lieutenant

Anselm Jerome Beehan

22909, 3rd. Bn. 3rd, New Zealand Rifle Brigade who died on 27 March 1918 Age 22

Son of William and Annie Theresa Beehan, of 86, Grafton Rd., Auckland.

Remembered with Honour
Grevillers (New Zealand) Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission