

William Henry Barnard



(William Henry Barnard, left and right)¹

Taking part in the Frank McDonald 2024 pilgrimage was an incredible honor and I enjoyed the opportunity to research a serviceman from my wider local community in World War One (WW1). The soldier I chose, William Henry Barnard, was from Sorell, which is the largest town in my area, and about 25km from Hobart. My family members that were known to serve during WW1, served in the British Army so I chose to instead research a Tasmanian soldier who I was connected to through by both growing up in the greater Sorell area. It was an invaluable experience learning all about WW1 and the life journey of the soldier who I picked and gaining an insight into the experiences of Australian soldiers in World War One.

William Henry Barnard's story begins on the 28th of April 1890, when he was born in Oatlands, Tasmania². His parents were Arthur George Barnard, a railway worker, and Alice Phoebe Barnard, and he was the 6th born of 11 children.³ The family moved to Sorell when William, or Billie as he was known, was young, with his father spending the next 25 years as an engine driver on the Sorell-Bellerive Railway.⁴ Billie went to Sorell State School as a child and when he left school he worked as a laborer. In August 1914 he enlisted for the AIF with his older brother Arthur. They were just 24 and 29 years of age

¹ vwma.org.au. (n.d.). William Henry (Billie) BARNARD. [online] Available at: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/329340>.

² vwma.org.au. (n.d.). William Henry (Billie) BARNARD. <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/329340>

³ ancestors.familysearch.org. (n.d.). FamilySearch.org. [online] Available at: <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/K899-7K9>

⁴ The Mercury, 1st May 1939, (pg. 5)

and were assigned to the 12th infantry battalion.⁵ Their oldest brother, Walter, had already served in the Boer War in the Tasmanian 4th (2nd Imperial) Unit in 1900, returning to Tasmania in 1901 to great fanfare.⁶

In October 1914 Billie and his brother Arthur departed Hobart on the HMAT Geelong, bound for Egypt.⁷ It would have been a long trip for 2 young men who had likely never been to sea, somewhere around 45 days. Conditions on board would have been tough, with many men crammed into the transport ships, with limited space and few facilities like toilets and bathrooms. These transports experienced heavy seas and extreme heat, which led to the deaths of some soldiers before they even arrived at the front.⁸ Billie arrived in Egypt and stayed at the Mena camp, set up for ANZAC troops to train at in winter after training camps in England became overcrowded. It was about 10 miles from the center of Cairo, and divided into three large training areas, one for each of the infantry brigades of 1914. Transport and ambulances, the divisional light horse artillery, and engineers covered stretches of desert just outside of these training areas.⁹

⁵ vwma.org.au. (n.d.). *William Henry (Billie) BARNARD*. [online] Available at:

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/329340>.

⁶ www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). Walter Barnard. [online] Available at:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1444600>

<https://www.angloboerwar.com/unit-information/australian-units/165-tasmania/399-tasmanian-4th-contingent>

⁷ vwma.org.au. (n.d.). Arthur Victor BARNARD. [online] Available at:

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/183869>.

vwma.org.au. (n.d.). William Henry (Billie) BARNARD. [online] Available at:

<https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/329340>.

⁸ Govt.nz. (2014). What was life like on board the troopships? | WW100 New Zealand. [online] Available at:

<https://ww100.govt.nz/what-was-life-like-on-board-the-troopships>

⁹ Following the Twenty-Second. (2019). *Training Camps: Egypt*. [online] Available at: <https://anzac-22nd-battalion.com/training-camps-egypt/>.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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(Embarkation departure of the 12th battalion on the HMAT Geelong, 20-10-1914)¹⁰

Billie's service, however, was short-lived. During his time at the Mena training camp in Egypt, he suffered a bayonet wound in his rectum¹¹, and was sent back to Australia onboard the HMAT Ulysses in March 1915,¹² leaving his brother to join the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Gallipoli.¹³ Back in Australia Billie was deemed medically unfit and discharged from the army. He was told his capacity for earning a livelihood had gone down by a quarter, and that he would be impacted for life from this injury.¹⁴ During his service in Egypt, he had an Australian and Egyptian flag tattooed on himself as a symbol of his pride in his service during this time.¹⁵

¹⁰ www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). EMBARKATION DEPARTURE OF 12TH BATTALION ON THE H.M.A.T. 'GEELONG' 1914-10-20. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1523>.

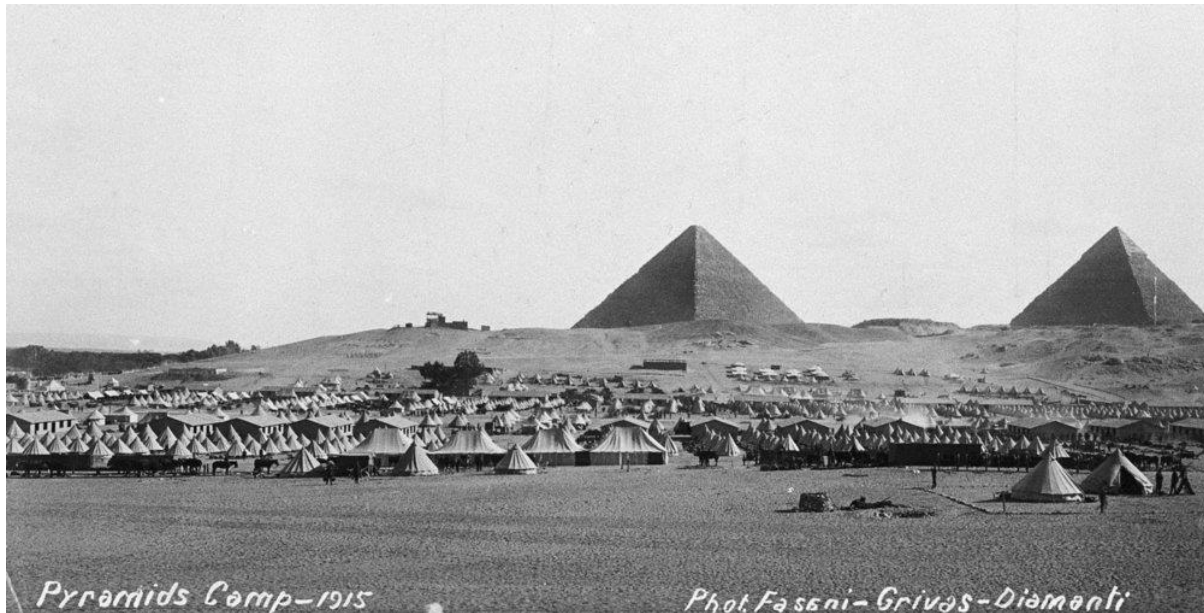
¹¹ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.67) National Archives of Australia

¹² Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.26) National Archives of Australia

¹³ Barnard, Arthur Victor service records. (n.d.). (Pg. 4) National Archives of Australia

¹⁴ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.68) National Archives of Australia

¹⁵ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.7) National Archives of Australia



(Mena Camp, Egypt, 1915)¹⁶

Back in Tasmania Billie faced disdain around his return, as so many men did. Despite, or perhaps because of this, Billie did not let his injury stop him. In Tasmania he served in the Sorell rifle club for six months, re-building his fitness and strength.¹⁷ He was eventually fit enough to return to service, and re-enlisted in August 1915.¹⁸ The pressure to re-enlist must have been immense, with his father proudly defending his son and announcing his return to service in a statement published in The Mercury newspaper:

It having been falsely reported in Sorell that my son, Private William Barnard, has returned from Egypt as "an undesirable." I wish, in justice to him, to deny this cowardly slander. My son has now returned to the Front as a Lance-Corporal, which speaks for itself. Should these reports be insisted upon, proceedings will be taken against the slanderers. A. G. BARNARD, Sorell, Oct. 19, 1915.¹⁹

This demonstrates the unmatched love and pride his father had in his son, who was prepared to sacrifice his life for his country and his home.

Billie embarked from Melbourne on the HMAT Ulysses in October 1915 for Egypt.²⁰ In March 1916 he was taken on strength by the 15th infantry battalion in Tel El Kabir Egypt, where he spent 3 months. During these months Billie's discipline was questionable, committing several misdemeanors: 3 times being AWOL (absent without leave), and once being late to parade. He received forfeiture of pay and detentions as punishment for his breaches of AIF rules.²¹ These breaches of discipline, however, were the actions of a young man from a small country town, overseas in a strange new culture and confined

¹⁶ State Library of South Australia. (2019). Mena Camp, Egypt. [online] Available at: <https://digital.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/nodes/view/429>.

¹⁷ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.5) National Archives of Australia

¹⁸ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.5) National Archives of Australia

¹⁹ Mercury 21st of October 1915, (P.g. 1)

²⁰ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.38) National Archives of Australia

²¹ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.12) National Archives of Australia

to military rules and camps. Billie knew he would soon be sent to the front, where conditions were grim, and the chances of dying were high. Around this time back in Tasmania, Billie's younger brother Eric Gordon enlisted in the 12th Battalion, 21st reinforcement, and departed from Melbourne on HMAT A23 Suffolk in September 1916.²² Two sons remained in Tasmania, the eldest Walter William who had fought in South Africa in 1900-01, and Albert Leslie. They also tried to enlist in 1916 but were both deemed medically unfit (Albert had hammer toe, while the reason for Walter's medical status was not given).²³

On the 1st of June 1916 Billie embarked on the HMT Transylvania to France, to join the British Expeditionary Force.²⁴ He spent 10 months along the western front before ending up in Bullecourt, fighting in the first battle in April 1917, a bloody encounter where over 3,300 Australians lost their lives.²⁵ On the first day of battle, Billie suffered a shrapnel wound on his right buttock and was admitted to a hospital in Rouen, France, before being transferred to a military hospital in Dartford, England. He was discharged about a month later and after a few months in and out of hospital with illness, he rejoined his battalion in December 1917 somewhere near Ypres.²⁶ His brothers sadly had not been so lucky, with Eric killed in action in April 1917 at 24 years of age in France, and Arthur near Zonnebeke in Belgium, dying after being wounded in the legs in October 1917, at 31 years old.²⁷

It was winter when Billie eventually rejoined his battalion, in appalling conditions. After fitful sleep, men would wake before dawn to find their eyelids frozen shut and their lips stuck together. Frozen ground seemed preferable to the thick mud they had been fighting and living in, but the ground was hard and slippery. Men broke limbs when they slipped on the icy surfaces. Shells were more lethal when hitting hard frozen ground rather than mud. In short, winter was more dangerous than ever imagined.²⁸

On the 21st of January 1918, just 22 days after he rejoined his battalion, and only ten months from the end of the war, William Henry Barnard was killed in action, fighting along the Western Front in France. He was 27 years old.²⁹ The exact location and cause of Billie's death was never recorded.

Not one of the Barnard boys would return home to their family.

Billie was originally buried in Fusilier Wood Cemetery close to Ypres before it was destroyed by the enemy.³⁰ His body and those of others also buried there, were moved to Dunhallow Advanced Dressing Station Cemetery in the hope that it would be taken care of and reburied. Due to the war waging on,

²² Barnard, Eric Gordon service records. (n.d.). (Pg.19) National Archives of Australia

²³ Barnard, Walter William service records. (n.d.). (Pg.3) National Archives of Australia

Barnard, Albert Leslie service records. (n.d.). (Pg.3) National Archives of Australia

²⁴ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.35) National Archives of Australia

²⁵ Department of Veterans' Affairs. (2024). First World War Battles of Bullecourt, 1917. [online] Available at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/media/media-backgrounders/first-world-war-battles-bullecourt-1917>.

²⁶ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.37) National Archives of Australia

²⁷ vwma.org.au. (n.d.). *Arthur Victor BARNARD*. [online] Available at: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/183869>

²⁸ anzacday.org.au. (n.d.). *Snow Bound - ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee*. [online] Available at: <https://anzacday.org.au/snow-bound>

²⁹ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.41) National Archives of Australia

³⁰ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.41) National Archives of Australia

WW1 Cemeteries.com - A photographic guide to over 4000 military cemeteries and memorials. (n.d.). Duhallo A. D. S. Cemetery, Belgium (CWGC). [online] Available at: <https://www.ww1cemeteries.com/duhallo-a-d-s-cemetery.html>

however, his grave was never properly marked and has not been found. A special memorial was instead placed in his honour and memory at the Fusilier Wood Memorial.³¹



(Memorial for William Henry Barnard at the Fusilier Wood Memorial)

For his time fighting courageously during the war, Billie received a Victory Medal (commemorating the victory of the allied forces) and a 1914-15 Star (commemorating all those who served between 1914 and 15). He also received a memorial scroll and memorial plaque, known as a dead man's penny, which was a bronze medal bearing the inscription 'he died for freedom and honour.'³²

The Barnard family lost 3 sons in less than a year to World War I. Their loss, as well as their pride in their sons was evident in the loving Memoria published in The Mercury newspaper for each son: In October 1918 for Arthur, April 1919 for Eric, and January 1920 for William.

BARNARD. - in loving memory of our dear

*Son and brother, Corporal **Eric Gordon Barnard**, killed in action in France between April 6 and 10, 1917.*

The midnight stars are gleaming

On a grave we cannot see.

Where sleeping, without dreaming,

Lies the one so dear to me.

A hero he lived, a hero he fell,

Though only a lad, he did his part well;

he gave his life for a cause that is true,

³¹ Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.42,43) National Archives of Australia

³² Barnard, William Henry service records. (n.d.). (Pg.45,48,49,50) National Archives of Australia

Fighting for country, for home, and for you.

*Inserted by his loving father, mother, sisters, and brothers.*³³

Eric is commemorated on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour, Sorell War Memorial, and the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial (Australian National Memorial - France).

*BARNARD. - in loving memory of our dear son and brother, warrant officer **Arthur Victor Barnard**, died of wounds, somewhere in France, October 22, 1917.*

No loved one stood around him

To bid a fond farewell;

No word of comfort could we give

To him we loved so well.

*Inserted by his loving parents, brothers, and sisters.*³⁴

Arthur is commemorated on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour and the Sorell War Memorial.

*BARNARD. - in loving memory of our dear son and brother, Private **William Henry Barnard**, killed in action in France, January 21, 1918.*

He gave his life for his country,

For honour, faith, and right;

With us his memory ever lives,

He fought a noble fight.

Midst the roaring of the battle.

And the rain of shot and shell

Fighting for his home and country,

*He like a hero fell.*³⁵

William is commemorated on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour, Sorell War Memorial, and the Fusilier Wood Memorial.

³³ Mercury, 18th April, 1918, (Pg. 1)

³⁴ Mercury, 22nd October, 1918, (Pg. 1)

³⁵ Mercury, 21st January 1920, (Pg. 1)

IN MEMORIAM.
Died on Active Service.

BARNARD.—In loving memory of our dear son and brother **Private William Henry Barnard**, killed in action in France, January 21, 1918.

He gave his life for his country,
For honour, faith, and right;
With us his memory ever lives,
He fought a noble fight.

Midst the roaring of the battle,
And the rain of shot and shell,
Fighting for home and country,
He like a hero fell.

— Inserted by his loving father and mother,
Brothers, and sisters Sorell.

(Memoria published for Private William Henry Barnard, 21st January 1920)³⁶



(Eric Gordon Barnard)³⁷



(Arthur Victor Barnard)³⁸

³⁶ The Mercury, 21st January 1920, (Pg.1)

³⁷ wwma.org.au. (n.d.). Eric Gordon BARNARD. [online] Available at: <https://wwma.org.au/explore/people/112487>.

³⁸ wwma.org.au. (n.d.). Arthur Victor BARNARD. [online] Available at: <https://wwma.org.au/explore/people/183869>.

The lives of William and his 2 brothers were tragically cut short by the war, the lives they could have lived unknown. Their father Arthur lived to an incredible 94 years of age, eventually passing away in New Town Rest Home in December 1950.³⁹

The 2024 Frank MacDonald Memorial prize has given me an invaluable experience, learning so much about the soldiers who defended their home and the sacrifices they made. I came out of the trip with so much respect and admiration for their stories and efforts, being able to comprehend so much that I would ever have known about their experiences. Being in Europe on the actual front really did give me so much more of a better idea of what it was like, there were times when I was colder than I have ever been in my life (especially the Dawn Service!), despite modern clothing, and it was not even winter there. Being able to see the landscapes and battle grounds where they fought was incredible too, as I have never been able to imagine something like the scale that it was. Experiencing how well-respected Australians are to this day in places along the front overwhelms me with pride for the ANZAC soldiers who sacrificed their lives not only for their country but all the other countries they fought for. I hope to be able to continue to learn about their experiences through life, always treasuring the experience I had with the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize.

Holly Stark, Rose Bay High School 2024

³⁹ The Mercury, 22nd December 1950, (Pg.6)