009

Barnes, William Patrick

A West Australian railway employee
killed while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Traffic
Designation:	Porter

Rail employment notes: Born 15/3/1882 (but see notes in Additional Information below). Employed as a Porter at Bunbury 18/1/1914, then in same role at Roelands 19/10/1915, Yarloop 24/11/1915, Perth 30/6/1916, Guildford 28/8/1916. ("Porter" was a very general category in the WAGR and Bunbury, a busy terminus station, probably had up to 10 porters working around the station and goods sheds and some would have passed exams to qualify them to assist with safe working.)

Granted leave 28/10/1916. Killed in action 4/10/1917.

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Military unit:	39th Australian Infantry Battalion.
Service number:	2781
Date of death:	4 October 1917
Place of death:	France
Age:	44
Rank:	Private

Burial/memorialisation: Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres (now Ieper), Belgium

William Patrick Barnes enlisted at Blackboy Hill where he also underwent basic military training. On enlistment he stated his age to be 32 years, he had no previous military experience and was assigned to 39th Battalion AIF - which was a very unusual Unit for West Australian enlistees. He had originated in Dublin and gave his elder brother in Ireland as his next-of-kin. He departed Australia aboard A34 HMAT *Persic* on 29 December 1916 from Fremantle and disembarked at Devonport UK on 3 March 1917. His Bn underwent extensive training in the UK after they joined 10 Training Bn on 21 March 1917. Pte Barnes joined the British Expeditionary Force through the Port of Southampton on 25 August 1917 and marched into 3 ADBD that same day. From there he joined the Battalion in the field for the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). He was initially posted as Missing in Action on 4 October 1917 in the drive to Passchendaele but this was amended to Killed in Action on that same day by a notification dated 13 October 1917. His active service in the field had been exceptionally short. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres (now Ieper).

Additional/personal information:

William Barnes was born and educated in Dublin, Ireland, where he worked as a compositor in the printing trade. It appears some relatives, but not all, emigrated with him:

> BARNES.—In memory of our beloved brother and uncle, Private William Patrick Barnes, killed in action, October 4, 1917. Farewell, in hope and love, In faith and peace and prayer, Till He Whose home is ours above Unite us there. —Inserted by his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Jarvis, and nieces Minnie and Lilian Price, Bunbury. *The West Australian* 6/12/1917p1

After his death, his brother Robert Charles Barnes in Ireland gave William's age at 44 years and said he came to Australia when 32 years old. Robert also sad that William served for "Some years verger at Bunbury cathedral" (AWM) which would necessarily have been before the WAGR posted him away from Bunbury in 1915, and possibly before he started with them in 1914. It is likely therefore that he lied about his age to both WAGR and the Army.

His service medals were sent to his eldest brother in Dublin.

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans' Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military information researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------