

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

William James Barnes



Name: William James Barnes

Rank: Gunner/Bombardier

Service Number: 71827

Regiment: Royal Field Artillery

Battalion/Unit number: 109th Battery

Date/year of Birth: 1896

Place of Birth: Taunton

Place of Residence: 52 Alfred Street, Taunton

Date of Death: 24th August 1914

Place of Death: Near Mons, Belgium

Burial/Memorial: Frameries Communal Cemetery, Belgium

William Barnes was one of five children born to James and Mary Barnes. The 1911 census lists James as working as a blacksmith at the Gas Works while William was a

printer's apprentice. Two of his sisters, Lily and Rose, were collar ironers in the shirt factory. The Barnes family had a history of military service, with William's Great Grandfather having served at Waterloo, both of his grandfathers having had long military careers, and his father also having served for 22 years. William continued in the family tradition, enlisting in the Royal Field Artillery on 4th February 1913. William's brother was also in the army.

The 109th Battery of the Royal Field Artillery was attached to the 3rd Division which was deployed into France as soon as war broke out. As part of 3rd Division William would have been moved forward to the front to try and halt the initial German invasion. The first major action of the British Expeditionary Force was the Battle of Mons on 23rd and 24th August 1914, some 19 days after war was declared, and it was in this first action of the war that William was killed in action. The main British artillery was situated to the east of Mons and would have exchanged fire with German artillery to the north.

The following was printed in the Taunton Courier along with the picture above:

"FORMER TERRITORIAL KILLED IN ACTION

GREAT GRANDFATHER AT WATERLOO

TAUNTON FAMILY'S SPLENDID RECORD

Bombardier Wm. Barnes, aged 19, eldest son of Mr and Mrs J. Barnes of 23 Greenbrook Terrace, Taunton, was killed in action early in the present struggle. Formerly a member of the Somerset Battery of the R.H.A., the deceased served his apprenticeship as a printer, and was a member of the St James's Church, where he was a chorister under the tuition of Mr J.H. Chalmers. On February 4th 1913 he enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery, and accompanied the Expeditionary Force to France, being promoted to Bombardier on the way over. The deceased soldier comes from a military family, who have a military record of which they are justly proud. His great grandfather fought in the battle of Waterloo with the old 4th Regiment, now the "King's Own," and his paternal grandfather was the late Colour-Sergeant T. Barnes, of the 3rd Regiment Somerset L.I., who served with the Battalion for 22 years, previous to which he served for 21 years with the 7th Regiment City of London Fusiliers. His maternal grandfather was Mr. R. Brown who served his country for 21 years in the Royal Marine Artillery. His father had 23 years service to his credit, having served with the 3rd Battalion Somerset L.I., the 1st East Surrey Regiment and the 5th Battalion Somerset L.I. He is now a member of the National Reserve. The second son is a member of the 5th (Reserve) Battalion of the Somerset L.I., and is at present undergoing training with the Battalion.

Mr and Mrs Barnes and family desire to thank all who have sent letters or expressions of sympathy with them in their bereavement."