

Alfred James BARRETT



Born: 14th May 1884, Padstow, Cornwall
Occupation: Shopkeeper
Enlisted: Toronto, Canada: 20th August 1915
Unit: 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, CEF
Rank/number: Lance Corporal: No.172097
Death: Killed in action, 26th August 1918
Detail: Alfred died as the Allies pushed towards final victory in the final year of the Great War. His battalion was involved in a mass attack by the Canadian Corps on the heavily-fortified village of Monchy-le-Preux near Arras in the run-up to their assault on the Hindenburg Line. Though the village was captured Alfred was killed when he was hit by enemy shellfire.

Age at death: 34

Military info: Alfred emigrated to Canada with his brother Philip in 1907. Philip returned to Britain, but Alfred stayed on, married and brought up a family. A year after war broke out he joined up and after training in Canada he sailed on *Olympic* for England on 28th April 1916, docking at Liverpool on 7th May. Alfred was sent to France a month later and posted to the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, a former cavalry unit converted to infantry. Renamed 5th CMR, it was part of the 8th Canadian Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division. Alfred arrived at the unit on 9th June as they recovered from the battle of Mount Sorrel at Ypres. They were soon heading for the Somme where they saw action at Flers Courcellette and Ancre Heights. Apart from ten days leave in October 1917 Alfred stayed with 5th CMR in France. In 1917 they fought at Arras, Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, and Passchendaele. In March 1918 the Germans launched a last offensive. The British defended grimly and on 8th August they counter-attacked at Amiens. Led by Canadians, the allies won a vital victory, spelling the end for Germany. On the 20th Haig ordered the Canadians to breach the Hindenburg Line, the last enemy bastion. But first Monchy-le-Preux had to be taken. An attack, led by three CMR units, began at 3am and by 7.40pm the village was theirs - but Alfred was dead.

Grave/memorial: Alfred is buried in Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, near Arras in France. He is also commemorated in Canada and on Padstow War Memorial.

Family info: Father: Alfred Barrett, born Marylebone, London in 1863. House painter.
Mother: Bessie May, born Padstow, Cornwall in 1863. Domestic servant. The couple married in 1883 and lived in Hammersmith. Bessie returned to Padstow for the birth of her first child, Alfred. Her other five sons were born in London.

Additional info: Alfred wed British-born Daisy Critcher weeks after reaching Canada. They had two children, Sydney and Bessie May, who was named after her Padstow granny.



This information was researched by Peter Smith, who is currently writing a book about Padstow's part in the Great War. Anyone wishing to correct errors or supply additional information can write to him at 24 Mallard Drive, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 5PW. Also phone 01825 762226 or email smithpeter24@gmail.com.

+Lest we forget+

