

**Tunbridge Wells Cemetery,  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**3981 PRIVATE**

**W. E. BYRNES**

**2ND BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**30TH JANUARY, 1918 Age 26**

*He Is Not Dead  
But Gone Before  
To Rest Above  
For Ever More*

## William Edward BYRNES

William Edward Byrnes was born in Glen Innes, NSW around 1892 to parents Patrick James and Eliza Jane Byrnes

William Edward Byrnes was a 23 year old, single, Labourer from Byron Street, Inverell, NSW when he enlisted on 19th August, 1915 with the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 12th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 3981 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr P. J. Byrnes of Byron Street, Inverell, NSW.

Private William Edward Byrnes embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Medic (A7)* on 30th December, 1915.

Private William Edward Byrnes joined 2nd Battalion at Serapeum on 17th March, 1916.

Private William Edward Byrnes embarked for Overseas from Alexandria on *Invernia* on 22nd March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 28th March, 1916.

Private William Edward Byrnes was "On Command" to Reg. Traffic Control in the field in Belgium on 9th September, 1916.

Private William Edward Byrnes was on furlough to UK from France on 12th May, 1917. He rejoined his Battalion in France from furlough on 28th May, 1917.

Private William Edward Byrnes was sent to Hospital sick on 30th September, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance with Gastritis then transferred to No. 3 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. Pte Byrnes was transferred & admitted to 22nd General Hospital at Camiers, France on 2nd October, 1917. He was listed for transfer to England on 21st October, 1917 & embarked for England on the Hospital Ship *Stad Antwerpen* on 22nd October, 1917.

Private William Edward Byrnes was admitted to Central Hospital, Chatham, England with Gastritis on 22nd October, 1917. He was admitted to Fort Pitt Hospital, Chatham, England on 23rd October, 1917 with Gastritis then transferred to Neville Park V.A.D. Hospital, Kent on 23rd October, 1917 with Gastritis. He was transferred on 20th November, 1917 to an Eye Hospital for investigation into his symptoms – Cerebral type of vomiting, frontal headache

Private William Edward Byrnes was re-admitted to Neville Park V.A.D. Hospital, Kent on 28th November, 1917 with definite optic neuritis.

Notification was sent on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1918 from Base Records, Melbourne to Mr P. J. Byrnes, father of Private William Edward Byrnes, advising that his son who had been admitted to Neville Park Voluntary Aid Detachment, Tunbridge Wells, England was suffering from Inter Cranial pressure of Optic Neuritis – severe.

Private William Edward Byrnes died at 5 am on 30th January, 1918 at Neville Park V.A.D. Hospital, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England. A Post mortem was held & the cause of death was from a Cerebral Tumour.

A death for William E. Byrnes, aged 26, was registered in the March quarter, 1918 in the district of Tonbridge, Kent, England.

Private William Edward Byrnes was buried at 2 pm on 1st February, 1918 in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England – Plot number 5. 17 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte William Edward Byrnes - *Coffin was good polished Elm with brass fittings. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military Funeral. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack Flag. Several beautiful wreaths sent by the Hospital Staff and Patients were placed on the coffin. The Gun Carriage was supplied by the A.S.C., Band, Firing Party, Buglers and Pallbearers, under the command of an Officer, were supplied by the Middlesex Regiment stationed at Tunbridge Wells. The Commandant (Miss Pott) and several of the Nursing Staff and about 20 patients of the Hospital followed the remains of the deceased soldier to the graveside. Mr Ashton representing the Australian Red Cross Society was also present. An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. London. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral. Relatives present at the funeral – Brother No. 5454 Pte Michael Henry Patrick Byrnes, 18th Bn., A.I.F. at Base Havre, France.*

## 2nd Battalion

The 2nd Battalion returned to Egypt after the withdrawal from Gallipoli. In March 1916, the 2nd Battalion sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army, principally in the Somme Valley in France and around Ypres in Belgium. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozieres in the Somme valley in July 1916. Later the battalion fought at Ypres, in Flanders, before returning to the Somme for winter.

In early 1917 the German Army withdrew to the formidable defences of the Hindenburg Line. As the 2nd Battalion advanced towards these defences in April 1917, Private T. J. Kenny attacked several enemy machine gun positions with grenades, earning the 2nd Battalion's only Victoria Cross. The battalion spent much of the rest of 1917 fighting in increasingly horrendous conditions around Ypres.

*(Information from The Australian War Memorial)*

A War Pension was granted to Elisa Jane Byrnes, of Oliver St, Inverell, mother of the late Pte William Edward Byrnes, in the sum of 33/6 per fortnight granted from 2nd April, 1918.

Pte William Edward Byrnes was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Byrnes' father - Mr P. J. Byrnes, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent November, 1921 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private William Edward Byrnes – service number 3981, aged 26, of 2nd Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Patrick James and Eliza Jane Byrnes, of Lawrence St, Inverell, New South Wales.

Private W. E. Byrnes is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 32.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

W. E. Byrnes is remembered on the Inverell War Memorial located on corner of Lawrence Street and Evans Street, opposite the Inverell Returned Servicemen's Memorial Club, Inverell, NSW.



**Inverell War Memorial** (Photo from Register of War Memorials in NSW – Douglas N. James)

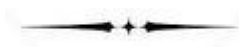
(52 pages of Pte William Edward Byrnes' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



**Connected to William Edward Byrnes:**

Younger Brother - Pte Michael Henry Byrnes, 5454, 28th Battalion. Enlisted 1st October, 1915. Returned to Australia 10th April, 1919. Discharged 8th July, 1919. Entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. Michael Henry Byrnes died in 1959.



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **383RD CASUALTY LIST**

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES LOSSES**

##### **DIED OF ILLNESS**

Pte W. E. BYRNES (Inverell), 31/1/18

*(Sunday Times, Sydney, NSW – 17 February, 1918)*

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#### **INVERELL**

Mrs E. Byrnes, of Inverell, has received information to the effect that her son, Private W. E. Byrnes, of the Second Battalion, had died in hospital in England. Private Byrnes, who was 25 years of age, enlisted from Brewarrina about three years ago.

*(Glenn Innes Examiner, NSW – 18 February, 1918)*

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#### **Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones**

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

A letter from Base Records, dated 5th July, 1921, to Pr P. J. Byrnes of Byron Street, Inverell, NSW, advised that a letter from the Defence Dept. concerning an inscription on the headstone of his son, the late Pte W. E. Byrnes, had not been answered & non-receipt of a reply within 21 days would have to be accepted as indicating that no further action was to be taken.

Pte W. E Byrnes does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*He Is Not Dead But Gone Before To Rest Above For Ever More*

## Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England

Tunbridge Wells Cemetery contains 138 Commonwealth War Graves – 75 relate to World War 1 which are scattered throughout the Cemetery & 63 relate to World War 2, of which more than half are located in a war graves plot in the south-eastern part of the Cemetery.



**Tunbridge Wells Cemetery** (Photo by N. Chadwick)



**Tunbridge Wells Cemetery** (Photo by js – Find a Grave)

Photo of Pte W. E. Byrnes' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England.



*(Photo by of js – Find a Grave)*