

## 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 and within weeks married British-born Daisy Critcher. Philip returned home, but Alfred stayed on and raised a family. Sydney was born in 1909, and Bessie May, named after her Padstow gran, arrived in 1911. The family moved to Toronto where Alfred opened an electrical store. In 1914 he took his family to England to visit his parents. During their stay war broke out and when in November they returned home they took precautions against U-boat attack by sailing to the US instead of Canada and travelling aboard a ship called *Vaderland*, no doubt hoping its Germanic name would keep them safe. It did. Alfred enlisted in August 1915 and the following April he left for England. In June Alfred was sent to France to reinforce the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, a former cavalry unit, that lost heavily at the Battle of Mount Sorrel. Converted to infantry and renamed the 5th CMR, the battalion was in 8th Canadian Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division. On the Somme they fought at Flers-Courcelette and Ancre Heights, and in 1917 they saw action at Arras, Vimy Ridge and Hill 70. In October Alfred spent ten days leave at his parents in London, before returning to the hell of Passchendaele. In March 1918 Germany launched a last offensive, but on 8th August the British counter-attacked at Amiens. Canadians spearheaded the victory, spelling the end for Germany. On the 20th Canadians were ordered to break the Hindenburg Line. Monchy-le-Preux had to be taken first. It was - but Alfred was killed.

**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. They wed in 1883 and had 6 sons. Brothers: Harry and Charles also fought in the war. Both survived.



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](mailto:smithpeter24@gmail.com)

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