

Cheltenham & Gloucester Branch  
of  
The Western Front Association

Remembering one of Gloucestershire's Fallen



**Gunner Percy William Barnes (3739)**  
213<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Section, Royal Garrison Artillery

**Percy William Barnes** was the son of Lambert Barnes, landlord of the *Odessa Inn* near Tewkesbury from 1917-1923. He was born in Cheltenham on 25 March 1897, but in 1901 he was a patient in the Home for Sick Children, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham. In 1911, however, he was back with the family of ten children, when his father was landlord of *The Grapes Inn*, Gloucester Place, Cheltenham.

Percy volunteered in August 1914 at the age of 17 and was posted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. He was subsequently transferred to the Royal Field Artillery as a Driver and then to the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Gunner in the 213<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Section, an arm of the artillery which had not existed at the outbreak of the war and which evolved

progressively to address a new menace of warfare – aircraft. The 213<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Section was part of the organisation known as the 'Lines of Communication' and its role was to defend key locations on the supply lines such as bridges, railways, depots and the like from attack by enemy aircraft. The section was a unit of some 40 men with two 3" anti-aircraft guns under their control and they operated within the Southern Group AA Area in the Somme.

According to the *Tewkesbury Register*, Percy was killed by a bomb dropped from an enemy aircraft on 21 March 1918 since when he had been posted as missing. However, this report was incorrect; the casualty records confirm that he died of wounds in Abbeville on 18 May although it is quite likely that he was wounded on 21 March

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(the opening day of the German Spring Offensive which started in the Somme sector) and then transported to Abbeville, the natural evacuation point from the Somme battlefields. For much of the war, Abbeville was headquarters of the Commonwealth Lines of Communication and a number of hospitals were stationed there.

Gunner Percy William Barnes did not recover from his wounds and is buried in the adjoining Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension. He is commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey, and in Cheltenham on the Borough Memorial and in All Saints Church.

*Extracted from a biography in A Noble Band of Heroes published by the Tewkesbury Historical Society*



*Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension*