

JOHN BARRY DCM.

75. PRIVATE.

1st WEST AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED INFANTRY.

(1st W.A.M.I.).

2854. SERGEANT.

D COMPANY (WEST AUSTRALIAN).

4th BATTALION,

AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH HORSE.

(A.C.H.).

AMGLO-BOER WAR.

1899 – 1902.

In early October of 1899, the Government of Western Australia decided to follow the example of the other colonies and to offer a contingent of soldiers, for service in South Africa, should the threatened event of war become a reality.

This offer was accepted by the Imperial Government under terms identical to those as applied to the other colonies.

The following information was then given so as to assist in the formation of units suitable for the military requirements. :-

“ Firstly, units should consist of about 125 men.

Secondly, they could be infantry, mounted infantry or cavalry, although in view of the numbers already available, infantry were the most and the cavalry least suitable.

Thirdly, all should be armed with .303 rifles or carbines, which can be supplied by the Imperial Government, if necessary.

Fourthly, all must provide their own equipment, with the mounted troops their own horses.

Fifthly, there must not be more than one Captain and three Subalterns to each unit ; where more than one unit is sent from a single colony the force may be commanded by an officer not higher in rank than Major.

Troops to be disembarked at the port of landing in South Africa, fully equipped, at the cost of the Colonial Governments or volunteers from the date of disembarkation.

Imperial Government will provide pay at Imperial rates, supplies and ammunition, and will defray expenses of transport back to colony, and pay wound pensions and compassionate allowances at Imperial rates.

The troops to embark not later than 31st October, proceeding direct to Cape Town for orders. “

In the Western Australian Government Gazette, Friday the 13th of October 1899, the official sanction for the raising of a contingent from Western Australia appeared, it gave the following information :-

“ A company of infantry, with an establishment of one Captain, three Lieutenants, and 125 other ranks for service with Her Majesty’s Imperial Forces in South Africa was to be formed.

The designation of the company is the West Australian Permanent Infantry, with the period of engagement to be for one year and the conditions of service to be as follows :-

Men between the ages of 20 and 30 shall be qualified for enlistment. The pay for warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, and men is to be as follows ;-

Company Sergeant-Major : 9 Shillings per day.

Sergeants :	8 Shillings per day.
Corporals :	7 Shillings per day.
Lance-Corporals (paid) :	5 Shillings per day.
Privates and Buglers :	4 Shillings and sixpence per day.

Two shillings and sixpence per diem of the above rates of pay shall be retained by the Government as deferred pay, to be handed over to the man on completion of his engagement. Such deferred pay will be forfeited to the Government in cases of desertion or dismissal from the service for misconduct and for each day for which actual pay is forfeited.

Each warrant officer, non-commissioned officer and man, upon joining, will be provided with :-

3 khaki drill jackets, 3 khaki drill trousers, 1 soft felt hat (complete), 1 forage cap (Glengarry), 1 great-coat, 2 pairs ankle boots, 1 guernsey (blue).

The free kit is as follows :-

1 blacking tin, 1 pair braces, 1 set rushes, 1 button holder, 1 comb, 1 knife, fork and spoon, 1 holdall, 1 knife, clasp and lanyard, 1 kit-bag (canvas), 1 razor and case, 3 flannel shirts, 3 pairs socks (woolen), 1 piece soap, 1 sponge, 2 towels. “

It was decided that the West Australian contingent would be commanded by Captain H.G. Moor, RA, who was at the time, the officer in command of the fort at Albany. Captain Moor had previously served in South Africa and it was thought that his knowledge of the Boers and their language would be an asset to the continent.

Now began the process of selecting the men from the many volunteers who had answered the call sent to the various volunteer corps and to others who had previously served in the Imperial forces and the volunteer corps in the other colonies.

Among those men who reported to the Drill Hall in Francis Street, Perth, at the appointed time was John Barry.

On his Application Form, he gave the following details :-

Name :-	John Barry.
Age :	27 years.
Birthplace :	South Australia.
Occupation :	Plasterer.
Previous Military Service :	14 months, Perth Artillery Volunteers.

Major McWilliams, of the Defence Force's Medical Staff, would put them through a thorough examination which was of a higher standard than that of the British Army.

They were to be unmarried, between the ages of 20 and 30, 5ft. 6in. in height, with a chest measurement of 34in.

The men from Perth, Fremantle and Guildford would be joined in camp by the volunteers from the country corps in York, Geraldton and Bunbury, with men from the permanent artillery force at Albany and two maxim guns to join the contingent when it would arrive in Albany, the port of departure for the contingent.

Once the final selections, including reservists, had been made, the men were sworn in and went into camp at Karrakatta.

Among those successful applicants was John Barry. He would be given the rank of Private and the number 75.

Once in camp, they were subjected to a vigorous source of training to fit them for the expected campaign.

The company was intended to be an infantry company and this was reflected in its first title, the West Australian Permanent Infantry Company and the training that was carried out at Karrakatta Camp.

Those selected all went into the camp as Privates, those who had already held non-commissioned rank in the volunteers would give this up for the time being. With the contingent requiring six Sergeants, six Corporals and six Lance-Corporals, these would be selected from those showing the greatest aptitude.

John Barry was one of those selected to be promoted. He was promoted to Lance-Corporal, on a date not specified.

After a brief but intensive period of training, the contingent was declared ready for departure for South Africa and preparations began for the embarkation of the troops, horses, wagons, maxim guns and other equipment.

After a parade and civic reception at the Perth Town Hall, the contingent left Perth by train and set off for Albany, where they were to embark aboard the transport MEDIC.

Lance-Corporal Barry was promoted to Corporal on the 7th of November 1899, prior to the departure of the contingent.

Arriving in Albany on the 7th of November, the contingent, now joined by the artillerymen from Albany boarded the MEDIC, which also carried the South Australian, Tasmanian and Victorian units that were also sailing for South Africa.

Arriving at Cape Town on the 27th of November, the four companies were joined by a New South Wales company and formed "The Australia Regiment", although each company would serve in its own right.

Stationed at Naauport, the Regiment was converted to Mounted Infantry and thus the title of the West Australian unit became the 1st West Australian Mounted Infantry (1st W.A.M.I.).

It was also here, that the contingent was issued with their full khaki uniforms and magazine fed rifles, as they were still in the interim uniforms that they had left Australia in and carrying their single action rifles.

On the 1st of December, the Regiment entrained for De Aar to join the Kimberley Relief Force and were used on the lines of communication between De Aar and Modder River.

The 1st W.A.M.I., served with General Clements' Column near Colesberg, Cape Colony, which was the site of their first action " West Australian Hill ", on the 9th of November.

The 1st W.A.M.I., served with Major-General Hutton's Column on the advance to Bloemfontein to the occupation of Pretoria.

Corporal John Barry was promoted to Sergeant, in the field, date not specified.

On the 15th of October 1900, the 1st W.A.M.I., were inspected by Lord Roberts in Pretoria and were complimented on their work.

On 13th of December 1900, the 1st W.A.M.I. left Cape Town aboard the transport ORIENT, for return to Australia, with Sergeant Barry amongst them.

Arriving in Albany on the 29th of December, the contingent returned to Karrakatta Camp, in preparation for their discharge.

The 1st W.A.M.I., was disbanded on the 29th of March 1901.

Sergeant John Barry was mentioned in Despatches, London Gazette, 27.9.1901 (this date is sometimes quoted as 19.4.1901) and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (D.C.M.). The circumstances of the action that brought him to the notice of the General Staff are uncertain, but it is thought to have been as a result of his capturing an enemy train (see attached newspaper cutting).

As the war in South Africa continued after the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia and the need for more troops was felt, once again the call for men to serve in what was now called the Australian Commonwealth Horse (A.C.H.), was made.

And once again, one of those who answered that call, was John Barry DCM.

Volunteering for service in D Company (West Australian), 4th Battalion, Australian Commonwealth Horse, he gave the following details :-

Name : John Barry.

Age : 28 years 7 months.

Birthplace : Not stated.
Occupation : Furnaceman.
Religion : Roman Catholic.
Previous Service : 1 year 169 days, 1st W.A.M.I.
Marital Status : Single.
Address : 269 Newcastle Street, Perth.
Next of Kin : Michael Barry. Hindley Street, Adelaide, South Australia.

After passing medical examinations etc, he was accepted into the contingent, with the rank of Sergeant and the number 2854, on the 1.2.1902.

The 4th Battalion was divided amongst the transports TEMPLEMORE and the ENGLISHMAN, with Sergeant Barry aboard the ENGLISHMAN, which departed from Fremantle on the 20th of April 1902.

The 4th A.C.H. disembarked in Durban in May 1902 and by the time they were organized and began to move inland to take up duties, peace was declared and they returned to Durban for the voyage home.

Of a total strength of 5 officers and 115 other ranks, one officer and 47 other ranks were struck off in South Africa, with Sergeant John Barry DCM, being one of the 47.

Sergeant John Barry for his service in South Africa, would be awarded :-

The Distinguished Conduct Medal (D.C.M.).

The Queen's South Africa Medal (Q.S.A.), with the clasps, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill, Wittebergen, Cape Colony, Transvaal and South Africa 1902.

Mentioned in Despatches.