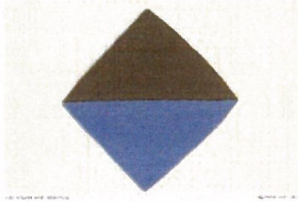


## Part A:

### Patrick Aloysius Byrne



Some said they heard the call, others said they were seeking adventure. WWI was the greatest unknown the world had ever faced, and these men were ready to put their lives on the line for their country. He was only a young man when he decided to go, just like a lot of them, believing that it was the right thing to do. By heading off to war he got to fight, get paid, have an adventure and travel abroad, but it was not what it seemed. The judgment of these men was clouded, others would say uninformed, either way the reality of war was far worse than anyone had anticipated.

Private 756; Patrick Aloysius Byrne was born in the town of Broken Hill, New South Wales in 1890. He was one of John Byrne and Bridget Byrne's two children. Although it is unknown whether he spent his early life in New South Wales or South Australia, we do know his mother moved between towns throughout her life. Patrick Byrne's father passed away in 1911 making Byrne the man of the house and leaving him without a father figure, although this did not stop Byrne. He worked as a labourer until his decision to enlist in The First World War. His enlistment is documented as taking place on Saturday the 20th of February 1915 at the Keswick Barracks. He was aged just 22 years and 5 months, unmarried, with a dark complexion and brown eyes when he signed the attestation papers for service abroad (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 9).

He was soon to be part of a group of men who would embark on a life-changing experience. Byrne was posted to the 27th Australian Infantry Battalion (Figure 2) and on the 31st of May 1915 Byrne and his battalion left Adelaide onboard the HMAT A2 Geelong (Figure 1) headed for Alexandria in Egypt. At midnight on the 11th of September the 27th battalion arrived at ANZAC Cove and marched to Taylors Hollow. Byrne, alongside 108 other soldiers from his battalion, took over the trenches from the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) where they defended Cheshire Ridge for the following month (AWM4, AIF War Diaries 23/7/1, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade).

After 42 days defending Cheshire Ridge on 26th of October 1915 Byrne was reported sick and transferred to the 7th field ambulance dressing station (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 42). He left the rest of the brigade, men who were now his mates, fighting a lengthy battle. That same day he was evacuated to Mudros on Lemnos where he stayed at the British Forward Base. His casualty form suggests he had Myalgia (muscle aches) which can be caused by overuse and exhaustion. That same day Byrne boarded a hospital ship, The Glenart Castle (Figure 3) which was headed to Alexandria. While on the hospital ship doctors suspected he had rheumatism, a pain that affected the joints. After 4 days at sea the ship arrived in Egypt and after disembarking, he was put on a train to Cairo where he would be admitted to the Second Australian General Hospital.

Over the next 2 to 3 months Byrne was transferred and admitted to different Hospitals across Egypt before being discharged from hospital in Abbassia on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1916 (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 43). Byrne was then transferred to Zeitoun training camp where he re-joined the battalion from Ismailia in Egypt on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. Byrne persevered and attempted to re-join the battalion and fulfill his service. During this time records show he also seized the opportunity to get up to mischief by leaving the ranks without permission which left him with 14 days of No. 2 field punishment (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 44). Those next 14 days would be a painful and unruly time consisting of heavy



labouring duties. However, Byrne's punishment was cut short as the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion was called to embark the Alexandria headed to Marseilles where they disembarked on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.

Byrne's first few months of service were filled with illness, warfare, new mates, and disruption in all aspects of his life. Byrne's next year of service continued as chaotically as it started due to ill health and moving between hospitals. He was not in a good state during this time and medical reports document he had shortness of breath, inflammation of his heart's inner lining and heart disease amongst other things.

It is now known that symptoms such as these may be related to the medical condition originally termed 'shell shock' or PTSD, a mental health disorder. PTSD was perceived as a weakness during WWI and few soldiers were ever diagnosed. However, doctors would sometimes record this affliction as heart disease on records to ensure that soldiers would be discharged as medically unfit without being forced to continue fighting. This was a show of strong mateship between the soldiers and doctors. Doctors understood the severity of war and how affected many men were by their time on the frontline and saw it as their duty to protect them from further damage. Byrne's medical records state that he too was given the diagnosis of heart disease, potentially indicating that he experienced this type of consideration and show of mateship from doctors directly.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1916, Byrne embarked the *Euripides* while still unwell and headed for home service on Australian shores. After 45 days at sea he arrived in Adelaide, Australia, where his mother was awaiting his arrival. Bridget had been informed that her son had been ill in past months and was eager for further news of his condition when he returned. After his arrival in Adelaide, he was examined at Keswick Hospital where doctors decided he was to be discharged as 'permanently unfit'. His discharge was confirmed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1916 and his service with the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion was concluded (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 59). By the end of his service Byrne had received the 1914/15 Star, The British War Medal and The Victory Medal for his service and when his service ended, he had achieved 1 year and 241 days of service with 1 year and 67 days of that being service abroad.

Upon his discharge Byrne lived in Clare before moving to Norwood in November of 1917. The following year was a busy one for Byrne. Records show that in 1918 he was living in Broken Hill before marrying Miss Vera Maude Furler in Adelaide. Byrne also became a father for the first time in 1918 when his son Kevin Patrick Byrne was born. It is presumed that Byrne lived in Norwood for a few years with his wife and first child and in 1920 had their second son which they named John Harold Byrne.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1922 Byrne's wife gave birth to their first and only daughter named Mary Eileen Byrne. She was also born in Norwood like both her older brothers. Mary would never get to meet her grandfather and sadly she only got to spend a short amount of time with her father and grandmother who both died later in 1922. Interestingly, at the age of 46 Mary Eileen married John McEwen who for three weeks in 1967/8 became the Prime Minister of Australia following the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt (figure 4).

There is evidence that Byrne received a War Pension from the state of NSW and SA upon his discharge; (NAA: B2455, BYRNE P, pg. 57) however there is no information currently available detailing any work he undertook. The fact that he received a pension in both NSW and SA indicates that the family moved interstate at some point during this period.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1922 Byrne's mother Bridget passed away at the age of 71. The death of his mother would have been a distressing event for both Byrne, his wife Vera and their young family.

Just three months later, Byrne was fighting yet another battle to stay alive; this time at Keswick Repatriation Hospital with heart complications. Documents state that his wife of 4 years "... was previously notified that he was dangerously ill and was in attendance at the time of [his] death." (NAA: A2487, 1922/16005) Patrick Aloysius Byrne, aged just 31 years, passed away at 7pm on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1922.

Byrne was a fighter and persevered through many horrific events in his life. He is one depiction of the true ANZAC spirit because his life's story illustrates that he never gave up through the First World War, being ill for multiple years and the death of both his parents.

Patrick Aloysius Byrne was buried in Adelaide's West Terrace cemetery in the Catholic Western Ground. Byrne is buried in an unmarked grave, but The Headstone Project work will lead to Byrne receiving a headstone under the auspices of the WWI Unmarked Graves Project. Throughout his life he had shown what it is to be an Australian through the good and the bad. He was only a young man when he passed away, but the time he had was not wasted through his service to Australia.

LEST WE FORGET

**Word Count: 1475**





Figure 1

Boys from the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion onboard the HMAT A2 Geelong headed to Alexandria, Egypt.

Service Number	Rank	Branch	Name	Unit	Enlistment Date	Discharge Date
1909A	Pte	WFLMC	Michael Joseph	10th Battalion	23/6/13	11/1/17
2195A	Pte	WFLMC	Michael Joseph	4th Battalion	8/3/13	12/3/18
7659	Cpl	WFLMC	Kenie Marie	A.A.M.C.	29/8/17	21/3/19
2444	Pte	WFLMC	Matthew William	14th Battalion	25/9/18	18/1/19
756	Pte	WFLMC	Raymond Martin	1st Division	29/7/18	11/1/19
2525	Pte	WFLMC	Petrick	7th Battalion	25/3/13	24/8/16
6714	Pte	WFLMC	Petrick	30th Battalion	11/9/16	20/12/19
6479	Pte	WFLMC	Patrick	9th Battalion	18/8/18	23/7/17
1082	Cpl	WFLMC	Petrick John	8th Battalion	25/7/16	11/7/17
35129	Ser	WFLMC	Patrick Joseph	12th Battalion	18/7/18	22/7/17
7088	Pte	WFLMC	Peter Joseph	13th B. Co. 34e.	20/9/16	13/10/17
5338	Cpl	WFLMC	Peter Joseph	9th Battalion	15/9/16	27/9/17
2093	Pte	WFLMC	Philip Perry	32nd Battalion	14/15/13	16/1/19
1617	Pte	WFLMC	S.	9th Battalion	3/12/10	20/1/15
8639	Pte	WFLMC	Richard	50th Battalion	23/12/10	18/1/17
3708	Pte	WFLMC	Robert Archibald	18th Div.	5/2/17	28/7/19
4780	Pte	WFLMC	Richard Everett	1st Division	28/2/17	13/7/19
5270	Pte	WFLMC	Michael Joseph	A.P.	7/8/17	6/3/19
288	Pte	WFLMC	Richard John	7th Battalion	18/8/14	25/2/15
5151	Pte	WFLMC	Raymond John	50th Battalion	5/1/18	18/3/17
3802	Pte	WFLMC	Stanley	28th Battalion	28/8/16	18/9/19
3018	Pte	WFLMC	Stacey Roland	32nd Battalion	3/8/13	27/9/17
1722	Cpl	WFLMC	Thomas	36th Battalion	8/7/13	17/8/19
2211	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas	6th Div.	8/2/10	27/6/19
2879	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas	1st Battalion	30/12/13	8/8/19
2990	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas	37th Battalion	2/1/14	10/1/18
1051	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas	16th Battalion	8/2/14	9/2/19
27	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas James	10th Div.	6/12/14	2/9/19
53681	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Joseph	13th Battalion	25/2/18	5/7/17
36471	Ser	WFLMC	Thomas Joseph	1st Div.	27/2/18	23/8/18
7623	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Joseph	3rd Battalion	11/1/17	23/8/18
4019	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Joseph	29th Battalion	5/12/16	15/7/18
2882	Cpl	WFLMC	Thomas Leo	9th Battalion	8/7/13	30/3/17
6044	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Lester	A.P.	3/6/18	22/7/19
1077	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Martin	2nd Div.	13/1/13	12/1/19
2871	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Patrick	31st Battalion	4/2/18	12/1/19
2862	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Francis	35th Battalion	11/12/13	9/2/17
2642	Pte	WFLMC	Thomas Anthony	31st Battalion	20/12/17	23/7/19
52721	L/Cpl	WFLMC	Verdon Barry	30th Battalion	8/2/16	29/3/18
2001	Pte	WFLMC	Victor John	46th Battalion	12/7/15	

Figure 2

Patrick Byrne's name listed of the First World War Nominal Roll.

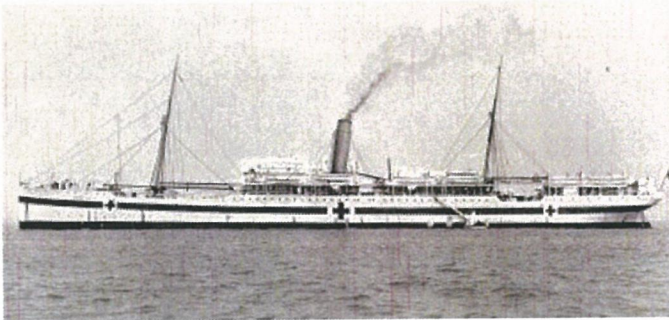


Figure 3

The Glenart Castle Hospital Ship that Byrne was on.



Figure 4

Mary Eileen & Sir John McEwen in 1968



Figure 5

Lara Dawson standing at Byrne's Grave



## Reference List

www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). *AWM4 War Diaries 7th Infantry Brigade*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1348048> [Accessed 9 May 2021].

National Archives of Australia. (1914). *Byrne Patrick : SERN 756 : POB Broken Hill NSW : POE Keswick SA : NOK M Byrne Bridget*. [online] Available at:

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3179724>  
[Accessed 7 May 2021].

Trove Family Notices. (1922). *Southern Cross (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1954)*, [online] 10 Nov., p.10. Available at:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/167032569?searchTerm=patrick%20aloysius>  
[Accessed 10 May 2021].

www.awm.gov.au. (n.d.). *FIRST WORLD WAR NOMINAL ROLL Patrick Byrne*. [online] Available at: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R2168530> [Accessed 5 May 2021].

Ancestry.com.au. (2021). *Mary Eileen Byrne Ancestry Tree*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ancestry.com.au/family-tree/person/tree/17861286/person/28884370452/facts>  
[Accessed 15 May 2021].

www.burra.info. (n.d.). *Burra School Records - Girls*. [online] Available at: <http://www.burra.info/pages/schoolgirls.html> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

www.genealogysa.org.au. (n.d.). *Genealogy SA*. [online] Available at: [https://www.genealogysa.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_gsa&view=gsa&layout=esearch&collection\\_id=birth&page\\_no=1&sort\\_by=&sort\\_direction=asc&Surname=&GivenName=&year\\_from=&accuracy=&Gender=&Father=Patrick+Aloysius+Byrne&District=&Book\\_Page=](https://www.genealogysa.org.au/index.php?option=com_gsa&view=gsa&layout=esearch&collection_id=birth&page_no=1&sort_by=&sort_direction=asc&Surname=&GivenName=&year_from=&accuracy=&Gender=&Father=Patrick+Aloysius+Byrne&District=&Book_Page=)  
[Accessed 14 May 2021]

## **Part B:**

Patrick Aloysius Byrne was assigned to me by a member of The Headstone Project SA to research his service and investigate whether he would be eligible for a headstone. This came about because of the work I did last year where we worked on soldier studies with the Virtual War Memorial. I spoke with Mr Ian Hopley who is very involved with the Headstone Project SA and he asked if I'd like to be involved in researching for them. As I had found my first soldier study very rewarding, I was eager to get involved.

Byrne was a stranger to me at the beginning. My research started with only a small amount of information - his name, service number and date of death which I came to learn was recorded incorrectly. The first place I went looking for answers was the Nation Archives of Australia. This gave me numerous leads some of which led to more, others that didn't go anywhere. I then turned to school records, birth registries and marriage records using 'Ancestry'. Ancestry gave me thousands of results which I sorted through and noted to revisit later or followed up at the time. Note taking was a really important component as I used them to develop a timeline, family tree and connect dots.

Next, I investigated using 'Trove' and I was able to find death notices for Patrick Byrne and his parents. This led me to finding out that Byrne had two children whom I was able to investigate further using 'Genealogy'. Genealogy gave me information on not just two of his children, but a third child. Byrne and Vera had three children all who were born after World War One.

There were numerous other websites and documents that I read and sorted through, but one of the most interesting discoveries came when I was researching Byrne's daughter Mary Eileen. Mary was born in March of 1922 and through my research I discovered she married a man called John McEwen. John McEwen became the Prime Minister of Australia in 1967 making Patrick Byrne the father-in-law of a Prime Minister of Australia. This was an interesting discovery in my research and although this event didn't directly impact his life it is fascinating.

My research into Patrick Byrne has sent me in many directions and has presented me with knowledge about his time at war and following however I am yet to find information about his early childhood. I have also learnt that as much as you puzzle it together, you are still left with questions unanswered. Sometimes I feel like I end my research with more questions than I started with and wish wholeheartedly I could sit down with the person I am researching and ask all those questions I could not answer. Even as the deadline for this piece approaches, I am still investigating Private Patrick Aloysius Byrne's life and I hope to find a photo of him to learn more about his life and family.

**Word Count: 498**