

# Private John ‘Barney’ Hines

## *The souvenir king*

*In the latter half of 1916, a large man of scruffy appearance, covered in tattoos, entered an AIF recruiting depot in Sydney. He walked up to the table and thumped it hard with his hand. ‘Is this where I join up?’ he growled in guttural tones, laced with a thick accent. His name was John ‘Barney’ Hines.*

Born in Liverpool, England, Hines gave his age as 36 and his occupation as comprising a variety of trades—seaman, engineer, fireman, deep-sea diver and shearer. This was not Barney’s first experience of military life. He had served in the British Territorial Forces (the 8<sup>th</sup> King’s Liverpool Regiment) for three and a half years. He had, in fact, also enlisted in the AIF the previous year, only to be discharged suffering from haemorrhoids.<sup>1</sup>

Barney was a ‘Fair Dinkum’, one of those who enlisted in response to the call for more volunteers following the heavy casualties suffered by the ANZACs at Gallipoli. These volunteers fully understood that this was not a glamorous adventure. They knew that war cost lives—and plenty of them. He sailed for England and further training at a camp on Salisbury Plain. The big man proved to be quite a handful in camp and frequently gave himself extended leave periods—the last one resulting in penalties of 60 days’ detention and forfeiture of 109 days’ pay.<sup>1</sup> Allocated to the 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion, he embarked for France and the Western Front in March 1917. Soon after his arrival, the 45<sup>th</sup> moved into the Bapaume area to prepare for its attack on the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line.

Barney had a habit of adopting a glazed stare when confronted by a hostile German, as a subsequent description of his fighting style indicates:<sup>2</sup>

*Digger comrades dubbed [Hines] ‘Wild Eyes’ and his escapades soon became famous. Disdaining to use his .303, he went into action clutching two sand bags stuffed with Mills bombs. Battalion officers recognised his natural fighting ability but despaired of ever turning him into a trained and disciplined soldier.*

*Lieutenant Colonel Allen thought of attaching the big fellow to a Lewis gun. Hines was entranced by the weapon and its spraying power. ‘This’ll do me’, he growled ... ‘it’s just like hosing the bastards down’.*

Barney’s passion was souveniring and his first taste of it came when he found a donkey and cart. The donkey was careering along the road after an officer of the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion had caused the animal to take fright. Barney tried to stop the donkey but, in so doing, was catapulted over the beast’s head, dislocating his shoulder. Barney regarded the injury as little more than an inconvenience, but he feared he now might only be able to carry one bag of bombs into battle.

The men of the 45<sup>th</sup> liked having this unconventional Digger fighting beside them. The man was fearless, and his natural ability to inspire confidence in his fellow soldiers was immensely reassuring. Yet, at times, he would behave in the most reckless, unorthodox, gallant or inexplicable manner.<sup>3</sup>

There were many occasions when his conduct could only be described as bizarre. One day, as the men of the 45<sup>th</sup> marched from their lines, Hines broke ranks and rushed up to a Chinese man working on the road with a labour unit. He smothered the little man in a bear hug, and then kissed him. The startled man took fright and, while trying to escape Barney's attentions, ran blindly in front of a truck and was killed. Without any apparent show of remorse or emotion, Barney checked the body, shrugged his shoulders, then rejoined the ranks.<sup>4</sup>

Hines was renowned for refusing to leave a wounded soldier behind. He repeatedly set off on his own, under heavy fire, to rescue casualties. Whenever possible, he buried those of his own unit who had been killed in action. Even after long periods of heavy fighting, Hines never tired of searching for and burying, bodies that had been missed or forgotten.

One day, in the mud and slush of a little-known place named Octagon Trench, Barney and an officer, Second Lieutenant Hopgood, had become separated from the rest of their platoon. Suddenly, the uneasy quiet was pierced by a burst of machine-gun fire. One of the rounds found its mark, wounding Hopgood in the arm.

The salvo had come from a German pillbox, and Hines realised he had to eliminate the enemy gun if he and the lieutenant were to survive. He crept forward, climbed on top of the offending concrete fortification and, to the astonishment of the resident Germans, dropped right in front of the door and threw in a few Mills bombs. The surviving 63 Germans, including a general who had taken shelter in the machine-gun post, offered no resistance and surrendered to Hines.

Later that day, Hines ventured out alone and destroyed another German machine-gun post. He was wounded during this latter action and spent the next six weeks recuperating in hospital. During a day's convalescent leave from the hospital, he found a fine chestnut horse with a saddle but no rider. He took it 'home' and traded it for a bottle of whisky.<sup>5</sup>



At Zonnebeke, armed with a handful of bombs and with his Lewis gun slung across his back, Hines set off on one of his lone forays. He stumbled upon an enemy dressing station. The German occupants were all dead, but a British soldier lying on a stretcher on the floor was still alive. With a gentleness that one would not normally associate with a man of Hines' size and appearance, Barney gently shouldered the wounded man to carry him back to safety. His efforts were in vain, however, as the Englishman died on the way. Hines buried him, then, ever

the opportunist, went back to collect a few coins and other odds and ends from the 'morgue' that once had been the dressing station.<sup>3</sup>

The following night, Hines accompanied Captain Dibbs on a reconnaissance patrol. A raid on a troublesome pillbox was considered, but Captain Dibbs decided, prudently, that they should first ascertain the strength of the enemy's defences. Barney worked his way up to the front of the fortification and counted about 20 Germans. Dibbs questioned whether they should return for reinforcements, but Hines was determined to try out his latest toy—an incendiary bomb. He prised open the door of the pillbox and launched his missile. In his own words, 'The egg went straight in among the bastards'. There was no need for reinforcements or a raid.<sup>4</sup>

On the way back to the lines, Hines encountered ten Germans taking refuge in a shell hole. He rushed in and took them all as his prisoners. Others from the battalion came to assist, but Barney warned them off in no uncertain terms. These were his prisoners and he was not about to share his loot. He wasted no time relieving his somewhat indignant captives of their personal possessions and equipment—watches, cash and any other saleable items were added to Hines' growing stash of 'finds'. Any time the Diggers wanted such items as Zeiss field-glasses or a Mauser pistol, Barney could supply them, but always at a price.<sup>4</sup>

Barney's souveniring escapades soon became common knowledge amongst the Diggers. An official army photograph of Barney taken at Polygon Wood made

*'The Souvenir  
King' AWM  
Negative  
E00822.*



headlines in a variety of newspapers and broadsheets. The image portrayed an unshaven, dishevelled Barney wearing a German forage cap and surrounded by the 'treasures' he had scavenged during a day of souvenir-hunting. On that particular day, he had amassed more than 4000 francs, a bottle of whisky, a pair of earrings, a diamond brooch, a gold ring, around one million German marks, a variety of watches, and sufficient iron crosses to fill a sandbag. Barney's notoriety was now widely known. It is reputed that the photograph was even reproduced in Germany, where the Kaiser was incensed at the sight of the scruffy-looking Digger surrounded by the piles of equipment and personal effects he had taken from German soldiers. The image caption described Hines as *typical of the impossible, uncultured Australian savages that the German soldier had to contend with on the Western Front*.<sup>5</sup> It was rumoured that the Kaiser was so furious that he put a price on Hines' head of 100 000 marks. The money would be paid for Barney's capture, dead or alive, and represented a small fortune in those days.

At Passchendaele in 1917, Hines was the only member of his Lewis gun team to survive a direct hit by an enemy shell. The force of the exploding missile ripped the soles off Hines' boots and threw him some distance from his post. He crawled back to the gun position to bury the dead, including his best mate, Private Colman. He restored the gun to working order and carried on alone until hit in the knee by a splinter of spent shrapnel.<sup>4</sup>

Barney was granted leave in England, where this ferocious fighter—whom many believed was worth two in the line—gave the trouble of ten. Barney turned up a week or so late to return to France. He had found a new cobbler and a bottle of whisky to enjoy before he returned to the war. Barney had so many brushes with military law—particularly for being absent without leave, resulting in fines or loss of pay—that many say Barney Hines' pay book was possibly one of the most graphic documents to emerge from the First World War. It could be argued that Barney's souveniring for profit was born of a need for additional money, to compensate for the pay he had lost in fines.

Barney's fearless assaults on enemy strongholds with his 'pins out of grenade' style; his fierce, wild-eyed demeanour; his large, intimidating body; and his bags of deadly bombs produced many enemy dead and induced numerous terror-stricken Germans to surrender.<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 1918, Hines fought with the 45<sup>th</sup> in the crucial battle of Dernancourt, preventing the Germans from breaking through the British front. Soon after this action, Hines became the casualty of a gas attack. He was reluctant to leave the combat area, but had been temporarily blinded by the chemical vapour and was sent to the rear area for medical attention. The hospital train was bombed en route—did the Hun know Barney was on board?

Hines had been undergoing hospital treatment for three weeks when German planes launched a savage attack on the facility. Casualties were heavy, and

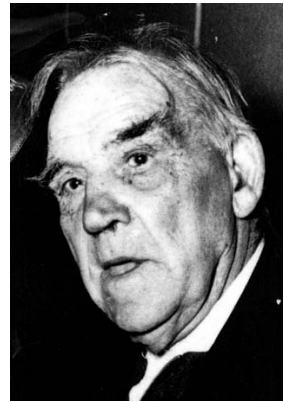
included Barney, who caught a piece of shrapnel in his heel. Despite his injuries, and supported by a makeshift crutch, Barney worked through the night to help the hospital staff move the patients to safety.<sup>4</sup>

Barney did not recover sufficiently to return to active service and was repatriated to Australia in 1919 and discharged as medically unfit. Postwar, Hines wandered the countryside trying his hand at a variety of jobs. He returned to the outer Sydney area of Mt Druitt where he lived a lonely existence in a little old bag shack. He had to survive on his war pension, income from odd jobs and money from the sale of his precious souvenirs.<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, Barney gained prominence when his plight was featured in the Returned and Services League (RSL) of New South Wales' magazine, *Reveille* in an article entitled, 'Souvenir King has no Souvenirs Now'. Old Diggers from around Australia dug deep and sent donations to help their old mate. A cable received at RSL Headquarters simply stated: *Have just received my December "Reveille" stop Wiring two pounds for Barney Hines Christmas stop Digger.*<sup>5</sup>

Barney's appreciation of his fellow veteran's generosity was heartfelt and sincere. When he sat down to his first real Christmas dinner for many years, he said, 'I'd like to meet that bloke and keep an eye on him in the next war'.<sup>4</sup>

Barney passed away on 29 January 1958. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery and is commemorated in the cemetery's Garden of Remembrance. In honour of a local hero, Blacktown City Council renamed a street in suburban Minchinbury, 'John Hines Avenue'.<sup>6</sup>



*Barney Hines in his later years. From digging for Diggers by Graeme Hosken.*

#### Notes

- 1 National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, 2296 Private J Hines
- 2 Holledge J, article, *Sunday Mirror*, 21 July 1968
- 3 AWM 43 (A377) 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion Souvenir King, *Reveille*, July 1939
- 4 AWM 43 (A377), Celebrities in the AIF, *Reveille* 1 December 1933
- 5 AWM 43 (A377) Souvenir King Has No Souvenirs Now, *Reveille*, 1 January 1934
- 6 Hosken G, *digging for Diggers*, ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, Brisbane, 2002



## 'Barney' Hines's Service and Casualty Forms

Reproduced from *digging for Diggers: A guide to researching an Australian soldier of the Great War, 1914-1918* written by Graeme Hosken.

330 2nd M.D. Army Form B. 103-II Part II.

**(SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM Part II)**

Regiment or Corps 45th Battalion 4th-Refs Regimental Number 2296

\*Substantive Rank Pte Surname HINES Christian Names John

\*Acting Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\* To be entered in pencil to facilitate alteration.)

(A) Report		(B) Authority of Part II. of Orders	(C) Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, etc. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be intelligibly named.	(D) Place of casualty	(E) Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, etc.	(F) Remarks and initials and rank of an officer
Date.	From whom received.					
			O. C. Troops A.18 "Wiltshire" Embarked	Sydney	22/8/16	
			Disembarked	Ply'mth	13/10/16	
			16/10/16 3 Com. Depot	Wool	13/10/16	
			19/11/16 12 T.B. Camp I4	Codford	18/11/16	20/3/2006
			5/11/16 No.3 Com. Depot	OFFENCE Bov. Camp	31/10/16	
			A.W.L from <del>W</del> night to 5 p.m.	31/10/16	1/11/16	
			<u>AWARD</u> 3 days C.C. by Lieut S.R.Richardson	2/11/16	Bov Camp	20/12/1866
			Forfeiture I days pay R.W	Wool	2/11/16	
			17/11/16 3 Com. Depot	M/out to I2 T.B	Wool	17/11/16
			I2 Tng? Btn.	D.C.M held at Codford	Codford	23/1/17
				23/1/17 Pres. Major E Twyram.		
				OFFENCE Codford A.W.L in that he at Codford Camp	5/12/16 till 9/1/17	
				absented himself W/O leave from 5/12/16 until he was apprehended by the C.P		

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W1889-PP1130 500000 5/11 G.W.P.Co.(499)

(A) Report		(B) Authority of Part II. of Orders	(C) Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, etc. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be intelligibly named.	(D) Place of casualty	(E) Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, etc.	(F) Remarks and initials and rank of an officer
Date.	From whom received.					
			at Bethnall Green, London			
			9/1/17. <u>PLEADED</u> & found guilty. <u>SENTENCE</u> to undergo detention for a period of (60) sixty days			
			23/1/17. Confirmed by Brig. Gen. E.G.Sinclair Maclogan. G.O.C. 27/1/17			
			Forfeiture in custody I3 days. Total forfeiture			
			I09 days		27/1/17	
5/3/17	I2 Tng Btn.		Sick to Hosp.	Codford	18/3/17	
5/3/17	" "		M/in from Hosp	"	1/3/17	
7/3/17	" "		Proc. O/seas to France	Folkestone		20/19/16 2/4/17
			ex I2th Tng. Btn Cod'fd		28/3/17	
I/3/17	4 A.D.B.D		Joined Base ex England	Etaples	29/3/17	
I/3/17	" "		Marched out to Unit	"	31/3/17	
7/4/17	C.O 45th Btn		Taken on strength	France	I/4/17	D.OI7/2006

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2nd M.D Army Form B, 103-11-  
Part II.

**(SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM Part II).**

Regiment or Corps 45th Battalion 4th-Ref Regimental Number 2296

\*Substantive Rank Pte Surname HINES Christian Names John

\*Acting Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\* To be entered in pencil to facilitate alteration.)

(A) Report		(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Date.	From whom received.	Authority of Part II. of Orders	Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, etc. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named.	Place of casualty	Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, etc.	Remarks and initials and rank of an officer
16/6/17	C.O 45 Btn		Wounded in action	Field	7/6/17	D.036/3681
8/6/17	56 G. Hosp.		Wound set Adm	Etaples	8/6/17	V.L378
9/6/17	9 A.F.A		G.S.W Shld. R.	Field	8/6/17	
			To C.C.S		8/6/17	
16/6/17	2 A.C.S		Gsw. Shld. R. Adm.	"	8/6/17	
10/7/17	24 G. Hosp		<del>W B/D</del>	Etaples	8/6/17	
17/6/17	24 G. Hosp		Gsw. Shld. R Adm	Etaples	17/6/17	
17/6/17	56 G. Hosp		Wd. set to 24 G.H	"	17/6/17	
14/7/17	4th A.D.B.D		M/in from Hosp	Havre	12/7/17-	
21/7/17	" "		Brime O/staying leave pass	"	13/7/17	D.045/4859
			W.L from 9.30 p.m.			
			I3/7/17 until 5 a.m.			
			I4/7/17. AWARD forfeit			
			5 days pay by C.O Havre		15/7/17	
			Forfeit 1 days pay under			
			R.W.			
"	" "		M/out to <del>the unit</del>	Havre	16/7/17	
"	C.O 45 Btn.		Rejoined Btn.	Field	17/7/17	D.045/4906

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W1889-PF11:30 500,000 8/18 G.W.P.Co.(3499)

(A) Report		(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Date.	From whom received.	Authority of Part II. of Orders	Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, etc. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named.	Place of casualty	Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, etc.	Remarks and initials and rank of an officer
12/9/17	C.O 45 Btn.		Absent from 9 a.m. to 2 P.M. 8.30 p.m. parade W/out permission Forfeits 3 days pay by C.O	Field	6/9/17	D.051/5758
14/11/17	" "		Absent from 9 a.m. parade to 12.30 p.m. AWARD 14 days F.P. No.2 by C.O 10/11/17	"	7/9/16 9/11/17	00 69/6983
2/2/18	C.O 45 Btn.		Rejoined from Leave to U.K.	"	29/1/18	
18/4/18	" "		1. Drunkenness 2. A.W.L from 9:30 a.m till 11.45 p.m AWARD 14 days F.P. No.2 by C.O period waiting 45 of Bn 16.4.18.	"	12/4/18	D.032/1638
4/5/18	" "		Period awaiting trial 13/4/16 to 15/4/16 Total forfeiture 18 days pay Wounded in Action	"	3/5/18	D.038/2069

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2nd M.D. Army Form II, 103-11.  
Part II.

**(SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM Part II).**

Regiment or Corps 45th Battalion 4th Refs-- Regimental Number 2296

\*Substantive Rank Pte Surname HINES Christian Names John

\*Acting Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\* To be entered in pencil to facilitate alteration.)

(F)  
Date and

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(A) Report		(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Date.	From whom received	Authority of Part II. of Orders	Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, &c. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named.	Place of casualty	Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, &c.	Remarks, and initials and rank of an officer
3/5/18	I2	A.F.A	S.W. Scalp & N.Y.D Gas Adm. & Tfstd.	Field	3/5/18	V.I 706
4/5/18	61	C.C.S	S.W. Scalp Adm & Tfstd	"	"	
"	"	Ist Can. G. Hos	" Adm	Etaples	4/5/18	D.038/2087
3/6/18	"	"	" To Hosp. Trou Ville	"	3/6/18	
4/6/18	74	G. Hosp	S.W. Scalp Adm	Trouville	4/6/18	
18/6/18	"	"	" To I A.C.D	"	18/6/18	
18/6/18	"	Ist Can Depot	" Adm	Havre	18/6/18	
27/6/18	"	"	" Tfstd to Base Depot	"	27/6/18	D.052/3043
28/6/18	"	A.I.B.D	M/in ex Hosp	"	28/6/18	
17/7/17	"	"	To Hosp.	"	15/7/18	D.058/3383
15/7/18	40	Sty. Hosp	Piles adm	Harfleur	"	D.057/3338
21/7/18	"	"	" to I A.C.D	Havre	21/7/18	
"	"	I A. Com Depot	" adm	"	"	
25/7/18	"	"	" (M.B) dis to A.I.BD	"	25/7/18	D.059/3007
26/7/18	"	A.I.B.D	M/in ex A.C.D	"	"	
31/7/18	"	"	Tfstd to England BS	"	31/7/18	D.062/3802

(A) Report		(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Date.	From whom received	Authority of Part II. of Orders	Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, &c. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1816 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named.	Place of casualty	Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, &c.	Remarks, and initials and rank of an officer
5/8/18	A?I?B.D		<u>OFFENCE</u> W.O.A.S negligent ly permitting ink to be placed on the writing and figures 2 and 3 of Pay Book. <u>AWARD</u> forfeits 28 days pay by C.O A.I. B.D 30/7/18	Roules	27/7/18	D.063/E.3 9/9/18
2/8/18	D.S No.2	C.D	M/in from France	Weymouth	1/8/18	D.059/1 E 14/6/18
9/9/18	"	"	<u>OFFENCE</u> Littlemore A.W.L from M/n 4/9/18 until placed under arrest M.Police at 2719 p.m. 6/9/18 <u>AWARD</u> Forfeits 4 days pay by Lt. D.A Lane. Total Forfeiture 6 days pay	"	5/9/18	D.064/16/9/18
9/9/18	"	"	M/out to Adm. H.Q. London re discharge. Returned to Aust. per D24 for Harmorhoids	Wey'th re discharge. England	9/9/18 7/9/18	A.F.BI79/55765

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y. J. Johnson  
per Officer A. Richards