

Evening Star. 19 July 1916 (Papers Past) [21/06/2023]

CORPORAL BARNETT.

Corporal M. J. Barnett (wounded) was born at Wairuna, near Clinton. Shortly after leaving school he became an apprentice under Mr D. Tannock, curator of the Botanical Garden, Dunedin. After six years' work at Dunedin Gardens, acting on the advice given him by Mr Tannock, he left New Zealand for England. On arriving there, he entered Kew Gardens, where he spent two years as a horticultural student. He gained his diploma in horticulture, and returned to New Zealand in 1914. Shortly after he arrived he obtained a situation as head gardener to Mrs R. Rhodes, of Blue Cliffs, St. Andrews. After eight months' work there he left for Trentham, and in 1915 he left New Zealand with the C Company of the South Canterbury Infantry, Fifth Reinforcements. On arrival at Gallipoli he was a fortnight in the trenches, when he took ill and was sent to the hospital in Malta, where he remained for six weeks, when he returned to the trenches again. Six weeks afterwards he left Gallipoli, and was in camp in Egypt. He left Egypt for France, where he was wounded, and is now in hospital. While in Dunedin, Corporal Barnett was a member of the City Guards. He took a very keen interest in his company, and was a corporal and held a sergeant's certificate at the time that company disbanded. He is the second son of the late A. Morris Barnett, and a grandson of the late Mr George Steel, of Wairuna Bush, Clinton.

Press. 20 July 1916 [16/06/2023]

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Press. 16 Oct 1964 (Papers Past) [21/06/2023]

Obituary

Mr M. J. Barnett, Former Director Of Reserves

Mr Morris John Barnett, the City Council's Director of Reserves for 26 years to 1955, died in Christchurch yesterday.

Under his administration there was a tremendous growth of parks, garden plots and playing areas in the city; and throughout New Zealand he was recognised as an expert in reserves planning.

Mr Barnett was 74. After an apprenticeship at the Dunedin Botanic Gardens, he went to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew as a student and returned to New Zealand in 1914 as head gardener to Mr Robert Rhodes, at Bluecliffs, South Canterbury.

He went overseas in the First World War with the Fifth Reinforcements and served in Gallipoli, Egypt and France. On his return in 1917 he went back to Bluecliffs, but was not there long before being appointed foreman in charge of the glasshouses and rock gardens at the Dunedin Botanic Gardens. Later he became general foreman.

From 1924 he spent five years in Oamaru as superintendent of parks, and came to Christchurch as superintendent of parks and reserves in 1929. He was appointed director of parks and reserves in 1946 when the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park came under the control of the City Council from the Christchurch Domains Board.

When he arrived in Christchurch, the city had between 300 and 400 acres of parks and reserves, including the river banks. When he left the council's employ there were 1521 acres, another 827 acres in hill reserves and plantation and forest reserves of 3166 acres.

During the depression in the 1930's, Mr Barnett was the whole reserves department — he did not even have a clerical assistant — and had 500 relief workers in his charge.

His services to horticulture were recognised in New Zealand and overseas. He was awarded the M.B.E. in 1951; but his highest honour was election as an associate of honour of the Royal Horticultural Society. The society's select band is limited to 100 and has few members outside Britain.

Mr Barnett was also an associate of honour of the Royal Institute of Horticulture, of which he was an executive member for many years and president for two. He was the Institute's chief examiner for several years.

He was a member of the Canterbury Horticultural Society from the time he came to Christchurch, was elected a life member just before his retirement and later edited the society's journal, "City Beautiful."

Mr Barnett is survived by his wife and a son.

Press. 17 Oct 1964 (Papers Past) [21/06/2023]

Mr M. J. Barnett - An Appreciation

[By J.L.H.]

When Londoners are asked if there is in St. Paul's Cathedral a monument to the memory of its famous architect, Sir Christopher Wren, they point to a plaque which reads "For his monument, look around you."

How truly this simile applies to Mr M. J. Barnett, who for 26 years was Director of Parks and Reserves for the Christchurch City Council.

In the beauty for which he has largely been responsible in Christchurch, Morris Barnett has created an imperishable monument for all to see. Any worth-while achievement in life does not happen by chance, its components consist of knowledge, plus vision, dedication and creative effort. All these qualities Mr Barnett possessed in abundant measure and gladly he gave them to the city he loved.

It was largely due to his insatiable demands for parks and playing fields for the people, sports grounds, the beautification of river banks, gardens and reserves, that Christchurch has entered into the rich heritage it enjoys today. In all his work, Mr Barnett raised and upheld the highest standards and it is due in no small measure to his inspiration that Christchurch has become a city of gardens and trees, rightly earning for our community the title of "The Garden City."

In Mr Barnett's death, Christchurch has lost one of its great citizens; his memory will abide in the hearts and minds of a host of people to whom he has given in visual form, so many of the finer things of life.