BARTON, William

Member 1912-20
Honorary Chaplain 1919-20
Enlisted 25 Sept. 1914

William Barton was born on 18 July 1868 in London, England to Henry Musgrave Riggs Barton, an architect, and Julia (Sadler). He immigrated to Canada in 1886. In 1891 he was a student lodging in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Graduating with a MA from Bishop's College, Lennoxville, in 1896, he was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Quebec and advanced to the priesthood the next year. He served in the Diocese of Quebec for 10 years.

He married Marion S. Pope on 27 Nov. 1901 at Anglican St. Mathews Church; she died in January 1904.

He was a resident of Bourg Louis, Que. when in 1907 he was invited to serve in the BC Diocese and was sent to Chemainus as vicar to organize a mission there.

He married again in Victoria on 31 July 1907. Nellie Campbell Jones, a resident of Saanich but born in Toronto, was 31 years old. They were married at Christ Church Cathedral. They returned to Victoria in 1909 and William served as priest-vicar at Christ Church Cathedral until 1914. William and Nellie lived at 810 Cook Street and later in Oak Bay at 2422 Esplanade.

William became a member of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club in 1912, the same year he joined the 5th Regiment.

He was 42 years old and the senior curate at Christ Church Cathedral when he left Victoria with the first contingent heading to Valcartier Camp- the 5th Regiment, 7th Battalion, Canadian Garrison Artillery - on 26 August 1914. After enlisting on 25 Sept. 1914, he immediately sailed overseas and served as a chaplain with the 7th Battalion 2nd Brigade and 2nd Field Ambulance. He was sent to the 3rd Canadian Hospital (McGill) at Boulogne which eventually had 200 beds with 60,000 patients in 10 months. He joined the HMS *Araguaya* hospital ship after 6 weeks sick leave in England and made 10 return trips to Halifax with an average of 765 patients on each voyage. After the sinking of the hospital ship HMHS *Llandovery Castle* Barton was held up in Halifax for 7 weeks and then returned to England on HMS *Kildonan Castle* on which he served as naval chaplain. He was dispatched to the front attached to 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion and served as chaplain until the armistice. He served as the Corps Camp Chaplain at Bramshott and Wibley camps during demobilization. He returned to Victoria as Major Rev. Burton on 10 July 1919. He was the first BC chaplain to the front and the last to return.

His wife Nellie also went overseas in Sept. 1914 and nursed under the British Red Cross during all the war. She was matron in charge of many hospitals in England.

Rev. Barton wrote a number of articles for the *Daily Colonist* newspaper in 1915 and 1916 graphically describing the conditions under which the soldiers lived, their achievements, the severe suffering, making readers aware of the true nature of life at the front. He experienced his own close calls. On one occasion he was reading the burial service over the grave of a Canadian soldier when the man standing next to him was picked off by a German sniper and fell dead at his feet. In 1917, Barton's horse, frightened by the sudden appearance of a convoy of trucks, jumped into a ditch, throwing Barton off its back and then landing on top of him. He survived his injuries, but after that he spent time on the hospital ship HMS *Araguaya*.

He returned to his home in Oak Bay in July 1919 "under orders from his physician to keep absolutely quiet, and is not therefore undertaking any clerical duties for the present." He did accept the position of honorary chaplain of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club in 1919 and served until 1920.

Before his retirement from the church in 1921 he was rector of Sidney and Patricia Bay for about 15 months. He was given a Bishop's Special Licence to officiate in the diocese – he regularly ministered at St. Barnabas Anglican Church (at 1901 Cook St., now St. Nicholas Catholic Ukrainian Church). In 1942 he was made honorary canon of the diocese.

Upon retiring in 1921 he took up farming on Wesley Road in the Royal Oak area and became a seed grower. He and Nellie retired to Braefoot Road in Saanich in 1942 where he died 6 July 1947, age 78. He was survived by his wife Nellie, one daughter in Montreal and four grandchildren. He is buried at St. Luke's Anglican Churchyard.

Nellie was living at 1021 Pemberton Road in Victoria when she died on 29 January 1958 at age 81; she is buried next to William at St. Luke's churchyard.

Source: Anglican Diocese of BC Archives, 900 Vancouver St., Victoria, BC
http://www.bc.anglican.ca/page/diocesan-archives