

Private John William Wilkinson d 12 January 1915



Where is the grave?

Directly below the middle of the crematorium, on a path leading straight down the hill, just off to the left.

Daily News 1915

According to the CWGC Pte Wilkinson, service no.1599, died aged 17. He served with King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) 4th Batt., and is buried in grave II. 1507, Barrow in Furness Cemetery. He was the son of Mr & Mrs George Wilkinson, 21 Shakespeare St.

The *Barrow News* of Saturday 23 January 1915 reported rather sentimentally as follows:

"A GOOD SOLDIER"

MILITARY FUNERAL FOR BARROVIAN

LOCAL FAMILY'S GRIEF

The honours which are reserved only for the interment of the remains of a soldier were duly conferred on the funeral of the late Jno. Henry (*sic*) Wilkinson, of 1 Byron-street, which took place on Saturday last. There was a distinct note of tragedy about the death of Wilkinson. He had been serving in F. Company of the 4th King's Own, and whilst in Canterbury he was suddenly taken ill. His mother was sent for, but by the time she arrived at the South, her son had expired. The body was subsequently removed to Barrow, and interred at the local cemetery last Saturday. The last sad ceremony had the usual military characteristic. The burial prayers were read by the Rev. J.W. Adams, curate of St. James's Church.

The grief which thus visited a Barrow family, was to be still further accentuated this week by somewhat sad tidings which were received from the War Office. George, another member of the Wilkinson family was serving at the front, and a Government communication this week reported that he had been missing since November 11th.

Both these brave men were engaged in the country's service, in the cause of civilisation and humanity. The character of the Territorial, Jno. Henry Wilkinson, receives an eloquent tribute, in a letter which has come from the officer of his company in the following terms to the deceased's mother:

Dear Madam, - I regret very much indeed to hear of the death of your son, and I offer you my deepest sympathy, in which all the officers and men join, and I am sure you will realise how much our thoughts are with you in your loss.

Your son was a good soldier, and you will be pleased to hear that there is not a mark of any description against his name since he joined the regiment; and his comrades inform me that he was very popular and will be missed very much by them all. Again offering you our deepest sympathy, - I am, yours faithfully, A. Beardsley, Lieutenant. For Captain Little, Commanding "F" Company, 4th Battalion, King's Own Regiment.

Points of note:

- No mention is made of his age. This is surprising, given that his age is given as 17 by the CWGC
- It took two months for news of George Wilkinson going missing to reach home. It is not clear whether George is a brother, or a member of the wider family. A George Wilkinson, with a date of death 11/11/1914, serving in the 1st Battn. Scots Guards, is commemorated on the Menin Gate, Ypres.
- The officer writing the letter apparently had little or no personal knowledge of Pte. Wilkinson. As far as their absence from the CWGC list suggests, both officers survived the war.

Ancestry shows that at the **1901 Census** the Wilkinson family were living at 31, Back Hartington Street North. Father George Wilkinson (34), shunter in steel works, born Sheffield, Yorkshire; mother Alice J. Wilkinson (32), born Camden Town, London, and children Florrie E. Wilkinson (8); George H. Wilkinson (6); John H. (*sic*) Wilkinson (3) and Lily C.

Wilkinson (6 months), were joined by two lodgers, Lily Pick (24), sister-in-law, maid (not employed at present), born Birmingham, Warwickshire; and Arthur Hossell (?) (19), house carpenter, born Cagley(?) near Manchester.

At the **1911 Census** the family is still at the same house, but there are no longer any lodgers. Father George is now a bolt gauger in the gun dept (presumably in the shipyard); mother Alice is listed as born in Kentish Town, London; Florrie Eliza (18) is a domestic servant; George Henry (16) is a billiard marker; John William (14) is a milk boy; and Dorothy Wilkinson (7) is a schoolgirl. Lily C(ecilia) Wilkinson had died in 1902. (*Cumbria BMD*)

According to the **Army Register of Soldier's Effects**, John Wilkinson had joined up on 12 March 1912, in Barrow in Furness, where he had been a labourer. He would only have been 15 at the time.