



Private

Cecil Wilson

11860, 7th Bn., Leicestershire Regiment
who died on 25th January 1915, aged 18

Remembered with Honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials
Aldershot Military Cemetery (AF. 1795)

CECIL JOHN WILSON was born on 28th December 1896, the second son of Bernard Wilson and his wife Sarah (nee Stubbins) and the third of their eight children.

Originally from Worksop, Sarah had met Bernard in Eckington where he worked as a railway engine cleaner and where Sarah kept house for her grandfather William, a highways surveyor. They married on 9th October 1892 at Eckington and became a family with the births of daughter Ada Dallas in 1893 and son George Richard in 1894.

Cecil was born at New Whittington, where another baby brother, Percy lived, for just 17 days in 1899. By 1900, the family had moved to live at 21 Traffic Terrace, Barrow Hill where baby Lucy Ottoline was born.

The house at Traffic Terrace had only been completed in 1894 and was one of the desirable properties in the village, built by the Staveley Company to house employees of the Midland Railway. The cottages had 2 rooms downstairs and 3 rooms upstairs.



Another daughter, Ivy May, was born at Traffic Terrace in 1903 but the Wilson family were bereaved again when both 13 year old Ada and another baby, Edith, died in 1906.

Researched and written by Ann Lucas as part of the Barrow Hill: A Community Remembers project

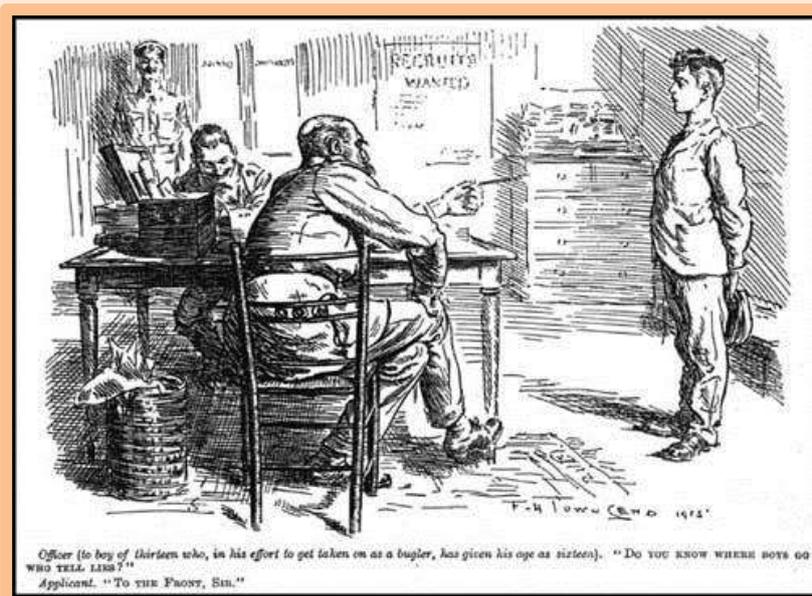


Cecil would have attended the nearby, steepled, village school until the age of 12. At the age of 14, he was working as an Iron Dresser at the local foundry and his brother, George, was employed as a colliery clerk for the Staveley Coal and Iron Company. Bernard, by this time, had progressed to be an engine driver and fireman with the Midland Railway.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, Cecil enlisted at Chesterfield in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for enough new recruits to raise an army. He was 17 years old.

'Boy Soldiers' fighting in World War One remained a controversial issue throughout the war. By the time World War One had ended many thousands of youths too young to legally enlist had been either killed or wounded.

Recruitment rules were simple. To enlist and fight abroad, you had to be nineteen or over. If you were eighteen, you could enlist but you had to remain in the UK until you were nineteen before being posted abroad. No one could join the army under the age of eighteen.



In reality, few, if any, of the recruitment officers had the time and probably the inclination to check the age of the volunteers. The rule of thumb seemed to be perfectly simple: if the volunteer wanted to fight for his country and was physically fit enough to do so, why stop him? In this way it is thought that as many as 250,000 'Boy Soldiers' were recruited and fought in World War One.

Cecil joined the 7th (Ser) Bn., of the Leicestershire Regiment, part of Kitchener's 2nd New Army and attached as Army Troops to 15th (Scottish) Division which was established by the Scottish Command in September 1914.

Early days were somewhat chaotic, the new volunteers having very few trained officers and NCOs to command them, no organised billets or equipment. The Division was inspected by HM King George V on 26th September 1914 - the first occasion on which the Division paraded as a formed unit, and with the exception of the Staff, plain clothes were worn.



7th Bn Soldiers 1914

It is not known if Cecil was amongst the men at The Magazine or Glen Parva but he was certainly amongst the men of the 7th Battalion at Badajos Barracks in Aldershot.

Unfortunately for the Leicesters, overcrowding was also very much in evidence at Aldershot in these early months of the war. The barrack blocks were housing double the number of men that they were designed for. Furniture and beds had been removed to allow the men to be crammed into these buildings where they slept on the floor. Salamanca Barracks (an identical block to Badajos) was designed to hold 800 men but in September of 1914 it was home to 2000.

The overcrowding in Barracks led to the rapid spread of disease and it was under these conditions that Cecil died in the Military Isolation Hospital at Aldershot. His death certificate confirms that he had been housed in Badajos Barracks and that he died of Scarlet Fever complicated by pericarditis on 25th January 1915.

Cecil John Wilson died, aged just 18, never having taken part in any action. He is buried in Plot: AF. 1795 at the Aldershot Military Cemetery in Hampshire.

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Sources include:

1. *1891-1911 England Census*
2. *England & Wales FreeBMD
Birth/Marriage/Death Indexes 1837- 1915*
3. *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919*
4. *Web International: Find a Grave Index*
5. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
6. *Death certificate and military information:
Courtesy of Mike Orme*
7. <http://ww1tigers.com/leicestershire-regiment-kitcheners-army.html>
8. www.1914-1918invisionzone.com
9. <http://www.1914-1918.net/leicesters.htm>

