

Private

Lister Wilson

16039, 10th Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment) who died on 14th February 1916, aged 25.

Remembered with Honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials
Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial (PI 39 and 41)



Matlock born baker's assistant Thomas Wilson and his wife Kezia were married in 1873 and their daughter Annie was born the following year. The family moved to live at Stonebroom around 1875 where their other children, William, Florence, Kate Elizabeth and Hannah were born. By 1881, Thomas had found work as a labourer on the railways.

In 1891, Thomas was working as a coal miner and their young children were all still at home with their mother on Stonebroom Lane. Recorded with the family was their one year old grandson George. **GEORGE LISTER TOM WILSON** had been born on 26th February 1890 and was the illegitimate son of 15 year old Annie; his father was named as coal miner, George Mason. Living with the family was lodger Thomas Hopkinson, a 27 year old coal miner from London. Later that same year, Kezia gave birth to her second son, Joseph Arthur.

Thomas had returned to his previous role as a labourer on the railways by 1901 and son William was helping to support the family by working as a grocer's shop assistant. Kate, Hannah, George and Joseph were still at home although Annie and Florence had left. The census enumerator recorded "George" as the "son" of Thomas.

By April 1911, 64 year old Thomas was listed as "unable to work." He and Kezia were supported by the only two others remaining at home; 21 year old colliery labourer "Lister" who is described as a "lodger," and 19 year old (Joseph) Arthur who was working as a platelayer for the Midland Railway.

Shortly afterwards, Lister and Joseph Arthur set off on an adventure when they sailed from Liverpool to New York on the SS Arabic on 3rd June 1911, arriving 8 days later. They were heading for Denison, Iowa to stay with their aunt, Thomas's sister Silence Dawes, and had each paid 15 dollars passage.



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

Lister was described as 5'3" tall with a fresh complexion and brown hair and eyes.

In 1913, Lister was back in England working as a labourer for the Midland Railway based with the Traffic and Motive Power Section at Staveley.

He enlisted at Chesterfield shortly after war was declared, and certainly before 18th Nov 1914. He joined the 10th (Service) Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) as Private 16039. The battalion had been formed at Derby in September 1914 as part of K2 and came under orders of 51st Brigade in 17th (Northern) Division.

Early days were somewhat chaotic, the new volunteers having very few trained officers and NCOs to command them, no organised billets or equipment. They moved firstly to Wool in Dorset and then on to West Lulworth in October 1914, returning to Wool in December. In June 1915, they moved to Winchester. After receiving an order that the Division would be retained for home defence, subsequently cancelled, advance parties left for France on 6th July. Main embarkation began on 12th July and Lister landed at Boulogne, France, on 26th August 1915 to join his unit near St Omer.

The Division spent the rest of 1915 in trench familiarisation and then holding the front lines in the southern area of the Ypres salient. They were involved in fighting at the Bluff (south east of Ypres on the Comines canal), part of a number of engagements officially known as the Actions of Spring 1916.



'On the night of February 13/14th they relieved the 7th Lincolnshire Regiment who were holding the Bluff and trenches immediately north of the Ypres - Comines canal.

The spoil from this canal when it was dug was heaped upon either side, and thin pine woods were grown on the mounds; a great accumulation of spoil, rising considerably above the level of the rest of the ridge was known

as the Bluff. To the south east of the side facing the enemy it presented a very stiff face, to the north west it sloped away more gradually in the long heap known as Spoil bank. The face towards the enemy was full of sniper's posts, and men from here were able to completely overlook the German front trenches which ran almost at the foot of the Bluff. From the top of the Bluff a very extensive view behind our lines was obtained; on a clear day Abeele aerodrome could be seen, about a dozen miles away.

A low ridge of ground stretched away in a north-easterly direction from the Bluff; our front trenches were about 100 yards over the crest of the ridge; on its crest and westerly side were our support lines and Reserve Wood - a tangled mass of undergrowth and tree stumps about

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200 yards from east to west. The possession of the crest of this ridge would give the enemy good observation, but not as good as from the top of the Bluff.

Major J. C. Keown was in command of the battalion as Lieut.Col. Banbury was on leave at the time. All ranks were wearing steel helmets for the first time. The next 24 hours tested the fighting qualities of the battalion severely. The relief was a quiet one.

About 8.30am on the next morning a slow bombardment of our front and support lines started, and the enemy apparently registered these lines with all his available artillery, trench mortars and rifle grenades. At about 2.30pm the bombardment suddenly assumed tremendous intensity, every bit of Hun frightfulness seemed to be going off at once. This continued for about two hours; all telephonic communication with the front line was soon cut, but the seriousness of the shelling could be seen from Bn. HQ, which was in Spoil Bank, about 600 yards west of the Bluff. Artillery retaliation was called for but this proved quite inadequate. The Divisional artillery had only just completed their relief the night before and their guns were not accurately registered; the sound-deafening effect of a strong west wind was also very marked, and unless one was actually in sight of the bombardment, or worse still in the middle of it, it was very difficult to realise that anything serious was occurring.

At about 5.40 pm a mine exploded under the trenches occupied by 'C' company which unfortunately caused many casualties to our men. This was followed by an enemy attack which reached our front line but was unable to make further headway.....'

10th (S) battalion: The history of the battalion during the great war by Lieut W N Hoyte.

Lister Wilson was killed in action at the Bluff on 14th February 1916 aged 25, one of 136 casualties suffered by the 10th Battalion on that date. Amongst them were three other local lads, Donald Houston, Frank Alton and Fred Brookes. He is remembered with honour on Panel 39 and 41 of the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.



The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. It bears the names of more than 54,000 officers and men whose graves are not known.

George Lister Tom Wilson was posthumously awarded the 1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

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Sources include

1. *England Census 1861-1911*
2. *FreeBMD Birth/Marriage/Death Indexes*
3. *Original birth certificate*
4. *New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-19571*
5. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
6. *British Army Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914-1920*
7. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
8. *Midland Railway Study Centre: For King and Country/Memorial pamphlet*
9. *10th (S) battalion: The history of the battalion during the great war. Lieut W N Hoyte.*
10. *Long Long Trail*

