



Thomas Henry Wilks

Thomas Henry Wilks was born in Bilston in 1881. His parents were Joseph and Elizabeth Wilks, both born in Bilston.

Family History

In the 1881 Census, the family was living in Millfield Lane, Bilston. Joseph was employed as a blast furnaceman. With Joseph and Elizabeth were their children Mary, Issac and Thomas.

In the 1891 Census, a Thomas H Wilks was recorded as being an inmate at the Staffordshire County Council Certified Industrial Boys School. The school provided practical training for boys. It was located at Werrington near Stoke-on-Trent.

In the 1901 Census, Thomas Wilkes of Bilston (age 20) is recorded as being a boarder with the Hall family in Asfordby, near Melton Mowbray. He was employed at a furnace.

On the 18th July 1909 Thomas Wilks married Ruth May Brittan in Derbyshire. Ruth was born in 1886 in Derbyshire.

By 1911, Thomas and Ruth were living in Derby Road, Lower Kilbourne, Derbyshire. Thomas was employed at a "Pig Iron Blast Furnace". The couple had one son, Harry Wilks.

Military History

According to what records exist, Thomas Henry Wilks enlisted in Kettering and served as a Private in the 1st Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (7778). He gave his residence as Ilkeston.

On 4th August 1914, the 1st Battalion was stationed at Curragh as part of the 14th Brigade of the 5th Division. They mobilised for war and landed in Le Havre on 15th August 1914.

According to records, Private Thomas Wilks landed in France on 21st August 1914.

The 1st Battalion were involved in a number of battles during 1914 including Mons, Le Cateau, Marne, Aisne, La Vassee and Messines and the First Battle of Ypres.

Private Thomas H Wilks was killed in action on 17th January 1915.



Thomas Henry Wilks is remembered on the Corby War Memorial and is buried at the Wulverghem-Lindenhoek Road Military Cemetery.

The cemetery was begun in December 1914 by four battalions of the 5th Division and was called at first Wulverghem Dressing Station Cemetery. It was used until June 1917, and again in September and October 1918, and at the Armistice it contained 162 graves, the present Plot I.

Graves were then brought in from the surrounding battlefields and the following smaller burial grounds:-

Auckland Cemetery, Messines, on the North bank of the Douve between Messines and Wulverghem, contained the graves of twelve New Zealand soldiers (including nine of the 2nd Auckland Regiment) who fell on the 7th June, 1917.

Cornwall Cemetery, Messines, 150 metres West of Auckland Cemetery, contained the graves of 21 soldiers from the United Kingdom (including 20 of the 1st D.C.L.I.) who fell in December, 1914-January, 1915.

Frenchman's Farm, Wulverghem, nearly 600 metres North of the village, contained several groups of graves; and in them were buried 29 soldiers from the United Kingdom and one French soldier who fell in 1914-15.

Neuve-Eglise North Cemetery was on the Neuve Eglise-Lindenhoek road. It contained the graves of 20 soldiers from the United Kingdom who fell on the 2nd and 3rd September, 1918, and of whom 16 belonged to the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Neuve-Eglise Railway Halte (or Railway Siding) Cemetery was at the light railway station on the South side of the village. It contained the graves of 14 soldiers from the United Kingdom (including seven of Queen Victoria's Rifles) who fell on the 5th January, 1915.

These formed Plots II-V. Within these later plots almost the whole period of the war is represented, in particular the defence of the Kemmel front in April 1918 and the final advance of September 1918.

There are now 1,010 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 352 of the burials are unidentified, but there are special memorials to two casualties believed to be buried among them and to seven others buried elsewhere whose graves were destroyed in the fighting of 1917-18.

The cemetery was designed by Charles Holden.



Reference

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Lest We Forget

Thomas Henry Wilks
of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

d. 17th January 1915

There is a record that Ruth M Wilks married Joseph Redshaw in Kettering district in 1917.

April 2016 Copy