



ELLESMERE PORT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

24765 Private WILLIAM BURROWS
18th Battalion Kings Liverpool Regiment
Killed in Action - 25 August 1917

William Burrows was born in Smethwick, Birmingham in 1894, the son of Thomas Burrows and his wife Rhoda. Thomas was a furnace man employed in local iron works, but by the start of the war he had brought the family to live in 35 Cambridge Road, in Ellesmere Port. Like hundreds of fellow workers, they had migrated from the Wolverhampton and West Bromwich area to follow the move made by the Wolverhampton Iron and Steel Works. William originally began his working life as a butcher's assistant, but soon joined his father in the Iron works, working as a 'breaker down'.

(right: 35 Cambridge Road, Ellesmere Port)

Once it was obvious that the war wasn't over by Christmas, William joined the surge of thousands of volunteers in early 1915 and signed up for the Liverpool Pals on 15 January. Following his several months training, he was in France for 7 November 1915 (thus qualifying for the 1915 Star service medal). The 18th Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment had been formed in Liverpool on 29 August 1914 by Lord Derby, in the old watch factory at Prescott. Although William's war record no longer seems to exist, the movements of his battalion were as follows;



After training in the Liverpool areas, on the 30th April they joined 89th Brigade, 30th Division, which was concentrated near Grantham. In the Autumn they moved to Larkhill, Salisbury, and proceeded to France on the 7th November 1915 landing in Bologne, the division concentrating near Amiens. On the 25th December 1915 they transferred to 21st Brigade, still with 30th Division. In 1916 they were in action during the Battle of the Somme, in which the Division captured Montauban. In 1917 they took part in the pursuit of the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, and the Arras Offensive.

While the battle raged in Arras, the Allies prepared for an offensive in the north, in Flanders. "Third Ypres" (or Passchendaele) became notorious for conditions that transformed the terrain of shell holes and trenches into a quagmire of mud. Ten of the regiment's battalions were active in the first stage, the Battle of Pilkem Ridge (31 July – 2 August). Six belonged to the 55th Division, situated in the Wieltje sector, north of the Liverpool Pals. The territorial battalions overcame their first and second objectives, but progress was difficult. Confusion prevailed during the 18th King's and 2nd

Wiltshires nocturnal advance through Sanctuary Wood. The Pals battalions had to consolidate in front of the 30th Division's initial objective. The King's losses accumulated, surpassing 1,800 by the 3rd, with the supporting 1/8th's casualties the heaviest at 18 officers and 304 other ranks. The 10th's medical officer, Captain Chavasse, received a posthumous, second Victoria Cross for attending to, and recovering, wounded in spite of his own wounds and fatigue during the battle. He succumbed to his wounds on 4 August.

An account by Captain Wurtzburg, 2/6th Liverpool Rifles, described the conditions endured by soldiers in the Ypres area:

'...Those who took part in it will never erase from their minds its many ghastly features, among which the mud and the multitude of dead will stand out pre-eminent. Of the former it must be said that the sodden condition of the ground, though it stopped our advance, certainly prevented many casualties from shell-fire, but at the same time many a wounded man was sucked down into the horrible quagmire and stretcher-bearers found their task in many cases beyond their powers.'

It was fighting in these conditions that William lost his life, killed in action on 25 August 1917, aged twenty-three. He had been hit by shrapnel from an exploding shell, which had also killed four other men. The local press carried the report of his death and published two letters received by his family from the front;

The Rev. J. H. A. Law (chaplain), writes as follows:—"Your son, Pte. Burrows, was killed in the line, and died suddenly on the 25th; I buried him on the 26th at 7-30, with four comrades, killed by the same shell, at Wytschaete Cemetery. A cross will mark the sacred spot, and a photo can be got from the enclosed address. I am so sorry for you, who have lost so good and brave a boy—like you I have given my boy. God make us brave like them to bear our heavy crosses until He calls us to go to them. We have that sure hope. God bless and comfort you and all who loved your lad."

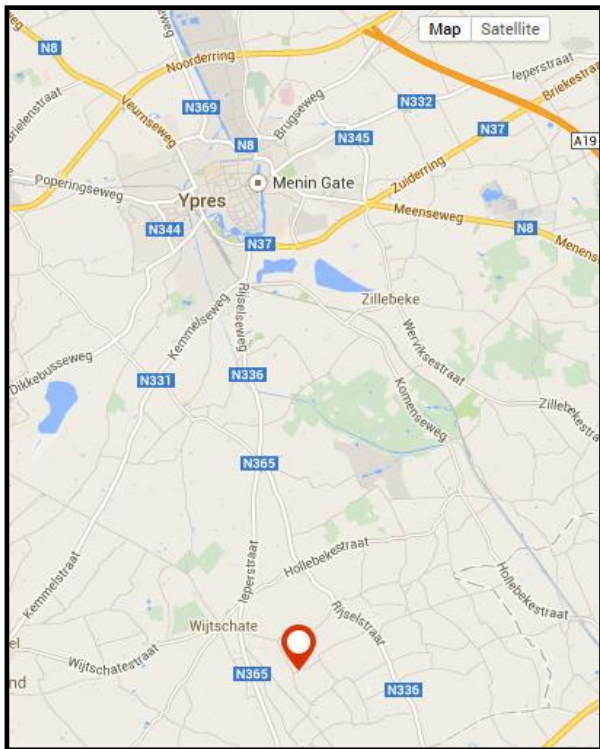
FIVE KILLED BY SHELL.
—
BRAVE ELLESMERE PORT MAN.
—
STRIKING TRIBUTES OF SYMPATHY.

The following is the letter sent by Sergt.-Major Crosby, D.C.M.:—"No doubt by now you will have heard from the battalion of the sad loss for you my letter contains, but I feel it my duty to write you as one who personally knew your dear son, Billy. I cannot frame into words the deep sorrow I feel for you in the great loss you have sustained in the death in action of your boy. He was killed by shrapnel from a bursting shell, and, believe me, he knew no pain, for death was instantaneous. It happened on the morning of the 25th August. He is buried side by side with three other comrades a few yards away from where he fell, and a cross has been erected on his grave. Billy was in my company until a few weeks, when he became attached to the battalion headquarters. He was a fine boy; one of the best, and liked by all. His death is keenly felt, for he was so popular with everybody. It is an awful blow for you, but I pray that God will comfort you and give you strength to bear up in your dark hour. The remainder of the Ellesmere Port boys in the Battalion wish me to express to you their very deepest sympathy in your bereavement."

The Cemetery is now known as Derry House Cemetery No. 2.

Derry House Cemetery (there is now only one) was named after a farm, which had been nicknamed "Derry House" by soldiers of the Royal Irish Rifles. It was begun among the ruins of the farm in June 1917 by a field ambulance unit of the 11th Division (32nd Brigade). It was used as a front line cemetery until December 1917, and again in October 1918 by the 2nd London Scottish.

The cemetery contains 163 First World War burials and the remains of a concrete command post built by engineers of the 37th Division in July 1917.





In Memory of
Private
W Burrows

24765, 18th Bn., The King's (Liverpool Regiment) who died on 25 August 1917

Son of Mr. T. Burrows, of 36, Cambridge Rd., Ellesmere, Birkenhead.

Remembered with Honour
Derry House Cemetery No.2



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Campaign :—

(A) Where decoration was earned.

(B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)												
(A) <i>BURROWS</i>	<i>I. B.O.F. P.F.E</i>	<i>24765</i>		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>MEDAL</td> <td>ROLL</td> <td>PA3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VICTORY</td> <td><i>H/2/02/2</i></td> <td><i>1325</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>BRITISH</td> <td><i>do</i></td> <td><i>do</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>15 STAR</td> <td><i>H/2/2^B</i></td> <td><i>410</i></td> </tr> </table>	MEDAL	ROLL	PA3	VICTORY	<i>H/2/02/2</i>	<i>1325</i>	BRITISH	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>	15 STAR	<i>H/2/2^B</i>	<i>410</i>
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15 STAR	<i>H/2/2^B</i>	<i>410</i>														
(B) <i>William</i>	<i>---</i>	<i>---</i>	<i>---</i>													

Action taken *Dead.*

THEATRE OF WAR. *P.1 France*

QUALIFYING DATE. *7/11/15.*

(6 84 46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608 [OVER.]

Medal Card

Many thanks to Jane Burrows of York for the photos of 35 Cambridge Road, the newspaper report of William's death, and Derry House Cemetery following her recent visit. William Burrows is the great-uncle of Jane's husband Jonathan.

Researched and written
by
Mike Royden

www.roydenhistory.co.uk