

1914-1918 military service history of Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor MC

1895 -1965

of Poplar Farm Clopton
son of George and Alice Taylor



The military service career of Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor MC

1. Military service file

The primary and most comprehensive source of information concerning a soldier's military career is his service papers. These covered the entire process between enlistment and discharge, and often provide personal, family and medical details, in addition to the facts of his training, postings to units, disciplinary record, and so on. The officer's files were thinned out in the 1930's leaving only miscellaneous correspondence; they have in general survived.

2. The Army List

All commissions, promotions and appointments of officers were shown in the monthly Army List. Wilfrid first appears as a Second Lieutenant with seniority from 30 January 1918, in the list of March 1918.

3. The London Gazette

All commissions, promotions and appointments of officers were announced ("gazetted") in the London Gazette, which is still today the official newspaper of the British Parliament.

Wilfrid's first entry was in the Gazette of 18 February 1918, when he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant of the Lincolnshire Regiment, Territorial Force.

The final entry was when he relinquished his commission, effective 30 September 1921.

4. Gallantry awards

All gallantry awards were also listed in the London Gazette, which is still today the official newspaper of the British Parliament. The award of the Military Cross to Wilfrid was published ("gazetted") on 30th July 1919.

5. Campaign medal entitlement documents

The records at the National Archive include a reference for every man who qualified for a campaign medal in the Great War. This is in the form of a card index, where every soldier's details were written on a card that has since been microfilmed.

Every soldier who served in a theatre of war in 1914-1918 earned at least one campaign medal, so this is the most complete record of the men of army.

Copies of Wilfrid's index card and the entries on the medal rolls that it refers to are attached to this report. Wilfrid qualified to wear the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and Victory Medal. These were issued to him — after he applied for them, for unlike those awarded to the men of non-commissioned rank they were not sent automatically - on 28 May 1924. (He appears on two rolls of the British War and Victory Medals, one as a ranker and the other as an officer. The medals were formally issued from the Officer's roll.)

6. The National Roll of the Great War

Privately published in 1921, the entries in this roll were by subscription. As such it is partial and notoriously inaccurate. There is no entry for Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor.

7. Civil records

In the 1901 Census Wilfrid was living with his family at Charsfield. At that time, Wilfrid was aged 6. His father George was aged 45 and a self-employed egg merchant. .

In the 1911 Census Wilfrid was living with his family at Charsfield age 16, with his occupation listed as “farmer’s son working on farm”. His father George was listed as being a farmer aged 54.

His brother Frederick, aged 25, was listed also as “farmer’s son working on farm”. His brother Frank, aged 23, was listed as a bricklayer. His brother Thomas (aged 12) and sister Ivy (aged 9) were still at School.

Interpretation of the documents found

In this section I have assembled the details given in the various sources of information that I was able to locate, into a narrative, into which I have added some commentary.

Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor was aged 19 years and 8 months when he voluntarily attested to enlist into the army at Ipswich on 2 September 1914, having been born on 26 December 1895 at Charsfield in Suffolk. Educated at Charsfield Elementary School and now employed as a farm hand, he was a single man with no prior military experience. Wilfrid gave as his next of kin his father George Taylor of Poplar Farm, Clopton, Woodbridge in Suffolk.

During the enlistment process, he signed the declaration on the attestation form, swore the oath and received the "King's shilling". Wilfrid also underwent a medical examination that recorded him as standing 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighing 128 pounds and having a chest measurement of 36½ inches. He was found fit for service, accepted into the army as a Private of the Suffolk Regiment and was allocated number 13091. He had agreed to serve for three years or the duration of the war, whichever the longer. Wilfrid was posted to join the regiment's 3rd (Reserve) Battalion and received orders to report next day to the depot at Felixstowe. There, he would have begun his basic and infantry training.

On 19 September 1914, Wilfrid was posted to join the new 10th (Service) Battalion which was in the process of formation at Felixstowe. In April 1915, this unit was converted from a Service unit, intended for duty overseas, into a training battalion that would be permanently based at home. It was retitled 10th (Reserve) Battalion. (On 1 September 1916, the battalion left the regiment and was converted into the 26th Battalion of the new Training Reserve.)

His training completed, on 27 July 1915 Wilfrid was posted to join the 2nd Battalion in France. A brief history of this unit appears in a later section of this report. He continued to serve with 2nd Battalion until wounded in August 1916 and did well as a soldier: he reached the rank of Sergeant, albeit in an acting capacity, on 26 July 1916.

There are notes in the record that suggest that Wilfrid sustained a wound some time in the period 16-20 July 1916, possibly to his back. I can only assume that it was not serious and that he remained at duty, for the medical notes do not suggest that he left his unit.

On 16 or 17 August 1916, Wilfrid sustained a wound to his left arm. The medical records call it GSW - gun shot wound - although it is later made clear that a piece of shrapnel (the phrase suggests a shell fragment rather than a shrapnel ball) was removed from the lower end of his humerus while he was still in France. Evacuated down the casualty evacuation chain, Wilfrid crossed back to England on 22nd August 1916 and arrived next day at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkestone.

He was discharged on 6 November 1916 and proceeded to the army base at nearby Shorncliffe, staying there for just one day before going on to the Convent du Oiseaux, where he spent just over two weeks in convalescence. This was based at Tower House in Westgate on Sea and was a 30 bed hospital, operated by nuns under the auspices of the Kent Voluntary Aid Detachment number 64.

Another brief spell at Shorncliffe followed, after which he went from 30 November 1916 to 6 January 1917 to the Woodcote Convalescent Hospital at Epsom.

By 29 January 1917, Wilfrid had arrived at the Command Depot at Tipperary. This was a large tented camp used for convalescing soldiers. It had capacity for 4000 men, of which half was allotted to Eastern Command which covered the Suffolk Regiment. (it is said that the Southern Irish were very bitter against the British troops).



Woodcote Convalescent Hospital at Epsom.

On 16 March 1917, Wilfrid was judged fit enough to be posted back to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion. He appears to have arrived - presumably with a draft, for this unit had very recently been in action at Arras and had suffered heavy casualties - at the 7 (Service) Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment in France on 19 April 1917. A note suggests that he had gone to 15 Infantry Base Depot on arrival in France and before going on to the battalion in the field. He appears to have been sent into D Company.

Wilfrid achieved a rapid promotion, being made Sergeant on 30 May 1917.

On 2 July 1917, Wilfrid signed an application to be considered for a commission as an officer. Witness to his "moral character" was provided by W. Youngman of Charsfield Hall, Wickham Market. His commanding officers, Lieutenant Colonel F. S. Cooper and Brigadier General B. Vincent both approved the application. (I believe that the Youngman family still occupy Charsfield Hall. The village hall in Charsfield was a gift from the family in the 1930's - to be precise, from W.H. Youngman, who is probably the same as the signatory of Wilfrid's form)

The application was accepted and Wilfrid was eventually instructed to join No 2 Officer Cadet Battalion at Cambridge on 7 September 1917. The exact sequence of events at this point is not easy to decipher. On 30 July 1917 he was posted to the regimental depot, but this is almost certainly only from an administrative viewpoint. He was granted leave between 1 and 14 August, with orders to report at the end of this period to 5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment at St Albans. It is not clear exactly why this was the case, unless it was simply to occupy time before the course of instruction began at Cambridge.

The OC Battalion, which had been formed in February 1916, was based at Pembroke College. Wilfrid would have undertaken the standard officer's course, which lasted four and a half months.

He was formally discharged from the ranks on 29 January 1918, to take up his commission as a Temporary Second Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. This was a unit of the Territorial Force. A note provided by Wilfrid tells us that he went at first to 4th Battalion, another TF unit, before landing once again in France on 22 April 1918. Some time after arrival he was attached to the 1st Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment

Wilfrid sustained a wound to his right knee while in action near Pontruet, not far from St Quentin, on 24 September 1918. He was taken to 141 Field Ambulance and then on to 47 Casualty Clearing Station, before being moved by train to No 8 General Hospital at Rouen where he arrived next day. Classified as a "Blighty" case, he arrived at Southampton 29 September and went on to the Horton (County of London) War Hospital in Epsom. The wound healed quickly, the bullet having passed through flesh, although he had difficulty in walking. He was given a month's leave from 12 November 1918.

The action on 24 September 1918 in which he was wounded was the same one for which he was awarded the Military Cross.

Wilfrid was among the twelve officers of the battalion that were wounded in the attack near Pontruet. The battalion war diary notes that the MC was gazetted on 15 November 1918.

The citation, which was published on 30 July 1919 - there being by now a considerable backlog - reads,

"2nd Lt. Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor, 5th Bn. Line. R., T.F., attd. 1st Bn. North'n R. For conspicuous gallantry during an attack on enemy trenches south of Pontruet, on September 24th. 1918. When his company was being held up by heavy fire from a nest of machine guns he took forward part of his platoon and by skilful manoeuvre and use of ground brought his men to such a position that, led by him, they were enabled to rush the machine guns, the enemy being all killed or captured. He did fine work".

The War Diary entry describes this action in detail.

From an administrative viewpoint, once he left the Northamptonshires in France, he was posted to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion of the Lincolns which was by now based at Kilworth Camp in County Cork.

A medical examination held at Fermoy on 24 January found Wilfrid fit to return to his unit. By March 1919 he had been sent to the Dispersal Camp at Thetford in Norfolk, where he was demobilised.

In April 1920, he advised the War Office of a change of his private address to Rustic House, Drinkstone, Bury St Edmunds.

He was promoted to Lieutenant in July 1919 and relinquished his commission on 30 September 1921 under an Army Order that stood down many of the Territorial units that had been expanded for war purposes.

A brief history of the 2nd Battalion, the Suffolk Regiment in which Wilfrid served as a ranker from July 1915 to August 1916

When war was declared in August 1914, this regular army battalion was in barracks in Ireland. As part of the 14th Brigade of 5th Division it moved immediately to France, following pre-war planning. The men of the original battalion were amongst the first to see action, at Mons on 23 August 1914.

Three days later it took part in a notable defensive action at Le Cateau, but so heavy were its casualties that it was withdrawn from the Division and came under orders of GHQ while it was re-established. It was not until 25 October 1914 that it was considered ready for action, by which date the army was fighting for its life at the First Battle of Ypres. The Suffolks were placed under orders of 8th Brigade in 3rd Division.

The 3rd Division took part in most of the major actions and engagements fought by the army on the Western Front over the next four years. The first half of 1915 was spent holding sections of the front line in the Ypres salient, generally between the Menin Road at Hooge and Saint-Eloi on the Messines road. Although it was a relatively quiet time on the Ypres front, there was the constant threat of shellfire, sniping, and raiding on both sides as each sought local tactical advantages.

On 2 June 1915, a severe German bombardment from Sam to noon, followed by an infantry attack from the north east, led to the loss of the ruins of the Hooge Chateau and Stables. At this time the position had been occupied by regiments of the 3rd Cavalry Division. During the evening, two Companies of the 1st Lincolns and one of the 4th Royal Fusiliers of 9th Brigade of the 3rd Division counterattacked and successfully recovered the Stables. Whilst the 8th Brigade was not directly involved, the whole area came under shellfire and was put on the alert. Fighting continued in this area throughout June and it is undoubtedly to replace battle losses that Wilfrid Taylor arrived in late July.

The battalion was posted to join 76th Brigade, still in 3rd Division, on 22 October 1915. This was a Brigade of the "New Army", composed of wartime volunteers. It had originally been with 25th Division, but the army had chosen to mix the volunteer units in with the more experienced formations, in order to "stiffen" them. The Division remained in the southern part of the Ypres Salient at this time.

On 14 February 1916, the Division had just been relieved by the 17th (Northern) Division who took over the key position called the Bluff, on the Ypres-Comines Canal, when the incoming Division was violently attacked, and lost the position. On 2 March, a counter attack by 3rd Division recaptured it, and 76th Brigade played a leading role.

Wilfrid's brother Frank Taylor entered the War when he landed in France in June 1916 and was soon in the Ypres Salient, fighting in major battles with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Whether the brothers' paths ever crossed I don't know.

The main British effort of 1916 was the Battle of the Somme. 3rd Division first entered in the highly successful dawn attack of 14 July, when it broke through the second German lines and on to Bazentin le Grand. 76 Brigade was in reserve on this occasion. The fighting in this area continued to develop, and the brigade took part in fighting at Delville Wood, after relieving the shattered South African Brigade.

Two days later, the Division extended south to the Trones Wood area and took part in fighting for Guillemont.

The Battalion War Diary for this period includes a detailed typed report on the action in which Wilfrid received the wound to his arm.

What was the Territorial Force?

The Territorial Force came into existence in 1908 as a result of the reorganisation of the former militia and other volunteer units authorised by the Secretary of State for War Richard Burdon Haldane. It provided the opportunity for men to join the army on a part-time basis. Territorial units of each infantry regiment and of each of the Corps (artillery, engineers, medical, transport etc) were formed. For example, most county regiments of infantry formed two Territorial battalions which were recruited locally. These units became more recognised and supported by the local community than the regulars.

The TF County Associations were planned to be the medium by which the army could be expanded in wartime. Men trained at weekends or in the evenings, and went away to a fortnight summer camp. Territorials were not obliged to serve overseas, but were enlisted on the basis that in the event of war they could be called upon for full-time service. The physical criteria for joining the Terriers were the same as for the regular army, but the lower age limit was 18 (whereas it was 19 for the regulars).

The enthusiasm of the Terriers for the war in the early days was measured by the fact that the majority signed up for overseas service when asked. This was called the "Imperial Service Obligation". This enabled units to be mobilised and sent overseas -initially, with some battalions being sent to the Western Front. Soon, entire TF Divisions proceeded overseas, either to the fighting fronts or as replacement garrisons as the regular troops were deployed to action. Many of the Terrier units soon established strong reputations, and the early doubts about their value were removed.

However, the men were still not obliged to agree to overseas service. Those that did not agree were separated from their original units and formed the core of what became known as the Second-Line unit. This was used for home defence, training, and so on. Eventually the needs of war meant that most of these units also proceeded overseas. Eventually the Second-Line units became called, for example, the 2/3 rd Battery, and the First-Line or overseas service unit the 1/3rd. Most units also formed a depot for training purposes, called the 3/3rd.

In practice once a unit was on active service, there was little or no distinction in being a Territorial soldier other than the 'esprit de corps' and, for quite some time, the local flavour of the unit. Until 1916 there was however one very important legal distinction, which seems odd, given the pressures at the time: when a man joined the Territorials he did so for an agreed period of time - a number of years, usually four. When his time was up, he became "time expired" and he could simply go home!

When the Military Service Act introduced conscription in early 1916, the niceties of the Imperial Service Obligation had been removed; all men of the Territorial Force were obliged to serve overseas when called upon to do so. Men who had already time-expired became immediately eligible for re-enlistment as long as they satisfied all other conditions.

A brief history of the 1st Battalion, the Northamptonshire Regiment in which Wilfrid served as an officer from late April 1918 to September 1918

This was another battalion of the regular army, although by the time Wilfrid joined it the ranks hardly contained any pre-war regulars. It served throughout the war in 2nd Brigade of 1st Division. By April 1918 it had seen a very great deal of service and had taken part in the majority of the large scale engagements.

The British offensive of summer 1917 opened with a brilliantly successful attack that captured the Messines ridge on the 7 June 1917. This was the first phase of what was to become known as the Third Battle of Ypres, or Passchendaele. The objective of this offensive was not only to break the enemy positions in front of Ypres, but also to push rapidly forward and re-capture the Belgian coast. (It was becoming imperative to do something about the enemy U-boats that were winning the battle against merchant shipping in the Atlantic. Capturing the coast would knock out the submarine bases). As part of this plan, two Divisions would make a beach landing from the sea, simultaneously with the attack coming out of Ypres. 1st Division was one of the formations selected for this dangerous enterprise. Consequently they moved to the Flanders coast, to begin training.

While occupying the coastal trenches, two battalions of 2nd Brigade (the Northamptonshire and King's Royal Rifle Corps) were almost annihilated by a surprise enemy attack. This so damaged the force that it would be several months before it was again ready to fight. The Ypres offensive was launched on 31 July. Initial success soon ran into problems: the weather was the wettest in Flanders for decades and it turned the already-damp Ypres sector into a quagmire. Meanwhile, 1st Division remained on the coast.

Wilfrid's brother Frank (who farmed in Bredfield after the War, and is the father of Doreen and Peter) was severely wounded at Passchendaele in October 1917 and was taken by to 'Blighty' in a Hospital ship, never to fight again.

During September the coastal attack was cancelled, as the offensive moved painfully forward across the Ypres wasteland towards the Passchendaele ridge. The 1st Division was moved from the coast, ready to be moved into this area. In early November the battalion took over flooded positions on the Paddebeek stream, facing Westroosebeek. This was indeed a terrible period, for physical effort just to cross the wasteland was prodigious. Morale fell sharply. The winter was spent alternatively in this place and in providing working parties while based out of the line in the area of Woesten.

Conditions had changed significantly since the end of the Ypres offensive. The revolution in Russia had caused the fighting on the eastern front to cease. Germany moved its Divisions to the west and now enjoyed a great manpower and material superiority. At the same time, David Lloyd-George was holding men back in the United Kingdom, at the same time agreeing to another lengthy extension of the British line. The French were still nursing their Divisions back from mutiny.

Overall, the conditions could not have been better for the enemy to attack. The storm broke on 21 March 1918 when an immense and devastating artillery barrage opened the largest offensive yet in the war. The attack took place to the south, on the north and south sides of the Somme. It broke through the British Fifth Army, and over the next two weeks pushed the Allies back almost to Amiens. This was a most serious crisis. Many units were rushed south to combat this attack.

As so many units moved to the Somme fighting, the 1st Division was moved to cover a major gap in Artois.

The battalion held trenches in this sector (Annequin - Loos), on a very long and thinly covered stretch, for a very long time. They were again lucky, for on 9 April the enemy launched the second phase of their offensive, a little way to the north and across the River Lys. It again succeeded in breaking through and pushing the British back towards the key railway junction at Hazebrouck.

It was shortly after this tense period that Wilfrid Taylor arrived as a newly qualified subaltern.

The enemy offensive was defeated, if only just, and for a while things settled down. It was not yet known to the Allies that the enemy was all but broken by its losses, the fatigue and disappointment at having failed to win (not helped by seeing the riches of stores and food they saw behind the captured Allied lines; conditions in Germany and for its armies was worsening daily as the British naval blockade held supplies in their grip), and the knowledge that American troops would soon be tipping the manpower balance strongly against them. Conversely, British morale was soaring in the knowledge that they had taken all the enemy could possibly throw at them, and survived. The lack of reaction of the enemy to an increasingly aggressive British Army was, in hindsight, an early indicator of the fundamental material, organisational and morale shifts going on in the enemy ranks that was to lead to collapse later in the summer.

The British Fourth Army launched an attack on 8 August, on the south bank of the Somme. It succeeded brilliantly, and broke through the enemy, causing chaos. German commander Ludendorff soon called it "The Black Day of the German Army". From this time on, the Allies launched attack after attack, pushing the enemy back. It caused great losses of men and ground to the enemy, but was also very costly in terms of casualties for the British. The Northants began to move into the area being attacked late in August.

September and October were months of almost continual fighting for the battalion, as their front pushed across Vis-en-Artois, Eterpigny, Maissemy and Berthencourt. Enemy resistance was breaking down but was still in places severe, with machine gun crews firing until the last possible moment before surrendering. Indeed it was in suppressing such a stubborn post that Wilfrid won his MC.

Finally, the Division was selected to be one that would advance into Germany, to form and hold the Rhine bridgehead that was part of the armistice agreement that brought fighting to a close in November 1918.

What was an infantry battalion in 1914-1918?

The Battalion was the basic tactical unit of the infantry of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918. At full establishment, it consisted of 1,007 men, of whom 30 were officers. It comprised a Battalion Headquarters, and four Companies.

Battalion Headquarters

The Battalion was usually commanded by an officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. A Major was Second-in-Command. Battalion HQ also had three other officers: a Captain or Lieutenant filled the role of Adjutant (in charge of Battalion administration); similarly a Captain or Lieutenant was the Quartermaster (responsible for stores and transport); an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps was also attached.

Battalion HQ also included the Regimental Sergeant-Major (RSM, the most senior Non-Commissioned Officer) plus a number of specialist roles filled by NCO's with the rank of Sergeant: Quartermaster, Drummer, Cook, Pioneer, Shoemaker, Transport, Signaller, Armourer (often attached from the Army Ordnance Corps), and Orderly Room Clerk.

A Corporal and 4 privates of the Royal Army Medical Corps were attached for water duties; a Corporal and 15 Privates were employed as Signallers; 10 Privates were employed as Pioneers (on construction, repair and general engineering duties); 11 Privates acted as Drivers for the horse-drawn transport; 16 acted as Stretcher-bearers (these often being the musicians of the Battalion Band); 6 Privates acted as Officers

Batmen (personal servants), and 2 as Orderlies for the Medical Officer.

Companies

Usually lettered A through D - or in the case of the Guards Regiments numbered 1 through 4 - each of the 4 Companies numbered 227 heads at full establishment. Each was commanded by a Major or Captain, with a Captain as Second-in-Command.

Company HQ included a Company Sergeant-Major (CSM), a Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS), 2 Privates acting as Batmen, and 3 as Drivers. The body of the Company was divided into 4 Platoons, each of which was commanded by a subaltern (a Lieutenant or Second Lieutenant). In total, the 4 Platoons consisted of 8 Sergeants, 10 Corporals, 4 Drummers, 4 Batmen and 188 Privates.

Each Platoon was subdivided into 4 Sections, each of 12 men under an NCO.

If asked, after his name, rank and number, a man might refer to himself as being in Number 3 Section, 2 Platoon, B Company, the 17th Manchester regiment.

A Private soldier would also know the Brigade his Battalion was in, and certainly the Division the Brigade was attached to. It seems that most men identified first with their Regiment, then with their Division.

Also in the Battalion

Each Battalion had, in 1914, a Machine-gun Section consisting of a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, a Corporal, 2 Drivers, a Batman and 12 Privates trained in the maintenance, transport, loading and firing of the Vickers heavy machine gun. These men made up two six-man gun teams.

Also on the Battalion strength were 8 Lance-Sergeants and 49 Lance-Corporals (these being included in the figures already given above).

Each Battalion had a detachment at its Base Depot, which did not take the field when the Battalion was on active service. The Base Detachment consisted - in theory - of a subaltern, 2 Sergeants and 91 Privates to form a first reinforcement (to make good Battalion casualties or other losses); 4 Storemen, the Band Sergeant and the Sergeant Master Tailor. When the Battalion went on active service, it left behind the Bandmaster and the Sergeant-Instructor of Musketry, for service with the Reserve Battalion.

Equipment

Battalion Transport consisted of 13 riding, and 43 draught and packhorses. The provided the power for drawing the six ammunition carts, two water carts, three General Service Wagons (for tools and machine guns), and the MO's Maltese Cart.

The Signalers' had 9 bicycles. (Note: the Divisional Train also provided four more two-horsed GS Wagons for each Battalion.

All ranks carried a rifle - which for the regular battalions (and after the early days when all sorts of older equipment was supplied to the Territorial and Service Battalions, all of these were eventually similarly equipped) was the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE). The only exceptions were officers, Pipers, Drummers, Buglers and the five men in each Battalion who carried range-finding instruments. All those carrying a rifle, except the RSM and other Staff Sergeants, were also armed with the sword bayonet.

Other Battalion equipment, over and above that carried by the man, included 120 shovels, 73 pickaxes, 20 felling axes, 8 hand axes, 46 billhooks, 20 reaping hooks, a hand saw, 32 folding saws and 8 crowbars. There was also a plethora of minor stores and spares. The Battalion also carried a certain amount of ammunition, although this was backed up by the echelons of Transport at Brigade, Divisional and Lines of Communication levels. When added together, the supply per rifle came to 550 rounds per man. The Battalion Transport carried 32 boxes of 1,000 rounds, and each man could carry up to 120 rounds. The machine guns were each supplied with a total of 41,500 rounds of which 3,500 was carried with the gun, and 8,000 in regimental reserve.

Changes during the war

By February 1915, the allocation of machine-guns to each Battalion had been doubled to 4. This, plus other minor adjustments, changed the full establishment of the Battalion to 1,021 men of all ranks. Pioneer Battalions, which were introduced, had 1,034 in action, Battalion machine-gun sections were increasingly collected into a Brigade group of 16 guns, under a Brigade Machine-gun Officer.

This arrangement was made permanent in January 1916: a month later, the gunners were formally transferred from their Regiment into the newly formed Machine Gun Corps. When they lost control of the Vickers guns in this move, the infantry Battalions received 4 Lewis light machine guns. By the opening of the 1916 Somme offensive this had been increased to 16 guns per Battalion, and early in 1918 this was increased again to 36 guns. The firepower of the Battalion was thus considerably increased throughout the war.

Battle experience also led to orders to ensure that Battalions would leave behind a number of men when going into action, to form a nucleus for rebuilding, in the event of heavy casualties being suffered. A total of 108 all ranks, consisting of a mix of instructors, trained signallers and other specialists, were to be left out. The number men acting as stretcher-bearers were increased from 16 to 32.

Battle reality

Especially as the war progressed, it was rare indeed for a Battalion to be at full establishment. It was not unknown at times for Battalions with a nominal strength of over 1000 men to go into fighting with perhaps only 200. Equipment was lost and damaged, and not always replaced quickly or fully. Lucky was the Battalion with a wise Quartermaster, who knew his way around the Lines of Communication, Brigade and even Engineers dumps. Certain types of heavy equipment were eventually left in trenches and other positions, being handed over to the relieving unit in exchange for a chit describing the 'trench stores' they had received. Battalion subalterns and CQMS's faced the brunt of continual Brigade and Divisional Staff questions about equipment state and availability. A typical battalion spent perhaps only 5-10 days in a year in intensive action; they would also spend 60-100 days in front-line trench activities without being in action, with the rest of the time being in reserve or at rest, both of which entailed continual effort on fatigues or training.

Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor MC

(c) crown copyright

Catalogue Reference: WO/372/19

| Name | Corps | Rank | Regt. No. |
|--|----------------------|-----------|---|
| TAYLOR (MC) | Suffolk Regt | RtE | 13091 |
| | — | Sgt | — |
| | Line. R | 2nd Lieut | |
| Wilfrid Johnson Northover 2nd Northants | | Lieut | |
| Book | Roll | Page | |
| VICTORY | Line. OFF. 124 | 191 | The K. Roll Regt 1305 623/11615. Dis Comm 29/18 W. N. 2931 at 20/11/14 11/1/29 Line R |
| BRITISH | do | do | |
| 15 th PAR | K/1/6/3 ² | 316 | |
| Theatre of War Unit served in | (1.) France | | |
| Date of entry therein | 37-7-15 | | |
| | | | hwd/4/7296 |

Army



Orders

BY
GENERAL SIR H. S. RAWLINSON, BART.
G.C.V.O., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., COMMANDING FOURTH ARMY.

MILITARY SECRETARY'S BRANCH.

IMMEDIATE REWARDS

(a) Under authority delegated by His Majesty the King, the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has made the following awards for gallantry and devotion to duty in action—

BAR TO THE MILITARY CROSS

Lieutenant (a/Captain) V. H. JACQUES, M.C., Royal Sussex Regiment.
Lieutenant B. C. WRIGHT, M.C., Royal Sussex Regiment.
Lieutenant (a/Captain) L. J. BARNES, M.C., King's Royal Rifle Corps.
Lieutenant (a/Captain) C. R. FRYER, M.C., King's Royal Rifle Corps.
Temporary Captain A. COOK, M.C., King's Royal Rifle Corps.

THE MILITARY CROSS

Second Lieutenant W. J. N. TAYLOR, Lincolnshire Regiment attached Northamptonshire Regiment.
Second Lieutenant H. KNIGHT, Bedfordshire Regiment attached Northamptonshire Regiment.
Temporary Lieutenant G. F. M. FORBES, Gloucestershire Regiment.
Lieutenant (a/Captain) E. DOLLEYMORE, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Second Lieutenant E. CLEMENTS, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Second Lieutenant S. A. H. KIRKBY, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Temporary Second Lieutenant J. PANNETT, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Second Lieutenant A. E. S. BAYLEY, Northamptonshire Regiment.
Temporary Second Lieutenant C. SMEATHERS, Northamptonshire Regiment.
Second Lieutenant F. W. KIDDLE, King's Royal Rifle Corps.
Second Lieutenant H. W. NUGENT-HEAD, King's Royal Rifle Corps.
Temporary Captain E. ROGERSON, Royal Army Medical Corps attached King's Royal Rifle Corps.
No. 7324 Company Sergeant Major H. ROUGHTON, D.C.M., Northamptonshire Regiment.

THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

No. 32269 Private (Lance Corporal) A. YARRINGTON, Gloucestershire Regiment.
No. 10507 Corporal (Lance Sergeant) A. J. SPURLING, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 4728 Private (Lance Corporal) F. CHILDS, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 14813 Private (Lance Corporal) S. R. MANTHORPE, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 10462 Private (Lance Corporal) A. STONER, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 2159 Private W. BOULTER, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 2187 Private E. W. BURKE, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 1406 Private F. EVENDEN, M.M., Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 3755 Private H. GODDEN, Royal Sussex Regiment.
No. 9555 Sergeant R. ADAMS, M.M., Northamptonshire Regiment.
No. 6345 Sergeant J. COUCH, M.M., King's Royal Rifle Corps.
No. 25619 Sergeant V. HOPKINS, Machine Gun Corps.

(b) Under authority delegated by the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, Corps Commander has made the following awards for gallantry and devotion to duty in action:

THE MILITARY MEDAL

No. 2823 Sergeant I. C. WHITE, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 3454 Lance Corporal A. SMITH, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 2567 Private V. L. BOURKE, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 7454 Private J. BRAITHWAITE, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 4746 Private A. BRYANT, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 6395 Private J. GRANT, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 512 Private J. H. LEE, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 5162 Private J. P. MILLER, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 4883 Private G. S. SHILL, Australian Imperial Force.
No. 7129 Private R. B. WRIGLEY, Australian Imperial Force.

H. C. HOLMAN, *Major-General*,
D.A. and Q.-M.-G., Fourth Army.

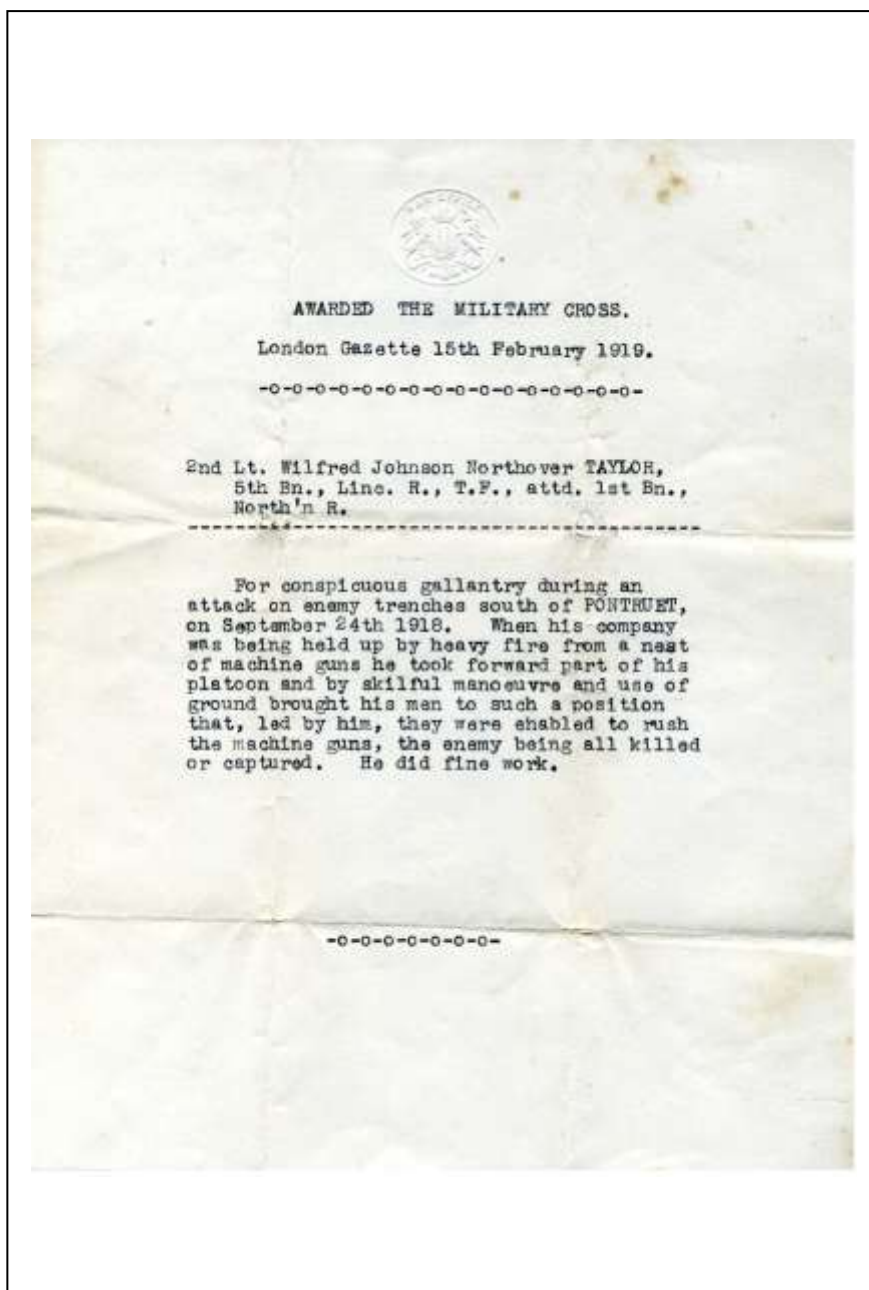
20th February 1919.

355

WW1 Medals of Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor MC



**From Headquarters Fourth Army
notifying Wilfrid of the award of the
Military Cross**

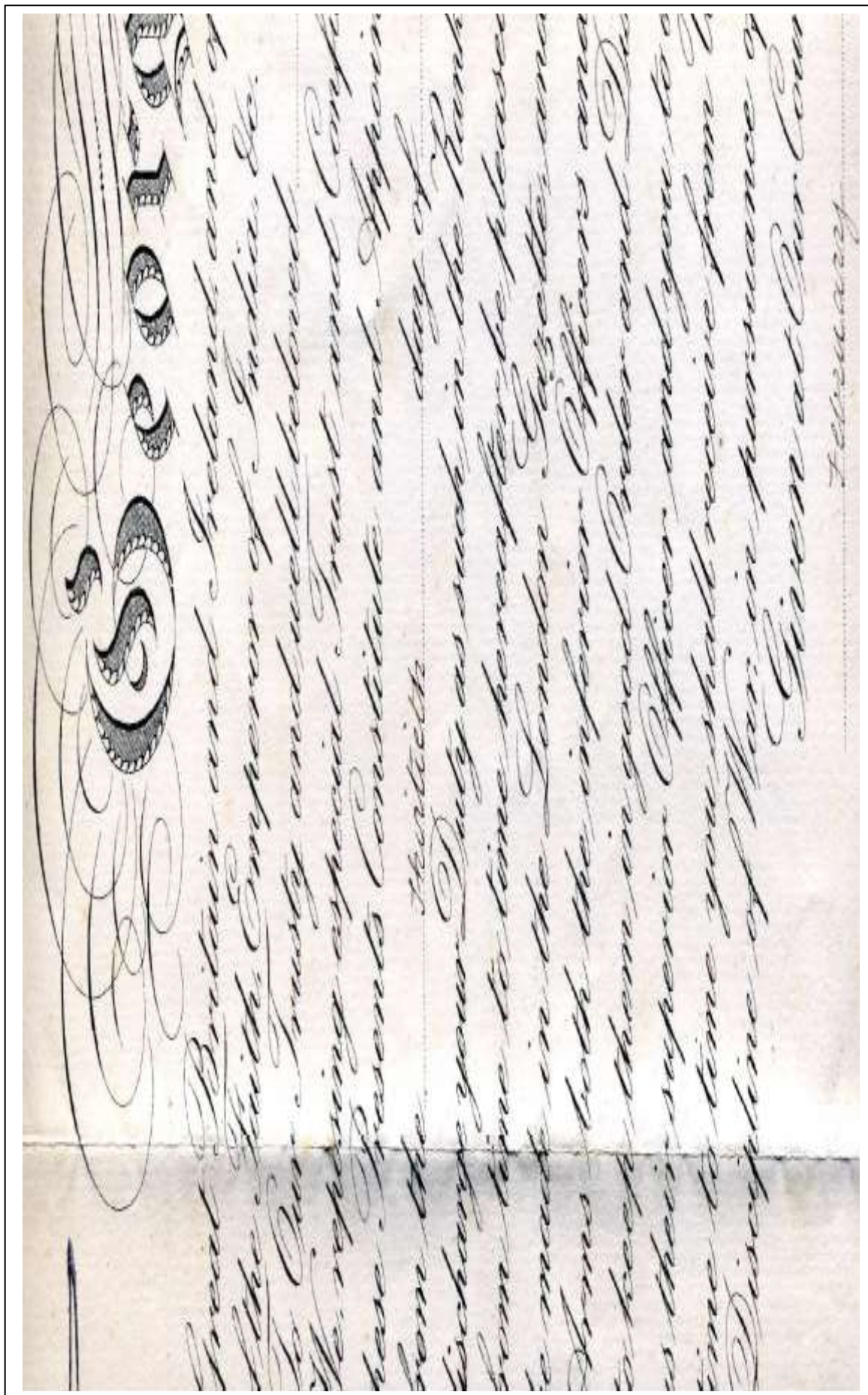


The award was created on 28 December 1914 for commissioned officers of the substantive rank of Captain or below and for Warrant Officers. In August 1916 Bars were awarded to the MC in recognition of the performance of further acts of gallantry meriting the award and recipients of a bar continue to use postnominal letters MC.

In 1931 the award was extended to Majors and also to members of the Royal Air Force for actions on the ground.

Since the 1993 review of the honours system, as part of the drive to remove distinctions of rank in awards for bravery, the Military Medal, formerly the third-level decoration for other ranks, has been discontinued. The MC now serves as the third-level award for gallantry on land for all ranks of the British Armed Forces.

Appointment as TA Officer - post war



Great Britain and Ireland and of
the British Emperor of India &c.
to Pur. Trusty and well beloved
We regarding appoint. Trust and Comf.
these Presents constitute and. Appoin.
from the. *Veritatis* day of
exchange your Duty as such in the Rank
from time to time hereafter be please
to march in the London Gazette and
Arms both the inferior Officers and
to keep them in good Order and to
as their superior Officer and you to
time to time you shall receive from
Discipline of War: in pursuance of
Given at Pur Cow
February

Wilfrid's marriage to Rene

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number: C01.050866

1921 Marriage solemnized at The Registrar Office in the County of East Suffolk
in the District of Woodbridge

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| When Married | Name and Surname | Age | Condition | Rank or Profession | Residence at the time of Marriage | Groom's Name and Surname | Rank or Profession of Groom |
| 164 | Wilfrid Johnson Northover Taylor | 26 years | Bachelor | Farmer | Poplar Farm Lipston | George Taylor | Farmer |
| | Rene Violet Kate Addison | 23 years | Spinster | Miliner | Poplar Farm Lipston | Harry Charles Addison | Business (Master) |

Married in the Registrar Office

This Marriage was solemnized between us

in the presence of


A. E. Taylor
H. L. Taylor

by us

Alan S. Treary Registrar
G. G. Hill Subst. Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Woodbridge
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of January 2006

MXC 365130


 HIX

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 65 of the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry prepared in the manner prescribed by the Act shall be received in evidence of the marriage in which it is issued without any further or other proof of the entry, and that the Registrar shall be liable to be or to be held liable in damages if it is issued or obtained as aforesaid.
 CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. (CROWN COPYRIGHT)
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

Wilfrid's Death Certificate

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number: COL050785

REGISTRATION DISTRICT: **Norwich Outer** in the County of **Norfolk**

DEATH in the Sub-district of **Norwich Outer South**

| Column | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------|---|---|------|-------------|--|--|--|-----------------|------------------------|
| No. | When and where died | Name and surname | Sex | Age | Occupation | Cause of Death | Signature, description and residence of informant | When registered | Signature of Registrar |
| 96 | Eleventh August 1965. New London Hospital, Wick Lowood. | Wilfred Tomson Southover PAYTON. | Male | 70 years | of Longney, Melford and Launceston, Toy Fashioner (owner (retired)). | 1a. Described hemorrhage, certified by R.D.B. Williams M.B., D.P. | R. Brown, Blaze, 24 Prince Philip Road, Colchester. | Twelfth August | G. Ray, Registrar |

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, this 3rd day of January, 2006.

DYA 876251

Six months fee

M.R.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT OFFICE X NORWICH

WARNING: THESE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO RAISING OR AUTHORIZING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE (CROWN COPYRIGHT)
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



R. J. BARTRAM
M.B.I.S., APPL. S.B.N.
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

TEL. WYMONDHAM 2188

HENLEY HOUSE,
FAIRLAND STREET,
WYMONDHAM,
NORFOLK

Date *12th August 1965*

I would confirm the arrangements made for the Burial/
~~Cremation~~ of the late *Mrs Wilfred J R Taylor.*

Date of Funeral *Wednesday 18th Aug.*

Time at House *10.00 at Longham*

Time and Place of Service *2.30 Longham Church.*

Time at Cemetery/~~Crematorium~~ *2.30.*

Number of Cars (each seating six persons) *NONE.*

Any Other Arrangements

The Registrar for *Wymondham* District

is Mr. *RAY.*

Hours *Thurs 11.30 to 12.30*

NOTE:—The Green Disposal Certificate issued by the Registrar should be handed to the Funeral Director as soon as possible.

TAKE TO REGISTRAR: 1. The Doctor's Certificate
2. Medical Card (if available)
3. ~~Birth and Marriage Certificates~~ (if available)

Copies may be obtained from the Registrar for:— Probate, National Insurance Grant and Widows Pension, Insurances, Post Office Savings, etc.