



**In this One Hundred Anniversary of the  
beginning of the Great War,  
the six names on the  
Melling Parish  
Church War Memorial  
are here, noted and remembered**



# The War Memorial Plaque in Melling Parish Church

It is mounted on the North Wall of the chancel and is a brass plate with moulded mahogany surround. It has inscribed on it the names of six soldiers killed in the Great War.

It was dedicated to the Dead of the Great War on 25th May 1920, by the Vicar of the day, Reverend Remington.

## 1. Private Peter Hodgson

No. 29/454, The 9th Battalion  
the Northumberland Fusiliers.

## 2. Private John Shaw

No. 19003, The Battalion  
The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

## 3. Private Leonard Thompson

No. 2056, 5th Battalion  
The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

## 4. Rifleman John William Vockins

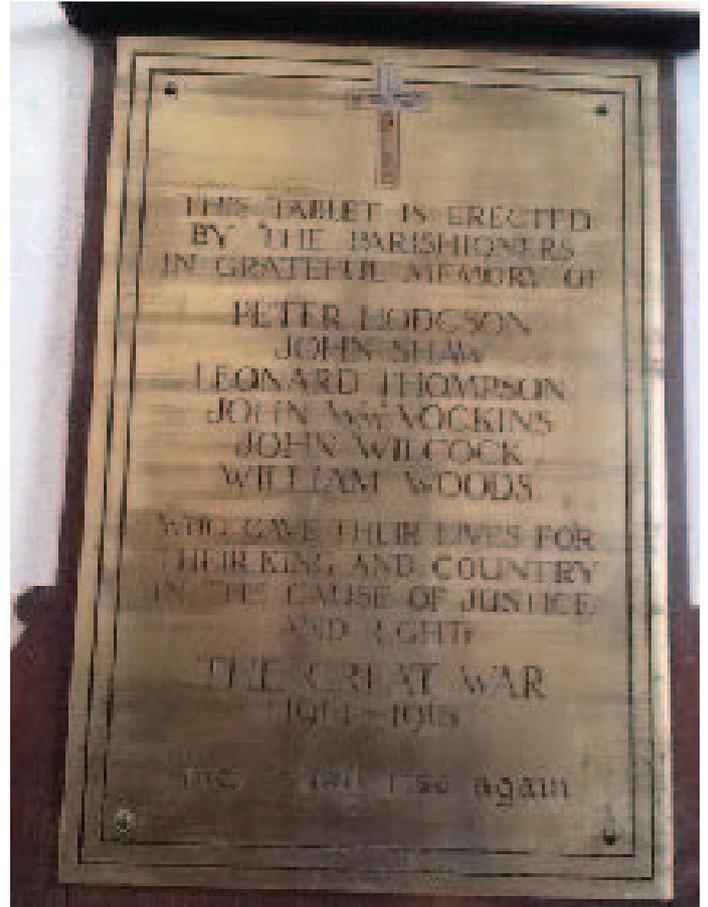
No. 419066, 'A' Company of the London  
Regiment  
The Queen Victoria Rifles.

## 5. Private John Wilcock

No. SPTS/2346, 2nd Battalion  
The Royal Fusiliers.

## 6. Private William Wood

No. 52672, 26th Battalion  
The Royal Fusiliers.



The War Memorial Plaque

100 years is five generations - The relatives and friends of these men have long since moved on, moved away or died without issue. Indeed, because these men were so young, mostly boys, they never had the chance to raise a family of their own. So, gradually, their names and their sacrifice may fade into history.

This Centenary lays a duty on us to bring them back to mind and give them the honour and respect they deserve.

This archive is intended to do this.

**PRIVATE PETER HODGSON**  
**NO 29/454, 9TH BATTALION**  
**The Northumberland Fusiliers**

Private Peter Hodgson NO 29/454 was the son of Henry Wilson Hodgson and Mary Ann Hodgson.

He was born in 1891 in Whittington but lived at Hill Top Farm, Wennington.

He enlisted at Settle, in the 9th Battalion, The Northumberland Fusiliers, and fought in France and Flanders.

On 3rd November 1916, a few days before the end of the Battle of the Somme, he was wounded during a failed attack on a German strong point. He died of his wounds on 17th February 1917, aged 25 and is buried at Grove Town Cemetery, Meaulte, south of Albert, Somme, France.



Hill Top Farm, Wennington (c.1968)



**PRIVATE JOHN SHAW**  
**NO 19003, 1ST BATTALION**  
**The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 1st Division**

John was born in Hornby on 7th March 1894 to Robert Shaw of Melling (who died in 1901 and is buried in St Wilfrid's churchyard) and Ann Shaw. He had a younger brother, Richard Burrow Shaw (b. 1896). In 1901, they lived at Moor End, Lodge Lane, Melling. He was employed in Bleasdale as a farm servant by Mr Brewer and is commemorated on the Bleasdale Roll of Honour.

John enlisted at Garstang in 1914. He was posted missing presumed killed in action on the Somme on 18th August 1916 when his Brigade went 'over the top' to attack the German trenches near High Wood near Mametz; in this action 30 other ranks were killed, 110 wounded and approximately 50 missing.

Private Shaw is one of those soldiers who has no known grave. He is commemorated on the THIEPVAL MEMORIAL, Somme, France. Pier and Face 11A.



This picture of Private Shaw was taken from the Westmorland Gazette, for the edition 9th September 1916

**Private Shaw's Medal Index Card**

These cards were produced by the War Office to establish and record where each serviceman had fought and which decorations he had earned. The right hand inset box epitomised in one word: 'MISSING' seen under the inset box.

The Medal Index Cards are an important document. They are Originals, that is, not copied from other lists and documents prepared later, they are available on-line.

Campaign — 1914-15.		(A) Where decoration was earned.	
		(B) Present situation.	
Name	Rank	Reg. No.	Medal
(A) SHAW	Lancian R Plt	14003	VC
(B) et. al.			BRITISH
Action taken		1/2/18 7p	
THEATRE OF WAR.		Missing	
QUALIFYING DATE.		(1) France.	
10 24 401 W201—H20100 20100 20100 20100 20100		2/6/15.	

In some cases soldiers may have served in more than one regiment, as they were called upon to fill gaps left by losses in other regiments. The Medal Card would show this.

Shown below is the page in the Westmorland Gazette in which John Shaw appears (top right hand panel). Also is the list of names, but due to its age is not very clear. Private Shaw's name is the second line down, on the right.

LOCAL SOLDIERS KILLED AND WOUNDED.

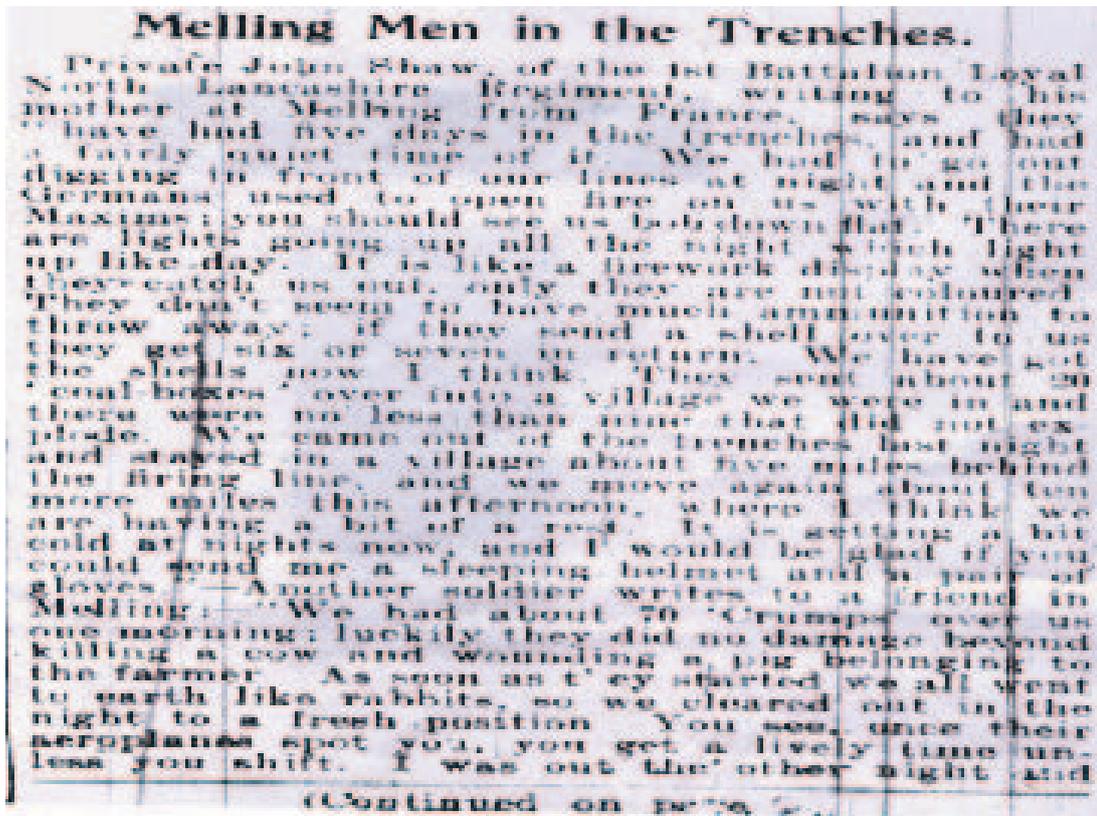


Row 1.—1. Pte. O. S. Dixie, Brundrigg, Kendal, Border Regiment; killed in action. 2. Pte. W. Knight, Milnthorpe, Border Regiment; killed in action. 3. Pte. W. Robinson, Windermere, Border Regiment; killed in action. 4. Pte. J. Shaw, Mellong, I.N.L.B. missing.  
 Row 2.—1. Pte. E. Woodhams, Landale, I.N.L.B.; missing. 2. Pte. J. Hardisty, Grassmere, Border Regiment; missing. 3. Pte. G. W. Scott, Witherlack, I.N.L.B.; missing. 4. Corp. M. Forrest, Ambleside, Border Regiment; wounded.  
 Row 3.—1. Pte. J. W. Blylock, Kendal, Australians; wounded. 2. Sergt. Hitchin, Erdmoor, Borders; wounded. 3. Sergt. John Gibson, Kendal, Borders; wounded. 4. Pte. E. Nevinson, Kendal, Borders; wounded.  
 Inset.—Pte. J. Langstret, Ark; killed.

Row 1.—1. Pte. O. S. Dixie, Brundrigg, Kendal, Border Regiment; killed in action. 2. Pte. W. Knight, Milnthorpe, Border Regiment; killed in action. 3. Pte. W. Robinson, Windermere, Border Regiment; killed in action. 4. Pte. J. Shaw, Mellong, I.N.L.B. missing.  
 Row 2.—1. Pte. E. Woodhams, Landale, I.N.L.B.; missing. 2. Pte. J. Hardisty, Grassmere, Border Regiment; missing. 3. Pte. G. W. Scott, Witherlack, I.N.L.B.; missing. 4. Corp. M. Forrest, Ambleside, Border Regiment; wounded.  
 Row 3.—1. Pte. J. W. Blylock, Kendal, Australians; wounded. 2. Sergt. Hitchin, Erdmoor, Borders; wounded. 3. Sergt. John Gibson, Kendal, Borders; wounded. 4. Pte. E. Nevinson, Kendal, Borders; wounded.  
 Inset.—Pte. J. Langstret, Ark; killed.

Part of a copy of a letter sent by Private Shaw to his mother, printed in the Westmorland Gazette in 1915 (18th September, page 5 column E).

Unfortunately, the 'continuation' page number has been lost in the printing, and a search of the rest of the edition proved fruitless



### Transcript of the letter: Melling Men in the Trenches

Private John Shaw, of the 1st Battalion The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, writing to his mother at Melling from France, says "they have had five days in the trenches and had a fairly quiet time of it. We had to go out digging in front lines at night and the Germans used to open fire on us with their Maxims [a type of machine gun], you should see us bob down flat. There are lights going up all night, which light up like day. [These are Very Flares fired from a gun which produce illumination over the battlefield.] It is like a firework display when they catch us out, only they are not coloured. They don't seem to have much ammunition to throw away. If they send a shell over to us, they get six or seven in return. We have got the shells now I think. They sent about 20 'coal boxes' over into a village we were in [a multiple explosive device], and there were no less than nine that did not explode. We came out of the trenches last night and stayed in a village about five miles behind the firing line, and we moved again about ten more miles this afternoon. Where I think we are having a bit of a rest. it is getting a bit cold at nights now, and I would be glad if you could send me a sleeping helmet [we would call it a balaclava] and a pair of gloves."

Another soldier writes to a friend in Melling - "We had about 70 'Crumps' over us one morning [air exploding shells], luckily they did no damage beyond killing a cow and wounding a pig belonging to the farmer. As soon as t'ey [they] started we all went to earth like rabbits, so we cleared out in the night to a fresh position. You see once their aeroplanes spot you, you get a very lively time unless you shift. I was out the other night and .....



## PRIVATE LEONARD THOMPSON

No 2056

### King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) 1st/5th Battalion

Leonard was born in 1886 at Newton, near Pickering, the son of Jerome and Sarah Thompson, of Edstone, Kirby Moorside, Yorks. from an early age he was employed for seven years as a servant at Wennington Hall. (His mother Sarah Thompson died in 1906.

Leonard joined the Battalion in September 1914: he was probably one of the 'Gallant 200' volunteers who enlisted that month. On 27th April 1915, during the 'second battle of Ypres', his battalion came under heavy shellfire while supporting an attack. One shell killed 12 men and wounded 5 others, including Leonard; he died of his wounds on 29th April 1915. Leonard was buried at BOULOGNE EASTERN CEMETERY, Pas de Calais, France. Ref: VIII B 2

There is an obituary on page 2 of the Lancaster Observer dated 21st May 1915.

#### Transcribed:

"Much regret is felt in Wennington and district at the death of Private Leonard Thompson, who was reported wounded in The (Lancaster) Observer of the 7th 'inst'

The news was sent by one of his pals, and no official news was forthcoming. Mr. Saunders, of Wennington Hall, wrote to the Commanding Officer of the Regiment in France for particulars, and has received the following reply: Private L. Thompson 2056 D Company, Was wounded on April 27th, and died in Hospital on the 29th. (signed) - Captain G,W.Sharpe

Thompson, who was 26 years of age, was a native of Great Edstone, Kirby Moorside,

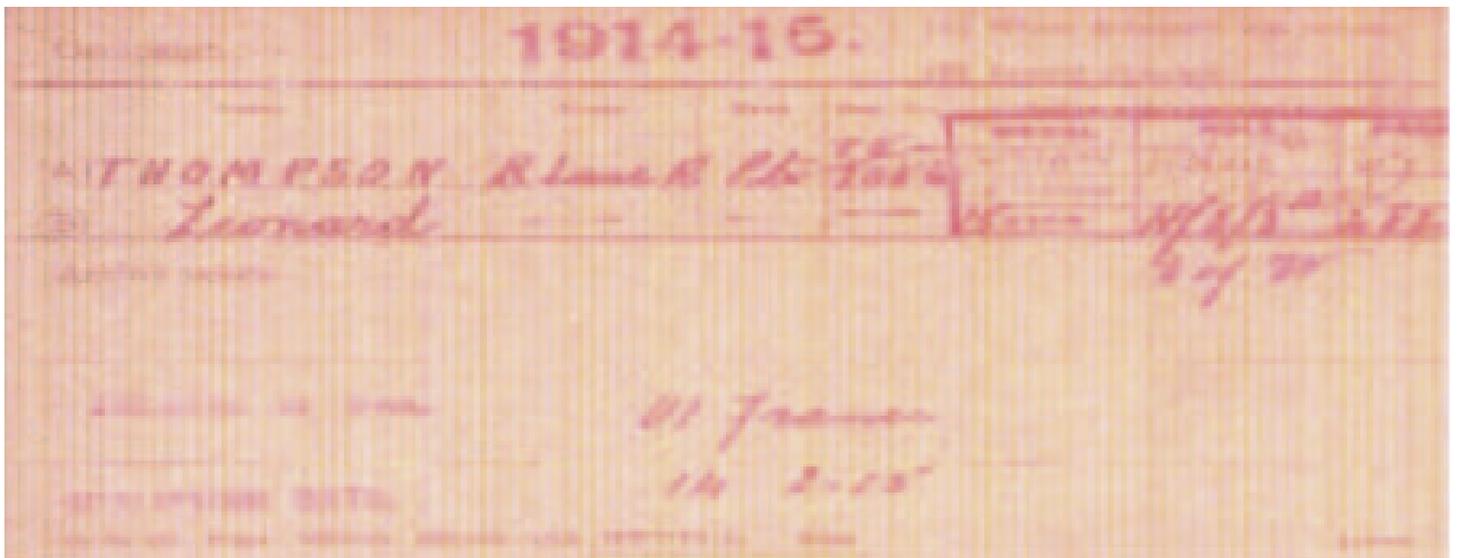
PRIVATE LEONARD THOMPSON.

Much regret is felt in Wennington and district at the death of Pte. Leonard Thompson, who was reported wounded in the Observer of the 7th inst. The news was sent by one of his pals, and no official news was forthcoming. Mr. Saunders, of Wennington Hall, wrote to the commanding officer of the regiment in France for particulars, and has received the



following reply:—"Pte. L. Thompson 2056, D company, was wounded on April 27th and died in hospital on the 29th.—G. W. SHARPE, Captain." Thompson, who was 26 years of age, was a native of Great Edstone, Kirby Moorside, Yorks, and had been a servant at Wennington Hall for the past seven years, where he was held in high esteem, and he was a general favourite. A soldier's life had no attraction for him, but he felt it his duty to answer his country's call, and joined the 5th King's Own early in September.

Yorks, and had been a servant at Wennington Hall for the past seven years, where he was held in high esteem, and he was a general favourite. A soldier's life had no attraction for him, but he felt it was his duty to answer his country's call, and joined the 5th Kings Own early in September"



Private Thompson's Medal Index Card.  
Under the inset box on the right are the letters "D of W" or "Died of Wounds".

### **Wennington Hall, Wennington**

Where Leonard Thompson had worked as a servant. The present building was constructed in the 1850s on a site originating in the 14th century. The Hall was owned by the Saunders Family. The Hall was taken over for use as a school during World War Two



2056 PRIVATE  
LEONARD THOMPSON  
Royal Lancaster Regiment  
29th April 1916



Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Pas de Calais



## RIFLEMAN JOHN WILLIAM VOCKINS

No. 419066

**'A' Company, the London Regiment of the Queen Victoria Rifles  
(Formerly 3837, Royal Lancashire Regiment)**

John William Vockins was born in Ambleside in 1899 and was the son of William and Susan Vockins of 140 Friendship Terrace, Read, Blackburn. They married in Ambleside in 1896 and lived there until at least 1901. Their two other sons, Robert and Richard, married in Burnley in 1925 and 1935 respectively.

Having worked as a carter in Burnley, John William Vockins was living in the Carnforth area when he enlisted in Lancaster on 3rd July 1915. His Company was sent to France in April 1918.

Private Vockins received a gunshot wound requiring amputation and died of a haemorrhage on 15th October 1919, aged 19. He is buried in the very large ST. SEVER CEMETERY EXTENSION, ROUEN, Seine-Maritime, France (REf. S. II. F. 12)

### **Transcript of the newspaper article which also shows Private Vockins' photograph.**

"Mrs W Vockins of 140 Friendship Terrace, Read [Blackburn] has been notified by the War Office of the death of her son Private John William Vockins of the Queen Victoria Rifles. Private Vockins joined the forces on 3rd of July 1915 and was sent to France in April 1918.

He received a gunshot wound to the thigh about a month ago which rendered amputation necessary. Haemorrhage resulted and he died on 15th October at the 11th Stationary Hospital.

Mrs Vockins received a letter from the Matron of the hospital assuring her that everything was done for her son the could possibly be and that his end was peaceful, also that his remains would be interred with military honours in the cemetery which lies near the hospital in Rouen.

Prior to his enlistment Private Vockins was a carter and was employed at Burnley.

A memorial service was held at Saint John's Church, Read on Sunday evening."



419066 RIFLEMAN  
J.W.VOCKINS  
Queen Victoria's Rifles  
15th October 1916 Age 19



The medal index card for Private Vockins.  
This one does not contain the expected details. It does not itemise that he died of wounds, or that he had also served in the Royal Lancashire Regiment.



Saint Sever Cemetery Extension. Rouen, Seine-Maritime.

## PRIVATE JOHN WILCOCK

No. SPTS/2346

24th Battalion the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regt.)

John Wilcock was born in Wennington in 1889 and lived in Wennington. Both his parents were born in Bentham. He was employed by Mr T Wilcock, Bentham as a commercial traveller for Messrs T D Smiths, Lancaster. Youngest son of Mr Wilcock, The Cravens, Wennington.

John was born in 1888 or 1889 in Wennington in the parish of Melling St Wilfrid's; he appears in the 1901 census for Wennington, and in the 1911 census for Lancaster.

John's parents were William [b. in Bentham around 1845] and Jane [b. in Bentham around 1845] Wilcock [1901 census]. In the 1881 census, they were living at 'Ravonsclose', Wennington. John's elder brother, Christopher, born in 1875 [1901 census]. He appears in the 1901 census for Wennington and in the 1911 census for Lancaster. Christopher married Mary Clapham.

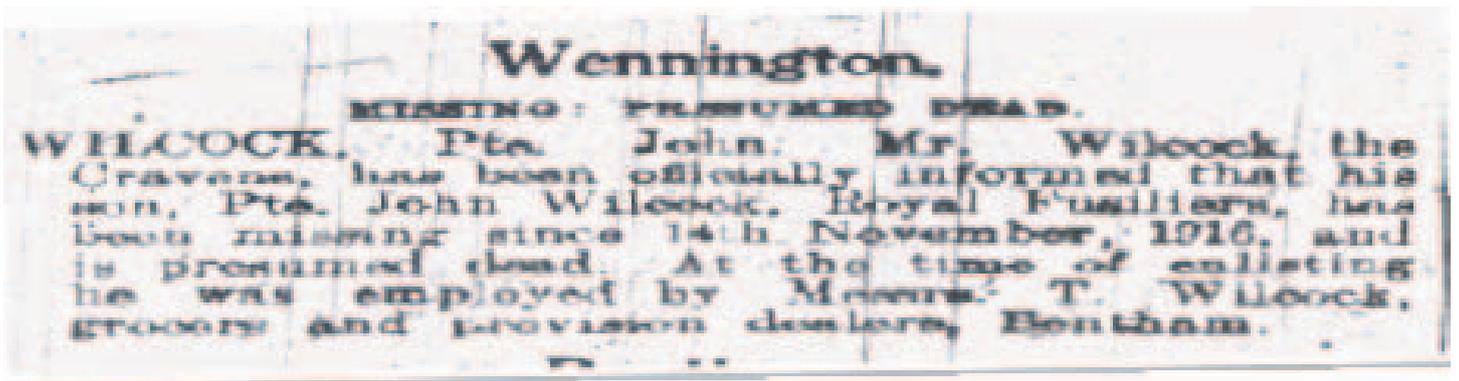


Cravens, Ravonsclose, Wennington

WILCOCK		24th B. Fus		No. 2346	
John					
15.11.15		TP/66B 39		Death pres: 14-11-16	
15.11.15		15.11.15			

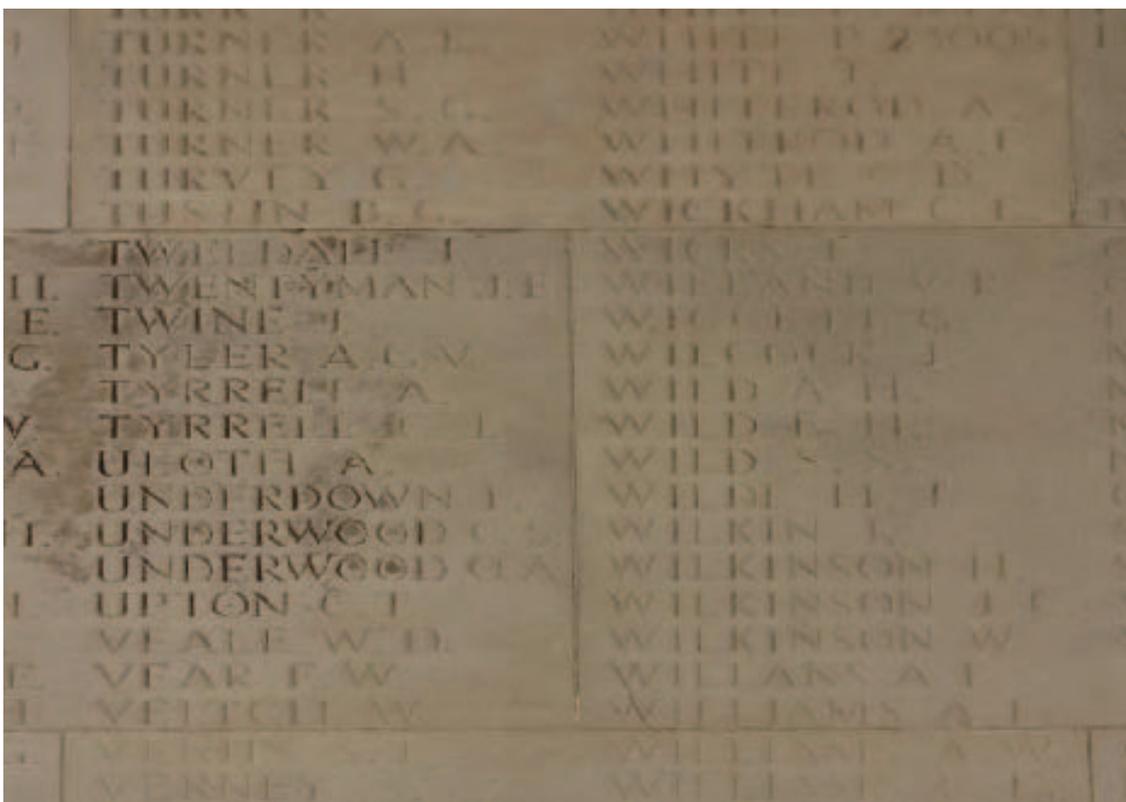
Private Wilcock's Medal Index Card: "Death Presumed: 14 November 1916" (in the remarks column). In the bottom left corner, it itemises that he went to France almost exactly a year before he was killed (15.11.15) it appears from the card that Private Wilcock was awarded the Victory Medal, the British War Medal and the 1915 Star.

John enlisted in Lancaster; he was killed in action on the Somme on 13th November 1916, when his Battalion took part in an attack on the German lines between Serre and Beaumont-Hamel. In this action losses among other ranks were severe: 22 killed, 6 died of wounds, 164 wounded and 50 missing. Although Private Wilcock is listed in the Battalions' War Diary among those wounded on that day, his body was never found, therefore he was "Missing Presumed Killed". He is commemorated, along with over 72,000 other casualties, on the massive THIEPVAL MEMORIAL, Somme, France (REF; Pier and Face 8C, 9A and 16A)



Extract from the Westmorland Gazette for 22nd December 1917

Private Wilcock's name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial being one of the "Missing Presumed Killed". His name is indistinct, but it is the middle of the photograph on the right hadn't side.



## PRIVATE WILLIAM WOODS

no. 52672

26th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers

Died on Friday, 07/02/1919 Age:..22 Son of John and Isabella Woods, of Green Close, Clapham, Yorks.

TERLINCTHUN BRITISH CEMETERY, Ref.:XIII. C. 5., WIMILLE, Pas de Calais, France



52672 Private  
William Woods  
Royal Fusiliers  
7th February 1919



Green Close,  
Clapham  
(Recent photograph)

Rank	Company	Branch	Serial No.
	R. Fus.	PTE	G/S/52672
WOODS. William			
Medal	Date	Page	Remarks
Victory	7.12/1914	B15	1922
British War	do	do	do
Other			
<small>Medals of War Bestowed by Ministry of Pensions</small>			

Private Woods medal card. He was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. It itemises that he actually died of his wound after the war ended, on 7th February 1919.

Terlincthun British Cemetery  
Pas de Calais



Thiepval Memorial



## THIEPVAL MEMORIAL



The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme is a war memorial to 72,246 missing British Empire servicemen who died in the Battles of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 and 1918, with no known grave.

PRIVATE JOHN SHAW and PRIVATE JOHN WILCOCK are commemorated here.

## MEDALS AND AWARDS OF THE GREAT WAR

The subject of medals, awards and honours is a research project on its own. Apart from medals for bravery such as the Victoria Cross, the Military Medal and the Military Cross, the three general service medals were the ones shown below.



British War Medal



1914 - 15 Star



Victory Medal

The British War Medal was awarded to any serviceman, or woman, who went abroad on active service. The Regimental Number and name were milled around the edge. 6,600,000 were made and distributed.

The 1914-15 Star was awarded to Soldiers who saw service on the Western Front before 1916. The regimental Name and number were inscribed on the reverse. Over 2,000,000 were awarded.

The Victory Medal was awarded to any soldier who entered a theatre of war. There were various rules about the combinations of these medals, but generally any soldier who did not qualify for the War Medal was not awarded the Victory Medal.

The combination of the three medals became known as “Pip, Squeak and Wilfred” after popular cartoon characters of the time.

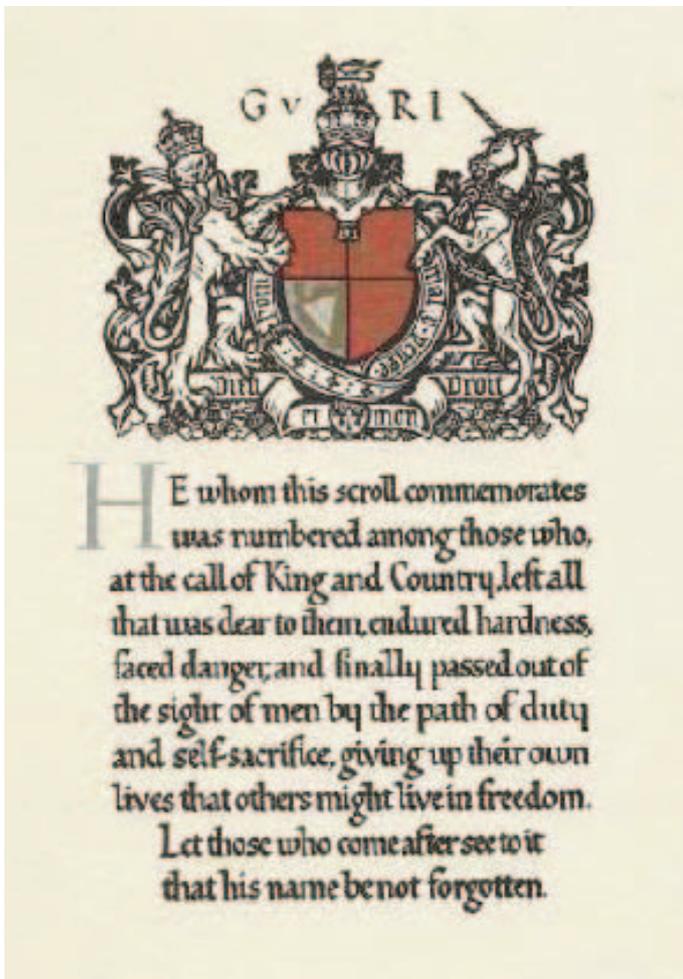
Fewer War Medals are in circulation with the Star and Victory Medals because they had a high silver content and therefore had a higher intrinsic value. Times were hard after The Great War and many were sold for this reason.



The Memorial Plaque was awarded to the next of kin of any soldier killed or died of wounds etc, in the service of his country. They are 4 1/2" diameter and are made of bronze. The face is inscribed with the name of the deceased. Over 600,000 were issued and the total needed 400 tons of metal. They became known as "The dead man's penny" or "The widow's penny".

The plaque was supplied with a commemorative scroll, shown below.

The last two lines of the script are poignant: "Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten."



**So somewhere, in some place, there are six sets of medals and plaques awarded to the six men named on the Melling War Memorial.**

**Let's hope that someone looks after them and remembers with respect and honour.**

**DETAILS OF THE GRAVES OF EACH MAN CAN BE FOUND ON THE  
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES WEB SITE:**

**Private Peter Hodgson**

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/31209/hodgson,-peter/>

**Private John Shaw**

Commemorated at Thiepval Memorial, Somme, Pier and Face 11A.

**Private Leonard Thompson**

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/46079/thompson,-leonard/>

**Rifleman John William Vockins**

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/521604/vockins,-john-william/>

**Private John Wilcock**

Commemorated at Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 8C, 9A and 16A

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/821488/wilcock,-john/>

**Private William Woods**

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/4027806/woods,-william/>

**Acknowledgements and References**

1. David Nott and the members of Melling Parish Council
2. Peter Donnelly and Chris Owen of the Lancaster and Fulwood Military Museums
3. JAC Beeson, Churchwarden, Melling Parish Church
4. Lancaster Reference Library
5. Kendal Reference Library
6. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Photographic Project
7. Maggie Howarth of 'Hill Top', Wennington
8. Kevin Bryan - Former Editor of the Melling Chronicle