

87: Arthur Harold Wilde

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Arthur Harold Wilde

Rank: Corporal

Battalion / Regiment: 196th Coy. Machine Gun Corps.

Service Number: 46797

Date of Death: 20 September 1917

Age at Death: 22

Buried / Commemorated at: Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery, Ypres (Ieper), West Flanders, Belgium

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of James and Mary Wilde of Ness, Neston

Born in early 1895 Arthur was the 9th, and last, child of James and Mary Wilde of Ness. None of the children appears to have been baptised at Neston Parish Church.

James, the son of stone quarrier William and Sarah Wilde of Ness married Mary Mealor at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in the 2nd quarter of 1876. James, earlier recorded as a general labourer, was recorded as the colliery agent in 1891:

James Wilde	Thos	Maries	37	Colliery Agent	Maries	+	Chris Cheshire
Mary Wilde	Thos	do	36				Chris Cheshire
Miriam Wilde	Thos	Single	13				do do
John Wilde	Son	Single	12				do do
James Wilde	Son	Single	11				do do
Joseph Wilde	Son	Single	8				do do
William Wilde	Son	Single	6				do do
Ernest Wilde	Son	Single	4				do do
Wilfred Wilde	Son	Single	3				do do
Frederick Wilde	Son	Single	6 months				do do

1891 census (extract) – Ness

James Wilde	37	colliery agent	born Ness
Mary	36		born Ness
Miriam	13		born Ness
John	12		born Ness
James	11		born Ness
Joseph	8		born Ness
William	6		born Ness
Ernest	4		born Ness
Wilfred	3		born Ness
Frederick	6 months		born Ness

By 1901 Joseph and James had left home and were boarding together in Birkenhead:

Joseph Wilde	boarder	18	Baker & Shop keeper	Neston
James Wilde	boarder	21	engine fitter, ship yard	do do

1901 census (extract) - 27 Beaconsfield Road, Birkenhead

Joseph Wilde	18	boarder, baker & shop keeper	born Neston
James Wilde	21	engine fitter, ship yard	born Neston

By 1901 Arthur had been born and James snr was recorded as the colliery salesman:

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES				Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of		PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN
		Uninhabited	In Occupation	Not in Occupation	Building				Male	Female				
32	Ness	1				James Wilde	Head	M	47		Colliery salesman	Worker		Cheshire Ness
						Mary Wilde	Wife	M	46					Do Do
						Miriam Do	Daughter	S	23					Do Do
						John Do	Son	22			Mason	Worker		Do Do
						William H. Do	Son	16			Apprentice fitter	Do		Do Do
						Ernest Do	Son	14						Do Do
						Wilfrid Do	Son	13						Do Do
						Frederick Do	Son	10						Do Do
						Arthur H. Do	Son	6						Do Do
						William Wilde	Father	85						Do Do
33	Do	1				Edith Jones	Servant	S	16		General Servant (Domestic)			Hind Hawarden

1901 census (extract) – Ness

James Wilde	47	colliery salesman	born Ness
Mary	46		born Ness
Miriam	23		born Ness
John	22	mason	born Ness
William H.	16	apprentice fitter	born Ness
Ernest	14		born Ness
Wilfrid	13		born Ness
Frederick	10		born Ness
Arthur H.	6		born Ness
William Wilde	85	father, widower	born Ness
Edith Jones	16	general servant (domestic)	born Hawarden

The birth of Arthur Harold Wilde was registered in early 1895 although there is no record of his baptism at Neston Parish Church.

By the time of the 1911 census James Wilde snr had left his employment with the colliery to become a grocer in Ness - the shop seemed to be associated with a bakery:

1	James Wilde	Head	57	Married 34	9	8	1	Grocer	320	Assisted Home Grocer	Ness Neston
2	Mary Wilde	Wife	56	Married 34	9	8	1				
3	Miriam Wilde	Daughter	33	Single				Assistant Home Keeper			
4	Joseph Wilde	Son	28	Single				Baker	925	Employed	Portsmouth
5	Ernest Wilde	Son	24	Single				Bricksetter	520	Employed	Widnes
6	Wilfred H. Wilde	Son	23	Single				Baker	925		
7	Fred K. Wilde	Son	20	Single				Baker			
8	Arthur Harold Wilde	Son	16	Single				Baker's Assistant			

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—
 (1) All the persons in this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.
 (2) I have entered the names and families in Columns 7 and 8 separately, and have compared their ages with the total number of persons.
 (3) After making the necessary corrections I have entered all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be correct and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: *R.H.M.*

Total: Males 6, Females 2, Persons 8

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

8

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *James Wilde*
 Postal Address: *Ness Neston Cheshire*

1911 census (condensed) – Ness

James Wilde	57	grocer, living on own account	born Ness
Mary	56		born Ness
Miriam	33	assistant & housekeeper	born Ness
Joseph	28	baker	born Ness
Ernest	24	bricksetter	born Ness
Wilfred H.	23	baker	born Ness
Fred K.	20	baker	born Ness
Arthur Harold	16	baker's assistant	born Ness

James and Mary had been married for 34 years and eight of their nine children had survived.

William Wilde snr had died in Neston shortly after the 1901 census, aged 85 and William Herbert Wilde, Arthur's brother, died on 19 January 1906 aged 21.

John Wilde married Alice Maria Hobbs at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in July / September 1902 and in 1911 John, 32, was recorded as a bread maker / dealer living at 45 Sea View Road, Liscard. Alice, who was 35, had been born in Birkenhead and at that time they had three small children; Edna (6), Mary Margaret (4) and Carrie (3).

James Wilde had married Bertha Eltenton at St Mary's Church, Walton, Liverpool, in mid-1906. In the 1911 census James (31, dairyman, own account) was living with Bertha (28, born Liverpool) and two small sons (William Herbert, 3, and James Rathbone, 1) at 79 Sea View Road, Liscard - James' brother, John, and his family were living on the same road.

The Service Record of Arthur Wilde has not been found so details of his time in the army, or of his death, are unknown. However, it is understood that Arthur served originally with the Cheshire Regiment when his Service Number was 3210 and that he enlisted in Birkenhead. Arthur then served with the 196th Machine Gun Company and it is known that this joined the 55th (West Lancashire) Division on 22 December 1916. Following training in Grantham the unit went to France in December 1916 where they spent the whole of 1917.

The first half of 1917 was comparatively quiet although the troops were surrounded by enemy forces on three sides and under constant artillery fire.

From 31 July to 2 August they were in action at The Battle of Pilckem Ridge, one of the conflicts at the commencement of The Third Battle of Ypres ("Passchendaele") and between 30 July and 4 August, in the Division's attack in the area of Spree, Pond and Schuler Farms, 168 officers and 3384 men were killed, wounded or missing.

On 7 August the Division was withdrawn to Recques for training before returning to the Front and being in action at The Battle of Menin Road Ridge which, officially, lasted from 20 - 23 September although fighting continued for several days after the 23rd. The action at this time, following a prolonged period of heavy weather which had turned the battlefields to quagmires, is well described by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission (the Regiment's War Diaries are unavailable):

Preparations during the first three weeks of September coincided with good weather; sunshine and wind dried the ground and raised the spirits of the Army. As guns and ammunition were accumulated the infantry rehearsed the new style of fighting required by Plumer's battle plan. The role of*



A British machine gun crew ready for action during The Battle of the Menin Road Ridge [IWM]

artillery was paramount; the preliminary bombardment began on 31 August, intensifying daily to culminate in a colossal two day counter-battery shoot prior to zero-hour. Wet through by overnight rain the infantry were on their start positions by early morning of 20 September. At 5.40am 65,000 troops advanced on an eight mile front, screened by heavy mist and a stupefying bombardment. Keeping close to the barrage, the initial rush, across slippery ground, quickly overran enemy outposts; retaliatory fire strengthened and skilful fighting was needed to negotiate surviving strongpoints. By midday the four attacking Divisions on the Gheluvelt Plateau were on their final objectives. The simultaneous attack by Fifth Army kept up alongside on the left. The newly won positions were consolidated in anticipation of expected German counter-attacks. Clear afternoon weather offered reconnaissance flights near perfect visibility; German threats were quickly spotted and between noon and 7.30pm numerous counter-attacks were dispersed by viciously accurate British barrages. By evening the battle-ravaged forward slopes of the Gheluvelt Plateau were in British hands. The following days saw further German counter-attacks and British attempts to secure objectives not gained on 20 September. [http://www.cwgc.org/ypres/]

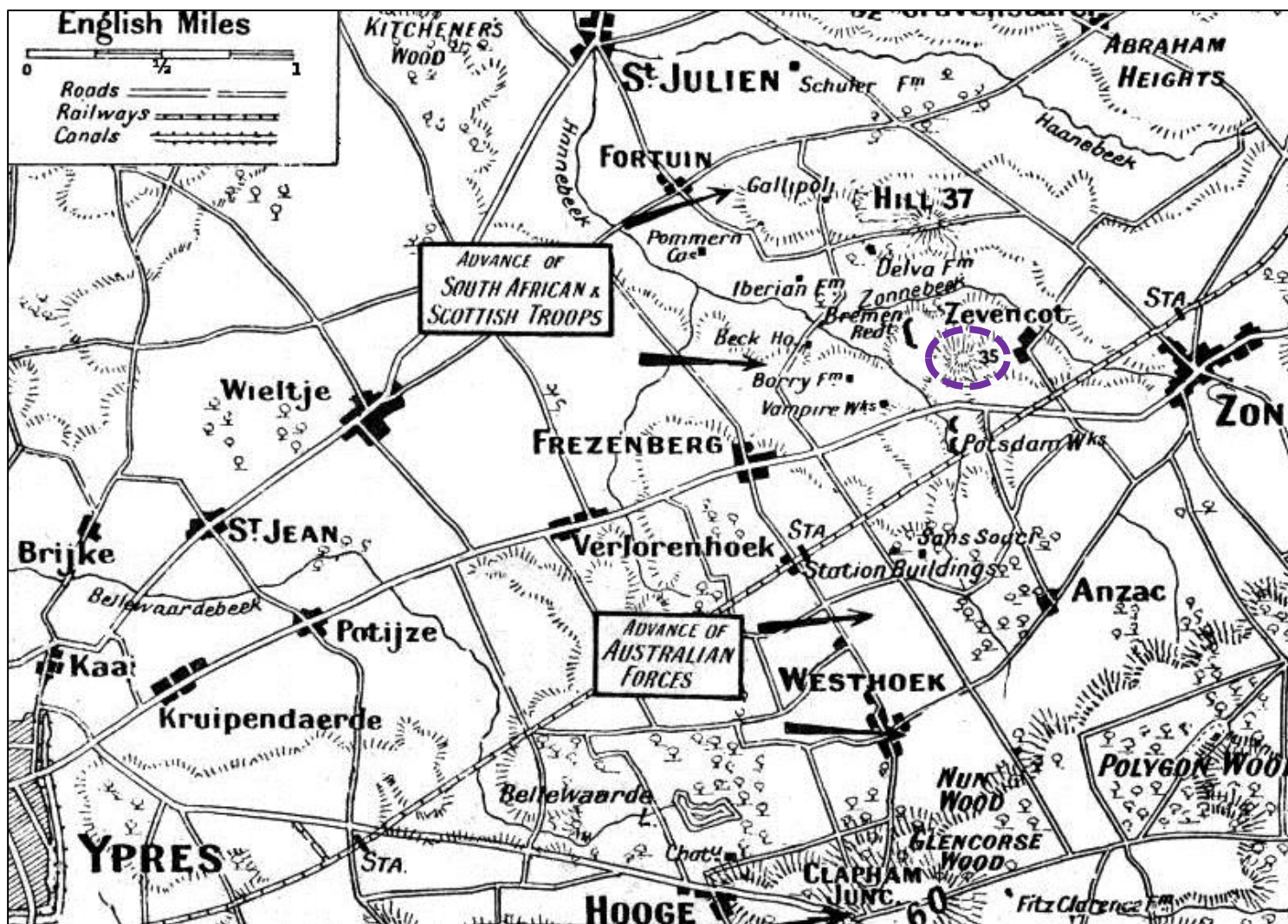
[*Field Marshal Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer, 1st Viscount Plumer, GCB GCMG GCVO GBE (13 March 1857 – 16 July 1932) was a senior British Army officer of the First World War. After commanding V Corps at The Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, he took command of the Second Army in May 1915 and in June 1917 won an overwhelming victory over the German Army at The Battle of Messines, which started with what was described as the loudest explosion in human history, created by the simultaneous explosion of nineteen mines by the Royal Engineers' tunnelling companies. He later served as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of the Rhine and then as Governor of Malta before becoming High Commissioner of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1925 and retiring in 1928 Wikipedia]

It is probable that it was during this action, considered successful, that Arthur Harold Wilde died on 20 September 1917 whilst serving with the 55th Division. Casualties in the action were high with 127 officers and 2603 men killed before the 55th Division was relieved by the 39th Division on 22 September.

The Battle of the Menin Road Ridge, sometimes called "The Battle of the Menin Road", was the third British general attack of The Third Battle of Ypres in the Ypres Salient in Flanders on the Western Front. It has been recorded that

During the pause in Allied general attacks between late August and 20 September, the British changed some infantry tactics, by adopting the "leap-frog" method of advance, when waves of infantry stopped once they reached their objective then consolidated the ground, while other waves passed through the objective to attack the next one and the earlier waves became the tactical reserve. General adoption of the method was made possible when more artillery was brought into the salient and by increasing the number of aircraft involved in close air support of the attackers and by specialising the tasks of air defence, contact-patrol, counter-attack patrol, artillery observation and ground-attack.

Optimism increased among German commanders that the Flanders offensive had ended. Drier weather and extensive road repairs made it much easier for the British to move vast amounts of supplies forward from the original front line. Visibility increased except for frequent ground fog around dawn, which helped conceal British infantry during the attack, before clearing to expose German troop movements to British observation and attack. The British infantry succeeded in capturing most of their objectives and then holding them against German counter-attacks, inflicting many casualties on the local German defenders and the Eingreif divisions sent to reinforce them,



Generalised map of the main area of conflict showing the central positions of Commonwealth forces around the Frezenberg Ridge, relative to Ypres and Hooge, in September–October 1917.

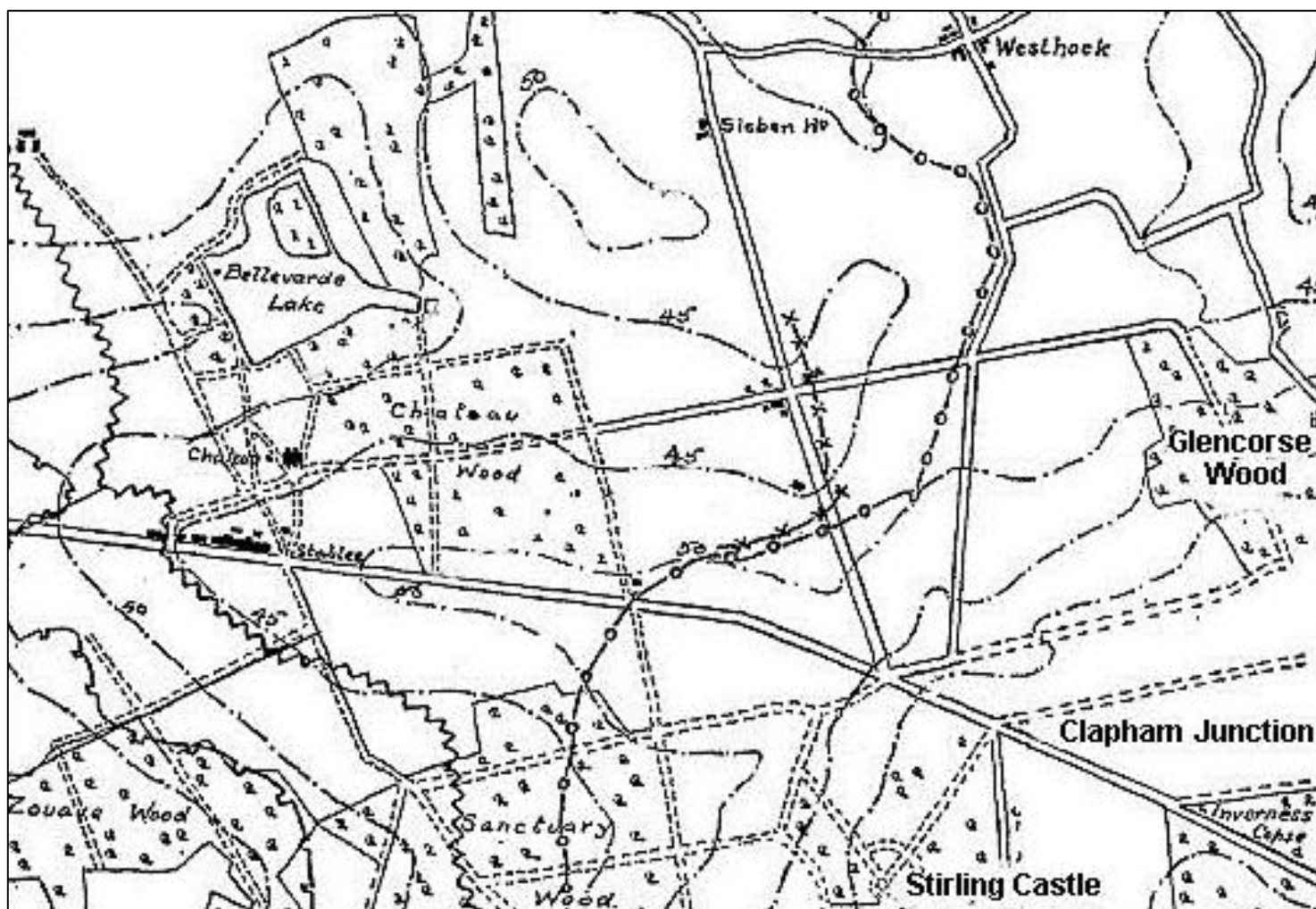
Strategically-important locations, held by the Germans before the action, included Hill 35 (encircled in purple), Hill 37 (north of Hill 35), the upland areas to the north of Westhoek and the wooded areas.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Menin_Road_Ridge#/media/File:MapThirdYpresFrezenbergSeptemberOctober1917.jpg]

with massed artillery and small-arms fire. German defences on the Gheluvelt Plateau, which had been retained or quickly recaptured in July and August were lost and the British were able to attack again on 26 September. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Menin_Road_Ridge]

The 9th and 55th Divisions of V Corps were to attack on fronts of 1,800 yd (1,600 m) over ground held by the right of the German 121st Division and the 2nd Guards Reserve Division, which had also changed hands twice in August. The large numbers of strong points, pill-boxes and fortified farms east of the Hanebeek and Steenbeek streams were mostly intact, despite numerous attempts to smash them with artillery fire. The artillery brought to the Ypres salient in September went to the Second Army so the Fifth Army adopted a new infantry formation, where moppers-up were reorganised into small groups of up to half a platoon, moving with the leading assault waves, to capture specific strong-points and then garrison them. XVIII Corps adopted the same practice, which became standard in the Fifth Army soon after the battle.

The South African Brigade on the left was badly hit by German machine-gun fire from Hill 37, as delays to the 55th Division meant that it was well short of the hill. The South Africans managed to capture Bremen Redoubt and Waterend House in the Zonnebeek valley and extend a defensive flank back to the first objective.



Sketch map of the west side of the Menin Road Ridge region (south of the region shown on the previous map)

The object of the attack in preparation was to capture the high ground known officially as the Menin Road Ridge. The northern end of that ridge is marked by "Glencorse Wood." South-west of that wood lies the cross-roads known as "Clapham Junction," where the ridge is crossed by the Menin Road. Thence the ridge runs south-westward by "Stirling Castle" to "Mount Sorrel." South of that height the ridge divides. One prolongation of the Ridge bends eastward to Hill 60 and thence southward again, to end above the Ypres-Commines canal at the hillock known as "The Bluff": the other prolongation of the Ridge turns south-eastward from Mount Sorrel and forms the western rim of the narrow wooded valley of the Bassevillebeek. That south-eastern prolongation of the Ridge is marked by the hamlet of Klein Zillebeke. In the crescent hollow between the two arms of the ridge lie "Battle" and "Fusilier" Woods.

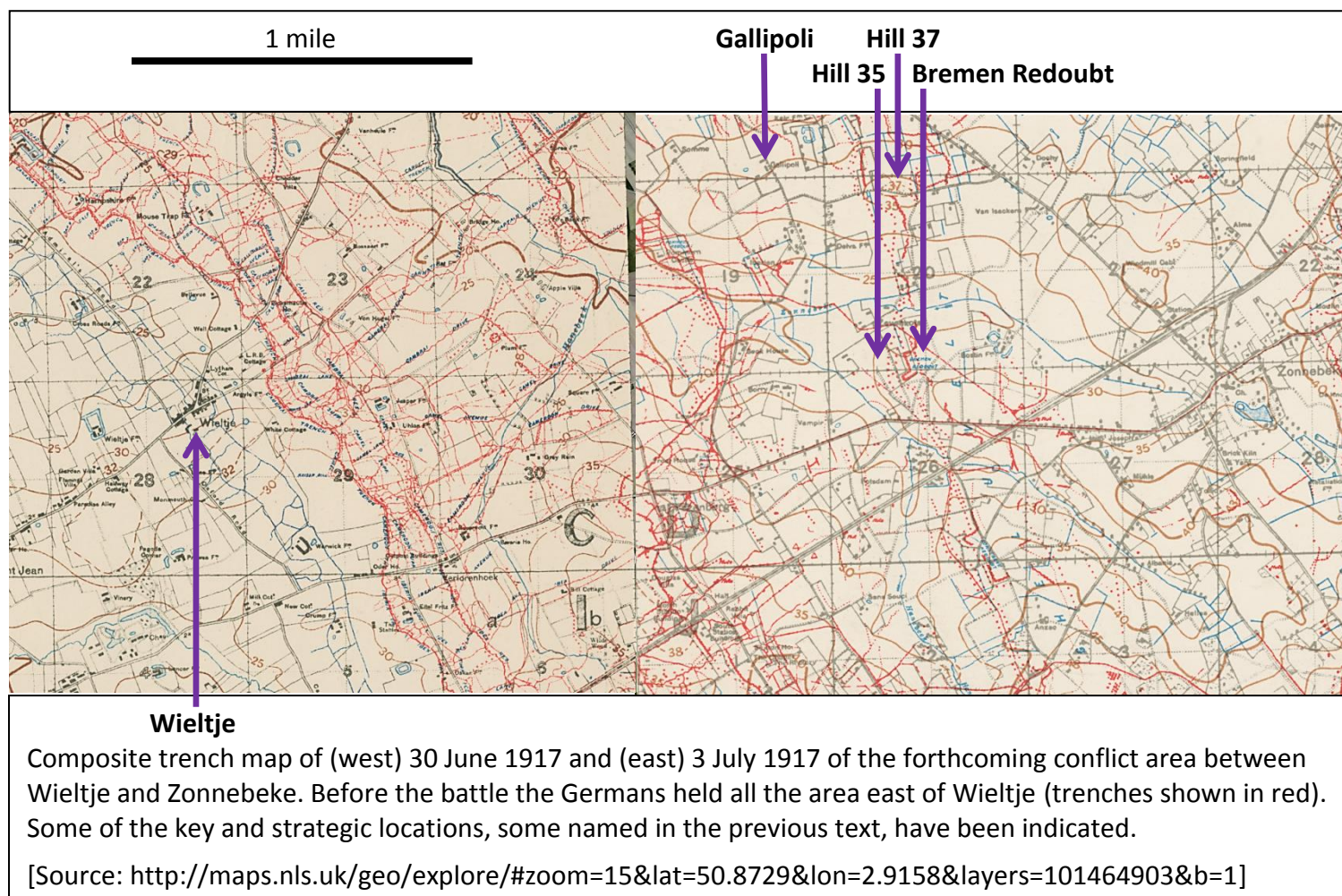
These two woods, as well as the ruins of Klein Zillebeke, had been captured by the advancing British troops in the fighting of the previous month; but the defending Germans still clung to the edge of the high ground just beyond Klein Zillebeke. [Source (map & text): http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/bat_10_1917.php]

To the north of 9th Division the 55th Division began the day understrength, after the losses of 31 July. Replacements had arrived slowly and 1,000 soldiers were left out of the battle, having arrived too late to be trained for the attack. German artillery and machine-gun fire from Reserve Regiment 91 of the 2nd Guards Reserve Division, engaged the infantry with massed small-arms fire as the attack began.

The mist worked to the Germans' advantage in this part of the front, because the depleted British units missed several German strong points and dug-outs, from which the Germans were able to stop the British support waves from moving up. The advanced troops realising this either halted or turned back and lost the barrage. The difficulties of the division were made worse at 7:08 a.m.,

when the scheduled advance to the final objective coincided with the dispersal of the mist. Reserves were pushed forward around 10:00 a.m. from the 166th Brigade, which allowed the 165th and 164th brigades to take the first objective around Gallipoli Farm and the Schuler Galleries in front of Schuler Farm, by noon. Fighting at Hill 35 continued and the Germans regained Hill 37 with a counter-attack. Machine-guns were placed in the Schuler Galleries and nine machine-guns were dug in near Keir Farm, with which the British stopped German counter-attacks from making further progress. In the afternoon the rest of the reserve brigade captured Hills 35 and 37, which dominated the Zonnebeke spur. The right of the division established touch with the 9th Division but the centre and left of 55th Division were 500 yd (460 m) short of the final objective.

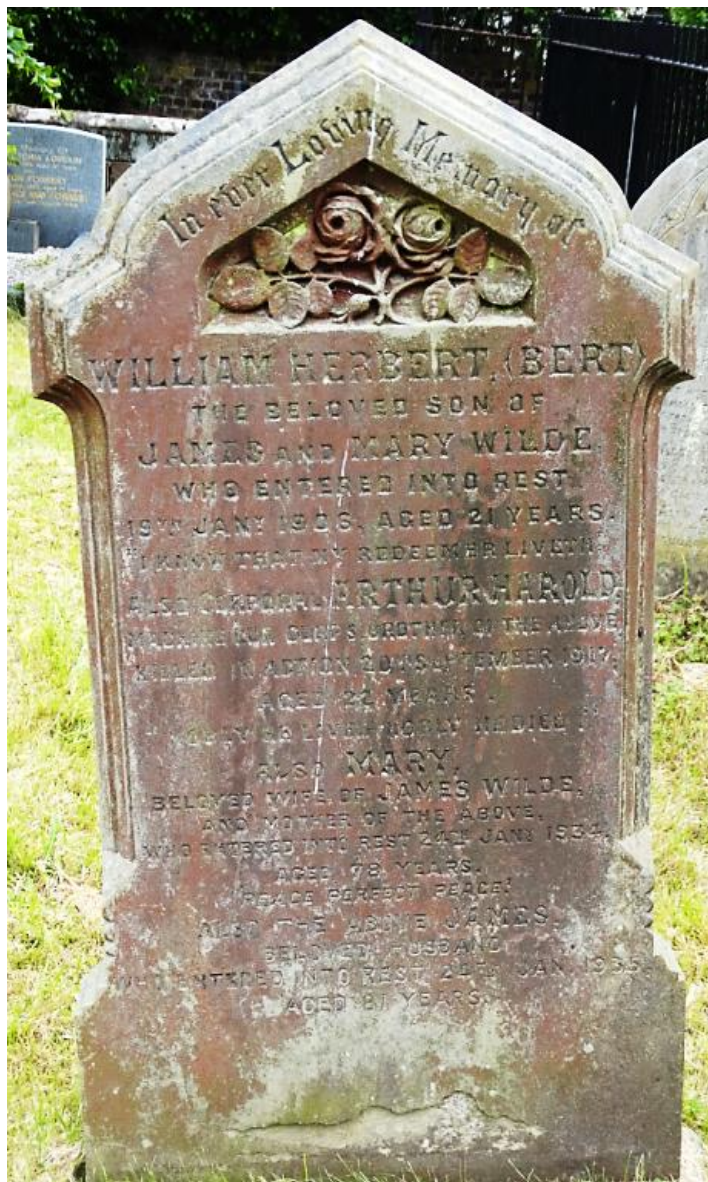
[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Menin_Road_Ridge]



ROLL OF HONOUR.—On Sunday morning, at the parish church, the Vicar, the Rev. C. Brooke-Gwynne, at the close of his sermon made some sympathetic remarks to the mourners and congregation on the death in action just recently of several Nestonians, who had made the supreme sacrifice in France for their King and country, and in a righteous and just cause. Special hymns were rendered, and the National Anthem was sung at close of service. The death toll is rising. The names of those specially mentioned last Sunday were W. Williams (Parkgate), Harold Wilde (Ness), Alf. Jellicoe, Geo. Ashworth and A. Colebath (Neston).

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 20 October 1917

Note: there is no record, either locally or in the CWGC database, of any serviceman with the name 'Colebath'.



The Wilde family headstone at Neston Parish Church

The stone commemorates William Herbert (Bert) Wilde and his parents, James and Mary.

Below the inscription to William Herbert the inscription reads:

‘Also Corporal Arthur Harold, Machine Gun Corps., brother of the above, killed in action 20 September 1917 aged 22 years’

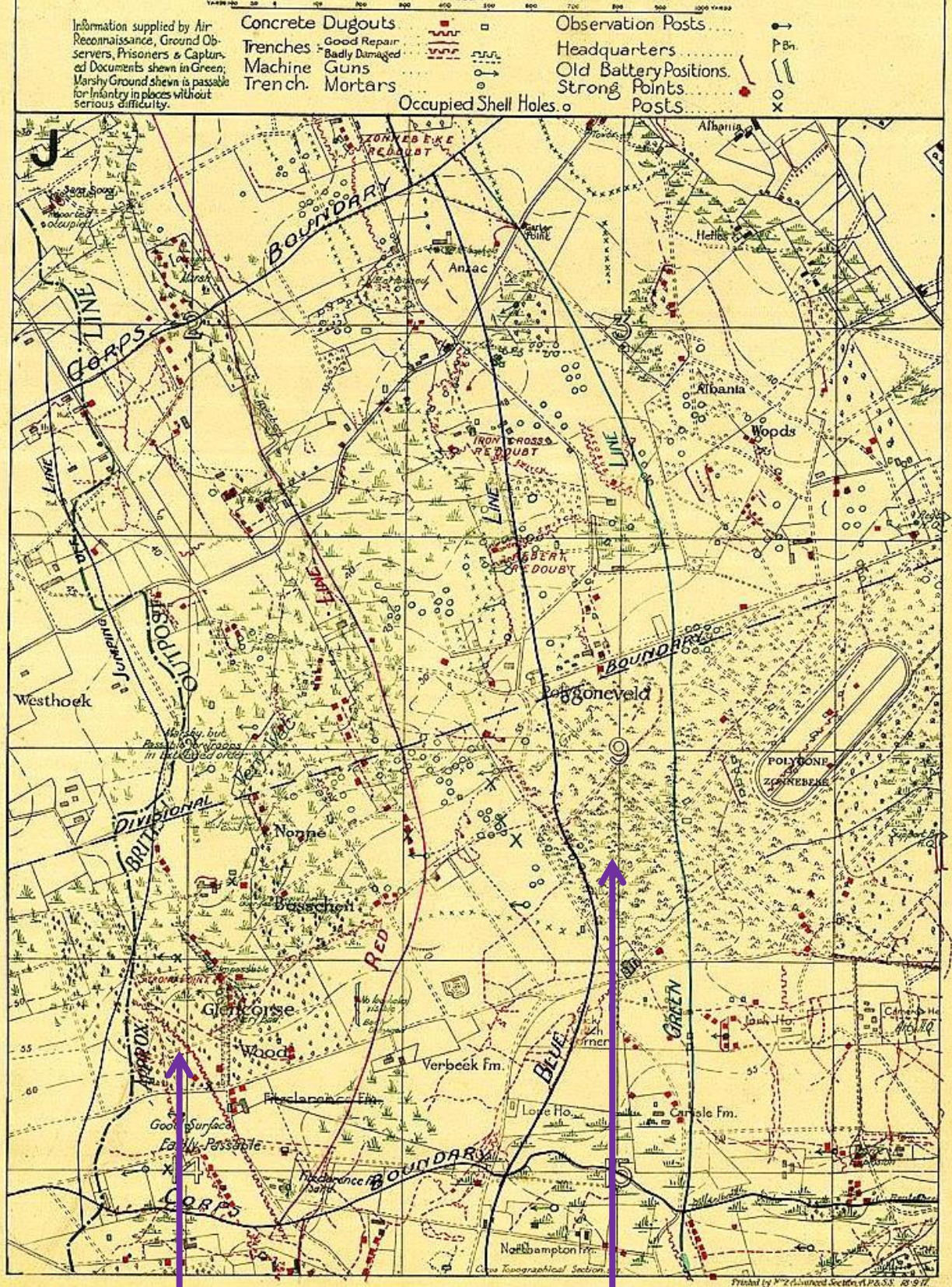


Arthur Harold Wilde’s CWGC headstone at Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium
[photo : CWGC]

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
WILDE	- M. G. C.	bpl	46797
Arthur Harold			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	M. G. C. / 101 B32	2912	Killed 20-9-17
BRITISH	- do -	- do -	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

J.2. to J.16. Scale 1:5,000.



Glencorse Wood

Polygon Wood

Generalised military map showing the Red, Blue and Green Line objectives of the Allied troops as they progressed eastwards. [Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Menin_Road_Ridge#/media/File:Battle_of_Menin_Road_-_objective_lines_map.jpg]

The database *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*, records that although Arthur had been born in Neston his residence was Liscard.

WILDE, Cpl. Arthur Harold, 46797. 196th Coy.
Machine Gun Corps. 20th Sept., 1917. Age 22.
Son of James and Mary Wilde, of Ness, Neston,
Cheshire. X. G. 3.

Detail of Grave Registration Document



The Memorial Window to Arthur Harold Wilde in Little Neston Methodist Church.



575055	45/9/10	Wilde Arthur Harold.	196 th Coy. 20-9-17. London. M.G.C. in Action 11-17 of. France or Belgium 46797.	12. 16 4 12 16 4 10.2.18. 19.2.18. La James 12 16 4
			WAR GRATUITY 19. 20 16-9-19 b256 b25636 b25621 245	13 10 - 13.11.19 La James. 13 10 = 18
			A.F.W. PAYMENT DATE 4/7/19.	

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. In July 1919 Arthur's father, James, received a payment of outstanding wages of £12 16s 4d from the army and a War Gratuity of £13 10s. This, a total value of £26 6s 4d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £4100 in 2016.

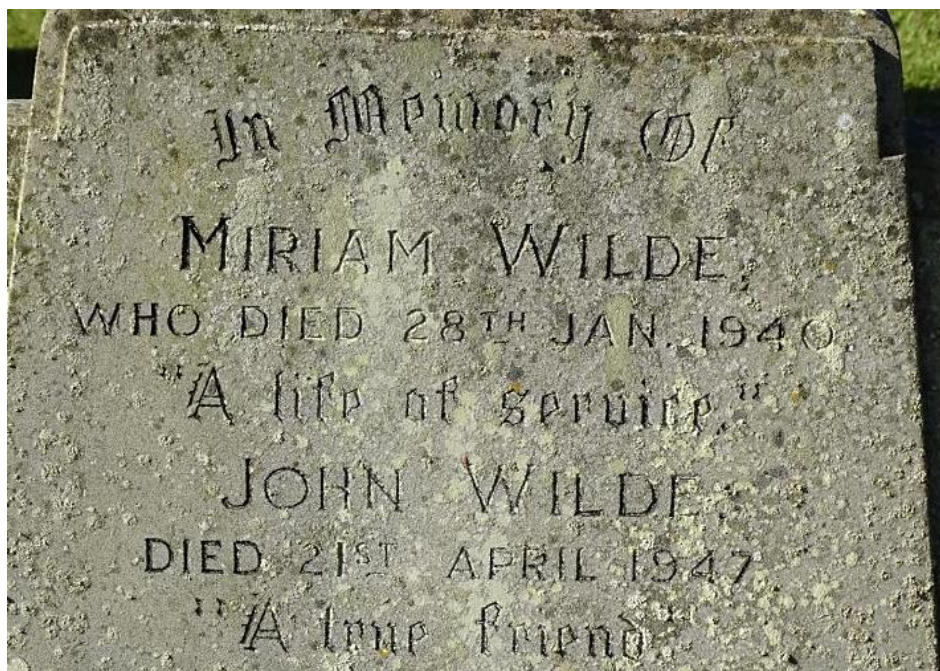
This form also records that Arthur died in action in 'France or Belgium'.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

Mary Wilde, Arthur's mother, died on 24 January 1934 aged 78. James Wilde, Arthur's father, died exactly one year later, on 24 January 1935, aged 81.

Of Arthur's siblings:

Miriam, the eldest sister (born 18 April 1877), remained unmarried and died on the 28 January 1940 aged 61. In the 1939 Register she is recorded as being incapacitated and living at The Cottage, Well Lane, Ness. With her was Mary Royston (single, born 12 July 1889), a hospital nurse. The Cottage is the sandstone house at the junction of Well Lane and Neston Road. John, the eldest brother, and Miriam are buried in the same grave in Neston Cemetery.



John Wilde died on 21 April 1947 aged 68 and Alice died in mid-1966 aged 90. John Wilde is buried in the same grave as his unmarried sister, Miriam, in Neston Cemetery although Alice does not appear to be buried there.

In the 1939 Register John (born 30 June 1878) and Alice (born 22 August 1875) were living at 31 Parkfield Drive, Wallasey, where John was a Life Insurance Agent.

James Wilde (born 1 March 1880) and Bertha (born 24 September 1882) are buried at Neston Cemetery; James died 25 May 1957 aged 77 and Bertha died 16 December 1964 aged 81. In the 1939 Register James was recorded as a *grocer, dairyman, coal dealer* and he and Bertha were living at Grocery Shop, Neston Road, Ness. This was very close to where Miriam Wilde was living and was probably the red-brick shop (which became known as The Vines) which, now a residential property, is located at the junction of Mill Lane and Neston Road. Bertha was recorded as a shop attendant and with them was unmarried son Henry G Wilde (born 23 September 1921) who was recorded as a *motor driver, coal delivery*.

Joseph Wilde (born 16 July 1882) married Lily Margaret Mealor (born 25 July 1896) at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in July / September 1919 and both are buried at Neston Cemetery; Joseph died 28 June 1951, aged 69, and Lily died 12 March 1988 aged 91. In 1939 they were living at 'Medway', Mill Lane, Ness and James was recorded as a master baker. One line of the Register has been redacted but the line following records the unmarried son of Joseph and Lily, Geoffrey, who was born on 23 January 1938.

William Herbert Wilde died on 19 January 1906 aged 21.

Ernest Wilde married Eleanor May Rostance at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1913 and nothing further is known.

Wilfrid/Wilfred Meador Wilde (born 25 October 1887) married Mary Ellen Meador (born 6 May 1884) at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1913 and he died in Hawarden in mid-1971 aged 83. At the time of the 1939 Register they were living at 107 High Street, Connahs Quay; Wilfred was a master baker, Mary was an assistant confectioner and their unmarried son, Harold Wilfred (born 16 September 1917) in the Mold area was an assistant baker and confectioner. Harold may have been their only child.

Frederick K Wilde (born 27 September 1890 in Neston) married Eveline Jessie Walker (born 2 November 1893) in Northampton in mid-1921 and, in 1939, they were living at 11 Shones Croft, Mill Lane, Ness. Frederick was recorded as a *clerk, temporary ironworks crane* hand and with them was their son James Trevor Wilde (single, born 20 October 1922 in Neston), who was recorded as a *gardener, market and horticultural*. Eveline died in the Holywell district in late 1973 and Frederick died in the Delyn area of Clwyd in early 1978.