



Wilfrid Kilburn 1878 – 1916

Wilfrid was born at 4, Woodbine Street, Dewsbury on 13th September 1878. His father was Wilman Kilburn, a Rag Warehouseman born in Dewsbury in 1857 and died in 1901. His mother was Maria (née Dunford) born in Earlsheaton in 1854 and died in 1906. They were married at All Saints Church, Dewsbury on 13th January 1877. They had another son, George Arthur born in 1877.

In 1881 and 1891 they lived in Earlsheaton but by 1901 they had moved to live at 5, Zetland Street, Southport, Lancashire. Maria was remarried at St. Peter's Church, Earlsheaton on 11th December 1902 to a widower; Benjamin (Ben) Dunford (born in 1849 and died in 1922).

Wilfrid was married on 25th September 1897 at St. Peter's Church, Birkdale, Southport to Mary Jane James (born in Ironbridge, Shropshire in 1877 and died in 1937). He worked as a Baker and in 1901 they lived at 16, Canning Road, Southport. They had four children; Edith, born in Southport in 1899, the next three were all born in Mornington Mills, Western Australia. Wilfrid Clifford, born in 1904, William James, born in 1910 and Lilian Mary, born in 1913.

He joined the 1st Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment in 1899 serving as Private 7786 and fought in the South African Campaign (Boer War) between 1900 and 1901, being awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with two clasps for Cape Colony and Laing's Nek. He was discharged after he returned home from South Africa, and in 1902 the family emigrated to Western Australia. They initially lived in the town of Mornington Mills, about 150 Kms south of Perth and later at 30, Cecil Street, Victoria Park, an inner south eastern suburb of Perth.

He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at Blackboy Hill on 24th June 1915 serving as Private 2697. He was initially assigned to the 28th Battalion Australian Infantry. On 2nd November 1915 he departed for Egypt where on 11th March 1916 he was transferred to the 53rd Battalion Australian Infantry at Tel-El-Kebir. On 19th June 1916 he boarded the "*Royal George*" at Alexandria bound for France, arriving at Marseilles on 28th June 1916. He was posted missing in action on 19th July 1916 during the Battle of Fromelles which was described as the worst 24 hours in Australian military history, with almost 2,000 killed in action or dying of wounds. The following year a Court of Enquiry on 2nd September decreed that Wilfrid was one of those killed in action that day.

Despite the recovery of 250 bodies killed in the Battle of Fromelles from mass graves in 2009, and the subsequent DNA identification of many of these, Wilfrid still has no known grave. He is commemorated at V.C. Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial, Fromelles, Nord, France. Wilfrid was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

For over 100 years, both the CWGC and Australian War Memorial records incorrectly spelt his first name as *Wilfred*, but in August 2021 these were amended when Dewsbury Sacrifices submitted copies of his birth certificate and his marriage certificate with his signature to the CWGC and AWM, along with a copy of a letter sent by his wife Mary in 1922 to the department responsible for sending out Memorial Plaques, requesting a plaque with the correct spelling of his name. Whilst Mary eventually received a replacement plaque in 1926, his AWM records were never corrected.

Wilfrid is also commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and as *Wilfred Kilburn* on the War Memorial in St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor and on the Australian War Memorial, Canberra and in the Memorial Records in the Victoria Park branch of the Returned Services League (RSL) and on the War Memorial in the town of Cannington, South Perth.

In Memory of

Private

Wilfrid Kilburn

2697, 53rd Bn., Australian Infantry, A.I.F. who died on 19 July 1916 Age 37

Son of Wilman and Maria Kilburn; husband of M. J. Kilburn, of 30, Cecil St., Victoria Park, Western Australia. Native of Dewsbury, Yorks, England.

Remembered with Honour

V.C. Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial, Fromelles



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

