

**Private George William Burrows**  
**Regimental number: 6109**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment**

**born: March 1891 - died: 1 May 1916**

Private George William Burrows was born in March 1891 and baptised on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month at St Luke's Church in Hanley, Staffordshire.<sup>1</sup> He was the eldest son of William and Emma Burrows of 106 Well Street, Hanley. His father was born in about 1868 in Somerset and his mother about a year later in Hanley, Staffordshire.<sup>2</sup> His mother was probably the former Emma Turvey, who married Charles William Burrows in the summer of 1890.<sup>3</sup> They had at least ten children:<sup>4</sup> George, Joseph Frederick (born in 1892, but died in early 1893),<sup>5</sup> Annie (born in 1894),<sup>6</sup> Florrie (born in about 1897),<sup>7</sup> Caroline Selina (born in 1899),<sup>8</sup> Clement (born in about 1902),<sup>9</sup> Nellie (born in about 1904),<sup>10</sup> Lilly (born in about 1906),<sup>11</sup> Harry (born in about 1908)<sup>12</sup> and Wilfred (born in about 1910).<sup>13</sup>

In 1901, George's father was a general carter and the family was living at 11 Victor Street in Hanley.<sup>14</sup> By 1911, the family had moved to 12 Milner Street and his father was a potter's labourer.<sup>15</sup> George was not living with the family then.

George enlisted in the North Staffordshire Regiment and joined the theatre of war on 2 July 1915. His medal rolls index card suggests that he joined the theatre of war in the Balkans.<sup>16</sup> However, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment served in France from September 1914 until November 1918.<sup>17</sup> Less than a year after arriving in France he died at the age of 25.

In April 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment was stationed north of Wulverghem, Belgium.<sup>18</sup> At 12.55 a.m. on 30 April a gas alarm was given. There was one wave of gas, probably chlorine, which lasted about 20 minutes. With winds blowing 10 miles per hour, the gas covered about 50 metres in eleven seconds. That did not give the men much time to adjust their helmets and a large portion of the men were gassed. At 1.20 a.m. a German attack began. There was considerable confusion because of the suddenness of the attack and the fact that the men were still wearing their smoke helmets and, as a result, were partially blinded. Although the Battalion had to evacuate the area, the enemy was not able to advance and much of the area was reoccupied. A shortage of bombs prevented anything more than a steady advance of the Battalion and the enemy was able to return to its own lines. The enemy had taken one man prisoner and killed or wounded a dozen more men. "Our losses from gas-poisoning were considerable chiefly owing to the speed with which the gas travelled over the short distance between the trenches. Smoke helmets when adjusted properly in time proved most effective. A large number of men suffered from after-effects being taken ill 12 to 24 hours after the gas had passed. Most of their cases, however, were only slight."<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately this was not the case for George. He died of gas poisoning on 1 May 1916 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.<sup>20</sup> The effects of the gas attacks were also felt at the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS, stationed near Bailleul,<sup>21</sup> which was just about six miles from Wulverghem. Fifteen patients died the same day as George, many apparently from gas poisoning.<sup>22</sup> In April and June 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion suffered well over 500 casualties in two serious gas attacks, while in the trenches north of Wulverghem.<sup>23</sup> George lost four comrades from his battalion in the few days at the end of April and beginning of May: Private Oliver Llewellyn Boon, Private James Morgan, Private Samuel Bertrem

(Bert) Clewlow and Private Thomas Alfred Hulme. Most of his comrades had been poisoned by chlorine gas.

George was a member of the Church of England<sup>24</sup> and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 119).<sup>25</sup> Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.<sup>26</sup>

His father, who was still living on Milner Street, received a letter notifying him of his son's death.<sup>27</sup> The monies owing to him from the army after his death were sent to his mother.<sup>28</sup>

George was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for George William Burrows, Archive reference: D3726/1/3, Page: 114

<sup>2</sup> "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for William C. Burrows, District: Stoke upon Trent, Registration district number: 361, Subdistrict: Hanley, Subdistrict number: 1, Census reference: RG14PN16538 RG78PN1022 RD361 SD1 ED28 SN291, Piece number 16538, Page: -, Folio: -

<sup>3</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Charles William Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 282

<sup>4</sup> The 1911 census indicates that they had nine children, all of whom were still living. However, there is a baptismal record for a son, Joseph Frederick, born in 1892 and who died before his first birthday. "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," entry for William C. Burrows

<sup>5</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Joseph Frederick Burrows, Archive reference: D3726/1/3, Page: 126; "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 18 September 2015), entry for Joseph Charles Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 117

<sup>6</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Annie Burrows, Archive reference: D3726/1/3, Page: 165

<sup>7</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 September 2015), entry for William Lowndes, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Sub-registration district: Hanley, ED, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 2600, Folio: 87, Page Number: 42, Household schedule number: 270. There is no evidence to indicate why the Burrow family was recorded as being "Lowndes" in this census. All the family details (names and ages) are consistent with this being the Burrows family.

<sup>8</sup> "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Annie Burrows, Archive reference: D3726/1/4, Page: 65

<sup>9</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Clement Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 172

<sup>10</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Nelly Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 213

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- <sup>11</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Lilly Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 193
- <sup>12</sup> "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," entry for William C. Burrows
- <sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Wilfred Burrows, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 178
- <sup>14</sup> "1901 England Census," entry for William Lowndes
- <sup>15</sup> "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," entry for William C. Burrows
- <sup>16</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 5 August 2015), entry for George William Burrows
- <sup>17</sup> "North Staffordshire Regiment," Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Staffordshire\\_Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Staffordshire_Regiment); accessed 16 August 2015)
- <sup>18</sup> "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 16 August 2015), Regiment or Unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment, Sub Unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary Dates: 1915 Nov - 1919 May, Piece Description: Piece 2213/1: 1 Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment (1915 Nov - 1919 May), Piece Number: 2213
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 80
- <sup>21</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G); accessed 17 June 2015)
- <sup>22</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G); accessed 17 June 2015)
- <sup>23</sup> "North Staffordshire Regiment"
- <sup>24</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 80
- <sup>25</sup> "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); accessed 9 September 2015), entry for Burrows, G.W., Service No: 6190
- <sup>26</sup> "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- <sup>27</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 80
- <sup>28</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 19 January 2015), entry for George William Burrows
- <sup>29</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 9 September 2015), entry for George William Burrows