

**Private George Burkitt<sup>©</sup>**  
**Regimental number: 1709**  
**8th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force**

**born: 1891 – died: 25 June 1916**

Private George Burkitt was born in Hunton, Yorkshire, England<sup>1</sup> in 1891,<sup>2</sup> the son of Wharfe and Mary Burkitt.<sup>3</sup> His father Wharfe was born in about 1865 in South Elkington, Lincolnshire, and his mother, the former Mary Harper, in 1871 in Well, Yorkshire. Wharfe and Mary married in 1887<sup>4</sup> and they had three children: Thomas (born in 1888), George and Emily (born in 1894).

George's father was both a publican and a farmer. In 1891, he was the publican of the Fox and Hounds Inn in Hunton.<sup>5</sup> Ten years later the family had moved to Snape Bedale, where Wharfe was the publican of the Milbank Arms<sup>6</sup> and then, in 1911, the Castle Arms.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, George's father died at the age of 46 in 1911.<sup>8</sup> Even before his father's death, his mother was keeping a boarding house in nearby Harrogate.<sup>9</sup> George was the only child still living with his father in 1911 and he was working on his father's farm. His brother Thomas was working as a journeyman gardener and living with Thomas Warrington, a gardener foreman, at Lilleshall Gardens in Newport, Shropshire.<sup>10</sup> Emily was a scholar and living in a home run by Sarah Ann Bolland, a teacher, in Snape Bedale.<sup>11</sup>

George immigrated to Australia sometime between 1911 and 1914, when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. He enlisted on 31 December 1914 in Melbourne, where he was a labourer. He was 5' 8¼" tall and had a fair complexion, light brown eyes and brown hair. On 13 April 1915, he embarked at Melbourne on Her Majesty's Australian Transport *Wiltshire (A18)* to join the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, where he joined the 8th Battalion.

He had a disciplinary incident in July 1915 when he was charged with "disobeying Camp Standing Orders and absenting himself without leave from 16-7-15 until 12 a.m. 18-7-15. He was sentenced to 28 days of Field Punishment No. 2.

George did not spend long periods on the Front Line. On 9 August 1915, he was wounded and admitted to the 24th Casualty Clearing Station in Mudros on the small Greek island of Lemnos, with a contusion of the eye. He was discharged and rejoined his battalion on 23 August.

Four months later, he was again hospitalized, this time at No. 3 Australian General Hospital in Mudros, with pneumonia. On 11 January 1916, he was transferred to Alexandria, Egypt, and was eventually admitted to No. 1 Australian General Hospital. He was discharged on 12 February and rejoined his battalion in Serapeum, Egypt, on 11 March. Two weeks later he left Alexandria to join the British Expeditionary Force. He sailed on the *Megantic*, leaving Alexandria on 26 March 1916. Less than three months after his arrival on the Western Front, he was wounded and admitted to the 14th Field Ambulance on 25 June with shrapnel wounds to his buttock and right leg. The same day he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died. He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: II. E. 153) by Rev A. T. Wilson, who was attached to No. 1 CCCS.

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 No. 1 Canadian CCS, 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; they occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when soldiers' remains were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.<sup>12</sup>

His mother received his last possessions: letters, cards, photos, a wrist watch cover, a prayer book, a knife, a pencil, a belt and a cotton bag. During the war, she had remarried, marrying Anthony Taylor in 1915. She was living at 48 Nearcliffe Road in Manningham, Bradford, in 1917.

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>13</sup>

George's brother Thomas also served and lost his life in the Great War. He served in the 7th Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (Regimental number: 14605)<sup>14</sup> and went to France with the British Expeditionary Force on 28 September 1915.<sup>15</sup> He died on 14 July 1916 in the first battle of the Somme—less than a month after his brother.<sup>16</sup> Like his brother, he was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914–15 Star.<sup>17</sup> He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.

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<sup>1</sup> "Australia, WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 6 November 2016), entry for George Burkitt, Service number: 1709

<sup>2</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for George Burkitt, Registration district: Leyburn, Inferred county: Yorkshire North Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 657

<sup>3</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for George Burkitt, Registration district: Bedale, Sub-registration district: Masham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 4601, Folio: 15, Page: 9, Household schedule number: 59

<sup>4</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Wharfe Burkitt, Registration district: Bedale, Inferred county: Yorkshire North Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 1067

<sup>5</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Wharfe Burkitt [*sic*], Registration district: Leyburn, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 4031, Folio: 87, Page: 2

<sup>6</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for George Burkitt

<sup>7</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for George Burkill [*sic*], Registration district: Bedale, Registration district number: 538, Sub-registration district: Masham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 29402

<sup>8</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Wharfe Burkitt, Registration district: Bedale, Inferred county: Yorkshire North Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 419

<sup>9</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Mary Burkitt, Registration district: **Knaresborough**, Registration district number: 489, Sub-registration district: Harrogate, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 25915

<sup>10</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Thomas Burkitt, Registration district: Shifnal, Registration district number: 347, Sub-registration district: Shifnal, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Household schedule number: 34, Piece: 16007

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<sup>11</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Emily Burkitt, Registration district: Bedale, Registration district number: 538, Sub-registration district: Bedale, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 29388

<sup>12</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>13</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for George Burkitt

<sup>14</sup> "UK, Commonwealth War Graves, 1914–1921 and 1939–1947," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Thomas Burkitt

<sup>15</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Thomas Burkitt

<sup>16</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Burkitt, Thomas, Service No: 14605

<sup>17</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 November 2016), entry for Thomas Burkitt