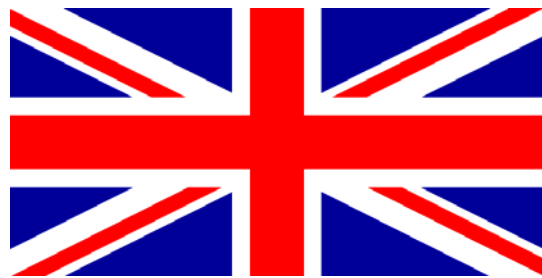


Report on the life and service of  
CORPORAL JAMES WILSON  
of the  
42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders  
The Black Watch



Born 24 June 1888  
Attested 22 October 1914  
KIA 13 July 1916  
Near Longueval, France

HIST 306

Dr. Laurie

April 24, 2007

Jamie Harrison  
Amber Baldwin  
Timothy Milligan  
Georgios Koliofotis

## The 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders or “The Black Watch”

The Black Watch, or Royal Highlanders, traces its roots back to 1724 when Irish General George Wade created six Independent Companies of Highlanders that could be counted on to be loyal to the English government, and these Scots alone were permitted to carry arms in the Highlands.<sup>1</sup> Their job was to police the Highlands and the various clans, which were prone to fighting amongst themselves.

General Wade established uniforms in an order dated May 15, 1725. “That officers commanding companies take care to provide a plaid clothing and bonnet in the Highland dress for the non-commissioned officers and soldiers belonging to their companies, the plaid of each company to be as near as they can of the same sort of colour...”<sup>2</sup> The tartan plaid that was eventually settled on would be dark blue, black and green.

The dark tartan, combined with the watchfulness of the troops, gave rise to the regimental nickname: *Am Freiceadan Dubh* – the Black Watch.<sup>3</sup> Officially, they were the Independent Highland Companies, and later the Highland Regiment of Foot, or infantry.<sup>4</sup>

In 1743, after part of the regiment mutinied to avoid service outside of Scotland, the rest of the regiment was sent to Flanders to join the allies in the War of Austrian Succession, becoming the “first kilted unit seen on the continent”.<sup>5</sup> The regiment earned its first battle honors at Fontenoy, receiving accolades from friend and foe alike.<sup>6</sup>

During the French and Indian War, the Black Watch participated in an ill-conceived frontal assault at Ft. Ticonderoga in 1758, held by the French under Montcalm. On the eve of

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Howard, “The Black Watch”, Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>6</sup> Archibald Forbes, “The Black Watch, The Record of a Historic Regiment”, (Scotpress:1985), 19-33.

battle, the King bestowed upon them the title of Royal, and the regiment was now officially The 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highland regiment.<sup>7</sup> The new 42<sup>nd</sup> furiously attacked the French breastworks, but their sacrifice was in vain as the impenetrable tangle of abatis could not be taken, with the Black Watch suffering twice the number of casualties as any other regiment in the fight.<sup>8</sup> Ft. Ticonderoga has since been reconstructed and a memorial cairn has been erected in memory of the Black Watch who fell there.<sup>9</sup>



Memorial cairn at Ft. Ticonderoga

In 1760, the Highlanders would participate in the capture of Montreal, and later be deployed in the West Indies before being stationed in Ireland after the Seven Years' War.<sup>10</sup> In 1775, having been away for over thirty years, the regiment, nearly a thousand strong, returned to Scotland, but their homecoming was short-lived with the outbreak of the American Revolution.

Landing at New York with Howe's invasion force, the Black Watch fought at Brooklyn, Bloomingdale and White Plains. In 1777 the regiment was engaged at the battle of Brandywine, and it was there that they first wore their "famous and mysterious red hackle".<sup>11</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was raised in 1779, but rather than be deployed in America, it was sent to India.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Howard, "The Black Watch", Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fort-ticonderoga.org/history/timeline1700.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Archibald Forbes, "The Black Watch, The Record of a Historic Regiment", (Scotpress:1985), 69-73, 92-95.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Howard, "The Black Watch", Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 37.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 38.

Over the next thirty years, the Black Watch would see service in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, fighting with distinction at Aboukir Bay off Alexandria before joining Wellington's Peninsula Campaign in 1809.<sup>13</sup> At Corunna in Spain, the regiment again covered itself in glory as it protected the British army's retreat with a series of reckless bayonet charges.<sup>14</sup> During the Napoleonic battles of 1812-1815, the regiment saw action at Salamanca, Nivelle, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse, Quatre Bras and Waterloo.<sup>15</sup>

Later in the century, the Black Watch fought in Egypt, Sudan, the Crimea and in the Boer War. In the First World War, 25 Battalions were raised, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was awarded the Croix de Guerre.<sup>16</sup> At Buzancy British Cemetery in France there stands a memorial to the 15th (Scottish) Division; the inscription reads "Here the glorious thistle of Scotland will flower forever among the roses of France."<sup>17</sup> In the Second World War, the Black Watch battalions fought in the Mediterranean, North Africa, Italy, Normandy, France and even Burma.<sup>18</sup> During the Korean War, the Black Watch fought with distinction at the Battle of the Hook, and in 1963 pipers from the regiment played at the funeral of President Kennedy.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, the Black Watch has served as peacekeepers in Northern Ireland and with the United Nations in the Balkans, which brings the unit back full circle to the policing duties that brought them into existence nearly 300 years ago, when it patrolled the Scottish highlands, maintaining an uneasy calm between competing clans.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 41-45.

<sup>14</sup> Archibald Forbes, "The Black Watch, The Record of a Historic Regiment", (Scotpress:1985), 223-224.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Howard, "The Black Watch", Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 50-54.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 91-99.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fylde.demon.co.uk/charles19.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Philip Howard, "The Black Watch", Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 107-122.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.theblackwatch.co.uk/newsite/history/index.html>

## James Wilson's Service with the Black Watch

With the outbreak of the First World War, The 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highlanders or “The Black Watch” was expanded to a total of 25 Battalions.<sup>1</sup> One of these new Battalions was the 8<sup>th</sup> Service Battalion, comprising part of the 26<sup>th</sup> (Highland) Brigade of the 9<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division in Lord Kitchener's New Army.<sup>2</sup> One of the volunteers for the new 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was a twenty-six year old miner from Leven in Fife named James Wilson, who attested for the Black Watch at Kirkcaldy on Thursday, October 22, 1914.<sup>3</sup> His town, Leven, is just north of Edinburgh, across the Firth of Forth. He was married to Maggie Christie Wilson, and had two children.<sup>4</sup> Wilson was mustered in at Aldershot and then sent on to training camp near Salisbury Plain with the rest of the Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Lord Sempill.<sup>5</sup>

After eight months' training, orders finally arrived for the Division to move out. The 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade deployed to France on May 10, 1915, landing in Boulogne with the honor of being the first brigade of the New Armies to reach France.<sup>6</sup> The Division billeted south of Bailleul, where it received intensive instruction in trench warfare.<sup>7</sup> On June 26, the Division was ordered to relieve the 7<sup>th</sup> Division in the line near Festubert, and the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade took its place in front line trenches for the first time on July 1.<sup>8</sup> The Division would remain in this position, which was overlooked by Germans entrenched on high ground to the east, until August 18.<sup>9</sup>

Amidst the monotony of trench life, there were occasional moments of humor to relieve the boredom. One such incident concerned Black Watch Sergeant J. McHardy, who, having hung

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Howard, “The Black Watch”, Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 91.

<sup>2</sup> John Ewing, “The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919”, (The Naval & Military Press:1921), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Leven Advertiser & Wemyss Gazette (Aug. 3, 1916) and Black Watch Depot Roll Book, 1914-15 (BWRA 0492).

<sup>4</sup> Leven Advertiser & Wemyss Gazette (Aug. 3, 1916)

<sup>5</sup> John Ewing, “The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919”, (The Naval & Military Press:1921), 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

up his kilt in the trench to dry, watched helplessly as the back blast from a shell blew it “over the top” and into no-man’s land. McHardy was forced to go without a kilt until dusk, when he was able to successfully retrieve his loincloth.<sup>10</sup>

On September 2, the Division was redeployed east of Vermelles, and it was from these trenches that the 8<sup>th</sup> Black Watch, now part of I Corps, would be first introduced to the horrors of battle.<sup>11</sup> The battle of Loos was preceded by a typically ineffective artillery barrage, which was supposed to have reduced the Germans’ strong points and create gaps in the barbed wire. Gas was also used to discomfort the enemy and inhibit their fighting efficiency.<sup>12</sup> After four days of bombardment, the infantry began its advance on September 25 at 6:30 A.M. and quickly discovered that the Germans were still in their trenches and the barbed wire remained intact.<sup>13</sup> The Battalion performed admirably, capturing the Hohenzollern Trench at the cost of 19 officers and 492 other ranks, but the gains were neither exploited nor held.<sup>14</sup>

On September 30, the ravaged 9<sup>th</sup> Division was removed from I Corps and concentrated around Bethune for rest and refitting.<sup>15</sup> It may have been after Loos that Private Wilson became Corporal Wilson, but I have been unable to confirm this. In October, the Division occupied trenches at a salient south of Zillebeke, facing German trenches that were at places as close as twenty-five yards from their own.<sup>16</sup> It was here that the 26<sup>th</sup> Brigade would spend three months freezing in mud and abject misery.

During much of January 1916 the Division was placed at rest in billets around Merris, and then moved to trenches at Ploegsteert, which turned out to be “one of the most pleasant areas

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 26-30.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Howard, “The Black Watch”, Famous Regiments series, Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, ed., (Leo Cooper Ltd:1969), 95.

<sup>15</sup> John Ewing, “The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919”, (The Naval & Military Press:1921), 61.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 64.

along the British front.”<sup>17</sup> In June the Division found itself first near Bomy, and then quickly in motion for Vaux-en-Amienois, where the level of activity indicated that a major action was about to commence.<sup>18</sup> The massive artillery bombardment that was the prelude for the Battle of the Somme began on June 24, James Wilson’s 28<sup>th</sup> birthday.

At the Battle of the Somme, the Black Watch did not take part in the initial assault of July 1, 1916 but was instead part of the reserve at Carnoy.<sup>19</sup> On the 12th, it was decided that the 9<sup>th</sup> Division would take part in the assault on Longueval.<sup>20</sup> On the 13th, the division moved up into position at the Breslau Alley Trench (taken earlier in the campaign), and on the evening of the 13th markers laid out the tapes for the attack.<sup>21</sup> The attack itself would not occur until the predawn hours of 14 July, with the units not moving up until after midnight.<sup>22</sup>

The 26th Brigade occupied the right flank for the assault, and as such, suffered from sniper fire coming from Trones Wood, which had been only partially cleared of Germans prior to the 13th.<sup>23</sup> It was on July 13 that Corporal Wilson was killed. His body was never recovered, and his named is listed on the Thiepval Memorial.

Since I have found no records of casualties taken at any time on the 13th except when the markers were laying out the tapes, I must conclude that Wilson was one of those markers killed by sniper fire from Trones Wood. If that was the case, I can fairly well narrow down the geographic area of his death to a few hundred square yards, based on maps provided by the division history (see attached map).

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>19</sup> Lt. Col C.W.E. Gordon, 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for 13 July 1916.

<sup>20</sup> John Ewing, “The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919”, (The Naval & Military Press:1921), 102.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 109-110.

<sup>22</sup> Nigel Cave, “Battleground Europe, Delville Wood”, (Leo Cooper Ltd: 2003), 53.

<sup>23</sup> John Ewing, “The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919”, (The Naval & Military Press:1921), 110.

Wilson's obituary from the Leven Advertiser & Wemyss Gazette of 3rd August 1916:

**"WINDYGATES**

**KILLED IN ACTION** – Intimation has been received by Mrs. Wilson, Maw Cottages, that her husband, Corporal James Wilson, Black Watch, had been killed in action. He took part in the great advance on the 8th, and fell on the 13th July. He worked as a miner before enlisting in September, 1914, and he left for the front in January, 1915. He was 28 years of age, and leaves a widow and two children for whom sympathy will be extended in their sad loss. His mother resides at Old schoolhouse, Leven."



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## Image Citations

Ft. Ticonderoga Memorial Cairn (page 2) - <http://www.cmana.net/castle.html>

Map of Longueval Battlefield (page 23) - John Ewing, "The History of the Ninth (Scottish) Division, 1914-1919", (The Naval & Military Press:1921)

Photograph Q 4012 (page 24) - The Photograph Archive at the Imperial War Museum

Photograph Q 4360 (page 25) - The Photograph Archive at the Imperial War Museum

### Thiepval Memorial to the Missing



Retrieved February 20, 2007, from <http://www.firstworldwar.com/today/graphics/02thiepvalmem06.jpg>

Within the Picardie region of northern France lies the small village of Thiepval. Just outside of Thiepval is the ground on which the Battle of the Somme took place during World War One. Corporal James Wilson died on that battlefield on July 13 1916, about two weeks after the British and French futilely attacked the extremely resistant Germans. Today, on a hill overlooking said field, stands a one hundred fifty feet tall memorial on forty acres of land as a dedication to Corporal Wilson and some 73,000 other missing soldiers from the lengthy Battle of the Somme.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.firstworldwar.com/today/thiepval.htm>

In 1928, a decade after the conclusion of World War One, the British Commonwealth Wargraves Commission chose to fund the construction of a memorial which would commemorate the missing soldiers that died at the Battle of the Somme from July 1, 1916 through March 20, 1918. Chosen as the chief architect was Sir Edwin Lutyens. Sir Lutyens designed several World War One memorials. Thiepval would be the largest of all British war memorials.

The memorial was completed in 1932. The Prince of Wales announced the opening of Thiepval Memorial for the Missing on July 31, 1932.<sup>2</sup> World War One veterans were initially agitated by the construction and opening of the memorial. They felt that it was a waste of time and money that could have been spent on the surviving soldiers of the war. That point may well have been true; however, as time has passed, people are grateful for the memorial and treat it with reverence.

The exact number of names listed on the memorial depends on the source. Names have been added since the construction of the monument. There are around 73,000 names engraved on the stone panels. The names are of mostly British men, but some South African men are listed as well. None of the men listed have known graves.<sup>3</sup> While the Battle of the Somme lasted from July 1916 through November 1918, over ninety percent of the names listed are of those who died from July through November of 1916.

Thiepval Memorial also includes a cemetery at its rear. The cemetery holds the graves of three hundred British casualties on the right side and three hundred French

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.firstworldwar.com/today/thiepval.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [www.thiepval.org.uk/thiepval.pdf](http://www.thiepval.org.uk/thiepval.pdf)

casualties on the left side.<sup>4</sup> Symbolic of the joint efforts of the British and the French at the Somme, the cemetery is an appropriate addition to the memorial.

Made of brick and stone, the memorial stands at 150 feet tall with a base of 123 by 140 feet. The structure dominates the landscape. It can be seen from miles around, dramatically standing out from the natural, rolling country sides of northern France. The names of the missing are engraved upon enormous panels which are found on total of sixteen piers. Visitors can look up names using numerous registers. The names are organized by regiment. James Wilson's name can be found on pier 10, face A.<sup>5</sup> He is just one of 622 Black Watch, Royal Highlanders soldiers to have gone missing at that battle.

One can locate and visit Thiepval Memorial today. Thiepval is one of thousands of French communes. It is located in the Somme department of France. Depending on the source, France has ninety-five to one hundred different departments. The departments are arranged into twenty-two or twenty-six regions; once again, this depends on the source as the number has changed over the years.<sup>6</sup> One can find Thiepval in department eighty, Somme, which is located in northeastern France in the region of Picardie, near the Somme River.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission still maintains the memorial. It maintains a number of war memorials across the globe. Funding for such memorials is provided by grants from the six member nations of the commission. These nations include the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and India.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.firstworldwar.com/today/thiepval.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/thiepval\\_memorial.htm](http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/thiepval_memorial.htm)

<sup>6</sup> [www.slowtrav.com/france/maps/regions.htm](http://www.slowtrav.com/france/maps/regions.htm)

The amount of funding each nation provides is proportional to how much space is devoted to that country's soldiers at the memorials.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the United Kingdom funds over seventy-eight percent of the money needed for Commonwealth War Graves in general.

Only slight changes have taken place at Thiepval Memorial over the years. Some names have been added. In the summer of 2001 a Visitors Center was opened. Each year on July 1<sup>st</sup> a commemorative ceremony is held at the memorial.<sup>8</sup> People continue to visit the memorial to pay respects to lost relatives or just to salute fellow countrymen. Many visitors describe it as a moving experience.

Corporal James Wilson is just one of thousands of names listed on that memorial. Those thousands of names are only those that were lost on the Allied side. While the Allies lost the Battle of the Somme to the Germans, Thiepval Memorial stands as a symbol of the extraordinary efforts of ordinary men. It commemorates their memories since their bodies were never found. The multitude of names and the sheer size of the structure suggest the great loss of human life in the Great War. Thiepval Memorial is analogous to Washington D.C.'s tomb of the Unknown Soldier, multiplied by some 73,000.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cwgc.org/content.asp?menuid=1&submenuid=7&id=7&menuname=Finance&menu=sub>

<sup>8</sup> [www.thiepval.org.uk/thiepval.pdf](http://www.thiepval.org.uk/thiepval.pdf)

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JAMES WILSON

### History of the British Commemorative Plaque

World War One was larger, longer, and deadlier than any of the Great Powers anticipated it would be in 1914. By 1916, the British government realized that the death toll was much higher than ever expected and for that reason some sort of token of thanks should be given to the families of fallen soldiers, nurses, and naval personnel. The questions that remained included what form would that token of thanks would take, how would it be produced, what would it look like, and how would it be funded?

In the years to follow, the British Commonwealth would produce approximately 1,150,000 plaques for the families of those who died in the Great War. The roots of this project found themselves in Prime Minister David Lloyd George's Parliament. Parliament birthed a committee and a sub-committee responsible for creating the war memento. The committee announced its agenda through *The Times*. On November 7, 1916 it was announced that a competition would be held to choose the design for a war memorial for the next of kin of deceased Commonwealth military men and women. It took almost a year for *The Times* to print the contest details.

The government delineated a set of guidelines for the creation of a bronze commemorative plaque.<sup>1</sup> The plaque could take on a square, rectangular, or circular shape, and had to include the phrase, "He died for freedom and honour." The plaque had to be of certain dimensions. Additionally, contestants had to be British citizens who marked their precisely scaled model with a pseudonym and mailed it to the British

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-medals/dead-penny.htm>



National Gallery by November 1, 1917. That date was soon extended to December 31, 1918. Over 800 entries were sent. A total of 300 pounds would be divided among the winners.<sup>2</sup>

*The Times* announced Edward Carter Preston as the competition winner. He won under the pseudonym, “Pyramus.”<sup>3</sup> Edward Carter Preston hailed from Liverpool and was an integral part of the cultural scene there. He produced paintings, sculptures, and in this case, medals. This particular success earned Carter Preston 250 pounds. The remaining 250 pounds were divided amongst four runner ups. Carter Preston was also rewarded by having his initials cast on each plaque, just above the paw of the lion that lay at the foreground of the plaque. His winning design was simple, yet very symbolic. It included Britannia and a lion, as well as two dolphins indicative of sea prowess. Another lion was pictured destroying an eagle, which was the symbol of Imperial Germany at that time. Around the edge of the plaque, Carter Preston had included the required line, “He died for freedom and honour.” A blank space was left for the victim’s name to be cast.

In December 1918, the casts began to be produced. There were various difficulties in producing the plaques. The biggest problem was reconciling mass production and the originality of the artwork. The first plaques were produced in Acton, England. Production was soon moved to Liverpool’s Woolwich Arsenal.<sup>4</sup> It was there that the bulk of the 1,150,000 plaques were produced. Only the families of those Brits who died between

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<sup>2</sup> <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.992/viewpage/7>

<sup>3</sup> <http://militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/deadmanspenny.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.992/viewpage/7>

August 4, 1914 and January 10, 1920 were given plaques. The first plaques were sent to Australia in 1922.

It was rumored that plaque production would be funded by German war reparations; however, it was the British government that took on the majority of the cost as history reveals that German war reparations were not forthcoming. The plaques were mailed to the victims' next of kin in cardboard that was folded into the form of an envelope. With the plaque was mailed a 27x17cm scroll as well as a short, mass produced message from Buckingham Palace, "signed" by King George V. If the soldier had merited any particular medals, those were presented to the next of kind as well. The scroll of parchment included the rank and services of the victim, but the plaque did not.<sup>5</sup> The lack of any ranks or honors on the plaques was meant to symbolize that each sacrifice was equally significant and each serviceman was equally appreciated.

The troops came to refer to the commemorative plaques as the "dead man's penny" or "blood pennies". A big problem with the pennies was that production ceased before each family was able to receive their penny. This angered those who were left out. On the other hand, some families sent their pennies back. They felt that a disk of bronze gunmetal was not worth the sacrifice of their kin's life and that it was a disgrace to represent their loved one's life with something that resembled a mere penny. Despite a small negative reaction, most families appreciated the gesture of the government. Some framed their plaques. It was even common to have little shrines, within the household, devoted to a passed on loved one. Many would scrub the plaques to keep them clean. Today a good number of British Commemorative Plaques can be found in museums and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/deadmanspenny.aspx>

archives. Some are in the hands of medal collector, a commemorative plaque along with a mint scroll and possibly some additional medals form the perfect collectors set. Many remain in families as heirlooms.<sup>6</sup> One certainty is the British government had honest intentions and did not mean to offend any families; it only meant to show gratitude and remorse for the grossly unexpected number of war related deaths.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.992/viewpage/7>

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### **The Badge of the Black Watch**

The badge of The Black Watch is one steeped in meaning and tradition, truly representative of Scottish tradition. The majority of the imagery comes from The

From: *The British Army in Scotland*

Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, a Scottish order of Chivalry (*ODM of the United Kingdom*),

formerly instituted by James VII in 1687 (*Order of the Thistle*).

The background of a silver St. Andrew's cross with rays is taken directly from the star of the Order of the Thistle (*Order of the Thistle*), though the thistle usually depicted in the center of the star is many thistles, shaped into a wreath. This only further emphasizes the Scottish quality of the badge, as the thistle is a symbol for Scotland (*Scotland*). The thistle is the embodiment of the Black Watch motto, as the story goes several Scottish warriors were asleep in their encampment as a band of Viking warriors were approaching stealthily upon the unsuspecting Scots<sup>1</sup>. Luckily for the Scots one of the Viking warriors accidentally stepped onto a thistle plant with his bare feet causing the warrior to cry out, hence alerting the Scots to the Vikings approach and the rest is history<sup>2</sup>. From that point on the thistle became known as the Guardian Thistle<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Thistle*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://www.visitscotland.com/aboutscotland/UniquelyScottish/Thistle>

<sup>2</sup> *The Thistle*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://www.visitscotland.com/aboutscotland/UniquelyScottish/Thistle>

At the top of the badge is placed a crown, a sign of the Monarchy, for the regiment is officially called “The Black Watch, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland” (*3 Scots*) and thus falls under the Crown. In the center of the badge is St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, holding his cross in its traditional position (*Saltire*), white on a background of blue, echoing the Scottish flag (*Flag of Scotland*). This imagery is clearly taken from the badge of the Order of the Thistle (*Order of the Thistle*), complete with the motto “Nemo Me Impune Lacesset”, a variation of “Nemo Me Impune Lacessit” which translates to “No one provokes me with impunity”, the official motto of the Scottish monarch (*Nemo Me Impune Lacessit*).

Below the badge is an image of a Sphinx, which commemorates the 1801 Battle of Alexandria, Egypt. They succeeded in capturing the colour of Napoleon’s legions stationed in Alexandria<sup>4</sup>. With this stunning success, the Black Watch was given the honor of placing a Sphinx with the word Egypt underneath it<sup>5</sup>.

This lowest emblem is the only piece of imagery on the badge specifically referring to a moment in the regiment's history, as most others are clear signs and symbols of Scotland, particularly Scottish chivalry, with one reference to the Crown. It is, on the whole, a very meaningful badge for a Scottish regiment, full of tradition and glory.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Thistle*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://www.visitscotland.com/aboutscotland/UniquelyScottish/Thistle>

<sup>4</sup> *The Black Watch, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland: Napoleonic Wars*. (2005, September 23). Retrieved April 14, 2007, from [http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic\\_wars.htm](http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic_wars.htm)

<sup>5</sup> *The Black Watch, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland: Napoleonic Wars*. (2005, September 23). Retrieved April 14, 2007, from [http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic\\_wars.htm](http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic_wars.htm)



From: *ODM of the United Kingdom*

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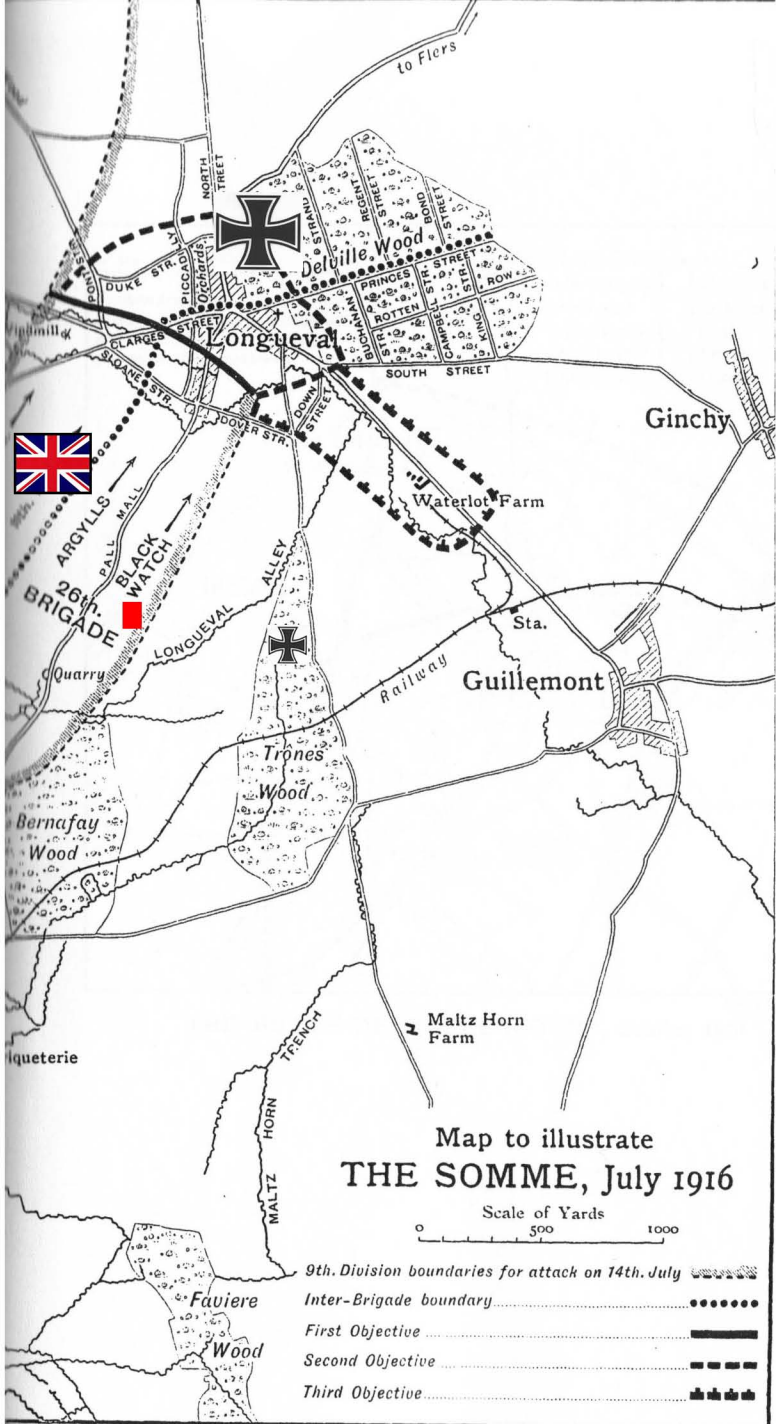
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[http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic\\_wars.htm](http://www.army.mod.uk/blackwatch/history/napoleonic_wars.htm)



Suspected site of Corporal James Wilson's death, July 13, 1916 →



## Map to illustrate THE SOMME, July 1916

Scale of Yards  
0 500 1000

- 9th. Division boundaries for attack on 14th. July
- Inter-Brigade boundary
- First Objective
- Second Objective
- Third Objective








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You are on page **1** of **1** for 1 records

Surname	First Name	Rank / Appointment	Service Number	Unit	Cemetery / Memorial	Grave Photo Held	Force Nationality
<u>Wilson</u>	James	Corporal	S/6278	8th Battalion Black Watch (Royal Highlanders).	Thiepval Memorial	Yes	

1



Commemorated at: Thiepval Memorial, France.

**British**

Corporal James Wilson

**Casualty Details**

**Unit:** 8th Battalion Black Watch (Royal Highlanders).

**Service:** Army

**Service Number:** S/6278

**Force Nationality:** British Forces

**Rank/Appointment:** Corporal

**Commemorated at:** Thiepval Memorial

**Locality:** Somme

**Country:** France

**Other Details:** 13th July 1916. Age 27. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson late of Old School House Leven Fifeshire; husband of Maggie Christie Wilson of 8 Cameron Cottages Maw Windygates Fifeshire. Pier and Face 10 A

**Medals & Awards** (where known):



British War Medal Victory Medal

**To learn more about medals and awards** [click here](#)

Photo(s) by Volunteer: Richard Howman & Steve Rogers

