



Vincent Wilkinson
Guardsman
2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards
Service no. **14387**

Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
26/10/1888	15 Sept 1916	27

Background

Vincent Wilkinson was from Radford in Nottingham. His father died when he was an infant. The 1891 Census finds the family – his mother, Amie Hannah Wilkinson, a charwoman, his grandmother, Frances Langsdale and older brother Frank (born 1883), at 5 Parrs Yard, Radford. They are still there in 1901.

By 1911, Vincent had joined the Grenadier Guards and was living in Blenheim Barracks in Farnborough, Hampshire. His mother, Hannah (52), was living with Frank in St Peter's Street, Radford. She was now working in a hosiery factory and Frank (28) was a coal miner. Grandmother Frances Langsdale died in 1906. Hannah's 1911 census return shows she had 5 children, 3 of whom had died.

Shortly after the census, Vincent left the Guards and returned to Nottinghamshire. On 1st July 1912 he joined the Nottinghamshire County Police at 22 yrs 8 months of age. At 5' 9" tall he was 3" too short to be eligible for the City Police. He was single. PC 227 Vincent Wilkinson progressed from a Grade 3 Constable on his appointment to Grade 2 (May 1913) and Grade 1 (June 1914). He served in Nottingham (either West Bridgford or Carlton) and Collingham.

His Police record describes him as having blue eyes, light brown hair with a fresh complexion, no next of kin is recorded, although his mother and brother were still living.

Military History

The Grenadier Guards

Raised: 1658 as the 1st or Grenadier Regiment of Footguards

The Grenadier Guards are the premier regiment of infantry in the British Army because of their being one of the Sovereign's Guards, and the first of those Guards. The Grenadiers, Coldstream and the Scots Guards are the oldest of the 5 Guards regiments and date back to the mid-17th century.

1914-1918

In 1915 the élite Grenadier Guards were reformed as the Guards Division. By August 1915 there were four battalions of Grenadiers on the Western front where they remained for the rest of the war. By the end the Regiment had suffered 11,915 casualties of which 203 Officers and 4,508 Other Ranks were dead, seven VCs had been won and 34 Battle Honours awarded.¹



Cap badge of the Grenadier Guards.
The motif represents an exploding grenade c/o British Empire.co.uk

Guardsman Vincent Wilkinson

Being a reservist Vincent would have received a mobilisation telegram, at the outbreak of the war, requiring him to report to Chelsea Barracks. His job as a policeman, a reserved occupation, meant he could have remained in Nottinghamshire County Police. However, he re-joined the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards on 4th August 1914.

The 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards landed at Le Havre on 15th August 1914 as part of the British Expeditionary Force. They saw action at Mons and the subsequent retreat, the battle of the Marne, the first battle of Ypres and various operations during the Winter of 1914 – 15. In 1915 they were in action at Aubers and Loos. 1916 saw them on The Somme.

Ginchy September 15th 1916

The following information is taken from 'The Grenadier Guards' by Charlie Griffin²

'On the 15th September the 2nd Battalion was in the initial advance near Ginchy with three battalions of the Coldstreams³ who gained so much of a reputation in this attack. The battalion under the command of Lt-Col de Crespigny was in support of the Coldstreams with their right flank on the Ginchy-Lesboeufs road. Their advance was made through heavy rifle fire and a constant barrage of heavy shells, and when they reached the enemy trenches they found them in the full control of the enemy, because the Coldstreams had lost direction and gone too far to the left. They had to form in line for the attack on the German trenches and at this time had no artillery support. The division on their right had failed so that flank was

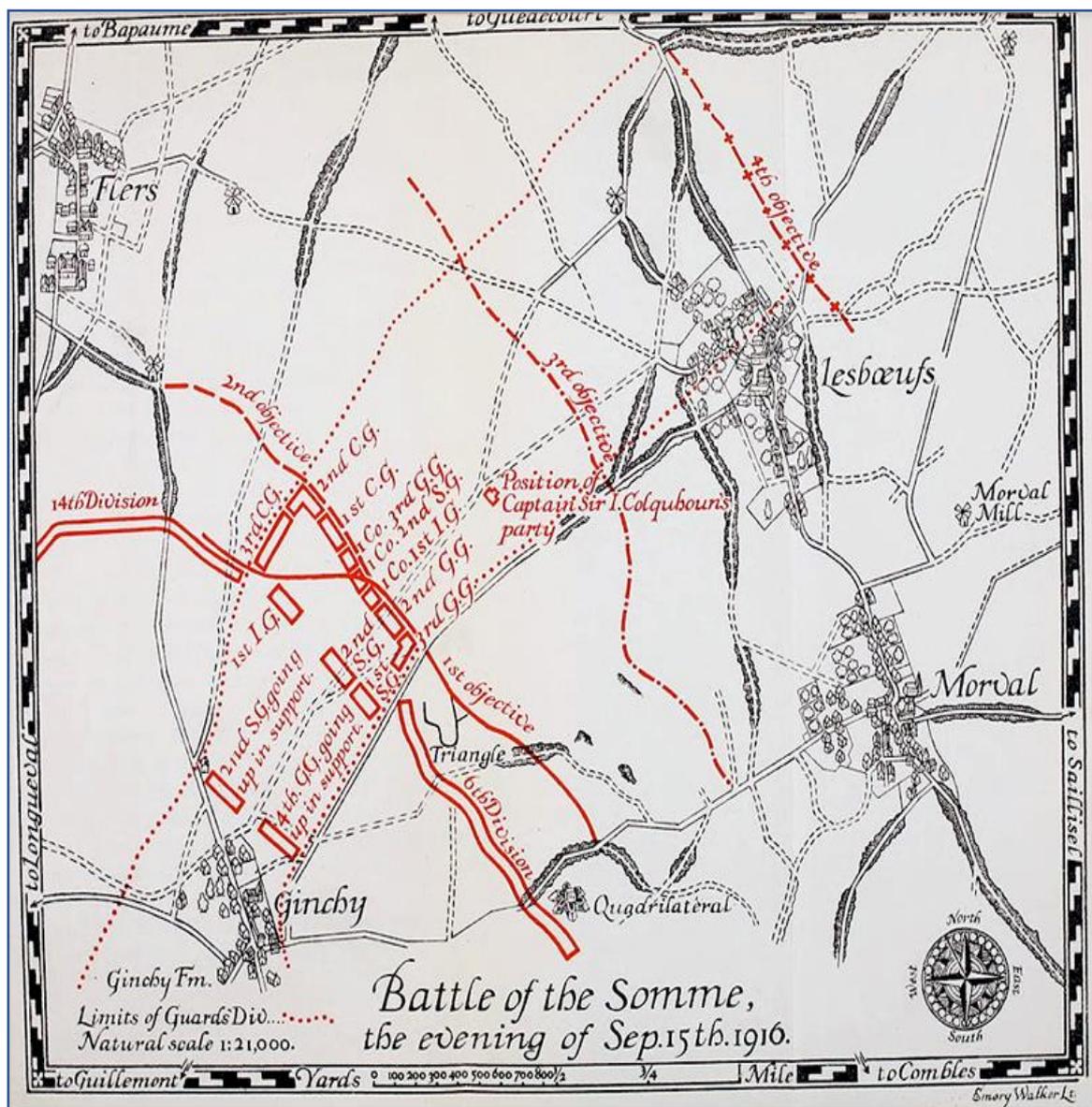
¹ <https://www.naval-military-press.com/product/the-grenadier-guards-in-the-great-war-1914-1918/>

² <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyunits/britishinfantry/grenadier.htm>

³ Collingham's T L C Curtis was a lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards during WW1. He would later rise to the rank of Major.

exposed, and a gap had become apparent on the left so that flank also was in danger. Machine-gun sections were sent out to cover these gaps while the centre rushed the trench in front with bayonets. Once in the trench they were threatened by German bombers but Sergeant-Major J Norton led a bayonet charge against them. However, the attack was beginning to fail and the battalion was forced back. At this point Captain G C FitzHarcourt-Vernon and Captain the Hon W R Bailey, who was armed with an automatic pistol, led another bayonet charge over the top of the trench and overcame the enemy bombers, killing many and taking others prisoner. The first objective had been achieved by the 2nd Battalion with one of their companies having also reached the second along with other Guards units. The casualties suffered by the battalion were 108 killed and 235 wounded.'

Guardsman V. Wilkinson was one of the 108 killed in action.



The map (above) is taken from Sir Frederick Ponsonby's *History of the Grenadier Guards in the Great War* published 1920

With thanks to Jeremy Lodge for his contribution to Guardsman Wilkinson's profile 2014

References:

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- 🕒 www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/821821/WILKINSON,%20VINCENT Accessed 10/08/2014

- 🕒 www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour/People/Details/11723 Accessed 10/08/2014
- 🕒 Personal Communication with Tim Hope. August 2014

Additions 2018:

Ancestry.co.uk (Census returns)

British Empire.co.uk: <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/> (cap badge image and info) Do check out the excellent Grenadier Guards section by C. Griffin
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyunits/britishinfantry/grenadier.htm>

With thanks to Malcolm Barnard for his photograph of the Thiepval Memorial

14/4/2018

