

FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE
BRAMHALL GROUP
NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2008

Is your name wood and are you related to
Private Wilfred wood v.c.?



Left: Private Wilfred Wood just after the investiture of his Victoria Cross by King George V at Buckingham Palace in December 1918. Right: Wilfred Wood, as an engine driver, in the cab of the steam locomotive of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway which bore his name.

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Extract from the

STOCKPORT ADVERTISER

December 13th 1918

The pride of Hazel Grove, which was always to be reckoned with among its noted characteristics, has been very much stirred by the news which has official confirmation, that one of its lads has won the Victoria Cross.

One of the most gallant feats of the war has been performed by Private Wilfred Wood, 10th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, whose home is at 52, Chester Road, Hazel Grove. His mother, Mrs. Daniels had a telegram on Thursday from Italy, stating that he had been awarded the V.C.

The award had already been announced in the newspapers, but no address was given except Stockport and it took a little time to establish the identity of the hero

The official record in the supplement of the "London Gazette" dated November 27th, 1918, stated that the V.C. has been awarded to Private Wilfred Wood, is as follows:

No. 59812 Pte, Wilfred Wood, 10th Battn. Northumberland: Fusiliers (Stockport). For most conspicuous bravery and initiative on 28 October 1918, during the battle of Vittorio Veneto, near Casa Vana, Italy, when a unit on the right flank having been held up by hostile machine-guns and snipers, 59812 Private Wood, on his own initiative, worked forward with his Lewis Gun, enfiladed the enemy machine-gun nest, and caused 140 of the enemy to surrender. The advance was continued till a hidden machine-gun opened fire at point blank range. Without a moments hesitation Private Wood charged the machine-gun, firing his Lewis Gun from the hip at the same time. He killed the machine-gun crew, and without further orders pushed on and enfiladed a ditch from which three officers and 160 men subsequently surrendered.*

The conspicuous valour and initiative of this gallant soldier in the face of intense rifle and machine-gunfire was beyond all praise.

*(*For those, including myself, who are not familiar with military terminology, I made enquires and was informed that enfiladed means that a soldier crawls forward until he is alongside an enemy trench and has a clear field of fire along the trench. He is then able to spray the area with machine gun fire until the enemy, as they have no cover, either surrenders or are killed. To be able to do this not once but three times in succession takes a tremendous amount of courage as was acknowledged by the award of the V.C. – Editor)*

WELL KNOWN AT HAZEL GROVE.

Private Wilfred Wood is 21 years of age. He was born in Adcroft Street, Stockport and has lived practically all his life at Hazel Grove, his parents and relatives being well known and respected Grove people. His grandmother was the licensee of the White Hart Hotel, Hazel Grove, for about 40 years and his aunt now resides with her husband Mr. James Birch, the present licensee at the same house. He has two younger brothers, one of whom, Private James Henry Wood, is now serving in the Army in Ireland, and the other is 15 years of age. His stepfather Mr. Daniels is also well known in the district.

He went to the Norbury Church School, where his headmaster, Mr. Lockett, held a high opinion of him. He was also a regular member of the congregation at the Norbury Church, and was a popular member of the Norbury Football Club.

He was employed as a fireman at the Edgeley sheds on the London and North Western Railway, and 17 months ago he, and two of his close friends in the sheds, joined the Army all three going into the Northumberland Fusiliers. They trained at Oswestry and then went to France where, for a short time Private Wood, served as a stretcher bearer, a job he did not care about.

His battalion was one of the first to go to Italy after the Italian disaster (*Caperetto - Editor*).

On October 27th one of his pals, Richard Downs was killed. The day after Private Wood performed the great act of gallantry for which he has gained the V.C. The death of his friend was a spur to him against the enemy. That is the opinion among those who knew them both at the Edgeley sheds. Only Private Wood's fiancée, Miss Bessie Mitchell, of Toronto Street, Heaviley knew, among his friends over here, that he had done anything out of the ordinary. To her he wrote, that he thought that he had been recommended for the V.C., but he was not sure about it, and he asked her to say nothing about it. His mother knew nothing until she received the telegram. "I never thought he had it in him," was his mother's proud comment to our

representative this morning. "He was always so quiet, and when he comes home I don't think He will say anything about it."

CAME THROUGH WITHOUT A SCRATCH.

In a recent letter to his mother he wrote that he had thanked the Lord many a time that he had come through it all without a scratch, and that he hoped to be home at Christmas, hi reply his mother, who had told him that that they had put flags out in Hazel Grove to celebrate the peace, he wrote, "They will perhaps put the flags out when I come home," but still there was no mention of what he had done. He also wrote to his aunt that it was surprising how the chaps kept their spirits up, and he added, "I don't think we shall be long before we are all home."

Mrs. Daniels put out a flag from the bedroom window to celebrate her son's great honour, and the neighbours have called to congratulate her and talk over Wilfred's great deeds. The people in the village who knew the gallant soldier are also rejoicing| and there is reflected glory in Hazel Grove itself.

Additional notes

(As with any Newspaper report, even today, there are a number of errors in the above report. We have therefore attempted to make corrections and provide additional information below.)

Wilfred Wood was born in Adcroft Street, Stockport, on 2nd February 1897 and began his working life at Christy and Co hat manufacturers in Stockport.

On 15 June 1914, just after the death of his father, he started work as an engine cleaner for the London and North Western Railway at Edgeley Sheds, Stockport.

A short while after he met Bessie Mitchell, a Stockport tram conductress, and later, they became engaged to be married.

Towards the end of 1916 he and two friends joined the army together, and Wilfred entered the Cheshire Regiment. He trained as a stretcher-bearer at Oswestry, but he did not like it, so he transferred to the 10th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Wilfred received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace, in December 1918 and also received the British War and the Victory Medals. A large crowd of people met him at Stockport Station and a procession, headed by the Hazel Grove Silver Band marched to Mechanics Institute where he was given a civic reception.

Private Wood was demobilised in December 1918 at Manchester, and returned to his work with the LNWR at Edgeley Sheds, being promoted to fireman on 22 May 1919.

He married Bessie at St George's Church, Stockport, in July 1919 and they had a son, who worked for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, later British Railways, like his father. Wilf became a 'passed fireman' on 28 May 1935, and a driver at Newton Heath, Manchester on 8 June 1936.

Wilfred attended the 1920 and 1929 VC's dinners. He received the 1936 and 1953 Coronation Medals, and Defence Medal for service in the 2nd World War.

Like Ernest Sykes VC and Jock Christie VC, the LNWR named a 'Claughton' class locomotive after him. When the LMS rebuilt the engine as a 'Patriot' class, number 5536 (British Rail No 45536), the name was also transferred.

Wilf Wood retired from the railway as a supervisor at Longsight Sheds, Manchester, on 27 August 1960. The locomotive itself was withdrawn from service in 1962.

In 1976 Mr Wood was informed that a nameplate was in a Newcastle museum and he travelled to Newcastle to retrieve it.

On 28 October 1976, a group of children from his old school were invited to his home, where he presented the nameplate to them. *(When the School closed where did it go to? - Editor)*

The second nameplate, from the other side of the locomotive, is currently given pride of place at Northumberland Fusiliers Museum, at Alnwick Castle.

His name appears on the LNWR Roll of Honour and, in 1977, he received the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Wilfred Wood died at his home in Butley Street, Hazel Grove, on 3 January 1982, one month before his eighty-fifth birthday, and he was cremated at Stockport Crematorium on 8 January 1982.

The Editor would like to thank the Staff of Stockport Heritage Library for their assistance with the compilation of the above article.

The preceding article was put together from a basic idea and a couple of very enjoyable hours at Stockport Heritage Library. If you would like to see more would YOU please consider producing a short article along similar lines for the Newsletter –The Editor

useful notes and websites

WEBSITES & THE CENSUSES

www.ancestry.com & its sister site www.ancestry.co.uk

Both have all the English & Welsh Censuses from 1841 to 1901. Whilst these are essentially pay sites, Stockport Libraries offer free access to library members, as do various other Library Services, and access is also available at the Alderley Edge Research Centre.

www.freecen.rootsweb.com

This is a free site, aiming to make available all censuses, including the Scottish records. Updates take place every month.

www.familysearch.org

The LDS site has transcriptions of the 1881 Census for England & Wales

www.findmypast.com

Another pay site, which is adding to its records on a continuous basis; it may be worthwhile subscribing to this site, to receive email updates.

www.findmypast.com

It is worth noting that the National Archives will, in 2009, be releasing an edited version of the 1911 Census through this site but a fee will be required to access it.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE FAMILY HISTORY SITE?

If you do, why not share through our Newsletter – please let Eric & Sue know!

& FINALLY

Your Assistant Editor Sue Harlin, whose family details are on the LEGACY program, would like to exchange notes with any one who has any experience of using this software with a view to getting more from it, if possible.

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

I am very aware that I have a difficult act to follow! Peter Greenwood was our Group Leader for 9 years, taking up the post at the formation of the Group and has seen membership grow from around 30. I would like to welcome Eric & Sue Harlin to our Committee; they have volunteered to edit our Newsletter, replacing Brian Siddons, who has done such a good job for the last three years. Any suggestions or contributions should be addressed to them. - *Pete Roberts.*

Library Notes

by
Group Librarian - Jim France

The books on display at the meetings are our library stock. Items can be freely borrowed from the library at the meeting and returned at the next meeting. A full list of the contents of our library is shown on the BFH Group website.

The following items have been added to the library since the last newsletter

BOOKS

'The Unitarians - A short History' by Leonard Smith.

'A Guide to the Registration Districts of Manchester' by John A. Coupe.

CDs

Contact Jim at any meeting.

Your New Committee for 2008/2009

Group Leader	Pete Roberts
Deputy Group Leader & Research Adviser	Andrew Moilliet
Hon. Treasurer	Diana Moilliet
Minutes Secretary	Aileen Scoltock
Group Librarian	Jim France
Newsletter Editor	Eric Harlin
Assistant Editor	Sue Harlin
Committee member	Peter Greenwood
Committee member	Susan Bickley
Committee member	Peter Whitehead

Should you wish to communicate with any member of the Committee in the first instance please contact the Group Leader Mr Pete Roberts.

Tel: 0161-440-0488 or E-mail: bramhall@fhsc.org.uk

Future Meeting Dates for Your Diary

November 2008 – JUNE 2009

2008

13 th November	Post 1858 Wills and Probate	Paul A Burch - Manchester Probate Registrar
11 th December	Christmas Social Evening and Quiz Night	

2009

8 th January	UK BMD.	Ian Hartas
12 th February	Tracing the history of your house.	Dr. Mike Nevell
12 th March	Lady Killers	Alan Hayhurst
9 th April	Epidemics	Dr. John Chamberlain
14 th May	Heraldry	Alan Bacon
11 th June	Paleography	Jan Craig

The Group meets on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are in the main hall at the Bramhall United Reformed Church, on the corner of Robins Lane and Bramhall Lane South, at 7.30 p.m. Admission costs £1 towards expenses - Visitors are very welcome.

Those of you who attend on a regular basis will know that we “make some time” at the end of the meetings to offer refreshments, and to allow people to discuss their ancestral research problems with one another, in the hope that they can sort some of them out.

Andrew Moilliet, as the Group's Research Adviser, is ready to help anyone who has come up against a "brick wall" or who just doesn't know where to begin

We would like to hear any suggestions for subjects for future talks. Please have a word with any of the members of the committee at the meetings or contact Pete Roberts.

Our website

The Bramhall Family History Group website is now active at: www.bramhallfamilyhistory.com

A full list of the contents of our library is shown on this website.

STOP PRESS - Cheadle Hulme School Archives

A visit to Cheadle Hulme School Archives has been arranged for Tuesday afternoon, November 18th at 2 pm. Would anyone who is interested please contact, Peter Greenwood, telephone 0161-439-6210.