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| **Name** | **GEORGE EDWARD COWINGS** |
| **Birth** | 1885 West Ryton Durham |
| **Enlistment/Occupation** | Enlisted at Alnwick/Colliery labourer |
| **Death, date, location** | 07/06/1917  Died of wounds  France & Flanders |
| **Age** | 32 |
| **Unit, rank, service no:** | 23/1592  Private  Northumberland Fusiliers  22nd Battalion (Tyneside Scottish) |
| **Family** | The village blacksmith in Wylam who reputedly helped with repairs to the historic Wylam colliery locomotives during their working lives was George Cowings (1819-1877). He also served as a village butcher and publican of the Black Bull Inn at times during his life in Wylam. Among his children were two sons George born 1851 and Alfred born 1856. Both sons and their respective wives Dorothy Ann Davidson and Hannah Bagnall produced sons in 1884/1885 and both named them George. In the 1880’s/1890’s these two sons and their families lived within a few hundred yards of each other in the vicinity of Gibson cottages, Gibson Terrace in the centre of Barmoor, Ryton. The two cousins, both named George, both of similar age and living in same locality presented some challenge to the research of the names on the Wylam War memorials. In addition the only recorded casualty of that name on the CWGC records is listed as George Edward Cowing spelt without the‘s’. Fortunately from the 1891, 1901 and 1911 census returns we know that the family definitely spelt their name as Cowings with an‘s’. In addition the name on Wylam War memorial is George Cowings with an‘s’. The census returns also provided the solution to the question ‘Which George Cowings?’ Each George had a middle name; George son of George had a second name Edward while George son of Alfred had a second name Alfred.  It became evident that the George Edward Cowing present in the CWGC records and the only fatality recorded under the name Cowing in WW I was in fact George Edward Cowings from 3 Gibson’s Terrace, Ryton.  The 1891 census lists George Cowings 40, a colliery labourer from Wylam, his wife Dorothy Ann 44 (nee Davidson) from Chester le Street & their children were Lily Alice 15, Frederick A. 9, George Edward 6 all scholars plus Ralph 5 and Robert 5 months, plus a lodger.  At the next census in 1901 the family are still in Gibson’s Terrace, but with two more sons Alfred 8 and Gladstone 6. Of the elder sons Frederick 19 is now working as a general cart man and George Edward is working as a screen miner like his father at one of the local pits.  By the 1911 census father George had died and George Edward 26 and Ralph 25 are both colliery labourers and Gladstone 16 is a miner driver. They are living at home with their widowed mother and a niece Isabella Kyle 9, brother Alfred 18, is living and working away.  Following the outbreak of war three of the Cowings brothers George Edward, Alfred and Gladstone enlisted and served in France and Flanders.  George Edward enlisted early in the war at Alnwick (date to find) joining the 22nd (service) Battalion (Tyneside Scottish) Northumberland Fusiliers. He died of his wounds 7th June 1917.  **George Edward’s brothers:-**  Brother Gladstone Cowings enlisted 8th May 1915, aged 20, joining the 3/9th Durham Light Infantry, service no: 4322 he gave 3 Gibson Terrace, Emma Vale, Ryton as his address. Gladstone served at Home 08/04/1915-07/04/1916 and was then posted to France 08/04/1916. He survived the war being returned from Cologne to the UK 20th April 1919 he was aged 24 on demobilisation.  Brother Alfred Cowings aged 22 enlisted 24th January 1916 he gave his occupation as horseman on farm, his address Cooper House Farm, Lansley (probably Lamesley). His sister Lily Kyle acted as witness to his enlistment and gave her address as 3 Gibson Terrace, Emma Vale. Alfred became a driver in the Royal Field Artillery, service no: 205262. He was posted to France 17th February 1917 and must have been awaiting demobilisation in 1919 when he was involved in an incident which led to him being awarded the Order of the British Empire Medal.  The service records show that on 1st February 1919 Alfred was billeted on a family in France and the adult members of the family went out that evening. During their absence a daughter took on the task of re-filling the oil lamps in the house and this resulted in an explosion and fire. Alfred sustained serious burns while rescuing the children of the house from the fire. He was repatriated to England on 13th February and awarded the O.B.E. 20th April 1920. (O.B.E. recorded on Medal Rolls) |
| **Battalion War Diary 22nd Battalion (Tyneside Scottish) Northumberland Fusiliers** | George is listed as having died of his wounds and there is no real telling when and where he sustained those wounds. However, the 22nd Battalion was involved in some heavy fighting in the first weeks of June and it could well be this was where and when George Edward sustained his fatal wounds.  The 22nd. Battalion War Diary for that first week in June 1917 shows the battalion in bivouac at **St.** **Nicholas, Arras** and at 8.00pm on 4th June they are moved off to trenches south of **Gavrelle** and occupying battle positions for an advance on **Greenland Hill**. The battalion has the 20th Bn. & 21st Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers with them on either flank.  The War Diary goes on to describe the fighting that took place over the next few days 5th-7th June on **Western Slope of Greenland Hill** aimed at capturing German held trenches coded Charlie, Cuthbert, Cod, Curlt . Greenland Hill is an area of high ground close to Gavrelle, Rouex, and Plouvain providing a commanding position that was a key feature in the battles of Arras 1917 .The fighting was severe and the casualties heavy on the night of 7th June. It might have been that George was one of these casualties.  Casualties for period 4th to 22nd June 1917 as recorded in War Diary:-  **Killed**  2/Lt. W.K. Simpson  Capt. T.M. Waugh  8 Other Ranks.  **Died of wounds**  6 Other Ranks  **Wounded**  174 Other Ranks  **Gassed**  2/Lt. A.W.D. Mark  **Missing**  80 Other Ranks + 2/Lt H. McDonald  **Missing believed killed**  Lt.Col. Spencer Acklam |
| **Battalion** | **22nd (Service) Battalion (3rd Tyneside Scottish)** Formed at Newcastle, 5 November 1914, by the Lord Mayor and City.. June 1915: came under orders of 102nd Brigade, 34th Division. Landed in France in January 1916. 17 May 1918: reduced to cadre strength; returned to England 18 June 1918 with the 16th (Irish) Division. 18 June 1918: absorbed new 38th Bn, and then attached to 48th Brigade, 16th Division.  Landed in France in July 1918. |
| **War Memorials** | IV. F. 41.  DUISANS BRITISH CEMETERY, ETRUN  Also commemorated in:-  War memorial Plaque St.Oswin’s church, Wylam  War Memorial Monument, Village Green,Wylam  Ryton War Memorial, Station Bank, Ryton. |
| **Comments** |  |
| **Sources** | UK Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919 ancestry  British Army WWI Service Records 1914-1920  Medal Rolls  Commonwealth War Graves Commission  1891/1901 &1911 Census.  War Diary 22nd Bn (Tyneside Scottish) Northumberland Fusiliers, Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland, Alnwick. |