



Private

# Joseph Benison

20742, 10th (Service) Bn., The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)  
who died on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1916, aged 22

*Remembered with Honour*

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials

**Thiepval Memorial** Pier and Face 4 D

**JOSEPH BENISON** was born at 68, Barrow Hill in 1893, the son of Joseph Benison Snr and his wife Elizabeth; half-brother of Beatrice (1881) and brother of Sarah (1885), Mary Ann (1887), Luke (1890), Elizabeth (1892), Hannah (1894) and Alice (1896).

Joseph Snr originally hailed from Leicestershire and his wife from Northumberland. He was employed by the Staveley Coal and Iron Company as a coal hewer in a mine, and later as a stallman.

Young Joseph would have attended the Staveley Works School at Barrow Hill and was well known in the village as “quite a lad as a newsagent for Sunday papers”. The family had moved to a block cottage at 179, Barrow Hill by 1911, when Joseph, aged 17, was working as a core-turner for pipe founders at Staveley Works whilst his brother, Luke, worked as a coalminer. Also living with the family were Joseph’s 85 year old grandfather, Luke Benison, and his sister Beatrice with her baby.

Joseph was employed at Ireland Colliery when he enlisted at Staveley and joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn., The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) as a Private in June 1915. The Battalion had been raised at Hamilton in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's 2nd New Army and joined 46th Brigade in the 15th (Scottish) Division. They proceeded to France, landing at Boulogne in 1915 and saw action at the Battle of Loos.

Joseph joined them on 7<sup>th</sup> October and had been “out there almost a year” when the Battle of Flers-Courcelette began on the morning of Friday September 15<sup>th</sup> 1916.



*A Mark I tank on the Somme Battlefield,  
September, 1916*

Following an intense artillery bombardment, the advance began in mist and smoke. The 15th Scottish Division attacked Martinpuich, helped by a single tank. By early afternoon the 15th Division were in possession of the village and at 3pm the troops had taken over the remaining ruins of the village which had been virtually flattened before the battle began.

The battle was the third main and final general offensive mounted by the British Army



during the Battle of the Somme. The battle is significant for the first use of the tank in warfare. It also marked the debut of the Canadian and New Zealand Divisions on the Somme battlefield.

The village is south of Le Sars, west of Flers and north west of High Wood. It was a strongly fortified village in the German defences and, according to H. P. Robinson in his book, *"The Turning Point"*, was the hinge and key of the whole German front.

The attack had met unexpectedly fierce resistance and losses were catastrophic. Joseph was initially reported wounded and his parents faced an anxious few weeks waiting for information. His cousin George Henry had been killed in April fighting with the 17<sup>th</sup> Bn., Sherwood Foresters and his cousin James, who was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn., Lincolnshire Regiment, had died in July. Cousins Jabes, William and Frank were also serving with the Armed Forces.

Eventually, the sad news came that Joseph had been killed in action on 15th September 1916, in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette on the Somme. He was 22 years old and, according to a friend, Private James Smith of Grassmoor, *"Joe didn't die a shirker. He died fighting for his mother and his home. He was always ready to do his share in everything and you can rest contented that he put a good many out before they got him. He always used to say to us that he did not mind being on the gun as long as there was plenty of ammunition....."*

Joseph Benison is remembered with honour on the Thiepval Memorial (*Pier and Face 4 D*) and was posthumously awarded the 1914-15 Star, the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

*Researched and written by Ann Lucas as part of the Barrow Hill: A Community Remembers project*

**Sources include:**

1. *England Census 1891-1911*
2. *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915*
3. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
4. *British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914-1920*
5. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
6. *Derbyshire Times Newspaper*
7. *"The Turning Point"*  
H.P.Robinson
8. *1914-1918.invisionzone.com*

