

Private



# Arthur Loomes

28268, 12th Bn., West Yorkshire Regiment  
(Prince of Wales's Own) who died on 16  
August 1916, aged 22

## Remembered with Honour

Barrow Hill and Staveley Memorials  
Flatiron Copse Cemetery, Mametz (III. H. 11)

Mary Eccles and Leicestershire born coal miner Thomas Loomes had married in 1878 and made their home with his father at the Brushes, in the Parish of St Bartholomew, Whittington. Their children, daughters Elizabeth and Annie, and sons, William, Robert and Thomas were all born in Whittington.

Mary was pregnant with her son, Joseph, when Thomas died in 1888 aged just 33. In 1891, the 30 year old widow was living at 34 Newbridge Street, Whittington, and was working as a charwoman to support her 6 young children whose ages ranged from 2 to 12 years.

Four years after her husbands' death, Mary gave birth to a son Christopher, in 1892, and two years later to her son, Arthur, in 1894. Thomas Leggitt was a Carter who lived on nearby Newbridge Lane. His wife, Jane, died in 1893 and the widower married Mary in 1895 when he was 53 and she was 34. They had two sons, Charles and Reuben Leggitt.

By 1901, Mary and her family had moved to live at Church Street, Old Whittington. Husband Thomas was still carrying out his trade as a coal carter and both 17 year old Robert and 14 year old Thomas were now working. Son William and daughters Annie and Elizabeth had all left home. Later that same year, Mary died aged 40.

The two young Leggitt boys, Charles and Reuben, remained with their widowed father whilst the Loomes boys were lodged elsewhere:

Elizabeth had married John Thomas Couzens, the Midland Railway Drayman who lived in the Draymans house at the junction of Station Road, Whittington Lane and Works Road at Barrow Hill. Her brother, 22 year old Joseph, a pipe moulder at Staveley Works, was lodging with her in 1911. William had married Sarah Jane Ashmore but was now widowed and lodging with friends. Robert was also married and living with his new bride, Eliza Annie Bates, at Church Street. Christopher was boarding in Dronfield and 16 year old Arthur was living in as a general worker at Belfitts Farm, Handley Wood.

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

Both Christopher and Robert Loomes were in the regular army at the outbreak of war and three more of the brothers are known to have responded to their country's call.

ARTHUR LOOMES enlisted in the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys Regiment) at Chesterfield on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and was given the service number 12702. He was described as having a fresh complexion, dark grey eyes and dark brown hair and stated his religion as Church of England. He was discharged on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1914 after 62 days as "not likely to become an efficient soldier."

At the age of 20, Arthur was living at 5, Devonshire Cottages, Barrow Hill when he enlisted for a second time; this time in the 13<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers (19051), at Chesterfield on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1915. He declared on his attestation paper that he had previously served with the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys Regiment) and that he was "now fit", having been previously discharged as "medically unfit." He was 5'7" tall and weighed 140lbs and gave his sister Elizabeth's name and address at Barrow Hill as his next of kin. Army Form B.204 is stamped "Not likely to become an efficient soldier" on the grounds of "Mental Deficiency" and Arthur was once again discharged 36 days later on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1915.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 1915, Arthur made a third attempt to join the army and enlisted in the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Bn., York and Lancaster Regiment (4235) at Rotherham. To the questions "Have you ever served in the army or been discharged?" he answered "No." It is apparent that Arthur had some learning difficulties but equally apparent that he was determined to become a soldier like his brothers and to fight for his country. Arthur's fraudulent enlistment was discovered and he was once again discharged.

*The Military Service Acts of 1916 changed the scope for conscription to include all men who had been at any time resident in Great Britain since 4 August 1914 who had attained the age of 18 but was not yet 41 unless he was in the exceptions defined in the Schedule attached to the first Act. Paragraph Five of the Schedule of exceptions (that is, "Men who had served with the military or Navy and been discharged on grounds of ill-health or termination of service") ceased and men who had been discharged became eligible for service again.*



Arthur enlisted for a final time at York and served as a Private (28268) with the 12<sup>th</sup> Bn., Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) which was in the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. In 1916 the Battalion took part in The Actions of the Bluff and St Eloi Craters then moved to The Somme for The Battle of Albert, The Battle of Bazentin helping to capture Longueval

and The Battle of Delville Wood.

*Following the successful dawn attack of 14 July the newly won British line formed a 'salient' the right side of which was threatened by **Delville Wood** and the northern edge by the uncaptured portions of Longueval village. Before any eastward attacks on the German second position could be made it was vital that the whole of Longueval and Delville Wood were captured. Vicious fighting for the wood continued for another six weeks, the advantage continuously changing from one side to the other: 27 July saw the 2nd Division renew the assault, followed on 4 August by the 17th Division; bloody encounters in mid-August pushed the line forward.*

*The fighting that took place within Delville Wood was fierce in the extreme. By the time the fighting finished not one tree in Delville Wood was left untouched and the immediate landscape was littered with just the stumps of what had been trees. It was not surprising that soldiers who fought there referred to it as 'Devil's Wood' as opposed to Delville Wood.*

The 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion war diary for the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916 records that the Brigade was acting as support for the Royal Fusiliers and that heavy shelling of the trenches resulted in 1 Other Rank killed, 14 wounded and 1 missing. Private Arthur Loomes was the soldier killed in action on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916.



Arthur Loomes is buried in Plot: III. H. 11 at the Flatiron Copse Cemetery at Mametz.

The cemetery was begun in July 1916 and it remained in use until April 1917. After the Armistice, more than 1,100 graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields and from smaller cemeteries. Arthur Loomes was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

**Charles Leggitt** (268846) was Arthur's half-brother. He worked at the Sheepbridge furnaces before enlisting on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1917 with the 16<sup>th</sup> Bn., Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys Regiment). He did his training at Saltfleet and landed in France on August 29<sup>th</sup>. After just 20 weeks in the army, Charles Leggitt was killed in action by shellfire on 5th November 1917, aged 21. He is remembered on the Tyne Cot Memorial and on the Old Whittington Memorial.





**Joseph Loomes** was living with his sister Elizabeth at Barrow Hill in 1911 and working as a pipe moulder at Staveley Works. He enlisted at Staveley as a Private with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (1326) before being transferred to the 11th Battalion (GS/50562). He was killed in action on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1918 and is buried in plot VI. I. 24. of the Dernancourt Communal Cemetery Extension.

He was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



**Christopher Loomes** (11747, 20636, 203482) had enlisted in the Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys Regiment) on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1912. On 8th September 1914, he arrived in France with the British Expeditionary Force and served as a Sergeant, with the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He was wounded four times and gassed during his service. He was killed in action on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1918 and is buried in plot II. E. 4 at the Brie British Cemetery.

In addition to the 1914 Star, British War and Victory Medals, Christopher Loomes was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal “*for conspicuous gallantry in action and consistent good work and devotion to duty since August 1914, to date, first as platoon sergeant, and latterly as acting C.S./M. He has set a very fine example to those under him.*” The fourth of the brothers to be casualties of the war, Christopher Loomes left a widow, Minnie, and five step-children.



**Robert Loomes** had enlisted at the age of 18 in 1902 and served for 3 years with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn., Rifle Brigade (9350) before being transferred to the Reserve. His attestation paper was witnessed by “T.Loomes, Sergeant”, who may well have been his brother Thomas.

Robert was re-engaged in July 1914 and went to France on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1914 with the British Expeditionary Force. He was wounded with a gunshot wound to his right arm and later with another one to his head on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916, after which he was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Bn., Labour Corps (151658) until the end of the war.

He was awarded the 1914 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He died in 1956 aged 72.

**Sources include:**

1. *1861-1911 England Census*
2. *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth/Marriage/Death Indexes, 1837-1915 and*
3. *British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920*
4. *British Army WWI Pension Records 1914-1920*
5. *UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*
6. *British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920*
7. *Web: International, Find A Grave Index*
8. *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*
9. *UK, Citations of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1914-1920*
10. *War Diary: 12<sup>th</sup> Bn., Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)*