

GEORGE THOMAS DAWSON

Born: 28th January 1878, Wood Norton¹

Enlisted: Norwich; 14th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) (Gunner 20883); 95th Company, Labour Corps (Private 56558)²



Died: 19th September 1918 – Salonika³

Age: 40

Memorial: Mikra British Cemetery, Kalamaria R/5/121/299, (Salonika)⁴

Medals: British War Medal; Victory Medal⁵



Residence: The 1918 electoral register lists George as an absent voter, and his residence as The Street, Wood Norton.⁶

George Thomas Dawson was born on the 28th January 1878, the second son of James and Sarah Ann Dawson. He was baptised on the 5th June 1881, in Wood Norton parish church (see Figure 1).

1881	June 5	George	James	Dawson	Wood	Latham	Charles
6 June 1881	Ultimacy	Thomas	Sarah Ann		Norton		Martin
No. 558							

Figure 1 : Extract from the Wood Norton Baptisms, 1881

¹ FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1878, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.79 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Baptisms Register, 1881, Wood Norton (www.familysearch.org).

² UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919 (www.ancestry.co.uk); British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³ CWGC commemoration (www.cwgc.org).

⁴ CWGC commemoration (www.cwgc.org).

⁵ British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁶ First Register of Parliamentary and Local Government Electors, 1918; Polling District: Foulsham, Parish: Wood Norton (Norfolk Heritage Centre, microfilm MF1038).

The British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920 do not appear to have survived for George, but from extant records it can be seen that George was serving with the 14th Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) (see Figure 2).⁷

Name.		Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
DAWSON		Royal West Surrey R.	Pvt	20883
George T.		Salonica Corps		56559
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	10/101	35	3494	
BRITISH	10	10		
STAR				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein				

Figure 2 : Medal Roll Index Card, George Thomas Dawson

The 14th Battalion was one of three Labour Battalions (13th, 14th and 15th), formed between July and September 1916. It was formed in Crawley, and went to Salonika in September 1916. The Royal Warrant of 21 February 1917 sanctioned the formation of a Labour Corps, and the 13th, 14th and 15th Labour Battalions of The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) were transferred to the Labour Corps in June 1917; the 14th Battalion became the 95th and 96th Companies of the Labour Corps, and new regimental numbers were issued to the servicemen (the 95th Company being issued the regimental numbers 56401-57000).⁸

The new Labour Corps would have continued to support the troops (the British Salonika Force) as part of the Salonika Campaign, allied troops having been sent to support the Serbs against the German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian armies in October 1915. A second offensive in the spring of 1917 made little impression on the Bulgarian defences, and the front line remained more or less static until September 1918 and the launch of a third offensive culminating with the surrender of Bulgaria on the 30th September 1918. Soldiers on both sides faced each other for three years across challenging terrain, through extremes of climate in summer and winter. Much effort was expended on improving the local road network and in constructing light railways, but even so, many parts of the front could only be reached by pack mules.⁹

The Register of Soldiers' effects for George records that he died on the 19th September 1918 of 'illness';¹⁰ disease, in particular malaria, proved endemic throughout the campaign, and this may have been the cause of his death. The British Salonika Force alone suffered more than

⁷ British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁸ See The Long, Long, Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918, <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/queens-royal-west-surrey-regiment/>; and Army Service Numbers 1881-1918, The Formation of the Labour Corps in 1917, <http://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/formation-of-labour-corps-in-1917.html>.

⁹ Salonika Campaign Society, 1915-1918, The Campaign <https://salonikacampaignsociety.org.uk/campaign/>; CWGC, Salonika, <https://www.cwgc.org/history-and-archives/first-world-war/campaigns/salonika>.

¹⁰ UK, Army of Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

160,000 cases of malaria, particularly in the Struma Valley; at the time, the region was one of the worst malarial areas in Europe.¹¹ The Register of Soldiers' Effects notes that an amount of £7 4s 4d was paid to George's mother, Sarah Dawson as sole legatee in March 1919, with a War Gratuity of £9 being paid to her in December 1919. George is buried in the Mikra British Cemetery, and his headstone bears the inscription *We Shall Meet Again*, chosen by George's mother.¹²

It appears that George's mother, Sarah, applied to the British Ministry for Pensions for a Dependant's Pension in 1919 (see Figure 3).¹³ Unfortunately the outcome of the application is not known.

DEPENDANT'S PENSION.		D.1
Name <i>Dawson George Thomas</i>	Regimental No. <i>56558</i>	Case No. <i>D.P2/52424</i>
Regiment or Ship <i>Lab. Bys.</i>	Rank <i>Pl</i>	<i>870 2327</i>
Documents received from Paymaster <i>18. 9. 19</i>		DEAD <i>13 3 24</i>
Date and cause of death <i>19. 9. 18. Pneumonia</i>		
Dependant <i>Mrs Sarah A. Dawson</i>		
Address <i>Wood Norton, Dereham, Norfolk</i>		
Relationship <i>Mother</i>		
Pension	a week from	
Date awarded	If refused	
Papers	reason	
F12293 Wt.47401/2553 100m. (12) 3/19 J.P. GP. 159		

Figure 3 : Dependant's Pension card in respect of George Thomas Dawson

Further research into George's family reveals that his father, James Dawson, was born on the 6th December 1847, and baptised on the 17th January 1847 in South Creake parish church, the son of John and Alice Dawson.¹⁴ James Dawson married Sarah Ann Buckingham on the 27th October 1874, in Wood Norton.¹⁵ Sarah was born in 1846 in Stibbard, the daughter of Thomas and Susan Buckingham.¹⁶ It is possible that James died in 1914 aged 68,¹⁷ as George's *Register of Soldiers' Effects* lists his mother Sarah as sole legatee in 1919. Sarah Ann died in 1928, aged, 81, and is buried in Wood Norton.¹⁸ The 1911 census for Wood

¹¹ CWGC, Salonika, <https://www.cwgc.org/history-and-archives/first-world-war/campaigns/salonika>.

¹² CWGC commemoration and headstone schedule (www.cwgc.org).

¹³ UK, WW1 Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914-1923 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁴ Baptism Register, South Creake, 1847 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to December 1846, Docketing, Vol. 13, p.53 (www.freebmd.org.uk); 1851 census, South Creake (p23) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁵ FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1874, Aylsham, Vol. 4b, p. 253 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Marriages, 1874 (p.95).

¹⁶ FreeBMD, Quarter to June 1846, Walsingham, Vol. 13, p.350 (www.freebmd.org.uk); 1911 census, Wood Norton (Schedule 196) (www.ancestry.co.uk); 1851 census, Stibbard (p.1) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁷ FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1914, Aylsham, Vol. 4b, p. 123 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

¹⁸ Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Burials, 1928 (p.131).

Norton records that James and Sarah had four children, of which only George was recorded as still living with them:

Name	Born	Died
John	1876, Wood Norton. Baptised 4 th June 1876. ¹⁹ In the 1911 census for Wood Norton, John is aged 34 and a fitter's labourer (railway worker), married with one child. He married Emily Louisa Hill on the 17 th March 1900, in Wood Norton. ²⁰ They had a daughter, Edith, born in 1914. ²¹ Emily died in 1918, aged 39, ²² and John married Florence Murray in 1925. ²³ John and Florence had a daughter, Ruth, born in 1927. ²⁴	1956, aged 79. Buried in Wood Norton. ²⁵
George Thomas	1878, Wood Norton. In the 1911 census, George is aged 33, and a farm labourer.	19th September 1918, Salonika
Benjamin	17 th December 1880, Wood Norton. Baptised 5 th June 1881 (with his brother, George Thomas). ²⁶ In the 1911 census for Fulmodeston, Benjamin is aged 30 and a railway worker, and newly married (he married Florence Emerson in the spring of 1911). ²⁷	
Susanna	22 nd October 1884, Wood Norton. Baptised 16 th May 1886. ²⁸ Susanna married Thomas James Jenkinson in 1908. ²⁹ In 1911 she is living with her husband (a farm labourer) and three children in Bulwell, Nottingham. ³⁰	1971, aged 86, in Derbyshire. ³¹

¹⁹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to June 1876*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.77 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Baptism Register, 1878, Wood Norton (www.familysearch.org).

²⁰ 1911 census, Wood Norton (Schedule 148) (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1900*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.135 (www.freebmd.org.uk); *Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers*, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Marriages, 1900 (p.99).

²¹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to September 1914*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.153 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²² FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1918*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.154 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²³ FreeBMD, *Quarter to September 1925*, Norwich, Vol.4b, p.229 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁴ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1927*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.94 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁵ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1956*, N. Walsham, Vol.4b, p.705 (www.freebmd.org.uk); *Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers*, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Burials, 1956 (p.133).

²⁶ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1881*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.79 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Baptism Register, 1881, Wood Norton (www.familysearch.org).

²⁷ 1911 census, Fulmodeston (Schedule 28) (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, marriage, *Quarter to March 1911*, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.437 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁸ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1884*, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.83 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Baptism Register, 1886, Wood Norton (www.familysearch.org).

²⁹ *Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers*, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Banns, 1908 (p.60); FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1908*, Nottingham, Vol.7b, p.570 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁰ 1911 census, Bulwell (Schedule 21) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³¹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1971*, Derby, Vol.3a, p.749 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

The Wood Norton War Memorial lists two other related Dawson men: Frederick and Herbert, brothers who both survived the WW1 conflict, who were the sons of William and Elizabeth Dawson.³² William and George were cousins whose fathers, William (aged 76) and James (aged 65), were brothers and both living in Wood Norton at the time of the 1911 census³³ (see Figure 4).

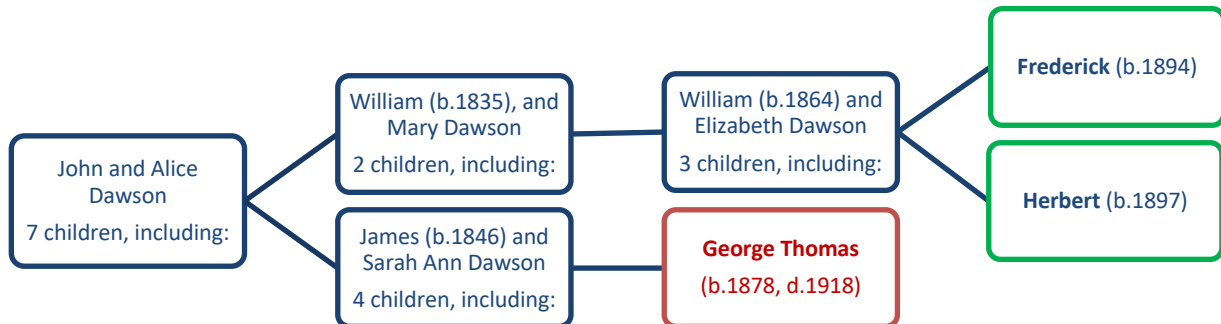


Figure 4 : Family relationship – Frederick, Herbert and George Thomas Dawson

George Dawson's name also appears on the war memorial in St Mary's church, North Elmham (approximately 5 miles from Wood Norton), but the link with North Elmham is not yet known.³⁴

³² 1911 census, Wood Norton (Schedule 197) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³³ 1911 census, Wood Norton (Schedules 172 and 194) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³⁴ See also: Janet Woodhouse, *North Elmham's Memorial of the World Wars* (Larks Press, 2014), p40.