

# Medals and Memorials

## *Honoured and Remembered*

**Mike Royden**

Communities did not wait for the end of the war to honour their war dead, as a popular movement for creating roadside shrines soon began to spread across the country. These 'street shrines' were distinctively different from the later parish and civic memorials and commemorated those who had been lost to close-knit communities, sometimes a particular street or a workplace. The movement was given impetus by a series of articles in the London Evening News, together with support from Selfridges department store and the Church of England. The first street shrine was installed in mid-1916 in South Hackney in London, but after Queen Mary visited the growing number of East End shrines, the movement spread rapidly. They were most commonly sited on city streets, near to their subject of commemoration remembering men from small geographical areas, and usually comprised a Roll of Honour surrounded by the Union Jack, flowers, and a cross or crucifix, and other suitably patriotic ephemera. They became so popular that 'kits' actually became commercially available. They were not popular with all however, as for many Protestants they were too popish and ritualistic, and a shrine in Ilford was intentionally targeted in 1916 for desecration for this very reason.

The Great War Shrine in Hyde Park was the apogee of the movement, where flowers were laid by an estimated 200,000 people between 4 and 15 August 1918. Such acts of mass grief have their modern parallels in similar expressions at Anfield in memory of Hillsborough in 1989 and at the gates of Kensington Palace following the death of Princess Diana in 1997, while there is a growing contemporary trend for street shrines, frequently generated in response to roadside tragedies.

The lack of inspirational design and durable materials contributed to the demise of street shrines and once the civic memorial was erected, which usually paid due regard to these aesthetics, the roadside shrines gradually fell into disrepair and disappeared, with only a few surviving today. (pictured; *Holyport St Shrine, Maidenhead*)



As the dust settled after the war, ideas about how to commemorate those who gave their lives began to be discussed both in government and at a local level. A national memorial was mooted, while the idea of a shrine to represent the men of all three services in Westminster Abbey was also suggested. It was decided to construct a *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* to represent all who were missing, and in this way the soldier selected could be the family member of anyone who had someone who had no known grave. Six bodies of six unknown soldiers were taken from the six main war-fronts and laid in a curtained Nissen hut near the quay-side at Boulogne. Then a very high-ranking British officer was guided, blindfolded, into the hut. The first coffin he touched, unseeingly, was carried by eight senior

N.C.O.'s of the British Army on board a French destroyer to be brought back to England. In France, a similar procedure was carried out with their *La tombe du soldat inconnu* laid beneath the Arc de Triomphe. On the morning of 11 November 1920, the gun-carriage with the flag-draped casket of 'The Unknown Soldier' moved slowly through the London streets towards the final resting place in the Nave of Westminster Abbey. As the cortege passed along Whitehall, it paused for King George V to place a wreath upon it, before he turned to unveil the Cenotaph.

Although the national memorials had been organised by central government, the decision of how to remember those from local communities who had given their lives were largely left to local town and parish councils. There was also the problem of who to include, as there was no central body from which a list could be obtained. Instead, the collation of names for inclusion on the memorial was carried out by the committee responsible for the memorial's erection by a variety of ways, which included door-to-door enquiries, leaflets through letter boxes, church announcements, articles in the local press, or by word of mouth. The committee usually defined the criteria for who could be added. In some cases, there were strict geographic boundaries, whilst others were a little more flexible. Because there was no centralised organisation, much of the information regarding how local committees proceeded no longer exists. Some minutes have been preserved, whilst information can also be gleaned from local newspapers or parochial histories, especially those mentioning unveiling ceremonies.



There was often controversy, ranging from a number of Catholics who objected to the siting of memorials in front of, or within, the bounds of Anglican parish churches, to those who couldn't agree on the what form the memorial should take. Then there was often much discussion on whether certain names should be left off – especially deserters and those shot for cowardice.

In Ellesmere Port, it was decided to site the war memorial in front of the parish church of Christchurch. Today the site is swamped by surrounding development and the construction of the M56 motorway, and it is no longer the prominent site it was in the early 1920s. The centre of town has now shifted from the dock area, once a hive of activity, to the present town centre half a mile away, which was laid out after the Second World War. A new memorial was erected there in 2005 (*both pictured*).

In the Cheshire village of Farndon, where eighteen men had been lost, some villagers subscribed to the erection of a Memorial Hall, while others supported the erection of a cross in the churchyard. In the end both were constructed, and all the men returning home were given gold medals by the people of the village. In Halewood, a village on the



outskirts of south Liverpool, (today more well known for the location of Everton F.C.'s training ground, Finch Farm) two proposals had been aired but fell through, reflecting the difficulties coming to a decision acceptable to the majority and in securing the funding. According to the centenary history of the village church written in 1939,

'The first suggestion for a War Memorial was that a recreation ground for men and boys should be secured, but all efforts to obtain a suitable piece proved fruitless. The cost of building and maintaining a Village Institute was felt to be too great, so it was proposed to provide a Lych Gate for the Church, with an inscription bearing the names of those who had fallen in the War. Any money remaining should be devoted to the benefit of blinded or otherwise disabled soldiers. The proposal of the lych gate ultimately fell through'.

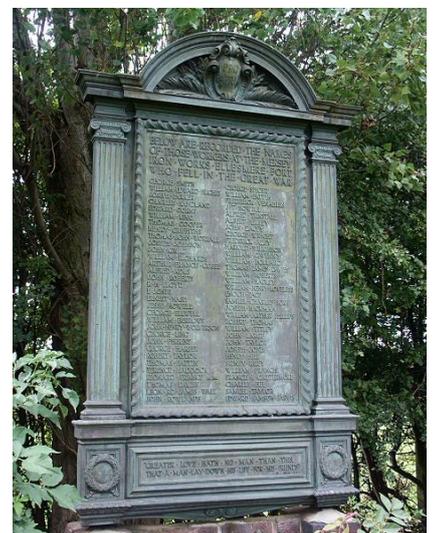
A short time later, definite plans were made for the memorial and this extract gives a precise insight into how some of the decisions over memorials came to be made;

'The Parochial Church Council decided in February 1921, that a simple stone memorial should be erected in front of the Church, bearing the names of the 19 men of the parish who had lost their lives in the War. The choice of the design was left to Mr. Thomas Hale and Mr. Thomas Lunt. After examining several photographs, they found in the premises of Messrs. Thomas Stubbs and Sons a memorial in white marble which appealed to them strongly. A similar red granite monument, including the inscription and names in raised leaden letters, would cost £135. The parish should not be canvassed for donations, and none were to exceed three guineas. Thus they would be more spontaneous and come from the parishioners generally. By September, £155/13/0 had been received, so a framed list, showing particulars of each man, was placed in the church porch. This additional memorial was designed and executed by two of the parishioners, Mr. Walter Pickavance and Mr. David Crosby. A balance of £21/10/10 was divided equally between St. Dunstan's Fund for blinded soldiers and the Lord Roberts Memorial Fund, to provide workshops for disabled soldiers and sailors. The outside monument was unveiled by the Bishop of Warrington on the evening of 27th July, 1921'.

The omission of names was not uncommon, especially when some of the onus may have been with the bereaved family to notify the committee to include their soldier's name. Sometimes families wanted to move on and life's priorities were elsewhere. Other families moved away from the area to find work. Frequently, for those who were missing on the battlefield, inscribing the name on a memorial was final acceptance by the family that he would not be coming home and for some who still held out hope, this was more than they could bear.

In Ellesmere Port, numerous men had been living in the swiftly expanding town only a short time, and in many cases their names appeared both on the local memorial and also the memorial erected in the area where they had come from, especially those from the Black Country villages.

Men were not only remembered on the local war memorial. For example in the case of my own great grandfather, Bombardier Charles Royden of the Royal Field Artillery, his name is recorded on the memorial panels in Liverpool Town Hall, in two books of remembrance in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, on a memorial panel for his former school, and in the memorial panel exhibition in the Museum of Liverpool at the Pier Head. He was self-employed, but if he had been working for a particular employer, such as a factory or public service, he name would undoubtedly have been included on their own dedicated memorials too. In Ellesmere Port for example, there still exists the memorial plaque for the long demolished Mersey Ironworks, now in the care of the Royal British Legion, listing all their employees who were lost (*pictured*). Rolls of Honour were also put up in sports clubs,



railway stations, schools, universities and so on. Many churches have stained glass windows designed and dedicated to military units or individuals. 'Living memorials' such as the Memorial Hall in Farndon village, or places for rehabilitation, worship or sport, were also erected.

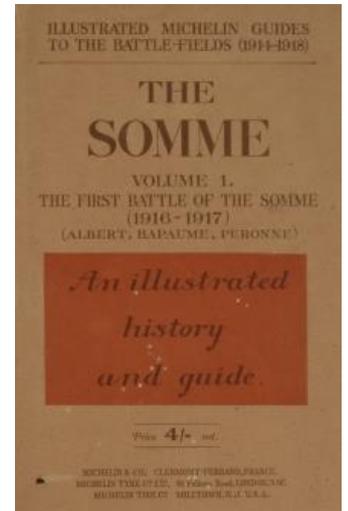
A number of villages erected memorials giving thanks for those who did return, as there were fifty-two parishes in England and Wales known to have all their men returned, although none in Scotland or Ireland. They became known as 'Thankful Villages'. Fourteen of them became known as 'Doubly Thankful Villages' after the Second World War, when again, all their serving men also returned home.



Of course, for many, the news that there would be no repatriation of those killed abroad came as a further blow to families at home. To have them buried in a local church yard, or in a family plot, were they could be easily visited, would have offered some comfort. However, from a purely logistical point of view this was completely out of the question. In May 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission was established by Royal Charter, and their work began in earnest after the Armistice. Once land for cemeteries and memorials had been guaranteed, the enormous task of recording the details of the dead began. By 1918, some 587,000 graves had been identified and a further 559,000 casualties were registered as having no known grave. Its foundation was largely down to one man, Sir Fabian Ware, who was commander of a mobile Red Cross unit during the war. Saddened by the sheer number of casualties, he felt driven to find a way to ensure the final resting places of the dead would not be lost forever. Under his dynamic leadership, his unit began recording and caring for all the graves they could find. By 1915, their work was given official recognition by the War Office and incorporated into the British Army as the Graves Registration Commission. Today the organisation is known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. (All names and details of men recorded are on their online database [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)). Three of the most eminent architects of the day - Sir Edwin

Lutyens, Sir Herbert Baker and Sir Reginald Blomfield - were chosen to begin the work of designing and constructing the cemeteries and memorials. Rudyard Kipling was tasked, as literary advisor, with advising on inscriptions.

Consequently, as soon as peace descended, the demand to visit the battlefields increased, and specialised tours were swiftly set up and guide books produced by companies such as Michelin. But of course, they were still in a battlefield state, and much more distressing to experience, unlike the comparatively sanitised landscape experienced by the modern visitor today. The work of the Imperial War Commission was in its infancy, with exhumation parties at work all over the battlefields, carrying out searches and constructing the new cemeteries. Government appeals to those making such pilgrimages to wait fell on deaf ears, as the impetus to visit the battlefields gathered pace. Newspapers such as *The Times* frequently carried adverts from individuals offering personal guided tours, while by 1920 organisations like the YMCA, the Church Army, British Legion, Red Cross and Ypres League had all followed suit offering group tours. The Ypres League and the St Barnabas Society offered subsidised pilgrimages for those less well off wanting to visiting family graves or memorials.



Thousands of names were engraved onto memorials for those who were missing, while at home many still clung on to flickering hope that they would return. Maybe they were in a German hospital recovering from wounds, or wounded and taken in by a French family, or wandering around Belgium or France not realising the war was over. Of course, such hopes were tragically futile; given the horrific nature of the conflict they were either still lying buried beneath the battleground, or in a war grave unable to be identified, or their existence simply wiped out by the ferocity of the munitions. Nevertheless, at home newspapers frequently carried appeals for any known sightings or whereabouts, as the following examples from Ellesmere Port reveal,

**Edward Sampson Jarvis** 26837 Private, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

**ELLESMERE PORT MAN'S FATE  
NEWS WANTED**

Mr and Mrs Jarvis, 68 Victoria Road, Ellesmere Port, are anxiously awaiting tidings of their son, Private E. Jarvis, 26873 North Lancashire Regiment, who has not been heard of for some considerable time. He was officially reported missing after an engagement which took place on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1917, the notice coming to hand on December 29<sup>th</sup> last. Despite every effort and inquiry lodged in official circles no tidings can be gleaned of him except that it is thought that he is an unwounded prisoner in the hands of the Germans.

*Birkenhead & Cheshire Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 17 April 1918*

Edward Jarvis originally signed on for the 5<sup>th</sup> Cheshire Regiment on 9 December 1915 at the age of nineteen, although he was not mobilised until 26 April 1916. Six months of training followed before he was posted to France on 7 September 1916. He saw action in several campaigns including the defence of Arras in April 1917. On 20 November the Cambrai operations began and Edward was reported missing on 30 November 1917. The war diary of the 1/5ths records what happened that day,

**Cambrai, 30th November 1917, 8:30 hrs**

That morning a heavy fog hung in the air over the 55th Divisional front line, a line that had been heavily bombarded for the past 90 minutes. The enemy penetrated the 1/5th sector at Holts bank, having advanced at a staggering rate with overwhelming numbers into Pigeon Quarry, they had succeeded in seriously outflanking our men. Massively outnumbered, and with the help of the

Liverpool Scottish, the Loyals gallantly stood firm and inflicted serious damage on the German soldiers, succeeding in holding Adelphi and Gloucester roads until such a time as they became so few in number they were forced to withdraw. Prior to the withdrawal, an element of Loyal North Lancs had already been cut off from the rest of the Battalion and were completely surrounded at Limerick Post. Somehow, they succeeded in defending their encircled position, managing to reach their own line by 5:00 hrs the next morning.

To the dismay of his poor suffering family, Edward did not return and his body was never found, and he was officially recorded as killed in action on 30<sup>th</sup> November at the age of twenty-one. He is recorded on one of the panels for the missing at the Cambrai Memorial in Louverval. Like many other men who had moved from the Black Country to work in Ellesmere Port, Edward was also remembered back in his hometown where he was recorded on the Dean Road Memorial in Deansfield.

### **Raphael Kenzie 49062 Private, Kings Liverpool Regiment / 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk Regiment**

#### **INFORMATION REQUIRED OF ELLESMERE PORT MAN**

Private Raphael Kenzie, son of Mr and Mrs Kenzie 28 Kingsley Road Ellesmere Port, has been reported missing since September 18<sup>th</sup>, and his parents would be glad if any of our soldier readers in France can give any information concerning him. Private Kenzie joined the 'Liverpool Pals' and was later transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk Regiment, with whom he went to France as a machine-gunner. He was a staunch supporter of the local Congregational Church, and had been connected with it since its inception in the district. Aged 18, Private Kenzie was very popular with all who knew him.

*Birkenhead & Cheshire Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 21 December 1918*

By the last line of this notice, the journalist is already fearing the worst and is writing in the past tense. Both these articles now look tragically pathetic when looking back at this, when we are now fully aware of the magnitude of the numbers of men missing, never to be found, whose names now lie on memorials such as Tyne Cot, Menin Gate, Thiepval Memorial with over 160,000 between them. Raphael's body was later found on the battlefield and he was buried at Epehy Wood Farm Cemetery in the village of Epehy.

All servicemen and servicewomen of Britain and the Commonwealth were awarded medals and awards for their service in the First World War. In addition there were also a wide variety of orders, medals and decorations given for gallantry and distinguished service. General service during the First World War was recognised by the issue of the 1914 Star (or the 1914-15 Star), the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal 1914-1919. This trio of awards became popularly known as 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' after characters in a Daily Mail cartoon of the period. Certain criteria had to be met and qualifications for each campaign medal were:





### **1914 Star**

The 1914 Star was introduced in 1917 and awarded to members of the British and Indian Expeditionary Forces (including civilian doctors, nurses, and other military hospital personnel) for service in France and Belgium between 5 August and 22 November 1914. The Bar was awarded to recipients of the Star who had actually served under fire during the qualifying period.



### **1914/15 Star**

Introduced in 1918, the 1914/15 Star was awarded to those who saw service in France and Belgium from 23 November 1914 to 31 December 1915, and to those who served in any other operational theatre from 5 August 1914 to 31 December 1915. The 1914-15 Star is identical to the 1914 Star excepting that the central scroll is titled "1914-15" rather than "Aug-1914-Nov". If a man or woman qualified for either Star then qualification for the British War & Victory Medals was automatic.



### **British War Medal**

Authorised in 1919, this medal was awarded to eligible service personnel and civilians. The basic requirement was that they either entered a theatre of war, or gave approved service overseas between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. Qualification was extended to service in Russia in 1919 and 1920. This was the most widely awarded of the service medals with almost seven million issued.



### **Victory Medal**

The Victory Medal 1914-1919 was also authorised in 1919 and was awarded to all eligible personnel who served on the establishment of a unit in an operational theatre. It was not possible to be awarded the Victory Medal unless you also had the BWM qualification and all recipients of either the 1914 or 1914-15 Star automatically qualified for the BW & V Medals.

The following WW1 awards for gallantry and distinguished service are listed below in order of precedence:

- Victoria Cross (V.C.)
- Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.)
- Distinguished Service Cross (D.S.C.)
- Military Cross (M.C.)
- Distinguished Flying Cross (D.F.C.)
- Air Force Cross (A.F.C.)
- Distinguished Conduct Medal (D.C.M.)
- Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (C.G.M.)
- Distinguished Service Medal (D.S.M.)
- Military Medal (M.M.)
- Distinguished Flying Medal (D.F.M.)
- Air Force Medal (A.F.M.)
- Meritorious Service Medal (M.S.M.)
- Mentioned in Despatches (M.I.D.)
- Citation for a Gallantry Award

News would soon filter back home regarding the awards of medals for gallantry and distinguished service, and details would often appear in the pages of the local press to the pride of family and

friends. What follows is a selection of accounts giving the known background to some of those awards to give a flavour and insight into the recipients themselves and their experiences.

### **Second Lieutenant L. Richmond DSO**

The highest honour bestowed on a local Ellesmere Port man was the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) conferred upon Second Lieutenant Leonard Richmond. He was also awarded the French Croix-de-Guerre with palm (the second highest level of the award). Leonard was born in Norley in the Delamere Forest area of Cheshire. His father was a Yorkshire man, who moved to Liverpool, met and married his wife, before finding work as a groom/coltbreaker in rural Cheshire. As this employment was unlikely to support his growing family, he moved into a dockside terrace in Lime Street, Ellesmere Port in 1896 where he worked as a railway platelayer. His eldest son Leonard began work as a storekeeper for the Shropshire Union Canal Company on the adjacent docks, before moving to the offices of the nearby cement works. He had ideas to train as an accountant before the war interrupted his career. He initially signed on as a Private for the Kings Liverpool Regiment, before being posted to the 12th Battalion Cheshire Regiment as an intelligence officer after taking a commission, being promoted to Second Lieutenant.



#### **DSO for ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER**

Temporary Second Lieutenant Leonard Richmond of the 12th Battalion Cheshire Regiment has been awarded the D.S.O. for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. As Battalion intelligence officer, he carried out many difficult and valuable reconnaissance's before the attack on 'P' Ridge. He was given the work of taping out the assembly position for the leading battalion, a difficult task, which he accomplished with such skill that the assembly of the Brigade proceeded in perfect order. Later when the attack had developed and the battalion suffered heavy losses, he took command of a company which had lost all its officers, rallied them under intense machine gun and trench mortar fire and led them forward with the greatest determination. When the remnants of the brigade had withdrawn, he remained for almost two hours under intense fire with his Commanding Officer, who had been mortally wounded, and when he died brought back all maps and papers which might have been of use to the enemy. He did good work in reorganising the battalion and displayed a magnificent spirit and contempt of danger throughout. Before enlisting, Sec. Lieut. Richmond was a member of the Ship Canal Portland Cement Company's staff.

*Birkenhead Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 4 January 1919*

Within a few weeks news reached home that he had received a further honour when he was awarded the French Croix-de-Guerre with palm for services in the Balkans.

#### **ELLESMERE PORT OFFICER GAINS FURTHER HONOUR**

Lieutenant Len Richmond has been awarded the French Croix-de-Guerre with palm for services in the Balkans. Recently, it will be remembered the gallant officer earned the D.S.O. for exceptional services. The lieutenant hopes soon to be home on leave. He has several times been on the point of coming home, but has received other instructions which have prevented his coming. His return has been further delayed owing to his having to be decorated with the French honour. On demobilisation, Lieutenant Richmond intends to enter the accountants office of the Cement Works, which he left on joining the Army.

*Birkenhead Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 26 Feb 1919*

A letter home from a wounded soldier reveals more about the Balkan experience and a little more of Lieutenant Richmond,

#### **ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER IN THE BALKANS**

Lance Corporal Walter Henstock, a brother of Mrs McLeod, 9 Beechfield Road, Ellesmere Port has sent her the following interesting letter, which we feel sure will be read with interest by his many friends in Ellesmere Port:- 'Just a line to let you know I am still one of the lucky ones left again. My regiment lost quite a lot on the 18th, the Colonel and the doctor also being killed. I shall never forget how we shifted the Bulgars from these hills, and he drove us back the first time. We did not expect to find him there. You have heard talk of 'Hell let loose', well it was one of those mornings. I had to come back on a message and I saw our dead and wounded lying there and everywhere I went. It was, "Chum, give us a drink" and you could see men crawling among the dead to take their water bottles. Len Richmond (Lieut. Richmond, formerly employed at the Cement Works) is in the battalion, and he is one of the best I have seen in a fight. He is an officer and we both went to school together. I got a slight dose of gas and am in hospital. I left the battalion in Bulgaria, and we have heard that peace is signed today. The Bulgars had pigs and fowl, and each man had a garden behind his front line, and he had made some fine dug outs, but we put them to a severe test and then they were safe'

*Extract from a letter sent by Lance Corporal Walter Henstock, to his sister, Mrs McLeod, of 9 Beechfield Road, Ellesmere Port.*

(Before the war, Lance-Corporal Henstock worked as a quarter-master for the Hault Line of ships. He enlisted on the outbreak of war, and was wounded in France, being later sent to the Balkan Front. He had two brothers serving in the Air Service and the Navy and another, Frank, was killed at the Dardanelles, and recorded on Ellesmere Port War Memorial).

After demobilisation in March 1919, Lieutenant Len Richmond DSO CdeG, returned to Ellesmere Port and his employment in the cement works. He continued to live in the area, moving to Childer Thornton, South Wirral in the 1930s. He died in 1967 aged seventy-seven.

#### **Sergeant W.E. Jackson DCM**

One of the most honoured local men was Sergeant W.E. Jackson, who was twice mentioned in despatches in the early stages of the war, then later was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He was born in West Bromwich and followed his brother Joseph to Ellesmere Port, who had migrated north around 1905 and had married and started a family. William joined his brother in the ironworks before they both signed on for the Cheshires.

#### **ELLESMERE PORT MAN'S D.C.M. TWICE MENTIONED IN DESPACHES**

'Sergeant Jackson who resides at Oldfield Road, Ellesmere Port, has gained great distinction during his 19 months service with the Cheshires. He won the D.C.M. in the first stages of the Battle of the Somme, and has twice been Mentioned in Despatches. Jackson, who is a single young man, was formerly employed as a breaker-down at Burnell's and he enlisted immediately war broke out.'

*Birkenhead Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 20 Jan 1917*

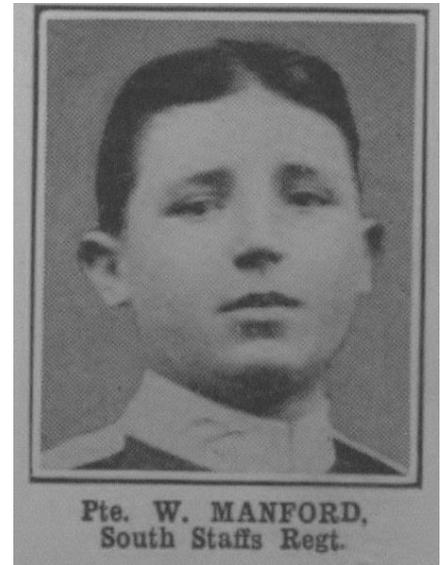
The London Gazette carried the following citation on 1 January 1917, '17977 Sergeant W.E. Jackson, Cheshire Regiment: For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty; He has displayed great courage and determination on several occasions during bombing attacks.'



Sadly, his brother Joseph was not so fortunate, and was killed in action on the Somme on 10 July 1916. He left his wife Lucy and three young children.

### **Private W. Manford D.C.M.**

William Manford was born in Bilston in the industrial Black Country of the West Midlands in 1898. In 1911 at the age of 14 he was working as a moulder in the local iron foundry, before moving to Ellesmere Port to work in the Wolverhampton Iron Works. When war broke out his allegiance was still with his hometown, and he consequently signed on to the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment. After the formation of the regiment at Aldershot he was sent to France with the B.E.F. landing at Le Havre 13 August 1914, and which was soon in action in Belgium in the Battle of Mons, followed by the First Battle of Ypres. In May 1915, the battalion had moved south to the French border, where they took part in the Battle of Festubert, where the main fighting took place between 15–25 May 1915. The initial fighting involved a night attack on the 15/16 May at 11.30pm, when units of the 2nd Division attacked on a 1,300 yard front. Initially this was successful, and 300 yards of No Man's Land at Rue du Bois was crossed with few casualties. However, by 12.45am, 2nd Division ordered a further bombardment as planned, to coincide with the attack to be made by 7th Division. The support battalions of 6th Brigade which included the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire were unable to leave the British front trench to move up to the captured position due to heavy cross-fire from the area between the two Divisional attacks, which had not been suppressed by the bombardment. It was in this attack on 16th May 1915 at Rue du Bois, that William Manford was involved in heroic action,



### **ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER'S D.C.M.**

News has reached Ellesmere Port that Private W. Manford of the South Staffordshire Regiment, has been awarded the D.C.M. for gallantry at Rue de Bois. A machine gun team with one exception had been killed or wounded and Manford, who is only seventeen years of age, went back twice to bring up equipment, although himself wounded. He made another journey and was again wounded. His efforts, however, enabled the gun to be brought into action.

*Birkenhead News, 21 Aug 1915*

The official citation read,

'9472 Private W. Manford 2 Bn. For conspicuous gallantry on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915 at Rue du Bois. When the men of a machine-gun team had, with one exception, been killed or wounded, Pte Manford went back twice under very heavy shell fire to carry up machine-gun equipment left by them, although he was himself wounded. He was wounded again on the third journey, but by his efforts he enabled the gun to be brought into action. 5 August 1915'

After he recovered from his wounds he was assigned a new number, 12717, promoted to Lance Corporal and transferred to the R.A.M.C., probably as a stretcher bearer to his own battalion. During the defence of the German campaign Operation Michael, Lance-Corporal Manford suffered a gas attack and died of wounds on 28 March 1918, and was buried at Etaples Military Cemetery, France. He was aged twenty-one. (right; Bilston War Memorial)



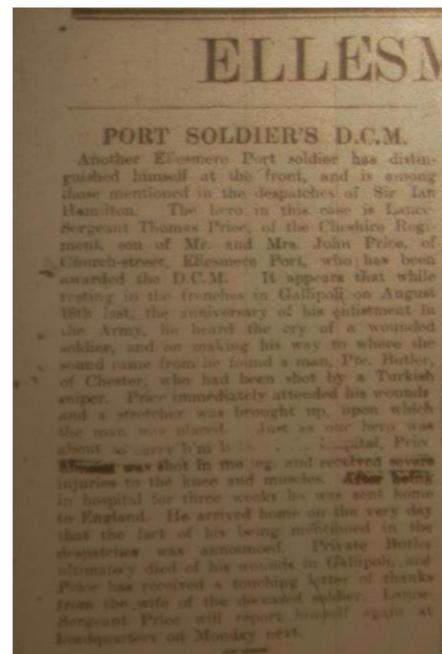
## Lance-Sergeant Thomas Price D.C.M., 10931 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment

Tom Price was the son of a painter, John Price, of Church Street, close to the dock site in Ellesmere Port. Both he and his younger brother signed on for the Cheshires, Tom joining the 8th Battalion and Merrill the 10th. The 8th (Service) Battalion had been formed at Chester on 12 August 1914 and were first moved to Tidworth camp, then to Chisledon by October 1914. In February 1915 they moved to Pirbright to finalise their training and by June 1915 they had embarked for Egypt, and then on to take part in the Gallipoli campaign in Turkey. The medal citation was described in the pages of the local press and was also recorded in the London Gazette on 2 February 1916.

### PORT SOLDIER'S D.C.M.

Another Ellesmere Port soldier has distinguished himself at the front, and is among those mentioned in the despatches of Sir Ian Hamilton. The hero in this case is Lance-Sergeant Thomas Price of the Cheshire Regiment, son of Mr and Mrs John Price of Church Street, Ellesmere Port, who has been awarded the D.C.M. It appears that while resting in the trenches in Gallipoli on August 18<sup>th</sup> last (1915), the anniversary of his enlistment in the Army, he heard the cry of a wounded soldier, and on making his way to where the sound came from he found a man, Private Butler of Chester, who had been shot by a Turkish sniper. Price immediately attended his wounds and a stretcher was brought up, upon which the man was placed. Just as our hero was about to carry him back to the hospital, Price was shot in the leg and received severe injuries to the knee and muscles. After being in hospital for three weeks he was sent home to England. He arrived home on the very day that the fact of his being mentioned in the despatches was announced. Private Butler ultimately died of his wounds in Gallipoli and Price has received a touching letter of thanks from the wife of the deceased soldier. Lance-Sergeant Price will report himself again at headquarters on Monday next.

*Chester Courant 5 Feb 1916*



Tom recovered from his wounds and was transferred to the Cheshire Depot Corps. The 8th Battalion, meanwhile, were pulled out to Egypt in January 1916, then to Mesopotamia the following month where it then remained for the rest of the war.

No.	Corps	Name
10931	DEPOT.	PRICE
	CHESHIRE	
L/SGT	(formerly 8BN)	T
Operations	Vol.	Page
DCM	LG 2-2-1916	A25
	AO 1-4-1916	A28-94

(432) Wt. 27169/7296 250M (3) 5/55 S.E.R. Ltd Gp. 647  
File Nos. :-

[On the outbreak of the First World War Hamilton was put in charge of Britain's home forces. In March 1915 Lord Kitchener selected Hamilton to take 75,000 soldiers to Gallipoli. He was much criticised for the Gallipoli landings and at subsequent operations at Anzac Cove and Sulva Bay. Relieved of his command, Hamilton was brought back to England where he became Lieutenant of the Tower (1918-1920). Sir Ian Hamilton died in 1947].

While Tom's parents were undoubtedly proud to read about Tom's award for gallantry on the battlefield, they later learned that Merrill was

killed in action in the later stages of the Battle of the Somme on 9th October 1916 aged twenty-five. He was buried in Grandcourt Road Cemetery on the Somme, on the slopes of the Ancre Valley below the Thiepval Memorial.

Several local men were awarded the Military Medal, although details of their action were not recorded in London Gazette as recipients of other classes of awards were, nor were details always printed in the local press. This is just a small selection of some of the stories of these men to again give a flavour of what their families at home were learning about their experiences;

### **Sergeant William Beavon M.M. and Private Thomas Beavon M.M.**

The Beavon family moved from Tipton in West Bromwich to Ellesmere Port in 1907 where Thomas Beavon senior took the job of sheet iron roller at the Mersey Iron Works, son Tom joining him there too as a sheet metal worker. William, three years younger than Tom, was working as a dock labourer for the Shropshire Union Canal Company at the age of 18 in 1911. This was a large family of twelve living in a tiny terrace house in Kingsley Road adjacent to the Iron Works, and a couple of years later William left home travelling abroad to start a new life in Australia. A short time after the war began both Tom and William, now thousands of miles apart, signed up for active service. William signed on for the Australian Imperial Forces at Melbourne on 30 December 1914, when he declared his occupation as an iron worker. Later reports suggest he was in the Australian Police Force, but this may have been his dream before war interrupted his plans. William was posted to training battalions before being assigned to the 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Imperial Forces, where he became a Lance Corporal and Corporal in 1917, then Sergeant in April 1918. Brother Tom joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Cheshires with many of his friends in the Port, but despite the parting of the brothers they were both committed soldiers and were uncannily awarded the same medal for gallantry, a rare achievement for siblings.

#### **GALLANT ELLESMERE PORT BROTHERS BOTH WIN M.M.**

Two more military medals have come to Ellesmere Port, and the honour is particularly distinctive in as much as the feat has been accomplished by two brothers. They are Sergt. William Beavon and Private Thos. Beavon, the sons of Mr and Mrs Thos. Beavon of 4 Kingsley Road.

Sergt. Beavon, whose deed that won him the medal was performed six months ago, is 25 years of age, and is attached to the Australian Forces. Before the war he was in the police force in Australia and answered the call to duty early on.

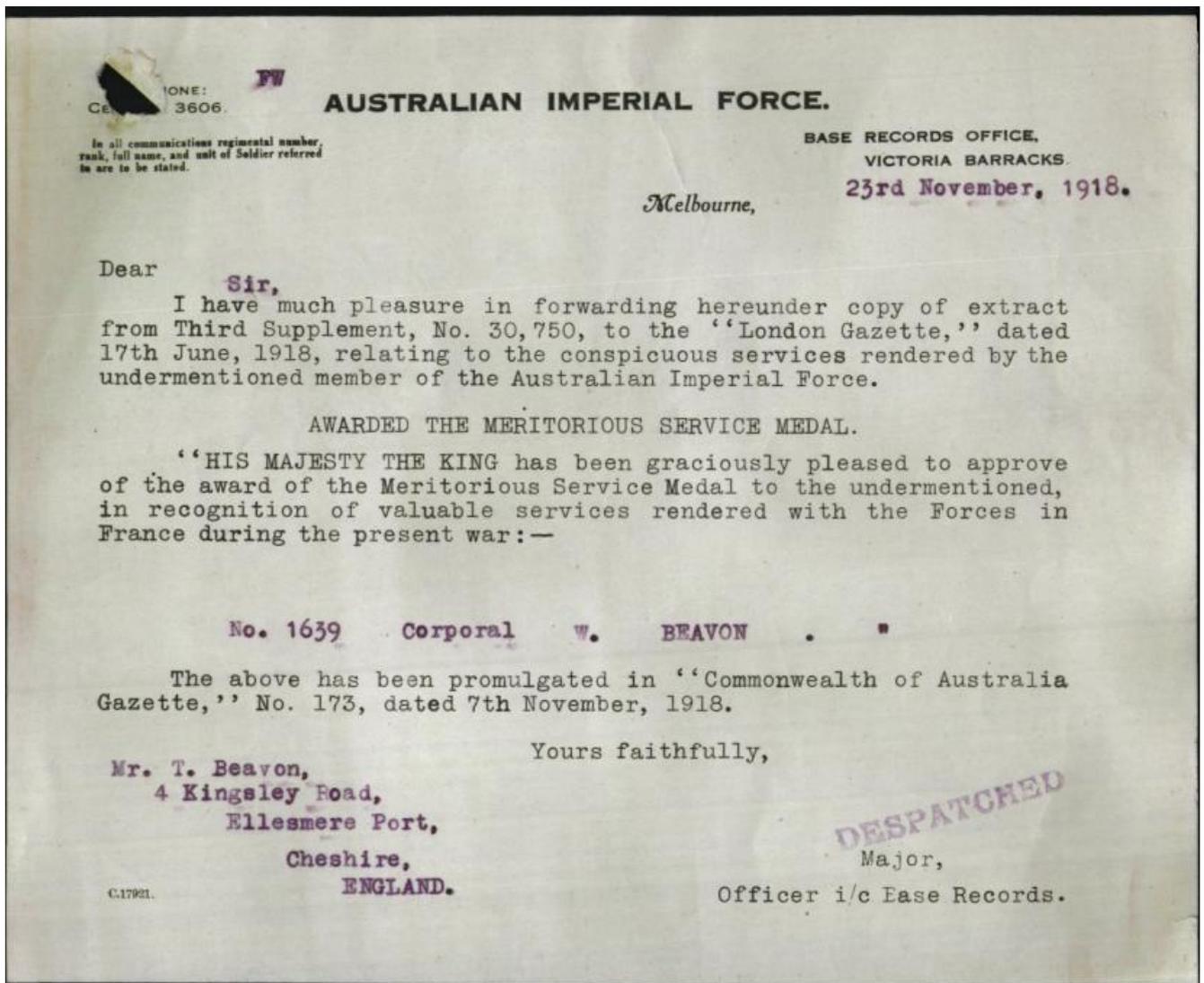
Private Thos. Beavon is 28 years of age, and before the war was employed in the sheet mills of the Mersey Iron Works as a breaker down. He enlisted with the 11<sup>th</sup> Cheshires in 1914, and proceeded to France the following year. He has gone through the war without a scratch, being one of the few fortunate men to have the experience. He has received the following signed declaration from the General Commanding the 75<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Cheshire Regiment:

‘Military Medal: “I wish to congratulate you on behalf of all ranks of the 102<sup>nd</sup> brigade. During the action near Spanbroekmolen Ridge on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September 1918, your work has been excellent and beyond praise. It has been a great pleasure to me to forward your name for the decoration you so gallantly earned, and I trust that I shall be able to congratulate you on many a future occasion. Your example to the company has been of great service to the officer commanding the company and to myself as your Brigadier.”

*Chester Observer, 22 September 1917*

William won his Military Medal on 17 March 1918. Although both men were gazetted, the precise nature of their gallant action has not survived. In May 1917 William received a serious gun-shot wound to the face which fractured his jaw and caused disfigurement, plus a gun-shot wound to the leg, and a broken hand. After treatment behind the lines, he was shipped back to England for hospital treatment, before rejoining his battalion in October that year. In September 1918 he was again wounded, this time receiving a gun-shot wound to the forehead, and again returned to his unit after treatment. After the war ended he was transferred to the 59<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and was in hospital again in

June, still suffering from the effects of his wounds. He was found to be medically unfit, and discharged in August 1919. He returned home and died in the Wirral aged 73 in 1966, and Thomas aged 84 in 1974.



### Lance Corporal G. Cadman M.M.

George Cadman was born in Wolverhampton in 1885 and married his wife Rebecca, who was from nearby Bilston, in 1907. Shortly afterwards they made the migration north to Ellesmere Port where George took up his job of sheet metal worker in the galvanised iron works, like many of his friends who had made the same journey. Three children quickly followed George (1908), Gertrude (1909) and John (1910). George signed on for the army in the early stages and was fully trained and in France by 28 September 1915.

### Military Medal for Local Soldier

It is with much gratification we learn of another Ellesmere Port soldier distinguishing himself on the field of battle, viz., 15422 Private G Cadman of the 2nd Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, who has been awarded the Military Medal for gallant conduct and devotion to duty in the field on February 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 1917. The official notification has been received by Mr Michael White of 10 Union Street, in whose charge Private Cadman's children have been since the death of the

mother, which took place about two years ago, while her husband was with the forces. The children are naturally delighted to hear of the honour bestowed on their father.

*Chester Courant 7 Apr 1917*

Sadly, Private Cadman died on 11 July 1919, not long after he returned home. Although his name was wrongly omitted from the local war memorial he was afforded a Commonwealth War Grave in Christchurch Churchyard, Ellesmere Port (grave 11.17). Could there have been no family to register his name on his behalf with those preparing the war memorial?



## **Corporal J.E. Davies M.M. King's Liverpool Regiment**

### **THRICE WOUNDED ELLESMERE PORT MILITARY MEDALLIST**

#### **HOW HE 'DUG OUT' THE HUNS**

Mr and Mrs Samuel Davies of 17 Bridge Street, Ellesmere Port, are proud that their soldier son, Lance-Corpl. J.E. Davies, has won the Military Medal. The gallant soldier, who is only 22 years old, was in the Liverpool police, which he joined at the age of 19, when the war broke out and he left to join the Liverpools, with whom he has done his duty in France. Prior to joining the police he was employed at the Mersey Ironworks as a crane driver on one of the modern electric cranes. He enlisted in April 1915 and proceeded to France in February 1917, having been thrice slightly wounded and twice admitted to hospital. He is now in hospital for the third time through wounds received while winning the Military Medal for a gallant act recorded in divisional orders as follows; "For fearless conduct during a daylight raid on the enemy trenches south of [censored], on the afternoon of June 29<sup>th</sup> 1917. On seeing a party of Germans run into a dug-out and close the iron door, he ran forward and threw in a phosphorous bomb. He bayoneted the first two Germans who came out, and, in spite of being severely wounded by a bomb, he bombed the remaining Germans".

His captain sent the following letter to him:-

"Dear Lance-Corporal Davies, I am writing to congratulate you very heartily on being awarded the Military Medal. From all accounts you did splendidly, and we are extremely glad you have got it; it was thoroughly deserved. I enclose a copy of the divisional orders. Let me know when you are fit again and ready to return to duty, as I feel you would like to come back to this battalion, and we will do anything that can be done in the matter to this end. Best of luck and I hope you will get on all right."

In a letter to his parents the gallant corporal, after saying that his wound is now healed and all that keeps him in hospital is a cold, and a very bad one at that, says; "I am glad to get the news that I got the Military Medal, for I have known ever since I got wounded - that is three weeks or more now - that I should be getting some distinction, as I deserved it, for I was in German lines, and my mates got popped off one by one, and I stood my ground against 50 Huns, and drove them into a dug-out and then suffocated them out again with a sulphur bomb, and killed them as they came out until I got hit. Then I did not know anything until I was in our own lines. I had come back on my own - so I was told - and a nice picture too, for both my hands and knees were bandaged and I was smiling all over my face on my way out".

*Birkenhead Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 1 Aug 1917*

*(Bridge Street - and the canal bridge - were demolished to make way for the M53 motorway - they lay approximately where the intersection for the Ellesmere Port town access road now lies).*

Having moved to Aigburth Vale in Liverpool to join the local police, he signed on for the 2/10ths Liverpool Scottish Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment in April 1915. He was awarded his medal in the action known as Dicky's Dash, a meticulously planned and successful attack on the Bridoux Salient near Armentieres (the raid being named after their commanding officer Captain A.P. Dickinson). John Davies' action was also mentioned in the regimental history (McGilchrist, A. M., *The Liverpool Scottish 1900-1919*). He received gun-shot wounds to his hands in the action and was eventually moved behind the lines for hospital treatment in Etaples, before rejoining the unit in September. He was promoted to corporal after he was awarded the military medal and was made acting sergeant in December 1917. John Davies survived the war and was discharged in December 1918.



### Private John Leonard France M.M. 51531 Cheshire Regiment

Born in Tilstock Park near Whitchurch, Leonard Davies had a tough start to life when his father John died before Leonard had reached his first birthday. He was a brick setter in the small hamlet of Whixhall in the mosslands north Shropshire. Leonard's mother Elizabeth was only thirty-two with seven children all under the age of eleven. After a period of hardship working as an agricultural labourer, Elizabeth married again, to a local man Frederick Betteley in March 1910. By that time, Leonard had moved to Ellesmere Port, lodging with his Aunt Elizabeth France, and working on the dock site as a warehouse porter for the Shropshire Union Canal Company. Other family members had migrated to the expanding town from Shropshire, and soon his mother with her new husband would arrive too. Leonard then worked for the Mersey Iron Works for a couple of years before signing on to the Cheshire Regiment on 9 December 1915. He was only 5 feet 1¼ inches in height, under the regulation minimum of 5 feet 3 inches, suggesting he may have tried to sign on earlier with the rest of his pals, but told to come back when he was taller. The height restriction became somewhat blurred as the need for recruits became more acute and a Bantams Battalion was formed in Cheshire to take men under height.

Army Form B. 103. Regimental Number. 51531

**Casualty Form - Active Service.**

Rank Plt Regiment or Corps Cheshire Regt  
 Surname France Christian Name J

Religion ..... Age on Enlistment ..... years ..... months  
 Enlisted (a) ..... Terms of Service (a) ..... Service reckons from (a) .....  
 Date of promotion to present rank ..... Date of appointment to lance rank .....

Extended (.....) Re-engaged (.....) Qualification (b) .....  
 or Corps Trade and Rate .....

Occupation ..... Signature of Officer .....

Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form B.103, Army Form A.36, or other official documents
Date	From whom received			
		Embarked ...		
		Disembarked...		
<u>20/9/18</u>	<u>ob</u>	<u>Killed in Action</u>	<u>27.9.18/1918</u>	<u>Major for</u>
		<u>Widow's Pension</u>		<u>O 175 No. 8 Infy Ser</u>
				<u>G. H. Q. 3rd Echelon FRANCE</u>
		<u>Awarded Military Medal</u>		
		<u>Will Supp. London Gazette 4/12/18</u>		

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted in Section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.  
 (b) Signaller, Shoeing-Smith, &c.  
 (1791) W.L.W. 1007-P.1124, 1,000,000, 615. D.A.S. Form B.103. (R. 1906.)

Leonard was posted to the 17th (Reserve) Battalion, which was a reserve battalion for the 15th and 16th – both Cheshire Bantams - and on 13th April 1916 was sent to Prees Heath camp for training, just a mile or so from Whixhall where he grew up, it probably felt like going home again. On 27 July, he was in France posted to the 16th Battalion (Bantams), who that night had relieved the battle weary brother battalion of the 15ths in the trenches near Trones Wood, at Guillemont, suffering heavy

shelling before they could get into position. Leonard had missed the opening of the Battle of the Somme, but this was still a battle at its height.

A week later on 6 August, Leonard had been moved to the battle weary 15ths. According to Stephen McGreal in his excellent work on the *Cheshire Bantams*,

The strain of almost constant trench warfare interspersed with backbreaking work was beginning to have a noticeable effect on the little men; officers and men were reported as being over tired and morale was in decline. The first week in August offered little to improve the situation for the infantry of the Division. This period was scheduled to be a rest period, but the days were now spent carrying out physical drill, bayonet fighting and practice in trench attack. The overworked men were also required to carry out night-time exercises, practicing trench attacks, carried out in front of the Brigadier. This disappointing course of events came about due to the arrival of fresh drafts of men, the vast majority of whom were poorly trained and physically under developed. Converting these men into troops fit to enter the line demanded considerable attention from the officers and left little time for more relaxing pastimes.

August 1916 was a gruelling experience for the Bantams and they were no doubt relieved to be moved north to the Arras sector in early September. However, on 6 December 1916 it had been decided that the 35th Division would no longer be a 'Bantam Division' and men of average height would now be accepted, and reduced the strength of the Division by rejecting 25% of their men, many of who had fought admirably thus far. In January, the 15ths lost sixty-one men in this cull of which Leonard France was one, being moved to the Field Ambulance on 14 January 1917. Weeks later on 16 March, he was transferred to the newly formed 189th Company Labour Corps at Calais before they moved to Rouen on 14 May 1917. There they were engaged in a wide variety of work, consisting of building and maintaining the huge transport network, stores, dumps, telegraph and telephone systems, and moving and supplying stores. By 15 October 1917, he had rejoined the Cheshires, having been transferred into the 1st Battalion, where they were in support at Broodseinde during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). After a short period of rest, they were back into the front line on 23 October 1917 near Bedford House on the Ypres Salient. By December 1917, they were sent as part of a joint Anglo-French force to aid the Italians after their heavy defeat by Austro-German forces at the Battle of Caporetto. On 24 October 1917, a combined German and Austro-Hungarian force had scored one of the most crushing victories of the war, decimating the Italian line along the northern stretch of the Isonzo River. Though the Italians managed to strengthen their defences over the next few weeks, by the end of November the Germans and Austrians had driven them back some 60 miles to the River Piave, just 20 miles north of Venice. Italian casualties at Caporetto totalled almost 700,000—40,000 killed or wounded, 280,000 captured by the enemy and another 350,000 deserted. Consequently, British forces were deployed to the area in December 1917 and the Division positioned along the River Piave. On the 18 March, still in Italy, Leonard received a head wound which failed to heal, causing an abscess to his face, and from the casualty clearing station he was sent to hospital in Pavia.

[A soldier who was injured in the field would be treated firstly by the Battalion Medical Officer and his orderlies and stretcher bearers, and at a Regimental Aid Post in the trenches, then moved to an Advance Dressing Station close to the front line, manned by members of The Field Ambulance, RAMC. If further treatment was needed, he would be moved to a Casualty Clearing Station, a tented camp behind the lines, and then, if required, moved to one of the base hospitals usually by train, the seriously wounded were taken back to Britain by Hospital Ship and onto the relevant hospital for further treatment].

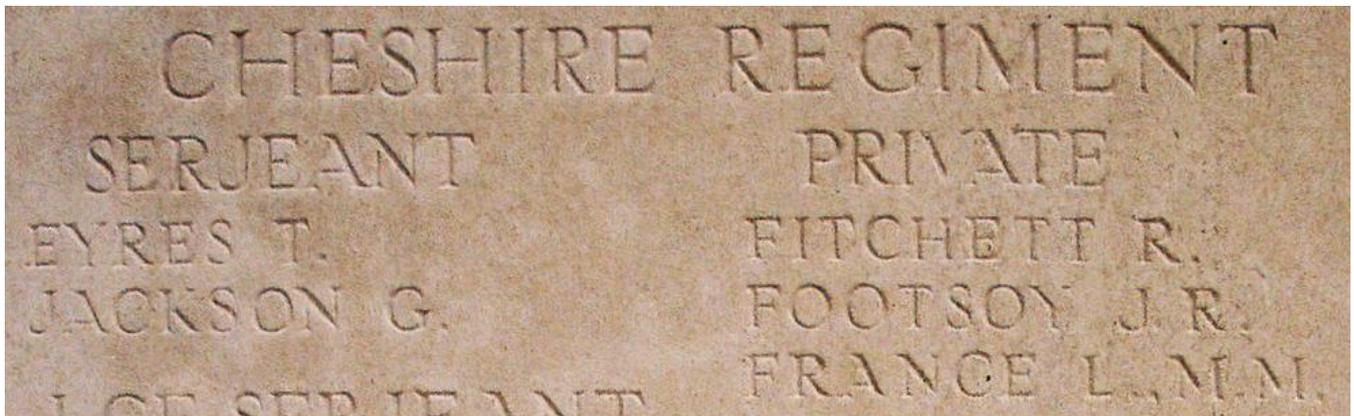
On 13 April 1918, the day he was released from hospital care in Pavia to return to the 1st Cheshires, he seems to have got himself so drunk that he became violent trying to resist arrest. Consequently, he was given 28 days field punishment No.1, which would have seen him shackled to a fixed object such as a wagon wheel for two hours a day, usually for three out of four days during the 4 week period. He would also have lost privileges and pay during the punishment, while also being subject to hard labour.

In April 1918 the 1st Cheshires returned to Belgium, where they took part in the Battle of Hazebrouck, fighting in the Defence of Nieppe Forest, before moving south once more to the Somme, fighting in the Battle of Albert, the Battle of Bapaume, and the Battle of the Epehy. In September 1918, they moved a few miles north to enter the Battle of Canal du Nord, part of a general Allied offensive against German positions along an incomplete portion of the Canal du Nord and on the outskirts of Cambrai between 27 September and 1 October 1918. At the commencement of these hostilities, Leonard was involved in the battle that saw him awarded the Military Medal, which also cost him his life as he was killed in action on 27 September 1918.

At home, a notice appeared in the local press the following month, just days before the Armistice.

#### **Private Leonard John France**

51531 Private Leonard John France, son of Frederick and Elizabeth Betteley, was employed at the Mersey Iron Works before signing on to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment. The circumstances of his award for gallantry are as yet unknown, but he was killed in action near Arras on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1918. His body was never recovered, and he is recorded on the memorial panel in the Vis-en-Artois Memorial, on the Arras to Cambrai road, Pas De Calais. He was twenty-seven years old.



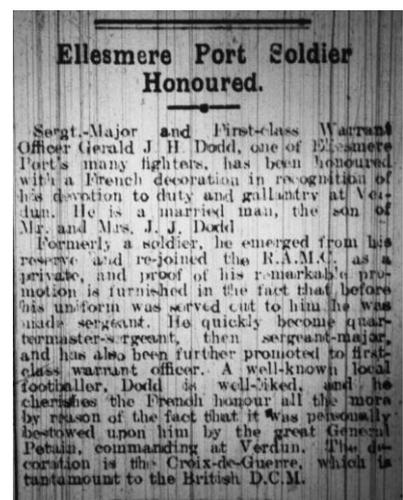
*Private Leonard France M.M. on the Cheshire's memorial panel on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial*

#### **Sergeant-Major and First Class Warrant Officer Gerald J.H. Dodd**

John James Dodd was an itinerant sign writer and painter, born in London in 1866, who married his Yorkshire born wife Jemima Shaw in Liverpool where they started a family, returning to her home in Huddersfield, where two children were born before returning to Liverpool. The family were uprooted again, moving to Ellesmere Port in 1894. Harold (1895) and Alexander (1896) were born there soon afterwards. When war broke out four of their sons signed on. Gerald, who had been married some years earlier joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, and rose through the ranks. He was honoured by General Petain himself, personally presenting him with the Croix-de-Guerre.

#### **ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER HONOURED**

Sergeant-Major and First Class Warrant Officer Gerald J.H. Dodd, one of Ellesmere Port's many fighters, has been honoured with a French decoration in recognition of his devotion to duty and gallantry at Verdun. He is a married man, the son of Mrs J.J.Dodd.



Formerly a soldier, he emerged from his reserve and rejoined the R.A.M.C. as a private, and proof of his remarkable promotion is furnished in the fact that before his uniform was served out to him he was made sergeant. He quickly became quartermaster-sergeant, then sergeant-major, and has also been further promoted to first-class warrant officer. A well-known local footballer, Dodd is well liked, and he cherishes the French honour all the more by reason of the fact that it was personally bestowed upon him by the great General Petain, commanding at Verdun. The decoration is the Croix-de-Guerre, which is tantamount to the British D.C.M.

*Birkenhead News, 24th May 1916*

Younger brother Harold was Mentioned in Despatches, while the youngest of the Dodds' was brought home to Chester very ill with what was diagnosed a diabetes. After unsuccessful hospital treatment he died aged 19 on 2 June 1915, and was buried with a gun salute in the Ellesmere Port parish churchyard of Christchurch.

**MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES  
PORT MAN HONOURED**

We are pleased to announce that an Ellesmere Port man's name appears in the list of those mentioned in despatches and published in our last issue. It is Harold P. Dodd, 1268 Welsh Border Mounted Brigade. He formerly worked for the Imperial Flour Mills, and joined the Territorial Forces, afterwards volunteering for active service. He left Ellesmere Port a month after the war started, and has some exciting experiences in France. He wrote to his parents a short time ago stating he had been Mentioned in Despatches, together with an officer, a sergeant-major and two men from Hereford. Private Dodd states that the honour is conferred for attending wounded soldiers under very heavy fire. The Dodd family has a fine record for war service. Three sons are in France, and one in England, all serving their country, and the two at home have both attested. We heartily congratulate Private Dodd upon the honour conferred upon him. His brother Sergt-Major Dodd visited the Port a few weeks ago, and has seen heavy fighting.

*Cheshire Courant, 15 January 1916*

**Private Alexander Alfred Dodd 24649 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment, died aged 19 on 2 June 1915,**

**ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER'S DEATH**

We regret to record the death of Private Alexander Alfred Dodd, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> City Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment, who died at Chester Royal Infirmary after an operation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst. The funeral took place at Ellesmere Port church on Saturday, the hearse containing the body being preceded to the cemetery by a firing party of 14 men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment in charge of Sergeant Gosling, also a party of deceased's regiment in charge of Sergeant Gummery, who furnished the bearers, viz., Privates A.Knight, J.Gillespie, W. Richards, J.McNay, H.Edwards, and T.Cooper. Private Dodd was a son of Mr and Mrs J.J. Dodd of 17 Oak Street, Ellesmere Port. Three of his brothers are serving in the Army.

*Birkenhead News & Wirral General Advertiser, 9 June 1915*

**Sergeant Reg Stanway**

**CROIX DE GUERRE  
FOR ELLESMERE PORT N.C.O.**

Sergeant Reg Stanway is a local soldier who displayed superb gallantry during the recent Hun onslaught, and his services were so much appreciated that the French Government have seen fit to award him the Croix de Guerre. Sgt.Stanway, along with Sgt-Major Gerald Dodd, who was awarded the honour two years ago, shares a distinction granted to the late Lord Kitchener, and more recently to the Queen of the Belgians. Sgt Stanway who is the youngest son of Mrs Stanway of Westminster Grove and brother of Stanway Brothers, the well-known tradesmen, served his time to Mr R.F. Walton, wheelwright and coachbuilder of Whitby. An imposing figure, standing six feet three inches, he is as popular with the men in the big gun battery as he was with many people in his

civilian days. The gallant sergeant is a keen lover of music and has inaugurated a choir amongst his comrades of the battery. Formerly a member of the Wesleyan choir, he was always very enthusiastic and reliable and used his resonant bass voice to good service in the church which he regularly attended. At a singing contest held in the Hippodrome four years ago, he was loudly acclaimed the winner, his song on that occasion very peculiarly enough being a military composition entitled 'The King's Own'.

*Birkenhead & Cheshire Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 31 July 1918*

#### **ELLESMERE PORT SOLDIER MUSICIAN**

The 'Advertiser' has received a cheery letter from Sgt. Reg Stanway, who was formerly a member of the Ellesmere Port Wesleyan Church Choir and the Male Voice Choir in connection with that body. In his letter he says he and his comrades are out for a rest somewhere behind the line, and he is organising a glee party, but is in want of some glees, quartets, etc. to give the start. He still has an interest in the 'old game' and says he is getting a choir together for church services. They are having a good time, but have 'bags of mud all thrown in'. He only joined his present battery a fortnight ago. We complied with Sgt. Stanway's request, and sent him a bundle of music, which will help him to commence his choir.

*Birkenhead & Cheshire Advertiser and Wallasey Guardian, 27 February 1918*

His brother Wallace Stanway, a dairyman, was with the Liverpool Pals on fateful first day on the Somme on 1 July 1916. He was shot through the head and killed instantly. He was never found and was recorded on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing.



All servicemen and servicewomen of Britain and the Commonwealth were awarded the 'Next of Kin Memorial Plaque' commonly referred to as the 'Memorial Penny'.

In 1916 a Government Committee was set up by Secretary of State for War, David Lloyd George, to consider what form of memorial should be made available to the next of kin of those who died on active service. On 7 November 1916, *The Times* informed its readers that the cost of the memorial was to be borne by the State and that the precise form it was to take was a matter for much longer consideration though the initially accepted idea was that it should be '...a small metal plate recording the man's name and services.' It was not until August 1917, in the midst of the Third Battle of Ypres, that the 'memorial plate project' resurfaced in the General Committee's decision that the commemoration should now take the form of bronze plaque. The announcement was reported in *The Times* on Monday 13 August 1917, together with extravagant detail describing the public competition for appropriate designs. The first prize of £250, for two model designs, was awarded to 'Pyramus' - Edward Carter Preston of the Sandon Studios Society in Liverpool. Production of the plaques began in December 1918 and around 1,150,000 were made. The plaques issued commemorated those men and women who died between 4 August 1914 and 10 January 1920 who had been killed on active service. Memorial Scrolls were also sent to the next of kin and were sent out in seven and a quarter inch long cardboard tubes. The plaques themselves were dispatched under separate cover in stiff card wrapping

enclosed within white envelopes bearing the Royal Arms. Both memorials were accompanied by a letter from King George V which bore his facsimile signature and read:

*I join with my grateful people in sending you this memorial of  
a brave life given for others in the Great War.*

*George R.I.*

Many families proudly framed their Memorial Plaques and scroll, and hung them on the wall in prominent place where visitors could clearly see them, but others felt bitterness and a resentment that they sent away their husband, son or brother, only to receive an inconsequential motif in return.

In my grand-parent's house in the Dingle, Liverpool (the street later to be the exterior set of the 80's sit-com *Bread* where the terraced houses sloped down the incline towards the docks) there were no photographs or medals or plaques on show, although to be fair it was by then the 1960s, and the Second World War was more prominent in their memories. Every grandparent's back parlour room had a cabinet with its 'bits draw', full of old pennies, batteries, pen knives and all sorts of artefacts to fascinate the young grandchild - and to keep them occupied while the adults got on with their conversations. Tucked away at the bottom, face down among small items like paper clips, empty cigarette lighters and a couple of marbles, I discovered the memorial plaque of my great-grandfather who had been killed in action in France in 1918. It certainly seemed uncared for and unwanted, while my grandmother always took pride in cleaning her brass ornaments which seemed to adorn every available space, while this lay face down in the depths of the draw - and I could see, at the age of eight or nine, that it was more significant than a brass ashtray or the figurines along the mantle-piece. So much so, that I asked if I could have it, and my father took it for me for safe keeping, together with a battered metal figure of Christ that was once attached to a small wooden cross. My grandfather said it had been pushed into his father's hands as he was dying and was returned from France with his belongings.

And this is where I came in, this is what sparked my interest in this conflict, this war to end all wars, this war that affected so many both abroad and at home, my home, my family, my great grandfather whom I never knew. I hope I have done justice to that face down memorial penny at the bottom of the bits draw.



## Further Reading

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**Spencer, William**, *Army Service Records of the First World War* (3rd edn., Richmond: Public Record Office, 2001)

**Spencer, William**, *Medals: The Researcher's Guide*

**Holding, Norman H.**, *World War I Army Ancestry* (Plymouth: Federation of Family History Societies, 1982)

*The Location of British Army Records: A National Directory of World War I Sources* (Plymouth: Federation of Family History Societies, 1984).

**Duckers, Peter**, *British Campaign Medals, 1914-2005* (Shire Album)

**Duckers, Peter**, *British Orders and Decorations* (Shire Album)

**Dymond, Steve**, *Researching British Military Medals*

**Connelly, M.**, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London 1916 -1939*, Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, (2001).

**King, A.**, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*, Berg, (1998).

## On the Net

**The Great War 1914-1918** [www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-campaign-medals.htm](http://www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-campaign-medals.htm)

A Guide to British Campaign Medals of WW1

**British Medals Forum** [www.britishmedalforum.com](http://www.britishmedalforum.com)

The Objective of the British Medal Forum is to develop and further the interest, research and collecting of British & Commonwealth medals and researching their recipients and assist each other with specialist issues such as research, naming styles, clasp combinations, etc.

**Next of Kin Plaque** <http://archive.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.992>

The full story of the Next of Kin Plaque and how it came to be issued is told here. (NB. This has moved a number of times and if the link is broken, a short Google search will swiftly turn it up).

**Julie McCollum's Militarium** [www.military-medal.co.uk](http://www.military-medal.co.uk)

A useful website offering a range of information on medals including an interactive medal identification tool, The Knowledge Zone, The Genealogy Archives (step by step guide to military genealogy), The Book Shop, The Militaria Forum and a directory of militaria dealers.