



ELLESMERE PORT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

THE PARTING OF THE CALDICOTT BROTHERS

15962 Private William Caldicott

17th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment

15963 Lance Corporal Jack Caldicott

17th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment

As the eye drifts across the endless names on the panels, the summer breeze blows through the cavernous arches where the names still reach higher and higher. The images cannot help but drive home the futility of war and the desperate sacrifice made by so many men. In all there are 73,000 names spread across the numerous panels set on every side of the supporting columns. It is heart wrenching enough to walk among the cemeteries of Picardy, which seem to appear at every turn in the road, but these are names of the missing. A stadium full at Cardiff or Wembley. Breath-taking numbers. How can so many be missing? But the answer is too dreadful to contemplate, the nature of war, the weapons the conditions, men swallowed up by the mud or quite literally blown out of existence.



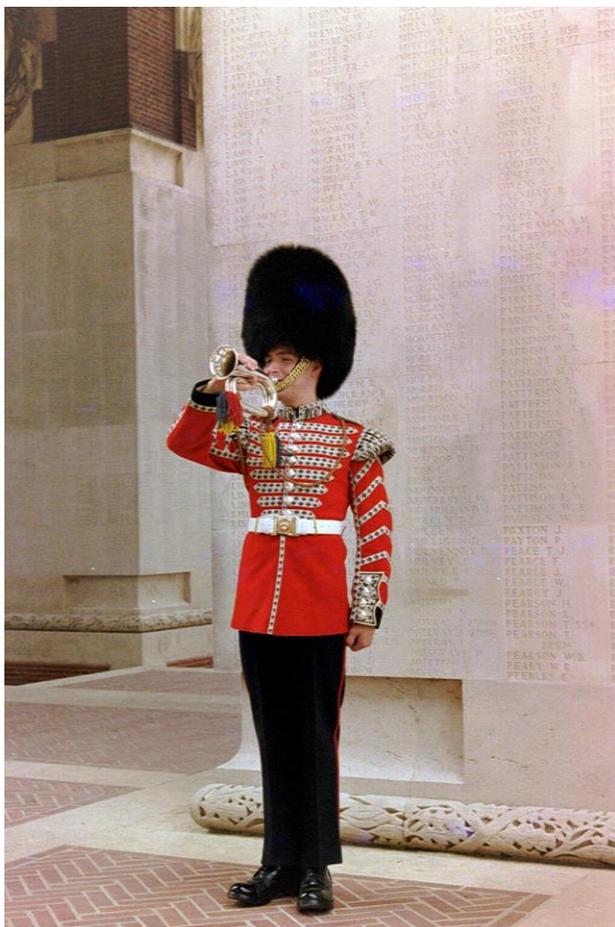
It was late evening and the summer sun was still strong, shadows not quite long enough to cast the memorial in patterns across the lawns below. I was a solitary figure among the missing, where there are usually endless visitors. It was peaceful and so rare to be able take in the idyllic surroundings without the respectful background hum, and trying not to get in the way of visitors taking treasured photographs. The whole area is beautiful, rolling hills, pretty hamlets, larks singing above the dusty paths among the golden cornfields. And all in full colour. The black and white



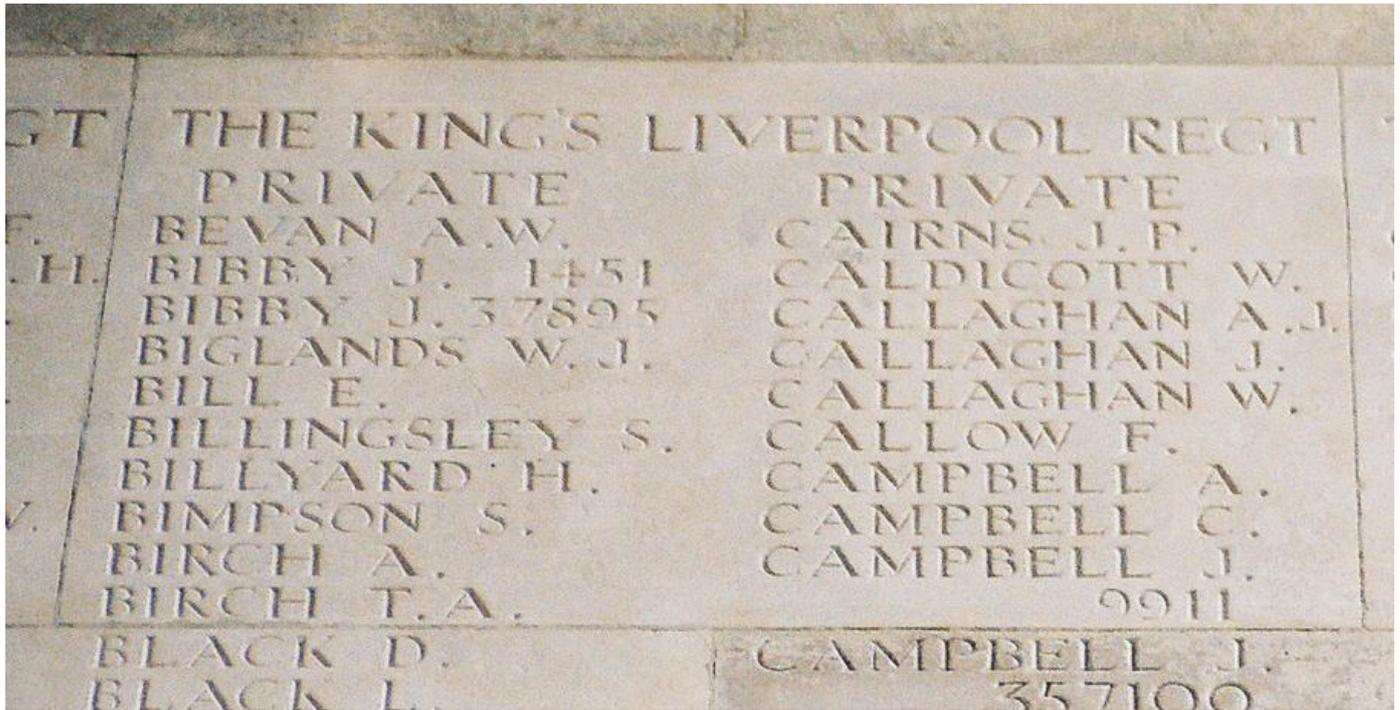
imagery in my head of trenches, craters, weary faces of soldiers staring at the camera among a desolate landscape, are completely at odds with the Somme landscape in front of me. It is quite impossible to imagine, to even begin to think of the dreadful events that took place here. It was the same at Auschwitz. A place you think will be in black and white when you get there. How can it be anything else? It has to be in monotone as that's how it was. Colour would just humanise it, or that's how the brain would react after decades of black and white imagery. But there the grass was green, the birds were singing, and from nowhere two hares raced across the beautifully mown grass and started boxing not ten yards away from the back of one of the still standing barrack blocks in Birkenau. A sight I had never seen in England, and I had to travel to that place to see it. Springtime. Life goes on. And so it was in Picardy, a place too beautiful for unspeakable horror. I was startled from my thoughts by the arrival of coach. Passengers began to disembark and I resented their intrusion. Mostly men, some in their thirties and forties, but several seniors, all clearly military, most sporting regimental blazers.

They mounted the steps and as they passed, one or two accents sounded very familiar, they were men of The King's Liverpool Regiment, past and present. Such a strange moment. I had been studying the panels of their missing, looking for one of their men in particular, only minutes earlier. This is why I had come to the Thiepval

Memorial, one of many visits I had made over the years. They were making an annual pilgrimage to visit the sites where the 21 battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment took part in the battles of the Somme, Arras and Passchendaele, a period of approximately 15 months, during which the Regiment lost some 10,000 men. They had stopped here to lay a wreath below the 2,058 Kingsmen looking down from the panels.



A few moments later, we were also joined by a small party of men from the First Honourable Artillery making a similar pilgrimage. They were accompanied by a bandsman in his red tunic and bearskin carrying a bugle (similar uniform to the Coldstream Guards to the lay observer). After they had spent some minutes walking below the arches and studying various names on the panels, an order was barked out and they quickly came to order at the top of the steps. The senior officer ran through procedure, before giving the order to begin the ceremony, which included words of remembrance – Binyon's verse, the laying of the wreath and a minutes silence. But it was their bugler playing the *Last Post* through those arches and beyond so movingly which will stay with me for eternity, and I was so grateful the coach parties had intruded on my moment of rare solitude at Thiepval.



I returned to look for the name I was after earlier, Private William Caldicott, King's Liverpool Regiment. This was part of an on-going project, tracing the men recorded on three war memorials back home; the village where I grew up (Halewood), one near my work place (Ellesmere Port), and one in the village where I live now (Farndon). I had made a great deal of headway on all of them, with the intention of not just photographing the grave, but to research and write about their lives too, with the results going on dedicated websites. I had also discovered that both William and his younger brother Jack were part of the Liverpool Pals.



Administrative County Stafford The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the Ward of Municipal Borough of Edingwold Parliamentary Borough of Wolverhampton Page 18

Col. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Col. 1	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Uninhabited	In use as a Dwelling	See Col. 3	Number of Persons in the House	Name and Surnames of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Sex	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lame (4) Inebriate, feeble-minded		
78	5 George Street	1			4	Samuel Weasley	Head	M	21	Engine Fitter	Worker		Staff Edingwold			
79	7 do	1			4	William Carter	Head	M	32	Sheet Iron Fabricator	Worker		do do			
						Emily do	Wife	F	29				Warwick Birmingham			
						Thomas do	Son	M	7				Staff Edingwold			
						Alice do	Daughter	F	4				do do			
80	9 do	1			4	William Caldwell	Head	M	45	Ironworks Tinsmith	Worker		do do			
						Lucy do	Wife	F	38				Monmouth Worcester			
						Edith do	Daughter	F	16				Staff Edingwold			
						William Francis do	Son	M	12				do do			
						John Henry do	Son	M	8				do do			
81	11 do	1			4	Joseph Davis	Head	M	28	Wood Turner	Worker		Worcester Edingwold			
						Rose do	Wife	F	29				Staff Wolverhampton			
						Flora do	Daughter	F	8				do do			
						Mary do	Daughter	F	16				do do			
						Joseph Henry do	Son	M	1				do do			
						Henry Gardner do	Brother in Law	M	21	Blacksmiths Shop	Worker		do do			
82	13 do	1			4	Henry Hollings	Head	M	28	Coal & Oil dealer for Machinery	do		do do			
						Emily do	Wife	F	27				Salop Tradeley			
						Benjamin do	Son	M	2				do do			
						Percy do	Son	M	1mo				Staff Wolverhampton			
83	15 do	1			4	William Thomas	Head	M	39	Sheet Iron Fabricator	do		do do			
						Alice do	Wife	F	38				do do			
						Alfred do	Son	M	15	Roll Screws as Hand Work			do do			
						Elsie do	Daughter	F	11				do Edingwold			
						Ellen do	Daughter	F	9				do do			
						William do	Son	M	6				do do			
						Percy do	Son	M	4				do do			
Total of Schedules of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms						6	Total of Males and of Females...						17	14		

NOTE—Draw your pen through such words of the headings as are inoperative.

Census 1901

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedules (To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection) **150**

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards	BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY		
			State whether (1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included.	Write "Single," "Married," or "Widower," or "Widow," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to previous Marriage. (If see that one year write "none.")					Total Children Born Alive.	
William Caldwell	Head	55 M	Married	25	4	9	1	Labourer	610	Wolverhampton	Widower	
Lucy Caldwell	Wife	54 F	Married	28	4	3	1			Wolverhampton	Widow	
William Caldwell	Son	22 M	Single					Sheet Mill Worker	610	Staffordshire	Worker	
John Caldwell	Son	18 M	Single					Sheet Mill Worker		Staffordshire	Worker	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchens, Tenements, or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count sanitary, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.

Total: Males **3**, Females **4**, Persons **0**

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature William Caldwell
 Postal Address 69 Heathfield Rd Edingwold Staff

Census 1911

The Caldicott family were originally from the Midlands. Their father, William Caldicott, was born in Newport Monmouthshire in 1856, but moved to the Wolverhampton area, where he married his wife Lucy who was born in Droitwich in 1861. They moved to Ettingshall in Bilston, south-east of Wolverhampton, a fast expanding hub of the industrial West Midlands. Like most of the working men in the area he was a sheet worker in the local Wolverhampton iron works. Their three children were born in Ettingshall; Esther (1884), William Francis (1889) and John Henry (1893), but in the early years of the 20th century, William uprooted his family and moved north to Ellesmere Port, although daughter Esther stayed behind to marry and bring up their children in the village of her birth.



The Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Company was founded in 1857 and specialised in galvanised and black flat or corrugated sheets. In 1905 the company established the Mersey Ironworks in Ellesmere Port on the banks of the Shropshire Union Canal, adjacent to the main railway line. Across the line were their main competitors, Burnell's Iron Works, founded in the late nineteenth century, and until then the main employer. Ellesmere Port may have been little more than a village based around the canal terminus and its small dock complex on the Mersey, but the Jones Brothers who owned the Wolverhampton works, chose Ellesmere Port for its commercially strategic position, with easy access to major ports, served by inland canals and railway, and because land was cheap. The major part of the company's production was exported, and barges were used to carry finished products to ships in Liverpool and Birkenhead. Almost two thousand people would be employed at the new factory, but there were insufficient workers in Ellesmere Port and this was a catalyst for its pre-war expansion as hundreds of workers began to move in. Significantly, many of the workers came from Wolverhampton, Dudley and Bilston. Census records reveal that around 300 families made this migration en masse. Some of them were so poor that they walked along the Shropshire Union Canal towpath with their possessions to get to Ellesmere Port. Well-planned housing estates were built by the factory owners for their workers. The Jones Brothers also hired trains to move others over one weekend to get their business up and running. (Pictured:



top: the family home at 16 Briarfield Road (by 1916), middle: 69 Heathfield Road (1911), bottom: The Wolverhampton (Merseyside) Iron and Steel Works).



The nearby Wolverham housing estate was built to house many of the migrant workers, hence its name - other street names reflected their origins too, such as Wolverham Road, Dudley Road, and Stafford Road.

William Caldicott may have been encouraged to move by promotion as he was now a timekeeper in the new Mersey Ironworks factory and was later joined by his sons William and John Henry ('Jack') as iron workers, although William later moved to the John Summers mill, a larger concern, near the River Dee at Shotton, Queensferry. (*Offices pictured left*).



When the war broke out hundreds enlisted from Burnells and the Wolverhampton Mersey Ironworks. Many signed up to the local regiment, the Cheshires, but many Ellesmere Port families had close ties to Liverpool, and increasing numbers began to head over the Mersey. They were also attracted by the Old Pals recruitment drives. This certainly attracted the Caldicott boys – like many others they were not from the city originally, but worked close by, but it is also possible that they may have been influenced by an acquaintance, maybe in the factory, as on the Attestation Forms signed by both William and Jack on enlistment, they stated they had been encouraged by a Sgt Jones of the K.L.R.



The first Pals battalion to be raised was the 17th (Service) Battalion of the King's (Liverpool Regiment) on 29th August 1914. The Caldicotts were quick to heed the call and signed on together in Liverpool on 1 September, their service numbers issued were 15962 for William, and Jack was right behind him in queue as 15963. William was now aged 26 and Jack, twenty-one. Initially they returned home to wait for the call, but were back in Liverpool the following Saturday on 5 September 1914, when they marched from their assembly point at West Lancashire Riding School

in Aigburth, to St George's Hall in the city, where the local population had lined the streets and cheered them all the way. Within days, William and Jack were in the Prescott Watch Factory with the rest of the 17th. Several sergeants of the Grenadier Guards had been recruited to train the men in army discipline, footdrill and musketry, although it would be a few weeks before they all had regular uniforms and rifles. As news filtered back from France about the developing nature of warfare, the 17th, plus men from the rest of the Pal's battalions, moved onto Lord Derby's Knowsley Estate nearby and began to practice digging trenches (*pictured right*).



At the end of April 1915 orders finally came to move out, and all four city battalions were entrained for Grantham on Friday 30 April, where the 12,000 strong Pals were quartered in a camp on the Belton Park Estate. During this period of training, and no doubt due to much tedium and frustration, William was twice on a charge, both for similar minor offences of arriving back late from local leave. Due back late the previous evening, William decided instead to turn up the next morning. For the first offence while still at Prescott on 4 April 1915 he was 'admonished', while the second one at Grantham on 11 August 1915 he was confined to barracks for 7 days. Additionally, in both cases he lost a day's pay.

Place	Date of offence	Rank	Case of drunkenness	Offence	Names of Witnesses	Punishment awarded	Date of award or of order dispensing with trial	By whom awarded	Remarks
Prescot	4.4.15	Pvt		Absent from barracks 4/4/15 to 9.30 AM 5/4/15	Line Sgt. Young Sgt. Hunsell	admonished	5.4.15	Capt. B. Sten	Forfeit 1 day pay under R.C.
Grantham	11.8.15	Pvt		Late returning from patrol from 10 pm 11/8/15 to 8.45 pm 12/8/15	Sgt. Cole	7 days C.R.	12.8.15	Sgt. Higgins	Forfeit 1 day pay under R.C.

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Army Form B 122

After 4 months of further rigorous training, the War Office formally took the Pals over as fully trained and equipped units of the British Army. It was a year to the day when Lord Derby had first raised the Pals. On 31 August 1915 they began to move out to Larkhill at Salisbury Plain, to join other regular units and practice large scale manoeuvres, with the 17ths arriving on 5 September.

While at Larkhill, and with their embarkation for France looming, Will seems to have received a letter from his father telling him that the government were in desperate need of munitions workers back home, probably a last attempt to keep his sons from going to the Front. Will wrote home in October 1915,

Dear Dad,

I know you will not blame me and Jack for the stand we have made in the endeavour to do what we felt strongly to be our duty. I know it would have been nice to have us both home again, but Dad, the honest truth is, I know I could not be happy as a munitions worker after training thirteen months to be a good soldier.

I and Jack joined knowing that sooner or later we should be called upon to make a great sacrifice for our King and country and for the life of me I can't help thinking that by backing out now we should not be playing the man. Dear Dad, whatever happens now no one can say that either Jack or Will Caldicott did not act up to what I hope they have always been – 'sportsmen'. As you used to say, 'chips off the old block'.

Your son,

Will

Jack wrote in a similar fashion, both sons clearly intent on making their father proud, even though there was a safer option open to them,

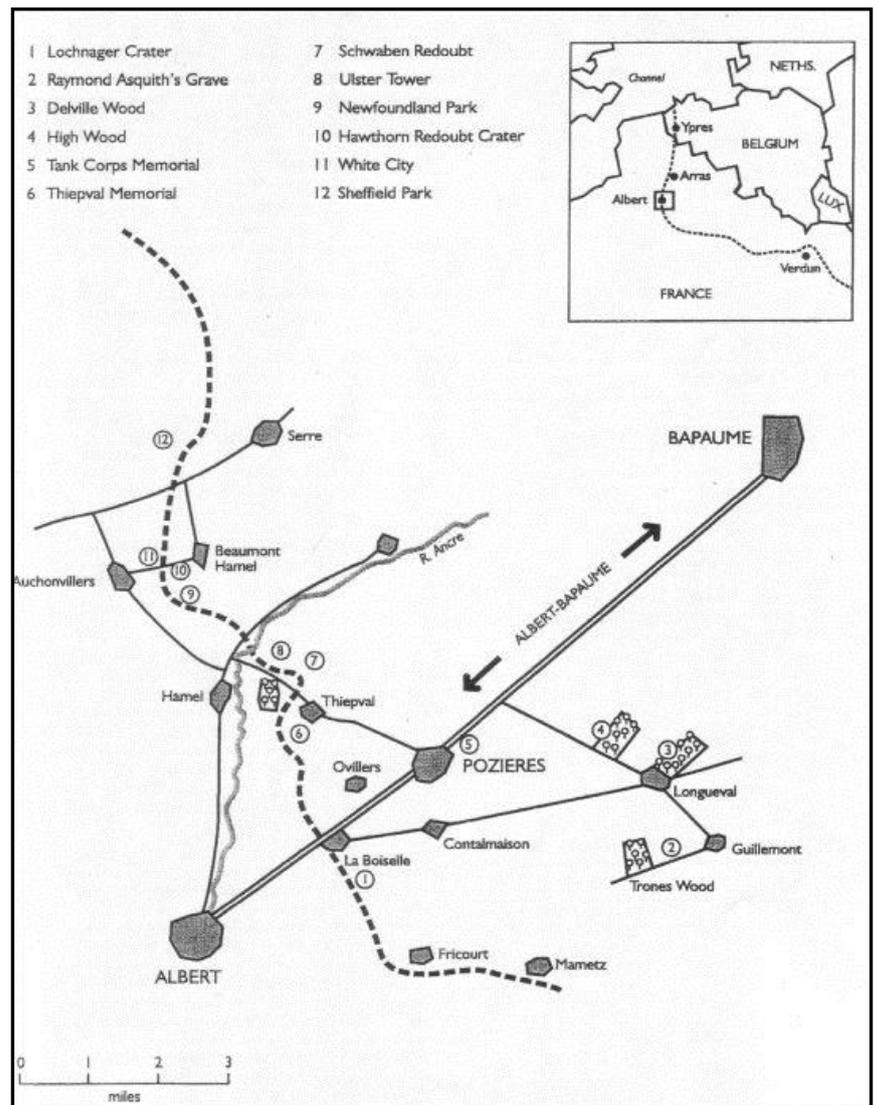
Dear Dad,

I told you I have put my name down as a skilled tradesman, and since then there have been fellows to interview us. I could have got my trade union rates, and if I was away from home working, I could have my Army allowance for mother as well, but I have refused to go, and I am sticking with the boys here. It was a splendid way of taking the easy way out, but I have refused to go. I do not think the money would compensate me for the misery I should go through if all my chums were in action and I was not with them.

Your son,

Jack

So after just over a year to get all the units disciplined, trained and battle ready, the Pals finally began to move across the Channel to Boulogne on 7 November 1915, with the 17th as senior battalion leaving first. After further intense training, the 17th were put in the front line with the depleted Royal Irish Rifles around Mesnil on the Somme on 18 December, where they stayed until the four battalions were withdrawn from the line in mid March for rest and training. After a short time back in the front at Maricourt in May 1916, the battalions were pulled back to Abbeyville where they dug 7,000 yards of trenches in a replica of the battlefield they would soon be expected to attack. The 17th returned to Maricourt on 17 June, which was now a hive of activity in preparation. The looming battle was the 'Big Push' - the Battle of the Somme. On 24 June 1916 a fierce bombardment opened up over the German lines like never seen before, in readiness for the attack planned for 1 July. Masterminded by General Sir Henry Rawlinson, it was intended to pulverise the opposition trenches and wire defences to the extent that his infantry could 'walk into enemy lines without opposition'. All four Liverpool Pals battalions were to play an integral role. The 17th, including the Caldicott brothers, were to the right of the 20th and were the most eastern British unit next to the French. They were just north of Maricourt and were to attack the Dublin and Glatz Redoubt with the 20th. Despite the appalling casualties on that first day alone (in total approximately 60,000 casualties, of which 20,000 were fatalities), the 17th on the flank were relatively unscathed, taking all their objectives, and were dug in Dublin Trench by 8.30. Three officers were dead or wounded and 100 other ranks killed and wounded. The Germans, of course, had not relinquished this land and battled hard over the coming weeks and months into the winter to try to retrieve it at the cost of many more thousands on both sides. Much of this was over the wooded areas of Trones, Delville, High and Mametz.



The 17th Battalion spent the remainder of that first day and all of the second in consolidating their

captured Dublin and Casement trenches, with two companies of the battalion in each, and in digging a communications trench between them. The battalion also reported the 3 July as a 'quiet day', although German shelling continued (the 11th Cheshires experience a couple of miles to the west on the same day was somewhat different). Trones Wood was proving especially difficult to overcome. By 10 July, four attacks had already been launched against the wood in an attempt to capture the whole of it, but no more than a foothold had been obtained in the southern end of the wood.

One company of the 17th Battalion had launched an attack against a German post situated where Trones Alley entered the wood, but the attack was a failure and the Battalion suffered heavy casualties, including young Jack Caldicott, who was hit by shrapnel in the leg. Will saw his brother go down and frantically tried to reach him. Relieved he was still conscious, he carried him back across no-mans land and on behind the lines to the dressing station. Knowing he had left many more wounded in the wood, and satisfied his brother was going to be alright, he left to look for stretcher bearers to make the return journey. What happened next – and exactly when – is not quite clear, but Will did not return to the captured positions of the 17th Battalion at the end of the day. Nor did he return the following day, when he was eventually reported missing by one of the stretcher bearers who had been with him, who said he was hit by a sniper's bullet when they were taking a wounded man back to the dressing station. Officially he was 'missing', but the stretcher bearer did not give any sign of hope, it was a euphemism for lying dead out there somewhere in the mud. Although it was now 12 July he was originally listed as 'Missing 10/12 July'.

At the end of July, Will's parents received a letter they always dreaded arriving,

14 July 1916

Dear Mr and Mrs Caldicott,

I am very sorry to have to write to you to inform you that your son, Private William Caldicott was killed on the afternoon of the 12th July, being shot through the heart. He was away from the company at the time, helping to carry a stretcher with a wounded man on it down to the dressing station and no one in the company knew what had happened to him until the following day, when the man who had been with him reported in. He was a very gallant man and died a gallant death in getting a wounded comrade out of the danger zone. He was one of the most popular men in the company, being liked by everyone, and was always ready to do work, no matter how hard or how risky. I feel his loss very much. He was my orderly the night before he was killed, and we had many narrow escapes, yet he always passed them off with a laugh, and then to think of his being sniped by a Boche while carrying a stretcher makes one's blood boil and there is not much hope for the next Germans we meet. They'll pay for it.

I hope you take comfort in the bravery and care for others he showed when he was killed.

I remain your servant,

*Captain Binnion
17th Battalion,
The King's (Liverpool Regiment).*

On Saturday 12 August 1916, the *Chester Observer* and the *Birkenhead News* carried the headline 'Parting of Two Brothers - One Killed and the Other Wounded' and recounted the sad events on the Somme, extending their sympathies to Mr and Mrs Caldicott while emphasising the 'supreme sacrifice' made by the their local heroes.

But their torment continued as over the following weeks the War Office's procedural correspondence was clearly giving them false hope, and they wrote asking for confirmation one way or another,



16 Briarfield Road
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
13 August 1916

Captain W. Nash,

Sir,

Will you explain the following different statements. On 30 July 1916 we received a letter from Captain Binnion of 17th Battalion Liverpool Pals that our son, Private W. Caldicott 15962 of the same Batt. was killed on 12 July 1916.

On 7 August 1916 we received official notice from the War Office that he was 'missing' after the engagement 10/12 July 1916 and again on 13 August have received a report that he is 'missing'. Hoping to receive a reply to this and to end the terrible suspense under which we are at present undergoing.

We remain
Yours truly,

Wm & Lucy Caldicott

P.S. Sir, Will you please note change of address as have moved from 20 Penn Gardens

Despite this despairing letter, he was still posted as 'missing' in the columns of the local press on 9 September 1916.

While in France, the men came to rely on the boxes of supplies, food and clothing sent from the people of their home town known as the Comforts Fund. Jack wrote to them following the death of William;

I hardly know how to thank you for your kind letter and expressions of sympathy. Hearing of my brother's death was the bitterest blow I have ever received in my life, for we were very much attached to each other, and I admired him as everyone did, and respected him for his grand, brave and generous nature, and I assure you the past months do show the best or otherwise in a man. We have been side by side at the Front for nine months, and had both refused promotion for fear we may have been parted, and almost the last action of my brother was to carry me from _____ [censored] Wood [most likely Trones] to the dressing station, and I wished him God-speed and left him looking for stretcher-bearers to take back to the helpless wounded in the wood which we were clinging to, when I was hit and my brother killed on the same day. I shall cherish his memory and miss him as long as I live, and I am proud of him, for I know he died with his face to the enemy and doing his duty, and I know that is as he wished.

I am pleased to say I am mending nicely, but the shrapnel which went through my thigh has broken some nerves and I find it difficult to brace my muscles yet, but I think my leg will get stronger soon. I should like to thank all of you and show my appreciation of the splendid work the committee and yourself are doing: it both cheers one and gives encouragement, which is a great help these days, and I know you have the thanks of every employee who is serving the Colours. Wishing the committee and yourself the best of health and success, and again thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

J.H. Caldicott

William's body was never recovered. His death was officially recorded as 10 July and today his name is among the missing of the King's Liverpool Regiment on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 1D, 8B and 8C). A packet of letters and photos and his Parade Service book were all that was left to return to his parents.



PTE. WILLIAM CALDICOTT,

who was killed on July 12th, was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Caldecott, of 16, Brierfield-road, Ellesmere Port. He was "sniped" whilst carrying a stretcher, being shot through the heart. His brother Jack has been wounded. Both men were ironworkers, and could have gone on munitions or other skilled work, but preferred to "play the man," as deceased put it in a letter home.

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Casualty Form—Active Service.

Regiment or Corps 17th (SERVICE) BATT. THE LIVERPOOL REGT.
 Regimental No. 15962 Rank Private Name William Baldicott
 Enlisted (a) 19/14 Terms of Service (a) Period of War Service reckons from (a) 19/14
 Date of promotion to present rank } Date of appointment to lance rank } Numerical position on roll of N.C.Os. }
 Extended _____ Re-engaged _____ Qualification (b) _____

Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received				
EMBARKED 7-11-15					
29.4.16	O.C. 17 K.L.R.	Sick to F.A.	In The Field	28.4.16	B213.
6.5.16	55 F.A.	Spin. Ankle. Admitted	-do-	28.4.16	98 F.A 3/5 A36/ED9495
7.5.16	98 F.A.	Spin Ankle -do	-do-	5.5.16	A36/ED9615
14.5.16	98 F.A.	Discharged to duty with hind.	-do-	8.5.16	A36/ED9850
13.5.16	O.C. 17 K.L.R.	Rejoined ex F.A.	-do-	9.5.16	B213.
15.7.16	O.C. 17 K.L.R.	Missing	-do-	19/12.7.16	B213.

Campaign:— **1914-15.** (A) Where decoration was earned, (B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included*(if any)
(A) BALDIBOTT	Lpool R.	Pr.	15962	H/2/2B/119.
(B) WILLIAM:				

Action taken

MEDAL	OLL	PAGE
VICTORY	H/2/102 ⁸⁵	776
BRITISH	D.	30
STAR		

THEATRE OF WAR. (1) France

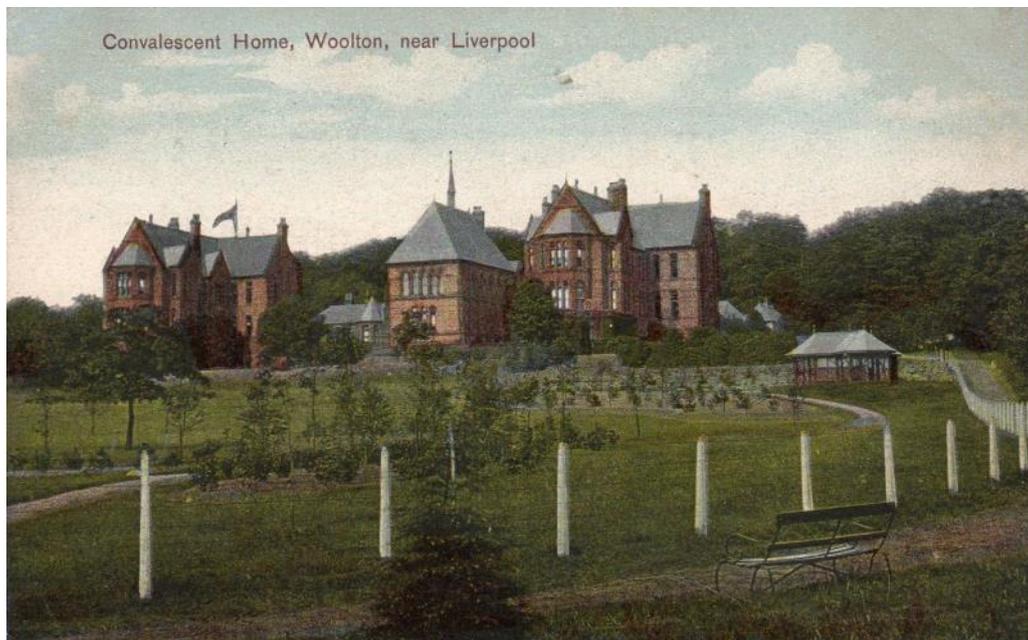
QUALIFYING DATE. 7-11-15

(6 34 46) W234-HP5690 500,000 4/19 HWV(P219) K898 [OVER]

Medal Card

Brother Jack meanwhile, was brought back to England and recovered from his wounds in the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield. The 17ths were pulled out of Trones Wood on 13 July made their weary way back to Bois des Tailles to rest, the 19ths and 20ths having been relieved the previous day. Nevertheless, they were back in action by the end of the month when they were sent over the top on 30 July in the disastrous attempt to capture the village of Guillemont. At least Jack was spared this.

Nevertheless, as soon as he was fit enough, he returned to active service and was promoted to Lance Corporal. He was back in action again with the 17ths in Easter 1917, only to be badly wounded again in on 9 April 1917, in the first phase of the Battle of Arras, known as the 'First Battle of the Scarpe'. Again he was shipped back to England, but despite many months of treatment he was moved to Fazakerley in Liverpool, where his right



leg was amputated in February 1918, following which he was also laid low by pneumonia. On 8 April, almost a year since he was wounded, he was sent to recover in Woolton Convalescent Home, in the leafy suburbs of south Liverpool. He was finally allowed home on 3 May 1918, although he would have to return to hospital for regular treatment. On 2 September he was admitted to the Rock Ferry Military Hospital in Ionic Street, Birkenhead for sixteen days where he was said to benefit from the change. Again, he was allowed home, then more treatment followed in Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool on 19 October.



Spital Station looking south (left) and north (right).

Just days before the Armistice while still in Alder Hey, Jack Caldicott was understandably suffering bouts of depression, but on the morning of 30 October 1918, he was well enough to leave hospital to return home for a few days, as he was soon due travel to Roehampton Military Hospital (founded in 1915 to help those who had lost limbs in the First World War) where he was due to be fitted with a prosthetic leg. After travelling over to Birkenhead, he boarded the 9.55am train at Woodside Station,

and headed south on the Wirral line towards Ellesmere Port. As the train passed through Spital Station part way through the journey, Jack was looking through the window when his uniform cap blew off. When the train arrived at Hooton Station further down the line, he got off, crossed to the opposite platform and returned to Spital by the next train.

On alighting at the platform at 10.43am, he began to walk to the steps of the bridge, when the station master, Francis Bowles, asked him what he was doing. On explaining that his cap had fallen on the line near the signal box, and seeing Jack was on crutches, Mr Bowles told him to stay on the platform and kindly sent a porter down the line to fetch his cap. The station master then left Jack near the steps and walked on into the goods yard to carry on with his work. In the meantime, Jack walked down the slope at the end of the platform, crossed the rails and walked up onto the opposite platform. Resting a crutch on the bottom of the bridge he looked down the line where the porter had gone. No one saw what happened next, but a railway gas man working on the opposite platform saw Jack being dragged along under the trucks, before being left on the line after the train had passed, 27 yards from the platform slope. The station master heard the cries from his staff and rushed to Jack's aid. But he was dreadfully injured, his left leg practically severed, and with numerous lacerations to his head. An ambulance was called and Francis Bowles did what he could with a tourniquet and other first aid, before a doctor arrived. Jack was rushed by ambulance to the Borough Hospital in Birkenhead, but there was nothing further to be done, and he died only half an hour after admission.

His distraught father came to Birkenhead to identify his son's body, and the inquest opened the following week on 5 November. Evidence was heard before a jury from the doctor at the Borough Hospital who tended to Jack before he died, together with the station master, the porter, and the railway gas man. The train driver and his fireman told how astonished they were to be told of the accident when they arrived at the terminus, as they had seen and felt nothing as they went through Spital. The porter, Charles Jones, found Jack's cap 250 yards down the line and his crutches propped up, leaning against the bridge wall.

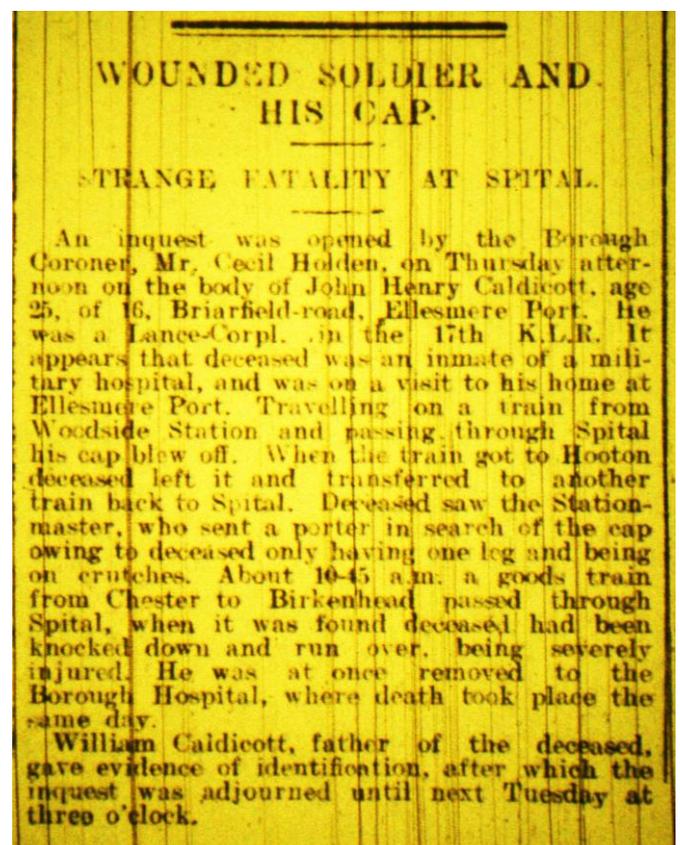
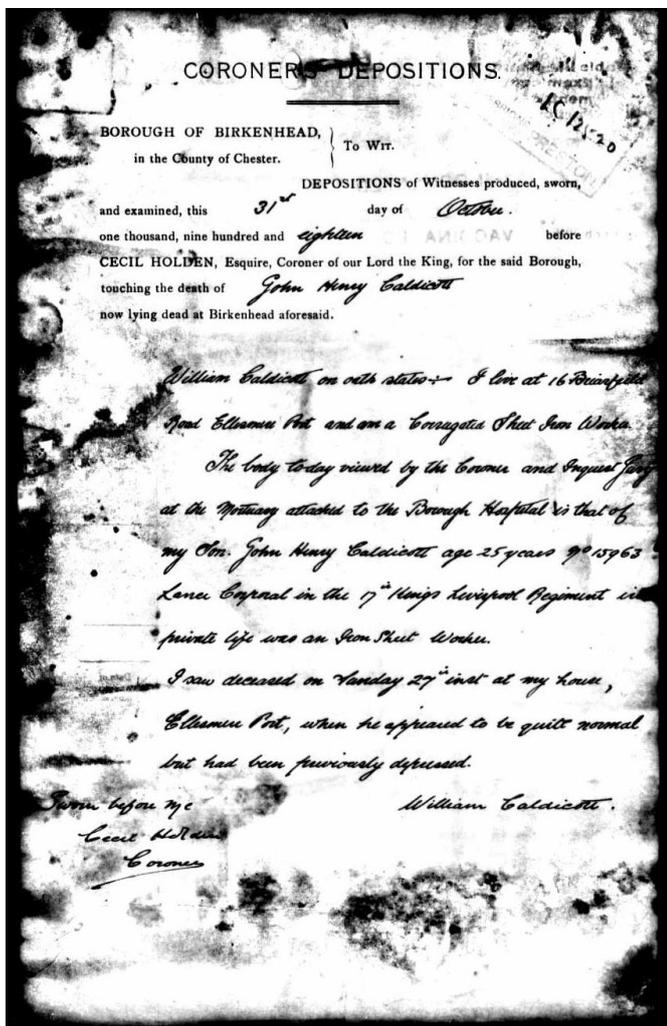
The jury returned a verdict of 'Accidental Death', officially written by the coroner as 'death occurring as result of shock and haemorrhage consequent on compound fracture of the left thigh and injuries following the result of the deceased being accidentally run over by a Great Western Goods Train on the Joint Railway at Spital Station in the County of Chester on the 30 October 1918'.

This may have been kindness on the jury's part, but what was Jack's state of mind on that day? His hospital pal, Fred Phipps, declared to the court that Jack was in good spirits that morning when he left Alder Hey, while his father had stated he was quite normal on his last visit, despite feeling depressed over the previous weeks. But the events of that day, although relatively unimportant, may have tipped him over the edge. The frustration at having to return to Spital station and having to struggle to cross footbridges and the line crossing, together with the humiliation of needing help from others, however good intentioned when he wanted to do it himself, may have been too much. He had lost his brother, he had lost his leg and probably his self-worth. The crutches were neatly propped together against the bridge. An accidental collision would have sent them sprawling too.

To add to the uncertainty, a letter from a Mr Robinson (signed 'Robbie'), a journalist friend of Jack on a Chester newspaper, was found near his body which said '*he (Robbie) was startled by the tone of his letter, but he (the deceased) would be held by them in as high estimation as before*'. Unfortunately, illness prevented the attendance of Robinson at the court so the jury were unable to hear the full contents of the original letter. The coroner also had a letter from the Chief Constable of Chester regarding the case but the contents were not disclosed in his report. Did either have a bearing on Jack's state of mind that day? Had he confided in Robbie that he was suffering mentally as well as physically from his injuries? We will never know.

Jack was buried in a Commonwealth War Grave in Christchurch cemetery, Ellesmere Port, and with his brother William he is recorded on the War Memorial at the church entrance. They were both also remembered in their birthplace and are recorded on the Ettingshall memorial in George Street, Bilston - the street where the family lived before moving to Ellesmere Port. They are also listed in the Liverpool Town Hall – Hall of Remembrance in honour of the King’s Liverpool Regiment.

Sometimes when we look back at the histories of these great forces and the immense events they were involved in, among the platitudes we sometimes overlook the intensely personal stories of honour and bravery combined with tragic loss and the very real tearing apart of families. In this way, the Caldicott brothers were typical of many. Missing, never to be found. Rescued, patched up, sent back out, badly damaged again, very slow physical recovery, hidden mental scars not healing at all. Two Liverpool Pals who were encouraged to join up together, to fight together, to look out for each other on the battlefield, and to be tragically split up for all eternity.



Campaign :— **1914-15.** (A) Where decoration was earned.
 (B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) BALDICOTT	6/Pool R.	Pte.	15963	* H/2/2 B/119
(B) JOHN H.				

Action taken

MEDAL	ROLL	PAGE
VICTORY	H/2/02	777
BRITISH	Do	Do
STAR		

Deceased

THEATRE OF WAR. *Dep. 1914-15 Star Brought to Charge C.R. 2/191 of 7.2.20896/Adk
 Deleted from 1914-15 Star Roll H/2/2 a page 23 Adk
 France * 1915 Star returned I.V. 327/A. d/16-11-21.
 896/Adk
 8/1/7442.*

QUALIFYING DATE. **7-11-15.**

(6 34 46) W234—HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608 **EE/1/7442** [OVER]

Correspondence.

*No 2 Recs Preston returns (2) 1914-15 Stars
 No 2 Recs Preston requests name to be deleted from Anoll. 8.7/9/2054 Encls 2A
 9-1-20
 Of Recs Preston writes re-issuance of 1914-15 Star 3/1/21*

Address.

1914-15

Medal Card

**Researched and written
by
Mike Royden**

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