

HALTON'S GALLANT HEROES

1914—1918



Foreword by Derek Twigg, MP

“This is a very important book about remarkable people who were born, lived and worked here. Before enlisting they were ordinary people going about everyday life but had their lives changed forever by the Great War, they were part of the massive armed forces sent to fight for our country on the sea on land and in the air – some never to come back. They became extraordinary people who put their lives on the line with acts of courage that from reading this book will just leave the reader in awe and admiration for what they did.

From a young boy I have always been fascinated by “heroes” and why they did what they did and how they found such courage in terrifying circumstances. They of course, would not think of themselves as heroes and many never spoke about their exploits. I would not have known about my own grandfather’s Thomas Twigg’s Military Medal had I not as a young boy seen an article about him in the local paper on the 50th anniversary of the ending of the First World War – the family just did not talk about it. That is why this book is so important in that it records these acts of bravery and will remind our community of the sacrifices made on our behalf. Frank Lawless and all those involved with the book should be commended for making it happen.”

Frank Lawless, Chairman of Halton Heritage Partnership:

Those who died during World War One are commemorated on the various cenotaphs in the Borough of Halton. The VC awards in the Borough are well documented and commemorated, but the many other gallantry awards for those who survived are not.

This booklet has focused on some of those who did return and should also be recognised; this project will help to build awareness among the general community and within local schools of heroism and crucially the ‘life stories’ of those who survived the War and what their life was like post-War.

To mark the Centenary of the First World War, this project has enabled local people in Halton to come together to preserve the memories and heritage of the people who lived through it. Volunteers have collected photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, letters and photos of keepsakes, as well as family tales passed down to help them build a clearer picture of what life was really like.

As many names as we have found and researched; we are aware there are many more who are yet to be acknowledged. We hope you find the stories we have uncovered interesting, and perhaps this will be the start, rather than the end of this project.

As Chairman of Halton Heritage Partnership, I and my committee would like to thank Allison Kirk and her volunteers from Norton Priory for researching and taking time to extract relevant news items recording this history. Thanks to a number of families that have let the project use some of their family records. I must also thank the Heritage Lottery for having faith in this project and awarding us a grant.

'As is common across the country, Runcorn has no dedicated commemoration to show appreciation to those who served and survived or continue to serve and will eventually return to our community. These service men and women blend quietly back into civic life, many bearing the weight of physical and mental injury without complaint. More unfortunate is that with their eventual passing and as memories fade into the fog of time, the part they played as individuals tends to be lost as a society moves on, more concerned with the here and now of its own time and space.'

Text from the 'Todger' Jones memorial, Runcorn.

Thanks go to the following people and organisations for helping with this project, in no particular order:

Anfield Road School

The family of Charles Ashley

The family of John Birch

Cheshire Military Museum

Cheshire Records Office

Daresbury District Heritage Group

Emily Harrington

Imperial War Museum

Brenda Jenkin nee Tyler

Peter Millward

The Norman Family

Norton Priory Men's Social Group a.k.a. Recharge

Preston Brook History Group

Runcorn Library

St Helens Connect

Widnes Library

The family of Louis John Wyatt



LOTTERY FUNDED

Gallantry Medals of World War One

During World War One, there were a number of awards that an individual might receive for a conspicuous and gallant act of valour, usually in the presence of the enemy, whilst serving in the armed forces. Other awards were issued for distinguished and meritorious service. The following medals were awarded to men who survived the war and who were from Halton. The list of individuals is by no means exhaustive.



The Victoria Cross (V.C.) is the highest military decoration awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy" to members of the armed forces. It takes precedence over all other orders, decorations and medals. It can be awarded to a person of any rank, in any service, and to civilians under military command. The VC was introduced on 29 January 1856 by Queen Victoria to honour acts of valour during the Crimean War. Halton recipient: Alfred 'Todger' Jones. Image: © IWM (OMD 2423)



Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) The order was established to reward individual instances of meritorious or distinguished service in war. It was typically awarded to officers ranked major (or equivalent) or higher. After 1 January 1917, commanders in the field were instructed to recommend this award only for those serving under fire. Halton recipients: Charles Stuart Brebner, Albert Jones, Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay, Louis John Wyatt. Image: © IWM (OMD 2454)



Military Cross (M.C.) was the third-level military decoration awarded to officers in recognition of "an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land...". The award was created in 1914 for commissioned officers of the substantive rank of Captain or below and for Warrant Officers. Halton recipients: Albert Jones, Samuel McCausland, Duncan Thomas Norman, Alfred Salt. Image: © IWM (OMD 2455)



Distinguished Flying Cross (D.F.C.) The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to personnel of the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force and other services, for "an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy". The award was established on 3 June 1918, shortly after the formation of the RAF. Halton recipient: John William Ravenscroft. Image: © IWM (OMD 199)



Distinguished Conduct Medal (D.C.M.) was an extremely high level award for bravery. The medal was instituted in 1854, during the Crimean War, to recognise gallantry within the other ranks, for which it was equivalent of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded for bravery to commissioned officers, but the DCM ranked well below the DSO in precedence. Halton recipients: Frederick Astles, John Baker, P J Bowden, J E Farrell, Sydney Garnett, Thomas H Wood, W P Connolly. Image: © IWM (OMD 16)



Military Medal (M.M.) was awarded to personnel of the British Army and other services, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land. The medal was established on 25 March 1916. Halton recipient: Ernest Ankers, Charles Ashley, George Atkin Rimmer, Edward 'Ted' Basnett, John Wallworth Broome, R Hampson, John Jameson, Frederick William Tyler, Thomas Twigg, Harry Woulds, B Hennigan, Thomas H Hankinson, G Morris. Image: © IWM (OMD 5788)



The Distinguished Flying Medal (D.F.M.) was a military decoration awarded to personnel of the Royal Air Force and other British Armed Forces, and formerly to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for "exceptional valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy". The medal was established on 3 June 1918. The decoration ranked below the DFC in order of precedence, between the Military Medal and the Air Force Medal. Halton recipient: Francis Harry Pritchard. Image: (reverse of medal Wikipedia)



The Meritorious Service Medal (M.S.M.) is a silver medal for distinguished service, or for gallantry, principally by non-commissioned officers of all of the British armed forces and of Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. It was instituted on 19 December 1845 for the British Army, to recognise meritorious service by non-commissioned officers. During 1916–1919, army NCOs could be awarded the medal immediately for meritorious service in the field. They could also be awarded the medal for acts of non-combat gallantry. Halton recipients: Charles Ashley, William George Bennett, Matthew George Booth, William Howard, Benjamin Ward, Charles Webster, George Wright, Harold John Wright. Image: © IWM (OMD 6211)



Croix De Guerre (France) is a French military decoration. It was created to recognize French and allied soldiers who were cited for valorous service during World War I, similar to the British mentioned in dispatches but with multiple degrees equivalent to other nations' decorations for courage. World War I began in 1914 and ended in 1918, so the final name adopted is "Croix de guerre 1914–1918". Halton recipients: Reginald Cartwright, Duncan Thomas Norman. Image: www.replicamedals.co.uk



The Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George is a British order of chivalry founded on 28 April 1818 by George, Prince Regent, later King George IV, while he was acting as regent for his father, King George III. It is named in honour of two military saints, St Michael and St George. The Order of St Michael and St George was originally awarded to those holding commands or high position in the Mediterranean territories acquired in the Napoleonic Wars, and was subsequently extended to holders of similar office or position in other territories of the British Empire. Halton recipient: Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay. Image: © IWM (OMD 312)



The Order of Leopold is one of the three current Belgian national honorary orders of knighthood. It is the oldest and highest order of Belgium and is named in honour of its founder; King Leopold I. It consists of a military, a maritime and a civil division. The maritime division is only awarded to personnel of the merchant navy, and the military division to military personnel. The decoration was established on 11 July 1832 and is awarded by royal order. Halton recipient: Duncan Thomas Norman. Image: ©IWM (OMD 411)



Cross of St George was established in February 1807 by decree of Emperor Alexander I, it was intended as a reward for "undaunted courage" by the lower ranks (soldiers, sailors and NCOs) of the military. It was initially established by Imperial Russia where it was officially known as the Decoration of the Military Order of Saint George between 1807 and 1913. An 1856 royal decree divided the decoration into four classes. A person initially received the fourth class and would subsequently be promoted to higher classes for further acts of bravery. Between 1914-1917 approximately 1 million 4th Class medals were awarded. Halton recipient: John Birch. Image: Birch family.

Other medals mentioned in this booklet:



India General Service Medal was a campaign medal approved on 1 January 1909, issued to officers and men of the British and Indian armies. From 1919 it was also awarded to officers and men of the Royal Air Force. Halton recipient: George Atkin Rimmer. Image: Wikipedia.

Ernest Ankers

Military Medal

Bombardier Ernest Ankers lived at 9, Church Street, Widnes. He had attended West Bank schools and Trinity Primitive Methodist Sunday School. Before the war he, like many others, was employed at Messrs. William Gossage and Sons. He enlisted in August 1914.

In June 1915, he was sent to Gallipoli, served two years in Mesopotamia, and later went to France. It was whilst serving in France that he was awarded the Military Medal.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News



In a 1919 Runcorn Weekly News article, one of his fellow soldiers described his actions as follows:

'In my opinion there is no man in France [who] deserved it more. He has done some wonderful work, both in Mesopotamia and France. A telephonist during active operations has always a very hard time. During the recent advance he was always ready for any work, no matter how dangerous or difficult. On the 11th of last month he spent practically all day out on the lines repairing breaks, and during the whole time he was subject to heavy shell fire, gas, and high explosives. This was the particular deed for which he was awarded the Military Medal.'

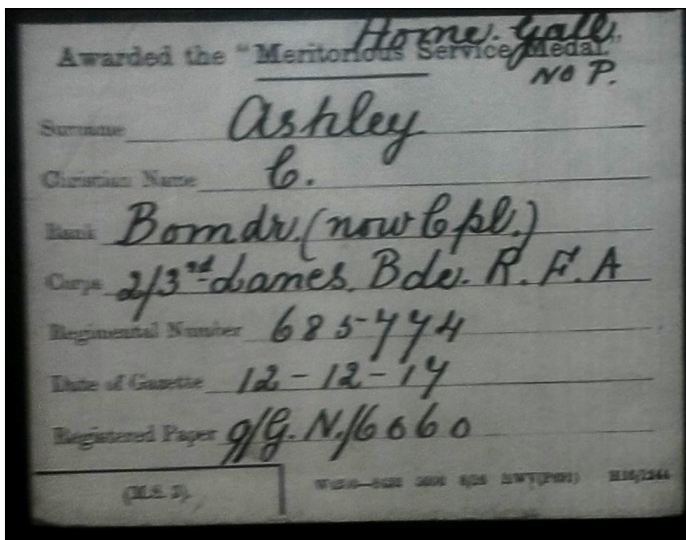
Charles Ashley

Meritorious Service Medal

Corporal Charles Ashley was the son of Mrs. Emily and Mr. James Ashley of 114, Horst Street, Widnes. He went to school at West Bank and before the war was employed in the box shop of Messrs. William Gossage and Sons. He joined the Royal Field Artillery in April 1915, and left for France in February 1917.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News



On 2nd April, 1916, one of the buildings at the Explosive Loading Company in Faversham, Kent caught fire and exploded. It contained over 200 tons of TNT. The explosion left a crater 40 yards across, killed 116 people and the noise could be heard from Norwich. The 2nd/3rd West Lancashire Royal Field Artillery raised a small group of soldiers and were detailed to help the factory fire brigade put out fires and move ammunition and explosives away from the area at risk.

Charles Ashley was one of the soldiers who helped on the day and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for gallantry. His award was reported in the Widnes Weekly News on 15th February, 1918.

He survived the war and died in 1954. He was buried with his wife Louisa in Widnes Cemetery. His brother, Private William Ashley, also served in France with the R. A. M. C.



'Manufacturing soap boxes at Gossages Soap Works, Widnes' A. Hall & Widnes Historical Society *Images of England: Widnes* (Tempus, 2004) p 29

Frederick Astles

Distinguished Conduct Medal

The Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded to Sergeant Frederick Astles in June 1919, he was also included in the Birthday Honours list.

The Weekly News on June 13, 1919 reported that Sergeant Astles joined the Royal Field Artillery as a gunner in May 1915. He was sent to Egypt arriving there on Christmas Eve of the same year, and the following March he was drafted to France. He was promoted to Bombardier whilst in England, before leaving for active service and whilst in France was made Corporal. Before the war, he was employed as a joiner at Warburton's of Warrington.

Sergeant Astles was demobilised in May 1919. His parents were Mr and Mrs John Astles of 170 Albert Road, Widnes.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

George Atkin

Rimmer

Military Medal

George Atkin Rimmer was the son of James and Jane Rimmer, from Widnes.

Rimmer enlisted at Wolverhampton on 15th July, 1912 and served with the Royal Engineers. He was awarded the Military Medal in 1916 with his name appearing in the London Gazette on 11th November, 1916, although we have found no explanation as to why.

He was also awarded the India General Service Medal with clasp for the Third Afghan War of 1919. He was discharged on 14th July, 1928.

After leaving the army, he became a civil engineer working in Sierra Leone for a number of years building bridges. On the 8th February, 1932, he married Phyllis Mary Jones at Birmingham Registry Office, they had one son, John George Rimmer. George Atkin Rimmer died on 1st February, 1939, from Tuberculosis.



Image www.wartimesmemoriesproject.com

John Baker

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Before the outbreak of World War One, Sergeant Baker had been a member of the Territorial West Lancashire Engineers. At the start of the war, he was mobilised and joined the Royal Engineers.

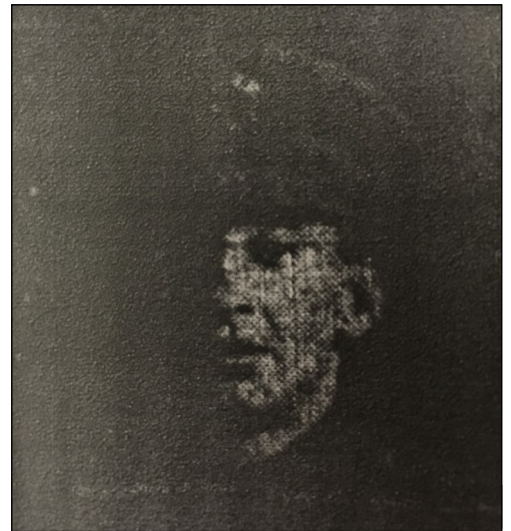


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

On 30th January, 1920, the Weekly News reported that his mother (Mrs Baker of 10, White Street, Widnes) had been presented with his DCM as he had 'recently sailed for foreign service'. The account of the deeds for which he was awarded his gallantry medal is as follows:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in an attack. He was one of a party detailed to establish a block in the enemy's trench. He formed the block, assisted to hold it, and then took part in a bayonet charge against the enemy showing splendid courage and initiative.'

The paper lists his age as 32 years in 1920 and mentioned that before the war he had been employed at Messers. J. H Dennis and Company.



**Image taken from Runcorn Weekly News on
17th January, 1919.**

The image is entitled 'Widnes and Runcorn men in India convey greetings to their friends in Merseyside.'

Edward 'Ted' Basnett

Military Medal

Ted was born in 39 Cavendish street, Runcorn on 31st March 1891 and was one of seven children. He left Runcorn aged 16 years and went to lodge with the Potts family at Cotton's Bridge, Preston Brook, where he worked as a warehouseman for the Bridgewater Canal Company at Norton. By 1911 he was working as a horseman for the company.



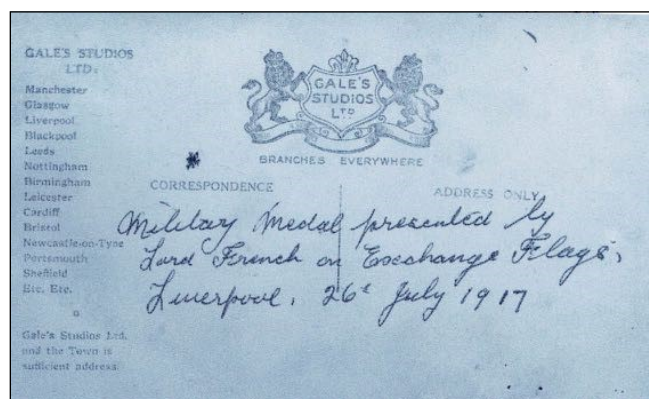
Ted was a keen sportsman and played both Rugby League for Runcorn RL Club and football for Runcorn FC. In the 1909-1910 season he played with Tom Potts for Aston Hall Reserve AFC along with several other men from the village.

Ted enlisted at Frodsham on 18th November, 1914, (aged 23 years) as a private in the 8th Battalion (B Company) of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (service number 15959). He was promoted to Lance Corporal in 1915 and, whilst on leave,



Ted married Bertha Jones (daughter of Thomas Henry Jones of Rose Cottage) on 18th September. Only nine days later, he was posted to France to begin his active service. During the Battle of the Somme, whilst his battalion was attacking Delville Wood, Ted won the Military Medal for 'conspicuous devotion to duty' on 18th July, 1916. A letter from his commanding officer stated:

'On July 18th, 1916, Sergeant Basnett, when in charge of the transport section, displayed great skill and great devotion to duty in the way he handled his transport under very heavy shellfire; and through his own particular bravery and example, kept his men under control; which enabled him to successfully have his transport unloaded—without loss. It was a very trying time for animals.'



With thanks to the Preston Brook History Group for images and information.

William G Bennett

Meritorious Service Medal



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

On 20th June, 1919, The Runcorn Weekly News reported that Corporal William George Bennett had been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Subsequent research has suggested that his first name was actually Walter and he was born in 1884 in Widnes.

The paper reported that he had attended the Widnes Secondary School and went on to study at Liverpool University. He trained to become a teacher and this is confirmed by the 1911 census, in which he was listed as 'assistant school master' working for the Borough Council. Interestingly one of his brothers and one of his sisters were also listed as entering the teaching profession. They were all living with their father Alfred and mother Alice at Mount Pleasant Widnes.

Bennett's enlistment form dated 20th November, 1915, listed his trade as 'School master.' He was living at 179 Speakman Rd, St Helens and was married. He married Dorothy Grace Appleby on 13th July, 1913 in Runcorn.

According to the Weekly News, Corporal Bennett enlisted with the Royal Garrison Artillery (303 siege battery). He took part in Messines Ridge from June 7th, 1917; Ypres and Passchendaele from July to September; Cambrai in November 1917; and the retreat to Amiens which began on 21st March, 1918.

After hostilities ended he joined the Army of Occupation and was stationed at Bonn. He was demobilised on the 29th January, 1919 and was acting headmaster at Rivington Road Council School, St. Helens in June 1919.



Image of Rivington School c. 1910 from www.sthelens-connect.net

John Birch

Medal of St George

Private John Birch, 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers lived in Wright Street in Widnes. He was decorated by the Tsar with the Medal of St George (4th Class).

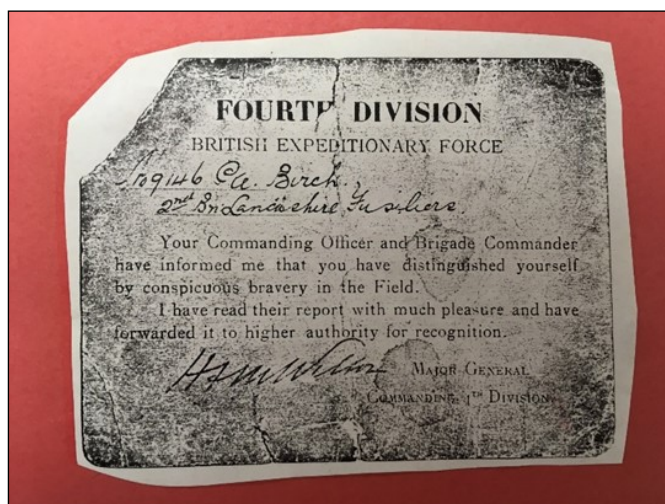
He won the decoration on 20th October, 1914, when, as reported in the Runcorn Weekly News on 27th August, 1915, 'to save his comrades, he ran 900 yards across open fields to the British artillery and gave them the German position. He covered the distance through a hail of bullets, had three shots through his overcoat, but escaped uninjured.'



Images kindly supplied by family of John Birch



During a 'recruiting effort' in Widnes, the local paper reported that 'when history came to be written there was no doubt that Widnes men who had taken their post in Flanders would stand in the forefront. They had one there that night who had the honour of wearing the badge presented by His Majesty the King on the field of Battle; he referred to Private Birch. The other day Private Birch had said to him "I was only trying to do my little bit and if I am spared I am going to finish it" That showed the mettle they had in Widnes.'



Matthew George

Booth

Meritorious Service Medal



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Sergeant Major M. G. Booth (WR/507096), of Picton Avenue, Runcorn, specialised in public works construction (docks, bridges and waterworks etc) and from 1882 until 1905 travelled to China, Japan, Bombay, East Africa, and West Africa. He returned from East Africa shortly after the outbreak of the war. Owing to his skills and experience he was sent to France to superintend the construction of timber wharves and jetties at Rouen. As a first-class Warrant Officer, Sergeant Major Booth was attached to the Royal Engineers, and was particularly associated with the Port Construction Company .

At the time there was an increased demand from the front for shells, but there were persistent supply problems due to the lack of berthing facilities on the French side and the consequent congestion of shipping. Mr. Booth increased the berthing accommodation. According to the Runcorn Weekly News article on 31st January, 1919, his work concentrated on the erection of bridges for the cross-Channel train ferries:

‘These trains... were largely brought about by the need for the shipment of the big guns. An enormous saving of time was brought about by the shipment of a whole train with its cargo to France, where it immediately ran off the boat on the metals laid on the bridges.’ The bridges [were] about 100ft long and [could] be raised or lowered according to the height of the boat or the tide. There [was] also a specially designed berth at the end of each, and anchorage to enable the vessels to be hauled taut to the structure... Mr. Booth [was] responsible for the bridges at Calais and Dunkirk.’ It was for this work that he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

M. G. Booth superintended the making of a new entrance to Widnes Docks and the construction of Queen’s Dock, Liverpool. He was an experienced diver and supervised eight divers in France. He was also an accomplished amateur photographer. Although he was offered a commission by the army, he declined, preferring the highest non-commissioned rank of Warrant Officer.

The London Gazette of Jan 1919 stated he was awarded the MSM for ‘conspicuous service with the Army in France and Flanders’.

P. J. Bowden

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Sergeant Bowden (service number 241977) was the son of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Bowden, 22, Tivoli street, Cheltenham, and is included here because at the outbreak of WW1 he was living in Widnes lodging with a Mrs A Butler of Deacon Road. He was employed in Widnes by the Midland Railway.



© IWM (OMD 16)

Bowden was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry in action during an attack on the enemy near La Bassee on September 20th, 1918.

On 31st January, 1919, it was reported that:

‘This N.C.O. acted with great boldness in rushing from above ground the enemy’s bombers, who were holding a trench.... On reaching the objective he worked his way alone across 300 yards of ground and gained touch with the platoon on his right. Whilst doing this he encountered two Germans in a broken piece of trench. He brought one of them back a prisoner; the other ran and escaped.’

The official record stated that Sergeant Bowden had already received a bronze medal from the 5th Army Medical School for being the top of the school in skill with the rifle and had received a congratulatory message from his Brigadier-General on his excellent report as being a credit to his regiment. The London Gazette from 16th January, 1919 reported the same action but included the comment ‘His dash and courage in action is always noticeable.’ Unfortunately we have no image of him.

Charles Stuart Brebner



Photograph courtesy of
www.ramc-ww1.com

Distinguished Service Order

Dr Charles Stuart Brebner, along with a number of other Halton based doctors, was honoured in an article in The Runcorn Weekly News on 28th March, 1919.

Brebner was born on 3rd August 1876 in Darlington. He was educated at Edinburgh and Liverpool Universities, taking his MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) in 1898; DPH (Doctor of Public Health?) in 1903, and MD (Doctor of Medicine) in 1904. In 1911 he was listed as living at 176, Birchfield Road, Farnworth, Widnes with his sister Davina and a domestic servant. His occupation was recorded as 'Medical Officer of Health' for Widnes and the Medical Directory listed him as Medical Officer for the Education Department. During this time he had an article published which raised concerns about the 'disadvantage of the Modern Baby Carriage' which allegedly caused 'deaths due to undue exposure of young children' and the harmfulness of the 'upright posture.' Dr Brebner married Gertrude Neil in 1914, and their daughter Edith Margaret Brebner was born during the war and baptised on 18th September, 1916 at St Luke's (formerly St Wilfrid's) in Farnworth, Widnes.



Pocket surgical kit owned by Major-General P Henderson DSO who served with the RAMC WW1 © IWM (SUR 553)

In 1908, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps Territorial Force and was promoted to Captain on 1st October, 1911, whilst serving with the 2nd West Lancashire Field Ambulance. In 1914, he became the Commanding Officer of the 2/1st London Field Ambulance and stayed with them for the duration of the war. In August, 1914, he was mobilised to France, where he served with distinction for three years. He was mentioned in despatches by Sir Douglas Haig in January, 1917, and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. In June 1918, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

The Royal Army Medical Corps listing informs that he was also a Barrister at Law and the Medical Officer of Health at the Isolation Hospital at Chiswick.

John Wallworth Broome



Image from www.ddhg.org.uk

Military Medal

John was born around 1894 in Keckwick, and was the fourth of five children to Alfred and Eliza Ann Broome. Alfred had been born in Preston on the Hill and had been a farmer at White House Farm since at least 1881. Alfred was a widower when he married Eliza Ann Wallworth in June 1886 in St. Paul's church, Southport.

In 1901, the family were living and working at Windmill Farm. Also living at the farm were two domestic servants and five Irish farm hands. According to the 1911 census, John was listed as 'farmer's son working on farm' along with his brother William. His sister, Josephine, was listed as being a music teacher.

By February 1915, John had enlisted with the Cheshire Yeomanry, South Lancashire Regiment. On 28th August, 1917, the London Gazette reported he had been awarded the Military Medal. In 1918, John was still away from home on active service, and was also awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

By the spring of 1920, John had returned to Windmill Farm and early in 1921, John's father died but A. Broome and Sons continued to run Windmill Farm until at least 1939. On the 25th July, 1923, when John was twenty nine, he married Phyllis Mary Britland in St. Paul's church, Helsby and they went on to have two daughters, Sybil Mary and Joyce Phyllis.

On the 30th December, 1926, his sister, Emily, aged thirty five, married Herbert P Sutherland, a cashier from Newcastle upon Tyne. The ceremony took place in Preston on the Hill. Whilst living at Aston Heath Farm, Aston, John died on the 6th January, 1962, aged sixty eight years.

With thanks to the Preston Brook History Group.

Reginald Cartwright

Croix De Guerre

Reginald Cartwright was the son of Reginald and Emma Cartwright. He was born in 1897, went to school in Widnes and worked at Messers Wm. Gossages and Sons before the outbreak of war. In 1916, he enlisted in the Royal Navy as third Writer. After three year's service, he was promoted to second Writer.

According to the London Gazette on the 21st March, 1919, he was mentioned in despatches and on 28th March, 1919, he was listed as being awarded the French Croix De Guerre. The Runcorn Weekly News on 21st February, 1919, reported a letter home to his parents which stated "you will be pleased to know that I have been awarded the French Croix de Guerre with star. A signal was sent here yesterday saying that it has been awarded by the French Admiral Ronarch. I have not yet received the medal, but I have had permission to wear the ribbon."

He served on the Antrim cruiser, and it was for his work with coastal motor boats on the French and Belgian coasts that he received his award. In February 1919, he was working with the flag-captain of the Arrogant, at Dover. The 1939 census records him as being married to Nancy Cartwright, living in Widnes and working as a 'Soap-works manager'. He died in June 1977 in St Helens.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Richard Llewellyn Davies

Member of the British Empire

In June 1919, it was reported by the Weekly News that Captain Richard Llewellyn Davies had been included in the King's Birthday Honours List. He was serving with the Royal Army Service Corps and was awarded the MBE. His parents lived at 36, Park Road, Widnes. Before the war he was employed by Messers T Bolton and Sons Ltd and had been a member of the Milton Congregational Church choir. He enlisted as a private in September 1914, was promoted to Staff Sergeant-Major. Eight months later, he was granted a commission.

The 1919 Birthday Honours were appointments made by King George V to reward and recognise good works by citizens of the British Empire. Temporary Captain R Ll. Davies was awarded the MBE 'for valuable services rendered in connection with the war.'



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

J E Farrell

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Corporal J E Farrell was awarded the DCM by Sir Douglas Haig at a ceremony at St George's Hall, Liverpool in 1919.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

As reported by the Weekly News on 11th July, 1919, 'It will be remembered that Corporal Farrell was engaged in the defence of a mine crater, which was being held against heavy attacks by the Turks. For twelve hours Corporal Farrell held on although his comrade had eleven bayonet wounds. The Turks charged in hundreds and got into the crater, but were driven out with heavy losses.' In 1919 Corporal Farrell was 23 years of age, and before the war had been employed by St Helen's Engineers from the age of 16 years. An earlier article from the Widnes Weekly News on 23rd June, 1916 mentioned he had been awarded the DCM 'For conspicuous gallantry when pulling out barbed wire entanglements in close proximity to the enemy.'

There are two service numbers associated with a J Farrell who was awarded the DCM. Under number 6534, he was Mentioned in Despatches in the London Gazette on 7th November, 1916 for 'distinguished and gallant services rendered during the period of General Sir Charles Monro's Command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force' and on 3rd June, 1916 it was stated that 'His Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve the reward for Distinguished Service in the Field.' Under service number 428040, we have two medical records. One from June 1917, which details 'traumatic cataract left' and another confirming his discharge order in January 1919 because he was 'no longer physically fit for war service.' In 1917, he was listed as 21 years old, had been in service for 4 years and 6 months and had spent 2 years with the Field Force.

Finding records of J E Farrell outside of military documents has been difficult. It is not an uncommon name. In 1911, there was a J Farrell living in Widnes in Appleton aged 15 years and working as a Slater. On the 1939 Census he is listed as 'Master Sla...' and married to Evelyn M Farrell with a son James A Farrell. Whether this is the same as the above J E Farrell is not certain.

Sydney Garnett

Distinguished Conduct

Medal

William Sydney Garnett, son of William and Mary Ellen, was baptised at All Saints, Daresbury in February 1895. He had two sisters, Sarah Ellen and Alice. His father was employed as a groom at the time, though he later became the landlord of the Ring o' Bells pub.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Sydney was educated at Daresbury and Stockton Heath schools, and in the 1911 census he is recorded as a junior clerk working for a wine and porter merchant.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, he enlisted with the 11th Hussars but was soon transferred to the Durham Light Infantry. He rose to the rank of Sergeant and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions in May 1918. He spent the last six months of the war as a prisoner in Darmstadt.

Sydney was married to Norah Smith in 1935, and they lived in Sutton Weaver. After Norah's death, he married Eileen Peacock in 1951, and the wedding took place at St Luke's church, Dunham on the Hill. They went to live in Kingsley where they had three sons.

During his working life, Sydney had been landlord of the Birch and Bottle pub at Whitley, and was a stores superintendent for MANWEB (Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board). He was a founding member, and secretary of the Runcorn branch of the British Legion. During WW2, he served in the Home Guard, reaching the rank of Captain.

Sydney Garnett died in January 1962, and his funeral was held at St. John's church in Kingsley.

With thanks to the Daresbury District Heritage Group for this information:
www.ddhg.org.uk

Ronald Hampson

Military Medal

Hampson went to school at Warrington Road School and joined the army at the age of 17 years. After a short time training, he was sent to France with the South Lancashire Regiment.

On 30th October, 1919, he was presented with the Military Medal at meeting of the South Lancashire Regimental Club in Warrington. The account of his actions as reported in *The Runcorn Weekly News* on 7th November, 1919 stated:

‘On 2nd August, 1918, during the attack on Fontaine-Le-Croiselles and Hendecourt, and after the capture of Fontaine, the attack of the company was held up by hostile machine-gun fire. This man, with a lance-corporal and two others, under heavy shell-fire and machine gun fire, went forward and, killing part and capturing the rest of the crew, put the machine guns out of action, thus enabling the advance to be resumed. Later, under the same N.C.O., this man took up a position as left post of the line reached by the battalion under heavy hostile fire. They covered the consolidation, and maintained this post until battalion was relieved.’

In 1919, Hampson was living at 26, Deacon Road, Widnes, aged 21 years old and after demobilisation, he worked at Bolton’s Copper Works.



Image from *Runcorn Weekly News*



Warrington Road School pictured in *Bygone Widnes* G. Smith (Eaton Press, 1985) p28

William Howard

Meritorious Service Medal

William Howard was born in March 1877 in Burtonwood, Lancashire. The 1911 census shows William Howard living with his wife Mary and their four sons William, James, Francis and Edward at 13 Deacon Road, Widnes with his mother-in-law Mary Marlin(?). He was aged 34 and employed as a Foreman Cooper at a 'Chemical Works'.

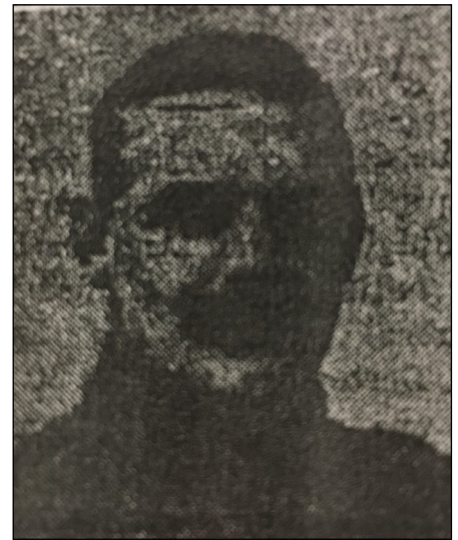


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

In April 1908, he was married and living at 2 Foster Street, Widnes when he enlisted in the Territorial Force of the West Lancashire division of the Royal Engineers at Deacon Road. He had been promoted to Sergeant by the time the war had broken out.

At the outbreak of war he was mobilised, and whilst at Knowsley Park, was promoted to the rank of Sergeant-Major. He was demobilised in April 1919, and was reported as working at Muspratt's Works of the United Alkali Company as a foreman cooper. Sergeant-Major Howard held a certificate for long service with the 2nd Lancashire Volunteers and a Territorial Force Efficiency Medal, which he was awarded before the war started.

In June 1919, William Howard was reported in the Runcorn Weekly News as living at 13 Appleton Road, Widnes with his wife Mrs Mary Howard.

Mary Howard died on 8th January, 1939, and probate was granted in the February. William Howard and his daughter Lilian (born 26th December, 1913) were listed as living at 31 Alder Avenue, Widnes on the 1939 Census. He died in either 1964 or 1965.

John Jameson

Military Medal

John was born at the Norton Cottages, Preston Brook to his parents Arthur and Mary Ann (nee Cliff), on the 23rd April, 1892. His birth was registered on the 3rd June, 1892. John had four other siblings: William, Joseph, Ellen, and Peter. John's father Arthur worked as a warehouse porter.



© IWM (OMD 5788)

In the 1911 Census, John was listed as a 'Poultry man', whilst still living at home.

On the 18th November, 1914, John and three friends went to Frodsham and enlisted in the 8th Battalion of the Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, being issued with consecutive regimental numbers. After training, they embarked for France on the 27th September, 1915. John served throughout the war with the 8th Battalion.

Whilst a Lance Corporal, he was awarded the Military Medal for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire or for individual or associated acts of bravery, which was reported in the London Gazette on the 14th May, 1919. Before being demobilised, John was made Acting Sergeant.

On the 14th June, 1922, John married Nellie Jackson, a farmer's daughter from Bowden Bank View in Ollerton, Cheshire. By the time of the marriage, Nellie's father, Daniel, had passed away. Nellie had 9 siblings.

The 1939 Register shows that John was a Dairy Farmer in Bucklow, Cheshire whilst Nellie looked after the house. When they retired from farming, they went to live at 2 Wellbank Cottages, Over Peover, Cheshire.

John passed away on the 14th February, 1966 in Parkside Hospital Macclesfield. Nellie, continued living at the Wellbank Cottage until she passed away on the 2nd March, 1986.

With thanks to the Preston Brook History Group.

Thomas Alfred 'Todger' Jones

Victoria Cross

Distinguished Conduct
Medal



'Todger' Jones image from L Howard *'The Way We Were: Runcorn Remembered. A social history'* (Aurora, 1997) p 39

Todger Jones' is perhaps the most famous WW1 soldier from Halton. He was awarded the Victoria Cross which is Britain's highest military award for gallantry. He was awarded the VC after the Battle of Morval 25th September, 1916. His award was reported in the London Gazette, on 26th October 1916 p. 10396:

'No. 11000 Private Thomas Alfred Jones, Cheshire Regiment. For most conspicuous bravery. He was with his company consolidating the defences in front of a village, and, noticing an enemy sniper at 200 yards distance, he went out, and, though one bullet went through his helmet and another through his coat, he returned the sniper's fire and killed him. He then saw two more of the enemy firing at him, although displaying a white flag. Both of these he also shot. On reaching the enemy trench he found several occupied dug-outs, and, single-handed, disarmed 102 of the enemy, including three or four officers, and marched them back to our lines through a heavy barrage. He had been warned of the misuse of the white flag by the enemy, but insisted on going out after them.'

Thomas Alfred Jones was born on Christmas Day 1880 at 39 Princess Street, Runcorn. His father was called Edward and was a 'fitter' at the Hazlehurst Soap Work, Runcorn, his mother was called Elizabeth. They had nine children in total. Edward Jones was a preacher at the Ellesmere Street Free Church in Runcorn.

Thomas went to school at the Runcorn National School from 1885-1894 and was well known for his footballing skills. He gained the nickname 'Todger' as a result of his clever footwork. After school 'Todger' became an engineering fitter at the Salt Union Works at Weston Point, Runcorn. He enlisted with the Runcorn Volunteers on 15th January, 1900—a company which later became the 5th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment. He was noted for

his marksmanship and was awarded the Territorial Force Efficiency Medal in 1912. In 1913 he resigned from the TF but went onto the National Reserve.

At the outbreak of war he was recalled and on 31st August, 1914 he was attested at Runcorn. Despite wishing to go into the Royal Engineers he stayed with the Cheshire Regiment. After training at Birkenhead he was posted to France on 16th January, 1915. Records show he was fined four days pay in January 1916, because he had overstayed his leave in England.



Todger shows his bullet-ridden steel Brodie helmet to his parents. From *I Laughed Like the Blazes! The life of Pte 'Todger' Jones VC, DCM*. D. Thompson (Mailbox publishing, 2002) p. 17.

He was presented with his Victorian Cross on 18th November, 1916 by King George V at Buckingham Palace. He had a civic reception in Chester and was presented with a 'gold wrist watch, a silver teapot, a case of cutlery and a pair of field glasses.' (www.vconline.org.uk/thomas-a-jones-vc/4587245619) .



'Four heroes in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace...' from *I Laughed like Blazes! The life of Pte 'Todger' Jones VC, DCM*. D. Thompson (Mailbox publishing, 2002) p 24.

His DCM was reported in the London Gazette on 5th December 1918 with the citation 'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This man went forward five times with messages through an intense barrage. He also led forward stragglers and placed them in positions. His fine example and utter fearlessness of danger were a great incentive to the men.'

He was sent back to the front and was gassed a number of times before the end of the war.

The Weekly News article of 2nd May 1919 recalled “‘Todger’ Jones at home—Pte. T. A. Jones, V.C., D.C.M. of the Cheshire Regiment, is at present enjoying 23 days’ leave and is at his home in Runcorn. His intention at the end of that period is somewhat uncertain. It is quite possible that he may rejoin the Army and follow the military career, for which he seems to have so much aptitude. He seems fairly well but has not quite shaken off the effect of three ‘doses’ of gas received in the later fighting.’ A later Weekly News article from February 1920 reported that he was presented with ‘a cheque for £41’ on behalf of the club members and friends of the Runcorn Liberal Club at a ‘tea and social’ event.



Jones meeting wounded soldiers from the Vicarage and Cottage Hospitals from *'I Laughed like Blazes': The life of Pte Thomas 'Todger' Jones VC, DCM* D. Thompson (Mailbook, 2002) p. 25

After the war ‘Todger’ returned to his job at the Salt Union Works, later taken over by ICI and eventually retired in 1949 after 36 years. During WW2 he was an ARP Warden and served in the Home Guard. He had a son Thomas William Jones Abram by Robina Abram but they never married.

Jones was admitted to the Victoria Memorial Hospital, Runcorn on 4th January, 1956, and died there on 30th January. He is buried in Runcorn Cemetery and a community-funded statue of him was unveiled in 2014 in Runcorn Memorial Gardens.

His medals are on display in Cheshire Military Museum, along with other items retelling his story.



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Jones in Home Guard uniform from *'I Laughed like Blazes!' The life of Pte 'Todger' Jones VC, DCM*. D. Thompson (Mailbox, 2002) p 39.

Albert Jones

Distinguished Service Order

Military Cross

Albert Jones was born on 20th June, 1886. On 1911 census he was recorded as living at 41, Portugal Street, Bolton with his wife Anne Lucy (b. 1884) and their sons Albert Hugh Thelwall (aged 2 years old) and John Andrew (aged 1 year old). His occupation was 'Medical Inspector of School Children' for Lancashire County Council.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

On 20th February, 1920, Jones was awarded his medals by the Prince Connaught during the Royal Investiture at the Council Chambers in Liverpool Town Hall, as reported in The Runcorn Weekly News on 27th February 1920. He had also featured as one of the local 'Praiseworthy... Doctors in War' in a Weekly News article dated March 28th, 1919.

Jones was decorated with both the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross. London Gazette announcements reported his award of the Military Cross in June 1917 and The Distinguished Service Order in June 1918. The Weekly News report stated that he was commissioned into the R.A.M.C. in January 1915, became a Captain in 1916, and by 1918 was Acting Lieutenant-Colonel. It seems he served in France and was given command of a Field Ambulance, possibly 'Medical Unit 9' and made Deputy Assistant Director of Medical Services to a division. He was also listed as 'deserv[ing] special mention' in the London Gazette on 24th May, 1918.

On 1939 census he was listed as 'Medical Officer of Health and Officer in charge of ARP Casualties.' His address was recorded as 130 Birchfield Road, Widnes and he was living with his wife and their sons Albert Hugh Thelwall Jones (b. 1908) and Eric Sherwood Jones (b. 1921). Both of his sons followed him into the medical profession.



'A Wade Deacon School Occasion' Dr Jones is 2nd from the right listed as 'Medical Officer' A. Hall & Widnes Historical Society *Images of England: Widnes* A. Hall and the Widnes Historical Society (Tempus, 2004) p 77

Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay

Distinguished Service Order
Most Distinguished Order of
Saint Michael and Saint George



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

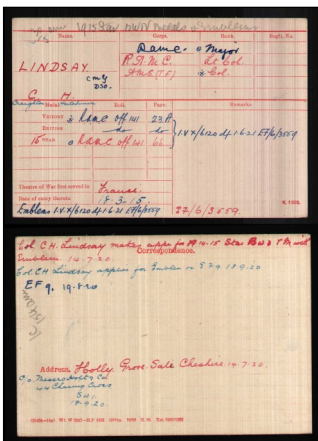
Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay was born on 23rd February, 1876 to Stewart Lindsay and Nancy Hutchinson at Drumlamph, Bellaghy in Northern Ireland. His birth was reported in the Belfast News on 23rd February, 1876.

The next record we have of him is when he enrolled at University of Edinburgh to study medicine on 13th October, 1896. He became a MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) in 1901 and a MD (Medical Doctor) in 1906. On 24th October, 1900, he appears to have been initiated into the Masons at the Widnes Lodge and on the 1901 Census he is recorded as living with his uncle William Hutchenson [sic] (also a physician and surgeon) at 95 Albert Road, Widnes.

In April 1902, his marriage to Margaret Helena - also born in Northern Ireland - was registered in Liverpool. The 1905 Kelly's Directory lists his address as 101 Albert Road, Widnes and a 1910 Medical Directory also lists him at this same address. By the time of the 1911 Census, he had moved to 1, Peel House Lane with his wife Margaret Helena Lindsay and one year old daughter Rhona Margaret Olivia Lindsay.

Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay joined the Territorial Force of the Royal Army Medical Corps before the war. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 25th November, 1907, and according to the Runcorn Weekly News had reached the rank of Captain before war broke out. The same article printed on March 28th, 1919, honoured several 'praiseworthy ... Widnes and Garston doctors holding commissions' in the R.A.M.C. and went on to list the exploits and awards won by these men.

This is what it had to say of (by then) Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay: ‘Lieut.-Colonel Lindsay joined the West Lancashire Field Ambulance several years before the war as a Lieutenant... In March, 1915, he was second in command of the 87th Field Ambulance to Gallipoli, and was in the first landing there. Finding that Y Beach had a rocky bottom, it was found impossible to bring the boats near the shore. Lindsay and his officers and men were dropped over the side of the boat into the sea with their heavy packs and equipment. Many got into deep water and were drowned, others fell to Turkish bullets. As a result of Lindsay’s meritorious conduct on that occasion he was mentioned in dispatches on 12th June.



In 1916, Lindsay was appointed as a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. The honour takes precedence of the D.S.O. and Military Crosses. The award was given “for conspicuous courage and coolness under fire on many occasions. No task has been too dangerous for him to undertake and his organising powers have ensured successful completion of what was undertaken”

On one occasion in Gallipoli, Lindsey was alone in a trench when a Turkish shell burst and buried him. The occurrence was witnessed by two men, who came to his aid. On the day of Suez, the ship he was on was in danger from a submarine, and an S.O.S. call, believed to have been sent out to lure ships to their fate was received, but ignored. He said he ‘could not praise “his boys” enough for the excellent work they had done. It is through their pluck and self- sacrifice that the 87th Field Ambulance has become famous.’

Another write up of the Gallipoli incident, which is recorded on the Merseyside Roll of Honour—Merseyside’s Part in the War. Reproduced from the ‘Liverpool Courier—a special report in 76 parts,’ gives a clear indication of the work of the Field Ambulances and Major Lindsay’s involvement in some of the most notable areas of conflict during the 1914-18 conflict:

‘The infantry and the second section of the Field Ambulance, under Major Lindsay, who had landed on the 25th April, also met with stiff resistance and were driven to re-embark next day after heavy losses had been sustained by the Infantry. Major Lindsay sustained a slight wound but was able to “carry on,” and on the 28th his section landed again, this time on X Beach, when Major Lindsay took over the command of the combined sections... Major Lindsay, who took command of the corps consequently upon Lt-Col. O’Hagan’s

illness [a fellow Doctor from Garston who won a DSO] was eventually promoted Lieutenant Colonel. After taking part in bitter fighting at Cape Helles they were transferred to Sulva Bay, and on August 21st took part in the attack on Chocolate Hill... soon afterwards the fierceness of the strain led to the departure of Colonel Lindsay. Dysentery and fever were increasingly rife, and the strength of the corps was visibly weakening... Captain Seddon took over the command, and in October the corps obtained a brief respite, being transferred to Cape Helles for a rest. Here Colonel Lindsay re-joined the corps, and in November they were sent to Lemnos to recuperate....



© IWM (OMD 312)

In March 1916... they were flung into the Great Offensive on the Somme, the ... 87th Field Ambulance as they were now known, being actively engaged at Beaumont Hamel. A short rest at Ypres, if such billeting area can be called a resting place, was followed by further activity on the Somme, notably Le Transloy in October. After wintering in this region, the corps took part in the Battle of Arras, and after a month's rest were then moved up for the great attack on the Passchendaele Ridge. At this point Colonel Lindsay handed over the command of the corps to Captain Stopford-Taylor, having been promoted to be Assistant-Director Medical Services, 59th Division. At Passchendaele the corps incurred severe casualties, many members being killed and wounded...'

At this time, we do not know when Lindsay was demobilised, but a 1920 Medical Directory lists him as living at 1 Peel House Lane, Widnes. Five years later he was listed as 'travelling not in practice,' and then in 1930, he was 'retired' and living at 3 Victoria Road, Darlington. Later he appeared in Medical Directories of 1935 and 1940 living at Queen Anne Chambers, Dean Farrah Street, SW1. It seems his wife died on 27th June 1959 in Sussex.

It would appear he died on 21st February, 1941 at Mount Vernon Hospital, Middlesex with probate granted to Messrs Holt and Company Trustees in Llandudno on 15th May, 1941.

Samuel McCausland



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Military Cross

Dr Samuel McCausland was honoured in an article in The Runcorn Weekly News on 28th March, 1919. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1917, for work amongst the wounded in exceptionally dangerous circumstances during the Battle of Arras in April 1917.

The official report states: -“Under very heavy and continuous shell fire he systematically searched from cellar to cellar of a village until he had successfully cleared his part of the village of all wounded. These included many men who had been lying there for days, and who could not be moved owing to the intensity of the enemy barrage. He worked unceasingly amongst conditions of the greatest possible danger for thirty hours.”

Captain McCausland was mobilised with the Territorials in 1914, and with the 87th Field Ambulance took part in the landing at Gallipoli, and was recommended for distinction ‘by virtue of the splendid work which he then accomplished’. He continued to serve on the Peninsula until the evacuation, and was then sent to France. His first leave since mobilisation was granted at Christmas 1916, whereupon he was sent back out to Arras. British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index show he applied for his medals and 1914—15 star on 29th February, 1920, and his first theatre of war was recorded as Gallipoli on 25th April, 1915. He would have experienced very heavy fighting in challenging conditions.

In various Medical Directories from 1915, 1935 and 1942, McCausland is listed as working at 101 Albert Road/Street Widnes. In 1915 he was listed as (Hutchinson & McCausland) which is interesting because it proves a link with another decorated Doctor Colonel Creighton Hutchinson Lindsay. In the 1935 listing, it records he was a late Captain of the R.A.M.C. and had also received the Croix De Guerre. In 1942, he was also recorded as being a ‘police surgeon.’ He was listed in the United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Register from January 1913 as a ‘medical professional’ and in the same document as ‘Surgeon.’ He attended Widnes Masonic Hall. There is the McCausland Suite at Widnes Masonic Lodge to this day. The History of the Widnes Golf club also recalls ‘Woolton Golf Club was influential in the foundation of Widnes as two of the main instigators, John Hardman and Dr Sam McCausland, were both Woolton members and they became the first two Widnes Captains.’ We are sure there must be more information about this gentleman, yet to be unearthed.

Duncan Thomas Norman

Military Cross

French Croix De Guerre

Belgian Order of Chevalier Leopold



1880s family photograph

Duncan Norman was born at Linden Lodge, Runcorn on 7th June, 1889 to Alfred Robert Norman and his wife Agnes (nee McKechnie). His father was well respected locally, having worked in the family chemical and sanitary pottery business founded by his father in Widnes. He later becoming chairman of Parkinson's Ltd, Tanning Company. Alfred Norman was elected to Cheshire County Council and in 1904 was installed as alderman. He was deputy chairman of the Education Committee for many years and chairman of the governors of Runcorn County Secondary School. He was a regular church goer and held many posts at St Paul's Methodist Church in Runcorn.

Duncan Norman's maternal grandfather Duncan McKechnie was also a respected local figure and successful business man. He had been born in Argyllshire but moved south at the age of 33 years. He founded a major chemical company in St Helens, which he eventually sold to United Alkali. He became an alderman of St. Helens, was elected Mayor of the Borough and was a 'stalwart supporter' of the Presbyterian Church in St. Helens.

Duncan Norman went to 'a local dame school,' then to Greenbank Preparatory School and finally on to Shrewsbury School where his housemaster wrote 'his whole career at Shrewsbury has been an exemplary one and as head boy of the house he has always endeavoured conscientiously to do his duty..' After Shrewsbury he went to Emmanuel College Cambridge to study law but before he



1909 May Emmanuel College Pagans, Duncan Norman in on the back row, 1st on left. Family photograph.



**D Nomran and Dilys on their wedding day 1918.
Family photograph.**

could fully qualify war broke out and he decided to enlist. A family connection enabled him to join the Royal Engineers, about which he recalled 'I had only the vaguest of vague ideas as to the function of the RE's, and even so far as those ideas were in any way definite, I doubted seriously whether I would ever be competent to carry them out. I never had a mathematical, mechanical or engineering bent of any kind—but I was happy because I thought I would now get into the war before it was over.' He clearly was suited to this role as he rose quickly to the rank of Captain in the Signals Branch, serving in the 55th (West Lancashire) Division.

In the same year (1914) Norman had met Dilys Owen at the wedding of an old school friend from Shrewsbury. Mrs Norman (as she later became) recalled their meeting 'He was tall and very good looking and I remember noticing how considerate {well mannered} he was... I danced with him at the party after the wedding.' Throughout the war Norman wrote letters to both his parents and Dilys which recalled some of the difficulties he faced and the actions which led to his gallantry awards:

'My experiences were very much those of most other young men out here... the MC was for work in one or two disagreeable spots... some time last autumn it became necessary to go out and live in an unpleasant and thoroughly disagreeable spot in a barrage line for about seven days... By the mercy of God, I was one of the lucky ones and we managed to do the job we set out to do, although many poor fellows were knocked out doing it. By another piece of good fortune for me the Brigadier happened to hear all about it, and there it (the MC) was.' His award was also reported in the Widnes Weekly News on 5th and 8th January, 1917.

In a letter to his parents dated 11th January, 1919, he wrote 'I am thankful to have come through without either being knocked out or maimed. Time was in the old Somme days and often at Wipers [Ypres] when I thought I should only come home in little bits. When times were bad, I always put resolutely behind me the thought that anything could happen to me. I always thought that if a man began to think 'I shall be hit this time' that he probably would be,' a fellow soldier Trumpeter Houghton echoed the grim circumstances

when he recalled ‘being together near Potage Wood when we were both shelled and smothered by earth during the bombardment.’

In another letter from 1918 he spoke of the comfort he felt when ‘sometimes, particularly in the early days and before I became a back area swab—I’ve had an acute sense of grandfather’s [McKechnie] presence and a feeling of protection. This absolutely surrounded me on the night of 8th—9th August 1916 (the second week of the Somme) in Troues Wood, and I know very well I should have been pipped otherwise.’

Despite the awful situation he felt a keen sense of responsibility to his fellow soldiers and in 1917 he wrote to Dilys saying ‘it has become an article of my creed that I’ve got the best men in the world and I proclaim it on the slightest provocation, or even with no provocation at all.’ In the same year he was given the opportunity to return to England and train recruits for 6-9 months but explained to Dilys ‘After much thought I have had to refuse the offer. I thought it would be a rotten trick to sheer off at a time like this and leave my friends here absolutely in it.’ Norman stayed in touch with many of the soldiers he served with during the war and on a number of occasions found work for them after the war had ended.

On 17th April, 1919, the Runcorn Weekly News published the following article:

‘Captian D. Norman, M.C., only son of Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Norman, Heath House , Runcorn, has been awarded the French Croix de Guerre and the Belgian Order of Chevalier de Leopold. Captain D. Norman, who has only just been demobilised, was commanding officer of the 19th T. Corps, Signal Company, and is at present in Greece on business. He has been with the forces since the outbreak of war, and has already been awarded the Military Cross for distinguished work in the field. This further recognition of his work will give great pleasure to his many friends in the district.’



Norman’s medals. Family photograph.

The reference to him being ‘in Greece on business’ concurs with a family memoirs which recalls that after demobilisation Norman joined his grandfather’s chemical firm, McKechnie Brothers, and exploited overseas contacts established during the war to develop new commercial interests, selling sulphur to the Balkans. By 1924 however, he had decided upon a new career and joined the board of Owen Owen, a business started by his wife’s father who had built up a ‘thriving drapery business in Liverpool’s London Road, after opening a small shop with a single assistant in 1868.’

According to his Biography on the Duncan Norman Research Scholarship Trust website at the University of Liverpool, 'with bold new strategies and inspiring leadership, he engineered a renaissance in the fortunes of the struggling company' and thanks to a close relationship with T J Hughes the two firms of T J Hughes and Owen Owen amalgamated in 1934, after T J Hughes' death. He finally stepped down as Chairman of Owen Owen in 1964.



The Norman Family. Family photograph.

After the directors of the company had presented him with a silver salver upon retirement, he wrote a thank you letter in which he stated 'I have loved the trade because of the human contacts it brings and the friendships that follow.' He thanked 'all his friends in the Organisation, in Britain and Canada.' He was also presented with a bound volume containing 'more than 3, 200 names of Pensioners and present members of the Owen Owen group of Companies in Britain and Canada... [and] a beautiful gold minute repeater watch and chain.'

Aside from his business interests Norman was heavily involved with The University of Liverpool and become Vice President until 1951, then Acting President from 1954—57 and finally Pro-Chancellor for six years. In recognition of his work the University awarded Mr Norman an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in 1964. His family later established a legacy The Duncan Norman Research Scholarship Trust which supports a postgraduate research scholarship in perpetuity. Mr Norman also served as High Sheriff of Cheshire from 1943—44 and gifted an electric organ to St Bartholomew's Church, Barrow in memory of their son Owen who was killed in action in 1942. He died in 1972.



D Norman in High Sheriff dress. Family picture.

Francis Harry Pritchard

Distinguished Flying Medal

The Runcorn Weekly News reported that Sergeant Francis H Pritchard joined the Royal Navy Division in August 1915 and was afterwards transferred to the Royal Air Force although other records show he served from 1914 to 1920. His service number was 214791 and he was listed as being a Disciplinarian under the Royal Navy and retained this role when re-mustered to the Royal Air Force. The 'date of joining' is stated as 1st September, 1916, which must have been when he transferred over to the R. A. F.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal for his conduct on 28th May, 1918, when acting as an observer to his colonel who was piloting the aeroplane. The citation read: 'For gallant conduct as an observer on 28th May, 1918, in a bombing raid carried out from a height of only 200 feet on the South Lock Gate of Zeebrugge. It has since been ascertained that the Lock Gate in question was seriously damaged on this occasion.'

In April 1920, Sergeant H Pritchard was presented with his DFM at a ceremony at the Annual General Meeting of the Runcorn Urban District Council and he gave the following account: 'Type of machine, de Haveland; No.4 Pilot-Commander P. F. M. Fellows,... 2am: Got into flying kit and started machine up. 2.30am: Left aerodrome on our expedition. 3am: Diving on Zeebrugge Mole at a speed of 180 miles per hour with orders to scatter machine-gun fire on all effective batteries. Succeeded in putting out of two searchlights and hit our object with the first bomb under heavy fire. The second bomb hit the left corner of the submarine base. 3.05am: Our plane was hit with machine-gun fire from batteries on the Dutch frontiers. 3.10am: Our machine fell into the sea, five kilometres from land, the pilot was wounded in the foot, and after an interval of five minutes the aeroplane sank. 4am: Picked up unconscious by German destroyer No. 55, in the mouth of the Scheldt. Taken as German prisoner of war and was stripped of gold wristlet watch, gold signet ring, all naval uniform, and was equipped with an old [khaki] uniform.'

Pritchard's parents were listed as Mr and Mrs Brazier of 10 Irwell Street, Runcorn. The Weekly News also reported he had been injured and had spent over eight months in Germany. Before signing up he had 'held a position with a commercial firm in London.'

John William Ravenscroft

Distinguished Flying Cross

As reported in the Widnes Weekly News on 27th February, 1920, Pilot Officer John William Ravenscroft (possible service number 175864) of Weaver View, Weston, was invested by Prince Arthur of Connaught (grandson of Queen Victoria) with the Distinguished Flying Cross for services in Russia in July 1919.



Image © IWM (OMD 199)

The award was established in June 1918 shortly after the formation of the Royal Air Force and was reported to be the first honour of its kind awarded to a Runcorn officer. He was listed as Petty Officer in December 1919 and according to the National Archives 'The RAF unit that was despatched to support the North Russian Expeditionary Force in May 1919 undertook various reconnaissance and bombing missions against Bolshevik forces in the region.' A John William Ravenscroft was listed as aged 6 years on the 1901 census living at Winsford, and in 1939 as a 'General Clerk' at the Salt Works but it is unclear if this is the same J W Ravenscroft who was awarded the DFC.

Alfred Salt

Military Cross

Alfred Salt went to school at Warrington Road where he later returned as a teacher. He trained to become a teacher at Hampshire College, and during this time joined up with the Territorial Army. After training, he returned to Widnes and began teaching at Simms Cross Primary School. In 1919, he was living at Lynwood, Birchfield road, Widnes.



Image Runcorn Weekly News

He was granted a commission in the 16th Royal Welsh Fusiliers, attached to the Trench Mortar Battery of the 113th Infantry Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division. On 28th February, the Weekly News reported that he had been awarded the Military Cross. His citation read:

‘During the attack on the enemy’s positions near Mortho Wood, on the morning of October 8th 1918, finding that the infantry were held up by machine gun fire, this officer, under very heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, took his mortars into the open in front of the infantry in order to get within range and engaged the enemy nest with complete success. The enemy was seen to run and was engaged by rifle fire.

He has on former occasions done excellent work in the face of greatest dangers. On September 19th 1918, when a bombing attack was made by us upon African Trench in the Couzeua-Court Sector, he fought his guns with the greatest skill and determination.

Observing from the parapet, he directed his fire with great accuracy, inflicting heavy casualties upon the enemy and enabling our infantry to take their objective. His personal courage and devotion to duty have proved an inspiration to his men.’

He was a keen sportsman and reintroduced Rugby Union to the town in 1924 by founding Widnes RUFC. The postcard shows the original Old Widnesian team from 1925/6. He is pictured wearing a pullover and tie on the far right of the picture.



Frederick William Tyler

Military Medal

Frederick William Tyler was born on 10th November, 1898 at 52 Junction Street, Manchester. By 1911, his family had moved to 14 Norfolk Street, Runcorn and attended Holy Trinity School. At 14 he went to work in a bakery, and later in a brickworks.



On his sixteenth birthday 1914, he enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment and was subsequently transferred to the Machine-Gun Corps.

He was awarded the Military Medal in 1917 for holding an advanced position for twelve hours with a machine-gun, after his officer and most of the gun crew had been killed.

Tyler was wounded in the war and spent some time at the 2nd Northern Military Hospital in Leeds as well as the Royal Victoria Military Hospital in Netley (pictured below).



When Tyler was demobilised in 1919 with the rank of sergeant, he returned to the brickyard. In 1927 he entered the chemical industry as a 'rigger' – a man skilled in handling heavy weights and in the use of lifting tackle. He later became a member of the Works Fire Brigade and First Aid Team. With the threat of war, Mr Tyler became an A. R. P. Officer, and three years later he became Safety Officer in control of all safety measure in the works.



In 1946, ICI commissioned a number of prominent British artists to paint the portraits of fifty-six of the firm's employees as part of an exhibition entitled 'Portraits of an Industry.' With 'the dual purpose of portraying ICI to itself and of showing the general public the sort of men and women employed in the laboratories and factories of the British chemical industry'.

The portraits went on display in London in 1946. William Tyler's portrait was painted by Francis Ernest Jackson, ARA (1872-1945). His portrait (right) is now in the collection at The Catalyst Museum, Widnes.

Tyler was a member of St. John's Church Weston and served as warden, sidesman and a member of the men's society. He was also a lifelong member and chairman of Runcorn Football Supporters' Club, having played amateur football for local clubs, the 'Ragged' School, and Runcorn in the 1920s. He was also a keen gardener and an active member of St John's Church.



He died on 12th May, 1972 whilst living at 17 Bankes Lane, Weston. Over two hundred people attended his funeral.

Images thanks to Brenda Jenkin

Thomas Twigg

Military Medal

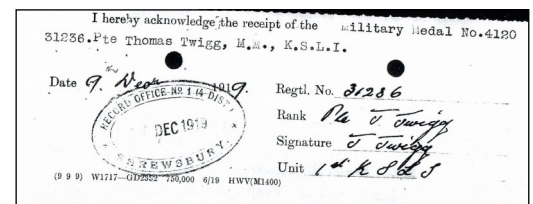
Thomas Twigg was born in Widnes on 6th October 1891. His father James T Twigg was an 'Alkali Worker' and his mother Sarah Ann Twigg was born in Runcorn. The 1911 census showed him living at 71, Lacey Street Widnes with his parents and siblings and working as a 'Chemical Labourer.' On 21st April, 1913 he married Ellen Maloney.



Images from Twigg family

On 26th November, 1916 he enlisted. His age was recorded as 24 years and 1 month, height 5 feet 3.5 inches and he was living at 11 Major Cross Street. He joined the south Lancashire Regiment then was transferred to the King's Shropshire Light Infantry 5th Battalion on 20th May, 2017. His occupation at the time was 'Process Labourer [at] Musprat[t].' On 2nd February 1918 he was then transferred to the 1st Battalion KSLI.

He was presented with the Military Medal on 12th December, 1919, at a meeting of the Widnes Town Council. The Runcorn Weekly News reported the following:



'He was recommended for the medal on September 17th, 1918, for acting as stretcher bearer at Fresnoy. He and another went under heavy enemy machine gun fire on several occasions bringing in the wounded. He was wounded in that engagement, and after recovering from his wound at Rouen he voluntarily gave a pint and a half of his blood to a comrade (applause). That comrade was dying...' His award was listed in the London Gazette Issue 31338, page 6037 date 14th May 1919. The injury he sustained was a shrapnel wound to his left thigh. Thomas' brother James served with the Manchester Regiment but unfortunately died from his wounds in Belgium on 27th June, 1917.

On the 1939 census, he was aged 48 and still working as a 'Heavy Chemicals Labourer.' He was living at 12 Lugsdale Road, Widnes with his wife Ellen Twigg (b. 1892). Six of their nine children were living with them and either at school or working in the chemicals industry.

Thomas died at the above address on 18 December 1943 aged 51 after 11 years of poor health. He was buried in a communal grave at Widnes cemetery. At the time of death he had nine surviving children and his son Thomas was serving in India and fought in Burma. His grandson, Derek Twigg has been a Member of Parliament for Halton since 1997 and a former Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans.

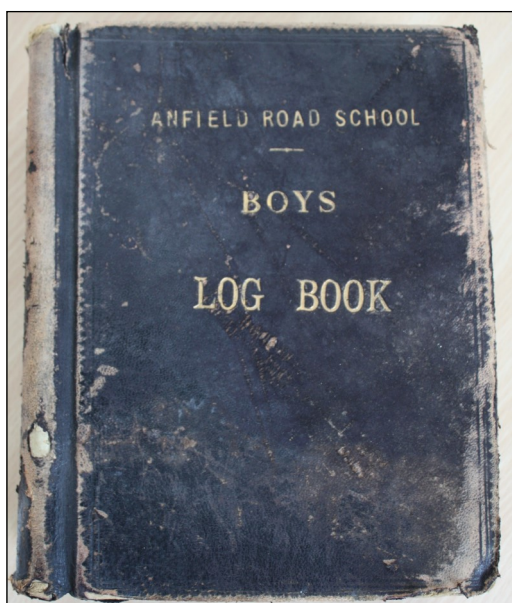
Benjamin Ward

Meritorious Service Medal

Benjamin Ward was born in Widnes on 10th January, 1886. On the 1891 census he was living with his father Benjamin Ward and mother Margaret Ward. His mother was born in Widnes and his father was born in Prescot and listed as a 'Chemical Driller[?].' Benjamin was one of four siblings and the eldest boy. By the time of the 1901 census he was 15 years old, they were still living at 13 Thomas Street, Widnes and his father was employed as a 'Boiler Minder—Soap works.'



Image from Runcorn Weekly News



According to a Weekly News article dated 20th June 1919 he attended Simms Cross Primary School, went on to be one of the first pupils at the Secondary School and 'served his pupil-teachership at West Bank school for two years under Mr Snoddy.' The 1911 census shows him aged 25yrs living as a boarder with Percy Francis at 11, Ash Leigh, Anfield, Liverpool. Both men are recorded as 'Elementary School Teacher L'pool Ed. Com.' Thanks to the records kept by Anfield Road School and the Runcorn Weekly News article we know he was working at Anfield Road School prior to the war breaking out. The Log Book for the School has proved a wealth of information. (Left and below).

The Weekly News also indicated that by 1914 Ward was married to 'his wife, whom he met whilst at Southampton University.'

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Age	Name	Date of Birth	Register No.
11. 01	Stearns John	15. 10. 61	24941
11. 03	Head Arthur	17. 5. 72	20503
11. 03	Stewart Luther	15. 11. 59	9077
11. 03	Spencer Benjamin	29. 12. 20	01813
11. 03	Walters Harold	21. 8. 82	05165
11. 03	Walters Harold	24. 6. 82	05218
11. 03	Walters Alfred	1. 3. 88	05236
11. 03	Walters Arthur	13. 9. 84	05253
11. 03	Ward Benjamin	10. 1. 86	05259
11. 03	Ward John	5. 11. 85	05259
11. 03	Walters Benjamin	24. 1. 87	05255
11. 03	Walters William	11. 11. 84	05256
11. 03	Walters Arthur	24. 7. 86	05263
11. 03	Walters William	21. 7. 83	05259
11. 03	Walters Frank	12. 6. 88	05252
11. 03	Walters Richard	14. 12. 79	05262
11. 03	Walters Walter	10. 10. 89	05261
11. 03	Walters John	31. 10. 91	05261
11. 03	Walters William	15. 12. 92	05261

For the pupils' Teachers see pages 120, 117, 115, 130, 141, 142

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1915
1. Nov: Military Free. John Gibson,
3, Westcott Road, Anfield.
Class 10.

Mr B. Ward has joined His Majesty's Forces. Mr Fisher has been in charge of the class recently taken by Mr Ward today and the classes in heavy wood-work have been suspended.

The paper states that ‘He was... promoted to the rank of Sergeant and at Christmas of 1914, was drafted to East Africa. While there he was in charge of the stores and superintended two hundred natives [sic].’ Finding his army records has been a challenge as B Ward is not an uncommon name. There are however a few records for a Benjamin Ward (service number s4/146128) who served with the East Africa Royal Engineers.

Awarded the "Meritorious Service Medal."	
Surname	WARD EAST AFRICA
Christian Name	Benjamin
Rank	J/S.S.M.
Corps	R.A.S.C.
Regimental Number	84/146128
Date of Gazette	Peace Gazette
Registered Paper	0137/5608
(M.S. 3)	W3945/RP2986 6,000 8/18 (K655) W. & Co. K:841

Ward was Mentioned in Dispatches on 5th March 1918 (London Gazette Issue number: 30560. Pp. 2885) and again on 2nd August 1919 (London Gazette Issue number: 30829. Pp. 9221). The latter contains the entry: ‘The names of the undermentioned have been brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War by Lieutenant-General Sir J.L. Van Deventer, K.C.B. Commanding-in-Chief, British Forces East Africa, for distinguished services during the operations from 30th May to December, 1917, described in his despatch of 21st January, 1918.’ Attached above is the Medal Roll Index Card for the same Benjamin Ward (S4/146128). Unfortunately we are unable to ascertain whether this is the correct Benjamin Ward, although many of the details match his description in the paper.



After Ward was demobilised (April 1919) he returned to teaching at Anfield School and in June 1919 his address was 24, Inigo Lane, Stoneycroft, Liverpool. No further information about Benjamin Ward has been found to date and we have found no direct reference to any specific actions that led to his Meritorious Service Medal.

(Left top) Ward is top right photographed with a school football team from 1925.



(Left bottom) Ward is bottom right pictured with fellow teachers dated 1923—1925.

With thanks to Rick Lacy and Laura Coward from Anfield Road School, for helping to locate these documents.

Charles Webster

Meritorious Service Medal

It has not been easy tracking down Mr Webster's details due to the different spellings of his middle name; from 'Baskerville' to 'Baskey Field' to 'B'. What we have found is a Charles Baskey Field Webster who signed up for 4 years service with the Territorial Force on 23rd November, 1908?.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

His initial service number was T6114 and he was 18 years 5 months old, a 'Labourer' and living at 3 Greenbank Place, Widnes. These details correspond with a Weekly News article dated 13th June, 1919, which described the following:

'The other recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal is Sergeant Charles Baskerville Webster, a married man, of 16, Farnworth Street, Farnworth. He is thirty years of age, and he was also in the Volunteers at Deacon Road before the war. He was second corporal at the outbreak of war, and in May 1915, was made sergeant. After a period on Salisbury Plain, he left for France in January of 1916. Twice whilst on active service he was recommended for distinction, the latter time being just before Armistice Day, when he, with several other men, successfully bridged the Scheldt.'

The 1911 census showed Charles B Webster aged 19 years working as a 'Chemical Manufacture Labourer' living with his family. His father Jabez(?) Webster was also a 'Chemical Manufacture Labourer,' his mother Margaret was aged 46 years old and after Charles there were four children; William, Jabez(?), Sarah Ann and Albert. They also had a boarder living with them at 9, Moon Street, Widnes.

Various Medal Rolls exist which show his entitlement to the general service medals and the Territorial Forces War Medal. In these, his service number was also listed as 428459. No record of his MSM has been found, as yet. This is possibly because his award was included in the Birthday Honours List which meant no details were specifically recorded.

The 1939 census records a Charles B Webster born 20th June, 1882, married to Helen Webster (b. 1889) and working as 'Head Timekeeper & Wage Clerk(?) at Copper Lithophone Mus...(?)'. His residence is 22 Cedar Avenue, Widnes. It would appear his brother William H Webster was living with his wife only two doors down at number 24. The last reference to Charles B Webster is the Civil Registration Death Index when his death was recorded between January to March 1977.

Thomas H Wood

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Sergeant Thomas Wood attended the Parish Church School, Runcorn and had been a chorister at St Michael's Church.



Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Wood joined the South Lancashire Regiment on August 6th, 1914, and was posted to France in 1915. He took part in the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, and was wounded at Ypres on July 5th 1915. He was sent home to recover and then joined the Manchester Regiment, to which he was originally attached at Suez. He took part in the Sinai Peninsula fighting, and was one of the army that drove back, with appalling losses, the 18,000 Turks whose object it was to destroy the Suez Canal. In October 1917, he was again involved in fighting around Ypres and later at Nieuport. It was whilst at Nieuport he was granted 14 days special leave for gallantry for 'wiping out a German post on the banks of the Yser.' He was wounded again in March 1918 but recovered in time to be back with his battalion in time to take part in the major Allied offensive. It was during this fighting he was wounded in the leg whilst storming the village of Reinecourt on August 30th, 1918.

He was sent to England and spent time recovering at Nottingham Military Hospital and then transferred to the Vicarage Hospital in Runcorn where he '[made] a cheery progress of his native town on crutches'.

The London Gazette recorded the DCM was awarded 'for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. For 6 months this Sergeant has always distinguished himself in the line by his keenness and zeal. He has often performed particularly good work, showing high qualities of courage, leadership, and initiative.'

Sergeant Wood was awarded his medal in a ceremony held at Runcorn Vicarage Utility Hospital on Saturday 1st February, 1919. Mr Smith, Chairman of the Urban Council, presented him with his medal and the Reverend Perrin added a tribute in Wood's honour.



Patients and staff of Runcorn Parish Church Vicarage Hospital in Highlands Road, Runcorn during WW1. *Pocket images Runcorn* B. Starkey (Nonsuch, 2006) p. 113.

Harry Woulds

Military Medal



John Harry Woulds was born on 25 August, 1881, in Wakefield. His parents were Harry and Fanny and he had four siblings: William (b. 1885), Ellen (b. 1889), Harold (b. 1891), and Evelyn (b. 1894).

Harry followed in his father's footsteps and became a bricklayer. In 1903, he married Louisa Wilkinson in Wakefield. They had four children, Norah (b. 1904), Harry (b. 1907), Kathleen (b. 1910) and Eveline (b. 1921). By the outbreak of war, the family had moved to Ivy Cottage, Runcorn Road, Keckwick.

Harry enlisted into the Royal Engineers, service number 442496. He was 5'5" and weighed 10 stones.

Unfortunately, his military records are indistinct and no details can be gleaned of his service. But we do know that he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in battle, though the circumstances are unknown. The London Gazette of 25th January, 1918 listed Woulds amongst the non-commissioned officers and men to whom 'His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Military Medal for bravery in the Field.' The medal was eventually presented to him on 9th September, 1919, whilst he was in Thorncombe Military Hospital. He had been in Cambridge Hospital the previous August.

Harry returned home and by 1939, described himself as a master builder. He and Louisa lived at 'Chez Nous', Runcorn Road, Moore, with their daughter, Eveline.

Harry died on 13 March 1952, aged 70 years. Probate was granted to his widow and son, Harry (a company director).

With thanks to the Daresbury District Heritage Group for this information and images:
www.ddhg.org.uk

Harold John Wright

Meritorious Service Medal



Image supplied by Mike Byrne PBHG

Harold was born in Hough Green, Widnes in April 1884 to Joseph and Mary Ann Wright. Harold was baptised in nearby Prescott on the 1st June, 1884, and was the oldest of eight children. His siblings were called Robert, Annie, Rhoda and Fanny and Thomas, George and Joseph. The 1901 census shows the whole family living together at 208 Southport Road, Formby.

Harold's father Joseph was listed on the 1891 Census as being a dog trainer. And in 1895, he won the prestigious Waterloo Cup with his greyhound 'Thoughtless Beauty'. This is a picture of the house at Hough Green where they lived called 'The Kennels.' By 1901 Harold and his brother Robert were also listed as Greyhound Trainers. In 1911, aged 26 years, Harold had left home and was working as a 'Professional Greyhound Trainer' at Deansgate Lane, Formby.



Picture from *Images of England: Widnes*. A. Hall & Widnes Historical Society (Tempus, 2004) p. 60.

Not long after, Harold got married to Emmeline Hodgson and they went to live at Wellfield Farm, Preston Brook, where Harold continued his greyhound training. Emmeline, who had been born in Manchester in 1877, had been working at 61 Derby Street, Ormskirk as a domestic servant. Harold joined the Royal Field Artillery at Frodsham on the 10th December, 1915, (service number 160694), where he rose to the rank of Warrant Officer 2nd class (Company Sergeant Major). He later transferred to the Royal Engineers No.360190 where he was gazetted and awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for duties in France. At one time Harold worked with message carrying dogs. Harold's home address was still at Wellfield, Preston Brook. Harold also received the Victory Medal and the British Medal. Emmeline died in early 1936 and was buried in Aston by Sutton aged 60. Harold died on the 24th November 1974 aged 93. He was living at the old family home in Southport Road, Formby. He too was buried in Aston by Sutton.

With thanks to the Preston Brook History Group for this information.

Louis John Wyatt

Distinguished Service Order

Louis was born in Islington, London, on 14 September 1874. His father was James Matthew George Wyatt, a civil engineer, and his mother was Eliza Pinta Wyatt. He was the youngest of five children. He lived with his family in Coombebury, Kingston before becoming a boarder at Aldenham Grammar School, Elstree, Hertfordshire.



By the age of 20, Louis John Wyatt was a second lieutenant in The King's Liverpool Regiment. In 1895, he moved to the North Staffordshire Regiment and fought in The Boer War.

He met Marian Sloane from Moore and the couple were married at All Saints' Church, Daresbury in 1904. Their first home was with Marian's family at 'The Beeches,' Moore.



All images courtesy of Wyatt family

He was awarded the DSO as part of the King's Birthday Honours in 1916, but there is no published citation. At the time, he was commanding officer of the 4th York and Lancaster Regiment. The London Gazette, October 20th, 1920, reported that he was decorated by the President of the Portuguese Republic, being made a Grand Officer the 'Military Order of Avis'. This was an honorary award and may be connected to a battle in April 1918 in which the Portuguese participated and suffered very badly.

Louis served with the armed forces throughout the war and by the end of hostilities had risen to the rank of Brigadier General, commanding forces in France and Flanders.

He was given the task of choosing the body of the 'Unknown Warrior' who was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey on 11th November, 1920. There were over a quarter of a million deaths among British military personnel during World War One. Many of these were buried in war graves, but unidentified. Their headstones are inscribed with the phrase Rudyard Kipling chose: 'a soldier of the Great War known unto God.'



Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, Westminster Abbey.

About three million people in Britain lost a close relative. Despite strong public opposition the decision was made not to return the bodies of the fallen soldiers to Great Britain. An Anglican Army chaplain, Rev David Railton, is attributed with having the idea of burying an unknown soldier as a public symbol of their sacrifice.

Records are sparse, but either four or six bodies were exhumed from the Somme, Aisne, Arras and Ypres. They were taken to a makeshift chapel in St Pol, covered and concealed. Brigadier General Louis Wyatt (GOC British forces, France and Flanders) chose one of them. The body was guarded and honoured and taken to Boulogne, where it was put into a coffin made of oak from Hampton Court. On Armistice day, 11 November 1920, the coffin was draped with a union flag and taken on a gun carriage to the Cenotaph. The King placed a wreath upon it. From there it was taken to Westminster Abbey where a short funeral service was held and the soldier's body was entombed just inside the west entrance.

"They buried him among the Kings because he had done good towards God and toward his house" (Dean Ryle, Dean of Westminster). Video footage of this event can be found on youtube.

With thanks to Louis John Wyatt's family and the Daresbury District Heritage Group for this information: www.ddhg.org.uk

George Wright

Meritorious Service Medal

George Wright—like another Widnes gentleman covered earlier in this booklet—was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for bravery whilst assisting during and after the explosion at a munitions factory at Uplees, Faversham on 2nd April, 1916 when 108 people died. Wright was enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery and stationed at Faversham when the explosion occurred. His brother Thomas was in the Tank Corps.



© IWM (OMD 6211)

A Guardian review of Brian Dillon's 'The Great Explosion' (Penguin, 2016) described the event and aftermath as follows: 'In the aftermath of 2 April 1916, men plunged into drainage dykes to retrieve the dying and the dead; they threw timbers from ruined buildings across the sea of mud surrounding the crater, and pulled their comrades, or what was left of them, from the ooze...' (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/16/brian-dillon-the-great-explosion-munitions-factory-uplees-faversham-kent-1915>)

George Wright was born in December 1896 to George and Julia Wright. A Runcorn Weekly News article described his father as 'the well known one-time athlete and starter.' In 1911, George was aged 14 years and living with his parents and siblings at 3 Brook Street, Widnes. His father was a 'Chemical Works Fitter', George was an 'Office Boy, Oil and Grease(?) Works'. He had attended Simms Cross School.



Picture of Simms Cross School from *Bygone Widnes* G. Smith (Eaton Press, 1985) p.28

The Weekly News article quoted a letter George sent home to his parents a few months after the explosion: 'I was pleased to know that you can manage to get something to eat. I would not like to hear that the people at home are starving. It must be laughable to see the queue, especially with the workmen amongst it—something fresh for them. The fellows back from leave say they get anything before a civilian. I can now tell that six of us have been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for the Faversham explosion. I am wearing the ribbon, and I expect that the medal will come later on. The ribbon is red and white down stripes.'

In 1939 George Wright was listed as married to Gertrude Wright. They lived at 79 Ireland Street, Widnes and he worked as a 'Clerk invoicing checking and book[s].'

'The Widnes Battery'

14th Lancashire Battery, Royal Field Artillery.

And finally, it seemed pertinent to keep the following names grouped together, according to the report from the Runcorn Weekly News which originally brought them to our attention.

The West Lancashire Division was a formation of the Territorial Force. It was created as a result of army reforms carried out in 1908 under the Secretary of State for War, Richard Burdon Haldane and was one of 14 Divisions of the peacetime Territorial Force. The 14th Lancashire Battery was part of the 3rd West Lancashire Brigade and based at Widnes. According to the Runcorn Weekly News it was 'better known' as the 'Widnes Battery'. A battery would be responsible for up to six artillery guns, trailers and a team of horses. During the winter of 1914–15 the infantry of the West Lancashire Division were sent to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force fighting on the Western Front.

On 16th May 1919 the Weekly News reported on a Re-union Ball held at the Borough Hall when four men were decorated: **Corporal W Connolly** DCM & MM, **Sergeant Thomas H Hankinson** MM, **Sergeant Hennigan** MM and **Gunner George Morris** MM.

The article stated that by May 1919 two thirds of the battery were 'now home' and Lieutenant Colonel Rimmer of Woolton who presented the medals was quoted as saying "The battery which I had the honour to command... is recognised as the first in Lancashire." The article went on to report that 'it was his lifelong pride to have seen it live before the war and then volunteer to fight. The four men he had the honour of decorating showed the merit of the battery. Widnes had reason to be proud of them.'

Gunner **W P Connolly's** service number was 685161 and a supplement to the Edinburgh Gazette dated 28th January 1918 recorded the following citation and reason for his being awarded the DCM:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. A convoy of ammunition came under hostile shell fire. Several casualties to teams and drivers were caused and the NCO in charge was

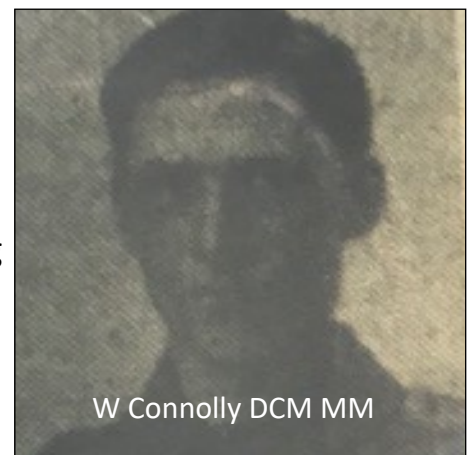


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

wounded. He at once took charge, cut the wounded clear, and superintended the re-horsing of the ammunition waggons. He saw to the removal of the wounded, and then led the convoy up to the position and delivered the ammunition. His great coolness and courage saved a difficult situation and proved an incentive to the rest of the men.'

His being awarded the Military Medal has not come up during research. A William P Connolly aged 7yrs appears on the 1901 census living at 15 Robert Street, Widnes with his father Peter and mother Anna L Connolly. His father is listed as a 'chemical worker.' The 1939 census shows William P Connolly living at 50 Warrington Road, Widnes. He was a 'process worker of Heavy chemicals Lithopone' and an ARP warden. He was married to Annie and they had a daughter Freda born on 17th April 1926.

Tracking down details for **B Hennigan** has been difficult. The Runcorn Weekly News article also listed him as B. Herrigan and the Register of Military Medal holders published in 'For Bravery in the Field' by P Warrington (2014) lists him as B Henigan. We have found a Bartholomew Henigan listed as a corporal and living in Runcorn. In 1891 a Bartholemew Henigan was listed as living with his father Joseph and mother Anne Henigan at 50 James Street, Widnes. He was 2 years old and his father was an 'alkali labourer.' In 1911 they were still resident at 50 James Street but both Bartholomew and his father were working as 'Copper Labourer[s].' Bartholomew also had a 5 year old brother Joseph.

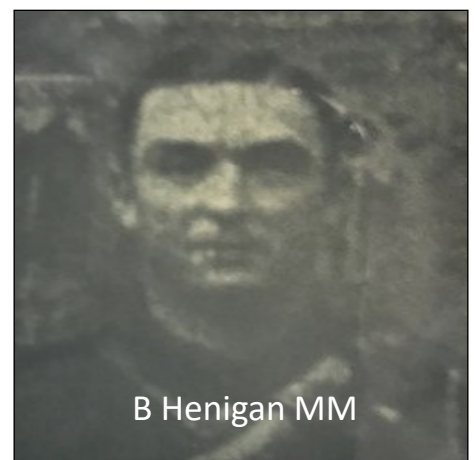


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Military records listed him as a Bombardier with a service number of 882 (and a possible miss type of 282) and also as a Sergeant with the service number 685148. According to the records of the 31st Ambulance train based in France, B Henigan (282) was treated for a 'gunshot wound to eye' on 13th August 1916 and discharged the day after. On 17th November Henigan (nos. 882) was recorded as entitled to wear a 'wound stripe.' According to a WW1 Medal Roll Index Card he was discharged on 17th February 1919. No further information can be found about the specific actions that resulted in the Military Medal, or when it was awarded. We do know he was awarded the 1914-15 Star which would indicate he enlisted at the outbreak of war. The last mention we can find of him is on the 1939 census when he was living at 14 Wellington Street, Widnes married to Maria Henigan and working as a 'General Labourer Copper Works.'

As yet, no **Thomas H Hankinson** can be found as living in Halton or is listed as receiving an Military Medal. Only a James and a Philip Hankinson were recorded as receiving the Military Medal in the Royal Field Artillery. The name Hankinson is not uncommon around Halton and Lancashire but no Thomas Hankinson comes up on any records for this period. His photograph was included in a later edition of the Weekly News which cited his address as 'Kent Street, Widnes' in May 1919.

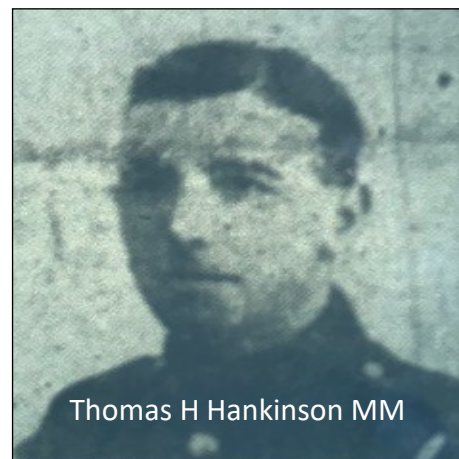


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

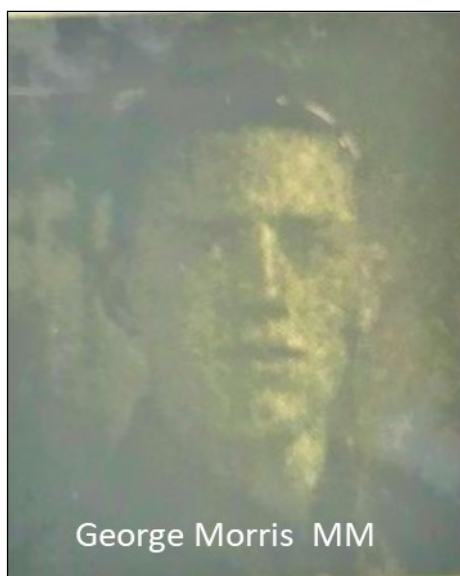


Image from Runcorn Weekly News

Gunner G Morris's Military Medal was announced in the London Gazette on 23rd February 1918. It stated 'The King has been graciously pleased to confer the Military Medal to this non-commissioned officer for bravery in the Field.' His service number was 685783 and his resident town was listed as Widnes. He is also listed under the service number 1706 but there are no more details beyond what we know already.

Other names were mentioned in the article about the 'Widnes Battery.' Men awarded Military Crosses: Major A W Gossage, Lieutenant E C Whelpton, Lieutenant W Roberts. Awarded Meritorious Service Medal: Sergeant Marjor B Hall, Sergeant Roydon. Awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal: Quarter Master Sergeant S Matthews, Sergeant S Royden, and Corporal W Connolly. Military Medals: Sergeant T Hankinson, Sergeant B Herrigan, Bombardier J Forshaw, Sergeant S Harrison, Gunner G Morris, Bombardier E Dalton, Corporal W Lawton, Corporal W Connolly, and two outside men. French Military Medal: Driver J Martin, and Driver B J Turton, Croix De Guerre: Lieutenant E Gardner.



Explore **YOUR** heritage through the
Halton Heritage Partnership website
www.haltonheritage.co.uk

'Working together to bring Halton's heritage to life'

Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP) is a voluntary group of societies and organisations that network to promote Heritage in Halton (Widnes and Runcorn).

We aim to:

- Bring together representatives of local groups, organisations and venues who are working to preserve and celebrate Halton's heritage.
- Strengthen links through sharing knowledge, skills, good practice and resources to widen participation and awareness of Halton's heritage.
- Influence local decision making in support of the partnership aims
- To facilitate and develop collaborative ideas and initiatives to further the aims of the partnership.
- To provide a mutual exchange of information within the partnership and key agencies.

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