119: Frank Burns

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Frank Burns

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 11th Bn. South Lancashire Regiment

Service Number: 21788 Date of Death: 26 January 1917 Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery, Saulty, Departement du Pas-de-Calais,

Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Frank (Francis) Burns was, probably, the first child of collier Patrick and Ellen Burns; Patrick (recorded as *Byrne*) had married Ellen Mealor of Neston at Liverpool Register Office in July/September 1892.

Although Patrick must have worked in Neston as a collier he is not recorded as such since his children were baptised at St Winefride's and the RC registers did not record the occupation of the father. By the time of the 1901 census, the family had moved to the Warrington area where Patrick was working as a collier on the South Lancashire coalfield:

Patrick Burns	Head M	32	, 1	 2/1/1/1/2
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annie	taus S	6	<u> </u>	 * 4
Samuel .	Son S	4.	1	 1 1 2
Cathorne "	Dave. 8	/	<u>/</u>	 San Buton bood
Ellen 4	4 3	2/2m	V	
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1901 census (extract) – 8	82, Fairclough Str	eet, Burtonwood, Warrington	
Patrick Burns	32	coalhewer, miner	born Ireland
Ellen	29		born Neston
Francis	8		born Neston
Annie	6		born Neston
Samuel	4		born Neston
Catharine	1		born Burtonwood
Ellen	2 months		born Burtonwood

Four of Patrick's children were born in Neston:

Francis born 25 April 1893 and baptised at St Winefride's on 14 May.

Annie born 29 September 1894 and baptised at St Winefride's on 14 October. Samuel born on 18 May 1896 and baptised at St Winefride's on 31 August.

John born on 1 September 1897 and baptised at St Winefride's on 19 September. John

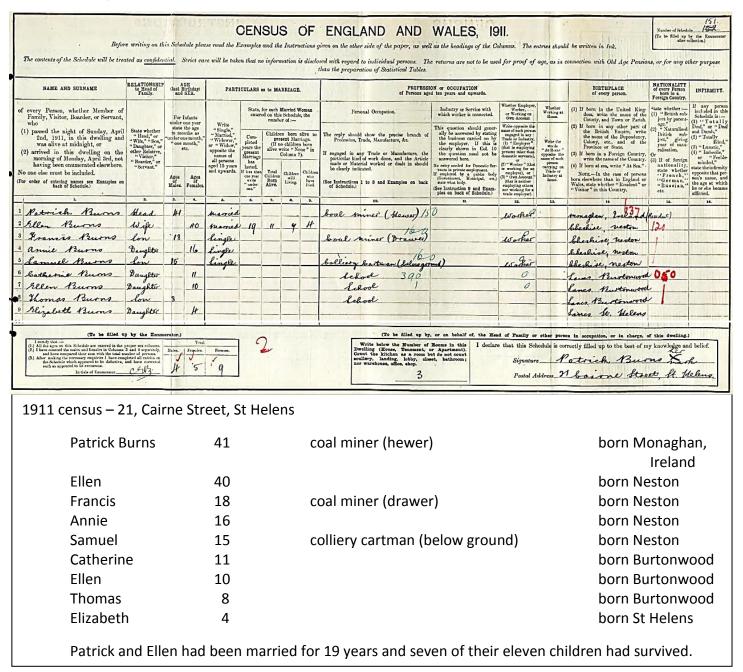
appears to have died before the end of the month and his death was registered in

Warrington.

The registration of John's death in Warrington suggests that the family had moved to Burtonwood around the time of his baptism.

By the time of the 1911 census the family had moved from Burtonwood to Cairne Street, St Helens and, like his father, Francis had become a collier. It is quite likely that they were employed at the Ravenhead Coal Mine.

Cairne Street (now demolished) lay in the area of St Helens, to the south of the town centre, known as Thatto Heath:



A hewer was a collier who worked at the coal face to extract the coal, often with a pick axe and shovel, and load it onto a wagon or conveyor belt. A drawer was the assistant to the hewer; he took the full wagons from the working face to the haulage area, or bottom of the shaft, and brought back empty wagons. A cartman was a less specialised

occupation and was engaged in moving small equipment along the underground roadways.

Francis Burns, recorded as a miner, enlisted in the 11th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Volunteers) in Prescot on 28 May 1915 when he gave his age as 23 years 1 month; his enlistment was approved 'subject to dental treatment'. It was noted that he was 5ft 7½ins tall and had a 37-inch expanded chest. His address was given as 21 Cairne Street, Thatto Heath, St Helens.

The 11th (Service) Battalion (St Helens Pioneers) was formed in St. Helens on 1 September 1914 by Lord Derby and moved to Bangor in February 1915.On 15 May 1915, a few days before Francis enlisted, they moved to Grantham and came under the command of the 30th Division as its Pioneer Battalion before being adopted by the War Office on 15 August 1915 and moving to Larkhill (Lark Hill) Camp on Salisbury Plain in September 1915.

On 6 November 1915, having spent 162 days in the UK, Francis embarked for France, landing at Le Havre on 7 November and the division concentrated near Amiens.

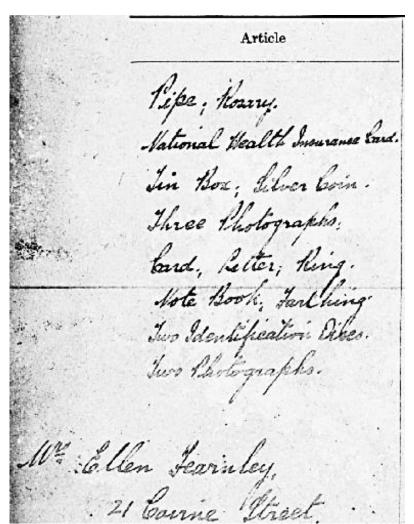
Probably before seeing any action, Francis was admitted to hospital (the 98th Field Ambulance) on 26 February 1916 suffering from bronchial catarrh and he was moved to the No. 1 General Hospital, at Etretat (on the coast, north of Le Havre - the hospital had been established

there in

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	resent rank		}	- roll	of N.C.Os.
Extend	led	Re-engaged		(i)	
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-	From whom	casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other
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December 1914) on 1 March where he was diagnosed with bronchitis. Although in hospital, military procedures still had to be adhered to and, on 17 March 1916, Francis forfeited 7 days' pay for being absent from parade at 7.45am.

Francis appears to have remained under medical care until early August as he rejoined his battalion on 5 August and on 21 August he was fined four days' pay for being found in possession of beer 'contrary to 1st Corps. Routine Orders'!

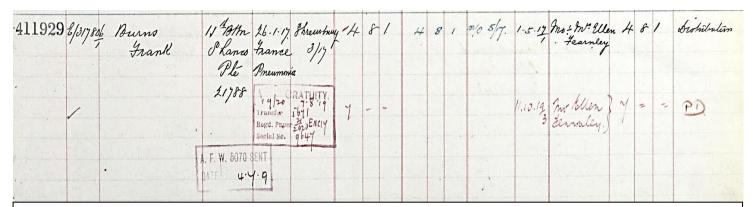


Although the 11th Battalion was involved in The Battle of the Somme, which began on 1 July 1916, it is unclear whether Francis saw much active involvement; certainly, he was admitted to the 20th Casualty Clearing Station, which was based at Warlencourt (between Amiens and Arras), by early January 1917 and he died of pneumonia there on 26 January. Francis had been in France for 1 year and 83 days and he had served for a total of 1 year 245 days. Following his death his personal effects were listed as: pipe; rosary; National Health Insurance Card; a tin box; silver coin; three photographs; card; letter; ring; note book; farthing; two identification discs; two photographs.

Frank Burns is commemorated also on the memorial plaque of St John's Church, Ravenhead, St Helens:



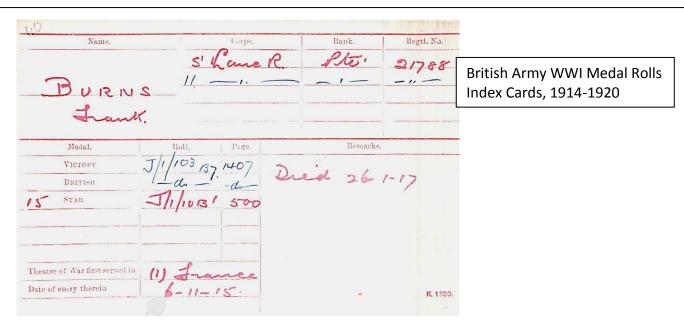
No reference has been found to the death of Francis Burns in any newspaper.



Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. In July 1919 Frank's mother, Ellen Fearnley, received a payment of outstanding wages of £4 8s 1d from the army and, in October, a War Gratuity of £7. This, a total value of £11 8s 1d, is equivalent to a labour value (wages) of around £1750 in 2016.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.



Francis's father, Patrick, died in the St Helens district in early 1912, aged 41, and Ellen Burns married William Fearnley at St John the Evangelist Church, Ravenhead, St Helens a few months later (July/September).

In the 1939 Register Ellen and William, with several of Ellen's unmarried children, were living at 5 Lonsdale Avenue, St Helens:

William Fearnley	born 6 December 1874	old age pensioner - general labourer
Ellen	born 31 August 1871	old age pensioner
Catherine Burns	born 2 August 1899	single - unpaid domestic duties
Elizabeth Burns	born 23 October 1905	single - surface hand, colliery
Lily Burns	date of birth obscured	single - surface hand, colliery
Thomas Burns	born 9 October 1902	single - colliery hewer

5 Lonsdale Avenue, St Helens [Google StreetView]

The Lily recorded in the 1939 Register is, probably, Ellen Burns. Ellen Fearnley, Francis' mother, died in the St Helens South district in mid-1947 aged 76.



William Fearnley may have died, in the Prescot district, in early 1944 aged 71.

Catherine Burns died in the St Helens district, aged 61, in early 1961.

It is not known whether Elizabeth Burns married, or when she died.

An Ellen Burns died, in the St Helens district, in mid-1969; her date of birth was recorded as 5 September 1900.

Thomas Burns, Francis' youngest brother, may have died in the Warrington district in late 1977 aged 74. It is not known if he married.

Samuel Burns, Francis' brother, married May Griffiths at St Helens Parish Church in mid-1917.

On 2 September 1914 Samuel, a collier, enlisted at St Helens in the South Lancashire Regiment (12092). However, he was found to be unfit for military service ("not likely to become an efficient soldier") and was discharged on 8 February 1916.

In the 1939 Register Samuel and May were recorded as living at 27 Cairne Street, St Helens (the location of this street is unknown):

Samuel Burns born 18 May 1896 coal contractor

May born 27 May(?) 1898

Two lines of the record have been redacted

It is possible that Samuel and May had the following children: Samuel (born early 1918, Prescot); Agnes (mid-1920, Prescot); Edna (late 1923, Prescot); Mabel A (mid-1937, St Helens).

May Burns may have died in the Prescot district in early 1967 aged 68. Samuel appears to have died in the St Helens district in late 1969 aged 73.