

12: Harry Cottrell

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Harry Cottrell

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 2nd / 5th Bn. The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

Service Number: 245068 Date of Death: 26 October 1917 Age at Death: 19

Buried / Commemorated at: Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, West Flanders, Belgium

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of John and Esther Cottrell of Old Post Office Place, Little Neston

Whilst Harry's rank is recorded as Private by the CWGC the newspaper reports of his death states that he was a Lance Corporal (*Chester Chronicle*) or Corporal (*Cheshire Observer*). However, the Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects (June 1919) records him as a Private.

Harry Cottrell, the youngest child of carter/farm labourer John and Esther Cottrell, was born in early 1898.

John Cottrell married Esther Jones of Little Neston in Liverpool in July / September 1886; Esther already had an illegitimate daughter, Mary Alice, who had been baptised at Neston on 20 June 1879 (and it is possible that Edward was an illegitimate son).

John Cottrell	Head	M	40	Farm Labourer	X	do	do
Esther	Wife	M	36			do	do
Mary Alice	Daughter		11	Servant		do	do
Edward	Son		10			do	do
Elizabeth Ann	Daughter		4			do	do
George	Son		3			do	do
William Kendrick	Son		1			do	do

1891 census (extract) – Little Neston

John Cottrell	40	farm labourer	born Little Neston
Esther	36		born Little Neston
Mary Alice	11		born Little Neston
Edward	10		born Little Neston
Elizabeth Ann	4		born Little Neston
George	3		born Little Neston
William Kendrick	1		born Little Neston

Elizabeth Ann and William Kendrick Cottrell died within a month of each other; Elizabeth was buried at Neston, aged 4, on 16 December 1891 and William was also buried at Neston, aged 2, on 19 January 1892.

In 1901 the family, which now included Harry, was still living in Little Neston and John was still working on a farm. The location of Mary Alice has not been found in the 1901 census; there is no record of her having either died or married.

Harry Cottrell attested in Birkenhead on 6 June 1916 when he was aged 18½. Small in height, at just 5ft 3¼ins - just ¼-inch above the minimum requirement for enlisting in a standard battalion (physically-fit men who were between 4ft 10ins and 5ft 3ins could enlist in a bantam battalion) Harry weighed 106lb (just over 7½ stone / 48kg) and had an expanded chest girth of 33½-ins. Despite his stature he was, however, described as having 'good physical development'.

Harry's civilian occupation was recorded as 'gardener for Sir Percy Bates' of Hinderton Hall. Sir Percy Elly Bates, 4th Baronet, GBE (born Wavertree, Liverpool 12 May 1879 - 16 October 1946) was an English shipowner who, on leaving Winchester College in 1897 was apprenticed to William Johnston & Co, Liverpool shipowners. After his father's death in 1899 Percy joined the family shipping business, Edward Bates & Sons. He succeeded his older brother, Edward, as 4th Baronet in 1903 and in 1910 he became a director of Cunard, becoming deputy chairman in 1922 and chairman in 1930, holding the post until his death. He became a director of the *Morning Post* in 1924 and chairman in 1930, holding the post until 1937. On the outbreak of the First World War Bates joined the Transport Department of the Admiralty, and later became Director of Commercial Services of the new Ministry of Shipping, responsible for the shipment of civilian supplies. Bates suffered a heart attack in his office on 14 October 1946 and died at his home, Hinderton Hall, Neston, two days later on the day of the *Queen Elizabeth's* maiden commercial voyage, on which he was to have sailed. Bates's only child, also Percy, was killed over Germany in 1945 whilst serving as a Pilot Officer with the Royal Air Force.

The 2nd / 5th Battalion The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in which Harry enlisted was one of ten Territorial Force battalions formed in WW1 by that regiment. The battalion was mobilised on 25 October 1916 and embarked at Southampton for France on 8 February 1917, as part of the 57th (2nd West Lancashire) Division, arriving at Le Havre the following day as a 'second-line unit'. After being involved in other actions the 2nd / 5th Battalion, in October 1917, took part in the later stages of The Third Battle of Ypres (also referred to as The Second Battle of Passchendaele) and it was here that Harry Cottrell was killed, after being hit by a sniper, and just one year and one day after his battalion was mobilised.

The Regimental War Diary gives some detail of the action at around this time:

Form No. 10180
Army Form No. 10180
SHORT SERVICE.
(For the Duration of the War, with the Colours and in the Army Reserve).
ATTESTATION OF General Service
No. 25/10/16 Name Harry Cottrell Corp General Service
Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.
1. What is your Name? ... Harry Cottrell
2. What is your full Address? ... 30, Wavertree Road, Liverpool
3. Are you a British Subject? ... Yes
4. What is your Age? ... 18 Years 6 Months
5. What is your Trade or Calling? ... Gardener
6. Are you Married? ... No
7. Have you ever served in any branch of His Majesty's Forces, naval or military, if so, which? ... No
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? ... Yes
9. Are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? ... Yes
10. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and also give it to you? ... Yes
11. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions, provided His Majesty should so long require your services?
For the duration of the War, at the end of which you will be liable to serve with all contingents until the end of the War, and you will be liable to serve with the remainder of the period in the Army Reserve, in accordance with the provisions of the Army Act, 1915, until such time as you may be exempted by order of the Army Council. If employed with Hospitals, depots of Mounted Units, or as a Cook, etc., you may be retained after the termination of hostilities until your services can be spared, but such retention shall in no case exceed six months.
I, Harry Cottrell, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.
Harry Cottrell SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
J. G. Wavertree SIGNATURE OF WITNESS.
BRITISH WAR MEDAL VICTORY MEDAL

Part of Harry Cottrell's Attestation Form, overwritten 'Dead' after he was killed at Passchendaele on 26 October 1917.

Line N.E. of POELCAPPELLE

25th 5.0am The Battalion completed the relief of 23rd Northumberland Fusiliers. Only 2 casualties during relief tho' carried out through heavy shelling.

The Bn. held the line under the worst conditions of rain and mud. The enemy shelled heavily at intervals and the Bn. sustained 53 casualties.

26th 3.40am The Battalion formed up for the attack on an objective 1000 yards from our original line. The forming up on the tape line was carried out very well and without many casualties, although the ground and weather conditions were dreadfully bad.

5.40am The Bn. advanced to the attack on a 500 yds front with platoons & Coys. in 'normal attack formation'.

3 Coys. in the front line & 1 as a counter attack Coy. each platoon having a frontage of about 160 yds. The going was almost impossible due to the conditions of the ground, however the men moved forward slowly and surely. The leading waves had not gone more than 50 yds before they came under an intense M.G. barrage which caused a great number of casualties, evidently the M.G. positions had been missed by our barrage.

All Coy. officers of the Bn. became casualties during the early stages of advance but the Serpts. and junior NCOs carried on the advance in a most determined manner. It is estimated that small groups of men reached and held shell holes about 500 yds in advance of our original line & it was only due to very heavy casualties & the very thin line that was being held that it was decided to withdraw to our original positions and consolidate there.

The enemy seemed to anticipate the attack & pushed forward small groups of men very close to our line under cover of darkness. These groups missed our barrage & surprised the leading [word illegible] & causing heavy casualties in the initial stages of the attack.

The enemy's sniping was very efficient, it is most [word illegible] that all ranks are dressed alike, as anybody assuming command (ie) by pointing, shouting or directing was immediately sniped.

The heavy casualties were mostly due to M.G. fire.

The ground which had to be advanced over was dreadful. It speaks well of the men that they got along at all. It was almost impassable.

Enemy M.G.s were mostly located in strengthened shell holes bringing cross fire to bear on the frontage.

Though covers were used on [word illegible] Rifles it was found almost impossible to fire due to the mud which collected on the rifle when the men fell in and out of shell holes waist deep in water.

As it was almost impossible to fire a [word illegible] or rifle the bayonet came well to the fore, in the magnificent wielding of which the men of the Battalion excelled themselves. The leading feature of the attack was the fact that the NCOs so splendidly lead their men on after all officers became

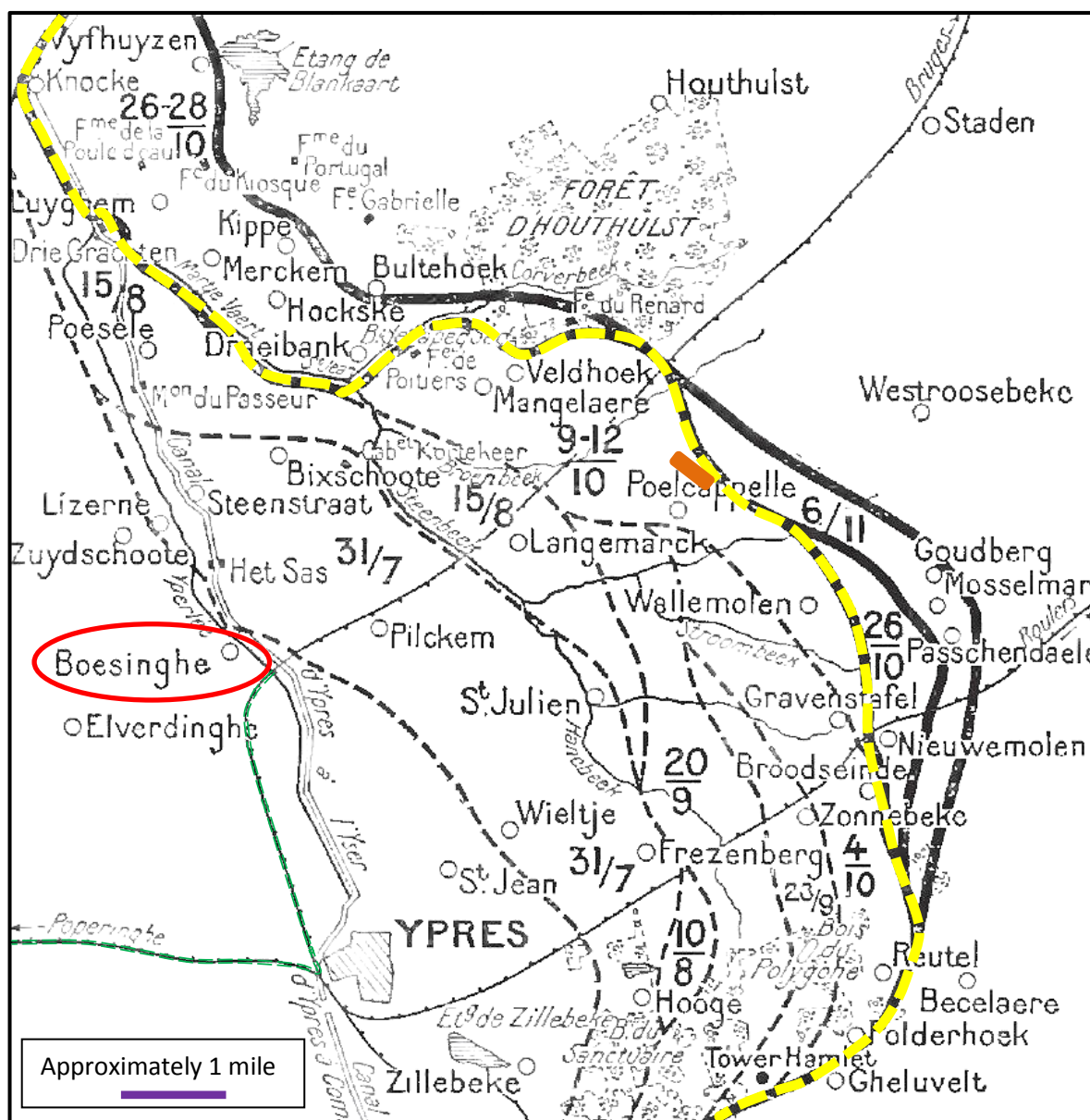
casualties early on in the advance. It is estimated that the NCOs and men of the Bn. accounted for about 500 Germans & 8 German M.G.s., one Sergt. Attacking and killing 2 German M.G. crews single handed & was further advancing when he became a casualty.

Casualties: 6 officers killed 9 officers wounded 42 O. ranks killed 144 O. ranks wounded 87 O. ranks missing

[A list of officers killed and wounded then follows]


WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.				Army Form C, 2113.
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. These forms will be prepared in accordance with the above.				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events, and Intelligence.	Remarks and References to Attachments.
Line N.E. of POELCAPPELLE	25 th	5.0am	<p>1. Casualties heavy, especially in the initial stages of the attack.</p> <p>2. The enemy sniping was very efficient, it is most unusual that all ranks are dressed alike, as anybody assuming command (ie) by pointing, shouting or directing was immediately sniped.</p> <p>3. The heavy casualties were mostly due to M.G. fire.</p> <p>4. The ground which had to be advanced over was dreadful. It speaks well of the men that they got along at all. It was almost impassable.</p> <p>5. Enemy M.G.s were mostly located in strengthened shell holes bringing cross fire to bear on the frontage.</p> <p>6. Though covers were used on [word illegible] Rifles it was found almost impossible to fire due to the mud which collected on the rifle when the men fell in and out of shell holes waist deep in water.</p>	

One of the War Diary pages included in the transcription



Second Battle of Passchendaele showing the Allied advances north-eastwards between 22 October - 6 November 1917.

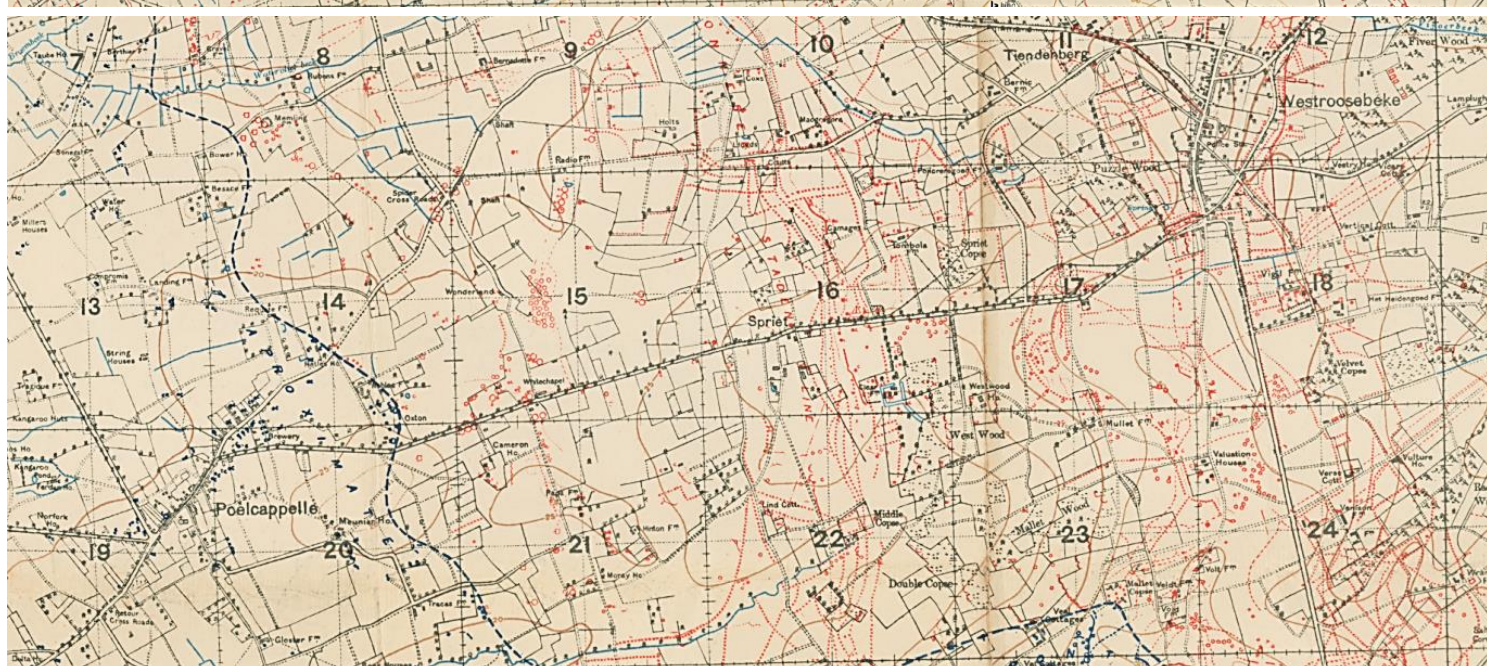
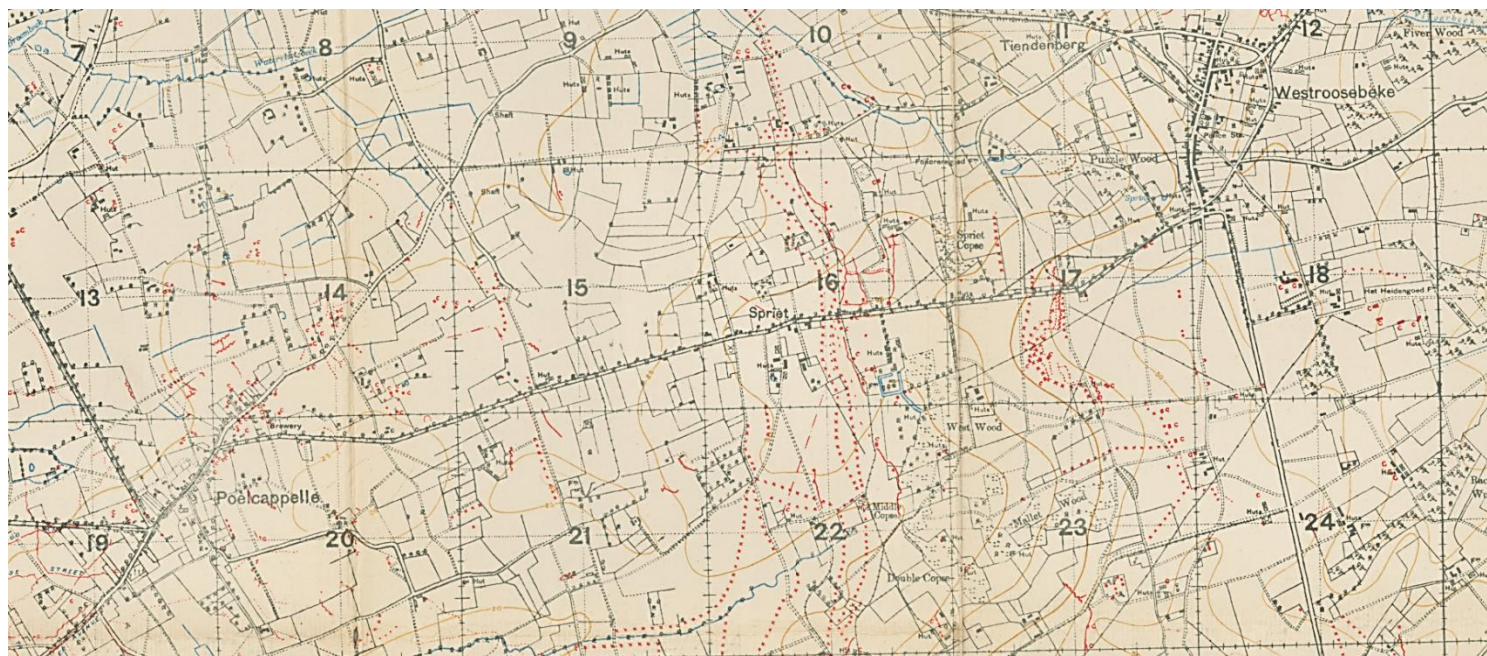
The front line position on 26 October is shown by the broken yellow/black line.

The approximate position of the 2nd/5th Bn. The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment on 26 October is shown .

The location of Boesinghe (now Boezinge) is outlined in red. The rail route to Proven (N of Poperinghe) is shown in green. The locations of Hoddleston Camp and Peddington Camp are unknown.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Passchendaele]

26/27 th	3.0am	The Battalion was relieved by the 2/8 th The King's Liverpool Rgt & moved to HODDLESTON CAMP.
27 th	11.0am	The Battalion marched to BOESINGHE & entrained for PROVEN.
	12.30	" " marched from PROVEN STATION to PEDDINGTON CAMP where it encamped.
28 th		The Battalion was rested & re-equipped & clothed.
29 th		The Battalion was re-organised.
31 st	Noon	Strength of Battalion 23 Off. 615 O. Rank (Total strength)

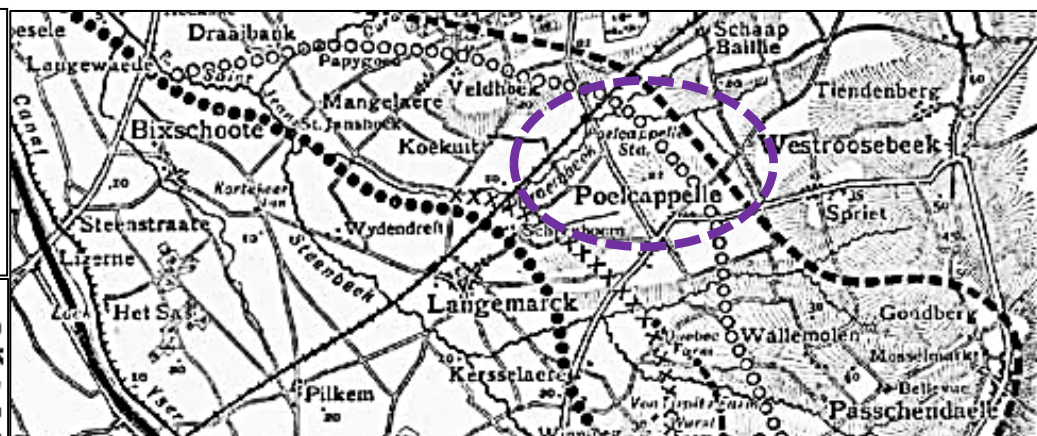


Two war maps, covering exactly the same area (between Poelcappelle and Westroosebeke) show the trenches and positions on 17 September 1917 (top map) and 17 December 1917 (lower map). On each map the German positions are represented in red and (lower map only) the British positions in blue. On 17 September the British front line was well to the west of Poelcappelle and the whole of this area was occupied by the Germans. Three months later Allied forces (which, here, included Canadians) had occupied Poelcappelle and established a front line to the east of the town. [Source: <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/print.cfm#zoom>]

Movement eastwards in the Allied front line from 30 July to 26 November 1917.

[Source: extract from <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/maps/ypres17c.jpg>]

July 30	●●●●●
September 19	XXXXX
October 3	●●●●●
October 8-9	●●●●●
November 26	●●●●●





The mud and shell-holed landscape near Passchendaele in October 1917 [Source: <http://www.ozanne.co.uk/content/battle-passchendaele-ypres-oct-1917>]

(348) W912/HP149 60,000 10/17 Cax.P.Ltd. H16/744 Effects—Form 118A.

MEMORANDUM FOR
The Officer in charge of Infantry Records, 2nd Division House Preston

WAR OFFICE,
IMPERIAL INSTITUTE,
SOUTH KENSINGTON,
LONDON, S.W. 7.
12th February 1918.

Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to—
The Secretary,
WAR OFFICE,
Imperial Institute,
South Kensington,
LONDON, S.W. 7,
and the following number quoted

E. 14 87 29611 (Accounts 4.)

Will you please note that any articles of personal property now in your possession or subsequently received by you belonging to the late 40345068. Lancelotti Harry Cottrell, 2/5th Bn. Foyal 200th Lancashire Regt. should be despatched to :—
Mr. John Cottrell,
36-1 Post Office Road,
Little Neston,
Cheshire

Any medals granted to the deceased that are now in your possession or that may hereafter reach you should be disposed of to :—
The same person

C. Harris
Assistant Financial Secretary.

Aerial view of Passchendaele in September 1917 looking forward from Hill 70 north of Lens. [Source: <http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A5095>]



PRIVATE H. COTTRELL

It is with much regret that we record the death in action of Corpl. Harry Cottrell, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Cottrell, of Little Neston. The sad news was conveyed to his parents by the following letter from his platoon officer: "Dear Mrs. Cottrell,—Being the platoon officer of your son, it is my unhappy lot to be the first to convey to you the sad news of his death, which occurred in action yesterday, when this battalion was attacking a strongly-held position. I have lost several brave lads. I shall miss them very much indeed, and am at present under a cloud of sorrow for those who have been bereaved. My duty at the time did not place me with my boys, so I cannot give all the details I should like to. I understand that your son was hit by an enemy sniper, and I believe his death was a painless one." Many expressions of sympathy have been already received by his parents, as he was most popular in the Little Neston district, and many of his friends will doubtless pay a last tribute of respect to his memory at the memorial service which will be held at St. Michael's Mission Church on Sunday evening.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 3 November 1917

ROLL OF HONOUR.—Another of our heroes has made the supreme sacrifice. We regret to announce the death in action of Lance-Corporal Harry Cottrell, of the 2/5th L.N. Lancashires. Deceased resided at Little Neston with his widowed mother. The sad news was conveyed to Mrs. Cottrell by the Platoon officer. Cottrell was 20 years of age and joined up about twelve months ago. The greatest sympathy is extended to the family, and on Sunday, at St. Michael's Church, a memorial service was held.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 10 November 1917

Despite the report, Harry's father, John Cottrell, did not die until mid-1929.

The extensive muddy conditions, following sustained heavy rain and the overflowing of streams and ditches, made some of the ground impassable and inhibited the movement of heavy artillery.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Passchendaele]



597150	487296	Cottrell Harry	26.10.17 Preston Bn Loyal action Lancs Bde	3 17 6	3 17 6	no 2 18 12 2 15 21/1/19	3 17 6
		PA. F. W. D. 1919 DATE 30/10/19	245068	WAR GRATUITY. 6485 1910 11/19 Transfer. 2-52 Regd. Paper 2/1/33 Serial No. 23610		22/11/21 Fa. John	3 10 -

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.

Harry Cottrell had accrued a credit of £3 17s 6d and this was received by his father John. John received also the £3 10s War Gratuity.

The total payment, £7 7s 6d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £1150 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.

John Cottrell, Harry's father, died on 26 September 1929 aged 78.
Esther Cottrell, Harry's mother, died on 3 September 1933 aged 77.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
COTTRELL.	L N Lan R	Lee	245068.
Harry			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORIA	H/2/101 B25	4/63.	
BAITHEM	do	do	
Star			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			
K. 1880			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920



George Cottrell, Harry's brother, died in April / June 1971 aged 83.

Nothing for certain is known of Annie Cottrell, Harry's sister, but she may have married Wilfred Moulton at Neston in July / September 1928. Nothing else is known of any members of the family.

The Cottrell family grave at Neston Parish Church commemorates Harry, who died at Passchendaele on 26 October 1917 and whose body was never recovered.