

## 122: Harry Collins

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

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

Rank: Lance Corporal

Battalion / Regiment: 124<sup>th</sup> Field Coy. Royal Engineers

Service Number: 140733

Date of Death: 18 May 1918

Age at Death: 27

Buried / Commemorated at: Hedauville Communal Cemetery Extension, Hedauville, Departement de la Somme, Picardie, France

Additional information given by CWGC: Son of Fred and Mary Collins, of 316, Hale Rd., Hale, Cheshire.

Harry Collins, born in early 1891, was the fourth son of lath maker Frederick and Mary Collins.

Frederick Collins married Mary Clare at St Saviour's Church, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Lancashire, in late 1881. Although born in Bedfordshire Frederick appears to have lived in Lancashire for many years prior to his marriage and in 1891, very shortly after Harry's birth, he was living in Urmston about six miles southwest of Manchester city centre:

Frederick Collins	Head	M	38		Lathi Maker			Bedfordshire, Woburn Sands
Mary	Wife	M	32					Lancashire, Padgate
Frederick	Son		8					to Manchester
Charles	Son		5					Surrey, Croydon
Sam	Son		3					to do
Harry	Son		?					Lancashire, Urmston

1891 census (extract) – 22 Lorne Grove, Urmston, Eccles, Lancashire

Frederick Collins	38	lath maker	born Woburn Sands, Bedfordshire
Mary	32		born Padgate, Lancs.
Fred	8		born Manchester
Charles	5		born Surrey, Croydon
Sam	3		born Surrey, Croydon
Harry	?		born Urmston, Lancs.

Lorne Grove, Urmston, has since been redeveloped.

In 1891 and 1901 Frederick was described as a lath maker and in 1911 as a lath-renderer, both occupations related to wall plastering. Lath makers produced the long wooden strips set onto a house wall to provide the setting for the plasterer and a lath-renderer was the person who applied the first covering of plaster over the laths, the wall being then finalised by the plasterer. Lath rendering by hand had died out by 1936.

By the time of the 1901 census the family had moved about five miles south, to Hale, just south of Altrincham and Fred jnr and Charles were now also employed in the wall-plastering trades:

Fred Collins	Head	M	48	Lath maker		Bedford Woburn Sands
Mary	Wife	F	43			Padgate Lancs
Fred	Son	M	18	Plasterer's apprentice	Woburn	Longsight
Charles	Son	M	15	Plasterer's apprentice	Woburn	Croydon
Samuel	Son	M	13			Croydon
Harry	Son	M	10			Urmston
Annie	Daughter	F	8			Urmston
Archer	Daughter	F	3			Urmston

1901 census (extract) – Hale Road, Hale, Altrincham

Fred Collins	48	lath maker	born Bedford, Woburn Sands
Mary	43		born Padgate, Lancs
Fred	18	plasterer's apprentice	born Longsight
Charles	15	plasterer's apprentice	born Croydon
Samuel	13		born Croydon
Harry	10		born Urmston
Annie	8		born Urmston
Archer	3		born Urmston

In 1911 the family may have been living in the same premises and Harry was now employed as a bricklayer:

**CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.**

Number of Schedule 70  
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

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

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

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE (Date Birth-day) and SEX.		PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.				BIRTHPLACE of every person.		NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.
		Males.	Females.	Single.	Married.	Widow.	Divorced.	Children born alive to present Marriage.	Children born alive to previous Marriage.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on their account.	Whether Working as Home.		
Frederick Collins	Head	60	64	Married	29	-	-	Lath-renderer	762	Works	Woburn Bedfordshire	British subject by parentage			
Mary Collins	Wife	54	58	Married	29	4	6				Padgate Warrington	British subject by parentage			
Harry Collins	Son	20	-	Single	-	-	-	Brick-layer	320	Works	Urmston Manchester	British subject by parentage			
Annie Collins	Daughter	18	-	Single	-	-	-	Draper's assistant	390	Works	Urmston Manchester	British subject by parentage			
Archer Collins	Son	13	-	-	-	-	-	School	390	Works	Urmston Manchester	British subject by parentage			
Fred Collins	Son	28	-	Married	3	-	-	Plasterer	730	Works	Longsight Manchester	British subject by parentage			
Helen Collins	Daughter-in-law	25	-	Married	3	1	1				Manchester	British subject by parentage			
Margaret Collins	Daughter	2	-	-	-	-	-				Hale Altrincham	British subject by parentage			

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Total.		
Males.	Females.	Persons.
4	4	8.

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

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

Signature: Frederick Collins

Postal Address: 316 Hale Rd Hale Barns Hale

1911 census (condensed) – 316 Hale Road, Hale Barns, nr Altrincham

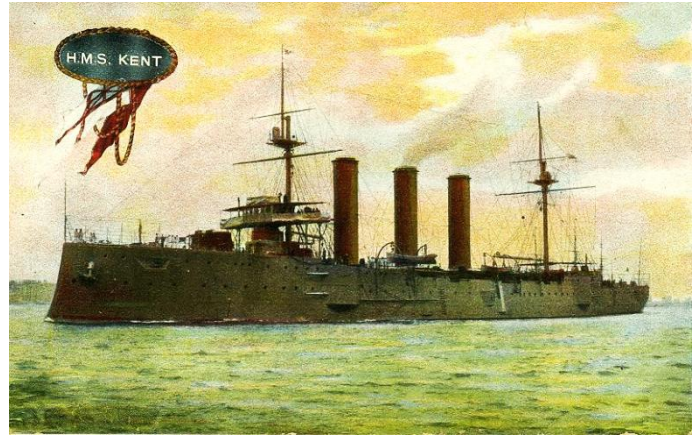
Frederick Collins	60	lath-renderer	born Woburn Sands, Bedfordshire
Mary	54		born Padgate, Warrington
Harry	20	brick layer	born Urmston
Annie	18	draper's assistant	born Urmston
Archer	13		born Urmston
Fred	28	plasterer	born Longsight
Helen	25	daughter-in-law	born Manchester
Margaret	2	granddaughter	born Hale, Altrincham

Frederick and Mary had been married for 29 years and six of their seven children had survived.

By 1911 Charles Collins (25) had married and, a plasterer, he was living with wife Eleanor (26, born Liverpool) and daughter Ethel (3, born Altrincham) at 71 New Street Altrincham.

Fred jnr, now married to Helen, was living with his parents in Hale Barns.

Samuel (25), the third son of Frederick and Mary, had joined the Royal Navy and was serving as an Able Seaman on *HMS Kent*, a Monmouth-Class armoured cruiser which at the time of the census was in the Pacific off the coast of Chile and just north of Valparaiso. At the time of the census the *Kent* had 625 men on board. The *Kent* was involved in marine warfare off the Falklands in the early part of WW1 (it sank the German light cruiser *Nurnberg* on December 8th 1914) although it is unknown whether Samuel was serving on the vessel at that time. Nothing is known of Samuel's war service



It is not known when or why Harry Collins came to Neston but *Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919* notes, incorrectly, that he was born in Neston and that (probably correctly) that he enlisted in Chester. It is known also that he was married to Ada, although no marriage, or other, details are known.

On Saturday 26 September 1914 the *Chester Chronicle* recorded, in an article on Neston, the recruitment of 29 local men including Harry Collins but nothing is known of his military service other than that he was serving as a Lance Corporal with the 124<sup>th</sup> Field Coy. Royal Engineers when he was killed in action on 18 May 1918 in France. However, Harry must have initially enlisted with another regiment - possibly the Cheshire Regiment - as the 124<sup>th</sup> Field Company was not created (in Porthcawl) until January 1915 as a support unit of the 38<sup>th</sup> Welsh Division and they were not sent to France until December of that year and first saw significant active service at the Battle of Albert on the Somme from 1 - 13 July 1916.

In 1917 the unit was in action at The Battle of Pilckem Ridge (31 July - 2 August) the opening attack of the main part of The Third Battle of Ypres, and at the Battle of Langemarck (16 - 18 August), the second Allied general attack of The Third Battle of Ypres. On Friday 5 April 1918 the unit was again in action during The Battle of the Ancre when German attacks both north and south of the Somme attempted to renew an advance on Amiens.

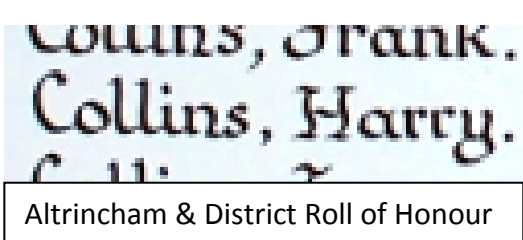
However, around 18 May 1918 - the date on which Harry Collins was killed in action - the 124<sup>th</sup> Field Company was not involved in any specific action and it appears that his death was an isolated incident; the unit did not lose any other men in the period 19

February - 8 June 1918. At this time the Royal Engineers of Harry's company were involved in routine work near the front line digging and repairing trenches and erecting wire barricades. A number of isolated incidents were recorded, but most days were very quiet and elicited no comment in the War Diary:

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.			WAR DIARY or <del>INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.</del> (Erase heading not required.)	Army Form C. 2118.
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
V.S. 2.8.	14.5.18		order 13 <sup>th</sup> .	
	15.5.18		"	
	16.5.18		" 1 officer + 1 NCO of American Engineers attached for instruction.	
	17.5.18		"	
	18.5.18		" one RE killed 2 sappers 2 attached infantry wounded.	
	19.5.18		"	
	20.5.18		" Company relieved of work in the line by 205 <sup>th</sup> Coy and commencing work on Lewis Obstacles under C.E. V Coy digging new trenches + wiring. Americans repair their unit.	7.10.11.16.17.18.19.20.21.22.23.24.25.26.27.28.29.30.31.
	21.5.18		" As for 20 <sup>th</sup> .	
	22.5.18		"	
	23.5.18		"	
	24.5.18		" attached infantry repair their units.	
	25.5.18		"	
	26.5.18		"	
	27.5.18		"	

On 18 May 1918, when Harry Collins was killed, the Diary entry reads *One RE killed. 2 sappers, 2 attached infantry wounded.*

Harry Collins is commemorated on the Hale & Hale Barns War Memorial and the Altrincham & District Roll of Honour:

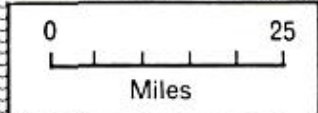


<http://www.carlscam.com/hale/warbarn.htm>



<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/3973132> [David Dixon]

# THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES 21 MARCH - 17 JULY 1918



KEY  
○ GERMAN ARMIES

*German troop strengths in the west had increased by 30% between November 1917 and 21 March 1918, primarily due to transfer of troops from the east following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. British strengths had decreased by 25% since "Third Ypres" (Passchendaele) 1917 as they were content to wait upon the arrival of the fresh American troops.*



KEY

- 'MICHAEL' 21 March-5 April.
- 'GEORGETTE' 9-11 April.
- 'BLÜCHER-YORCK' 27 May.
- 'GNEISENAU' 9 June.
- 'MARNE-RHEIMS' 15-17 July.
- Army boundaries.
- Army General Headquarters.
- Army Headquarters.

Arthur Banks 1973

Harry Collins is believed to have died to the north-east of Amiens, encircled in red, on 18 May 1918  
 [Source: *A Military Atlas of the First World War* Arthur Banks Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]

It is known that Archer Collins, Harry's youngest brother, died in Bedfordshire in mid-1978 aged 80.

Archer (Archie) Collins married Christina Eppleston in Bucklow (between Knutsford and Altrincham) in early 1924 and it is believed that they had four children, all born in the Bucklow district: Harry (late 1924) ; Aileen (10 April 1929) ; John (late 1932) ; Clive (late 1936).

In the 1939 Register the family was recorded as living at 82 Bradley Road, Luton, Bedfordshire:

Archie (Archer) Collins	born 28 February 1898	builder's carpenter
Christina	born 25 December 1898	
Aileen	born 10 April 1929	

Two lines of the record have been redacted

Aileen married George Billing in the Bedford district in early 1965.

Christina died in the Bedford district in late 1973.

Nothing else is known for certain about other members of Harry's family.

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
COLLINS,	R.E.	Ser.	140733
HARRY.			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	R.E./101 B.223.	55153.	
BRITISH			
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

692099	E 619266	Collins	Henry	RE	M. 5.15	Chatham	12. 2. 1	12. 5. 1	2.0. 8. 15	3. 8. 15	Brit Ada	12	15	1	
				124 Mills	Acton	6.18		4	6	10-1/15	9. 11. 15	Ind Ada		4	6
				A. 1 Dec 1918	Tramel	6.18	- 3 -								
				140733		10.18	- 4 6				6.12.19	Ind Ada	11	10	-
							11 10 -								

WA C JULY  
 Effects 19/20 1919  
 Transfer 6677  
 Paged papers 140252  
 Serial No 20843 20843

A. F. W. 6070 SENT  
 DATE 23/19

### 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 Harry's widow, Ada, received a payment of outstanding wages of £12 9s 7d from the army and, in September, a War Gratuity of £11 10s. This, a total value of £23 19s 7d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £3700 in 2016. On this record Harry is named as *Henry*.

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.