

13: Arthur Coventry

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC:	A. Coventry		
Rank:	Lance Corporal		
Battalion / Regiment:	15th Bn. Cheshire Regiment		
Service Number:	67553	Date of Death:	29 April 1918
		Age at Death:	?
Buried / Commemorated at:	Pozières Memorial, Pozières, Département de la Somme, Picardie, France		
Additional information given by CWGC:	None		

Arthur Coventry was a son of plasterer John and Sarah Coventry. It seems that John Coventry, Arthur's father, was the illegitimate son of Marianne (Mary Ann) Coventry of Neston and that he was baptised in Neston on 2 July 1858. His grandfather was bricklayer John Coventry of Chester Road, Neston and as a child he and his mother lived with John.

Although there is limited information, John Coventry married Elizabeth Jellicoe (sometimes *Jelicoe*) of Neston in early 1880 in a Civil Marriage on Wirral. A daughter, Ellen, was born in July / September 1880 and she was shown to be 7 months old in the 1881 census when John, recorded as 22 and a plasterer, and Elizabeth were living with Elizabeth's father, widower Charles Jellicoe, on Burton Road. Ellen died in May 1881 aged 8 months and was buried with her grandmother, Hannah Jellicoe, in Neston Parish Churchyard. Elizabeth, John's wife, died aged 23 and was buried at Neston on 28 October 1884. The birth registers record that twin boys, Arthur and Thomas, were born in June 1884 but both died, aged 3 weeks 2 days, and were buried at Neston on 24 June 1884. It is possible that these were children of John and Elizabeth and that Elizabeth died as a consequence of their birth.

Following the death of Elizabeth Coventry, plasterer John Coventry, 30, married Sarah Rutter (24, father labourer Thomas Rutter) on 14 February 1889 at Neston Parish Church.

The family has proved elusive and has not been traced in England/Wales in the census returns for 1891 or 1901.

The 1911 census, when the family was living at Poplar Weint (by Park Street), Neston, records that John and Sarah Coventry had been married for 23 years and that six of their seven children had survived - yet 7 persons, described as either son or daughter, are recorded on this form. Harry Coventry had married Norah Biggs shortly before the census date, but she has not been located in the 1911 returns.



Cottages in Poplar Weint, Neston, 2015. It is not certain which house the Coventry family occupied.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 188
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after census)

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards	BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
John Coventry	Head	42	Married	Slater & Plasterer	Neston	English	
Sarah Coventry	Wife	48	Married		Neston	English	
Harry Coventry	Son	22	Married	Collier, Hewer	Neston	English	
Annie Coventry	Daughter	20	Married		Neston	English	
John Coventry	Son	15		General Labourer	Neston	English	
Arthur Coventry	Son	13			Neston	English	
Ruth Coventry	Daughter	8			Neston	English	
Hilda Coventry		5			Neston	English	
Ivia Coventry		2			Neston	English	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—
(1) All the persons on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.
(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3, and 4 respectively, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.
(3) After making the necessary inquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: *John Coventry*

Male: 4, Female: 5, Person: 9

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

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

Number of Rooms: 4

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

Signature: *John Coventry*
Postal Address: *Poplar Mount Neston Cheshire*

1911 census (condensed) – Poplar Weint, Neston

John Coventry	52	slater and plasterer	born Neston
Sarah	48		born Neston
Harry	22	married, collier, hewer	born Neston
Annie	20	married	born Neston
John	15	general labourer	born Neston
Arthur	13		born Neston
Ruth	8		born Neston
Hilda	5		born Neston
Ivia	2		born Neston

John and Sarah had been married for 23 years and six of their seven children had survived.

Although all of John and Sarah's children are recorded to have been born in Neston it appears that, at least for some time, the family lived in South Lancashire. Of Arthur's siblings it is believed that

- Harry may have been born on 3 May 1887 but there is no record of a baptism in Neston. Harry (he gave his age as 24 and recorded that he was a labourer) married Norah Biggs (widow, 32, no occupation recorded), at St Peter's Church, Church Road, Woolton, Liverpool, on 8 March 1911. John Coventry, Harry's father, was recorded as a plasterer. Both Harry and Norah gave their address as Cambridge Street. Norah's father was James Prendergast, shoemaker.
- Harry emigrated to Philadelphia in December 1912 and he fought with distinction in Europe with the American Army Infantry, being awarded the DSC in October 1918. He and his family lived in Philadelphia until his death in May 1969.
- Annie was baptised at Neston 7 April 1893 when the family's residence was recorded as Burtonwood, Lancashire. John, Annie's father, was recorded as a slater/plasterer. Although, in the 1911 census, she is shown as being married, no record of a marriage has been found - and her name, presumably, would not then have been Coventry.

- John was baptised as John Sidney at Neston on 27 August 1897 when the family's residence was recorded as St Helens, Lancashire. John was recorded as a plasterer. It is believed that he also fought in WW1 (probably with the Cheshire Regiment) and in 1918 and June 1920 he was recorded as being in the police force in Liverpool. In early 1927 John married Minnie Appleton at Neston Parish Church but no children are known. In the 1939 register (29 September) John (born 12 February 1897) was recorded as a 'fire policeman, retired) and it was noted that he was an ARP warden. Minnie was born on 22 April 1892 and the couple were living at 60 Royston Street in Liverpool, just south of Edge Lane. John died in South Liverpool in late 1956 aged 60 and Minnie also died in South Liverpool, in early 1960, aged 70.
- Ruth was born on 28 October 1901; no record of a baptism at Neston parish church has been found. Ruth married William Jellicoe in late 1927 at Neston Parish Church and at the time of the 1939 Register (29 September) they were living at 15 Cottage Close off the Burton Road. William was born on 25 August 1902 and he was recorded as being the driver of a coal lorry. William died in the Birkenhead area in late 1975 and it is believed that Ruth died in September 1989.
- Hilda her birth was recorded in Wirral in July / September 1906. Baptismal records for Neston Parish Church are unavailable after 1903. Hilda married Harold Godfrey Jones in late 1927 at Neston Parish Church and in the 1939 Register they were living at 3 Poplar Weint. Harold (born 25 April 1906) was recorded as a 'bread baker and confectioner, cake baker, heavy worker'. Hilda was born on 20 June 1906. Also in the household was a daughter, also Hilda, who was born on 3 April 1930. Hilda jnr married Roland Albert Tyson in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1955. Another person, presumably a child, was in the Register although this entry has been redacted and cannot be read (as of February 2018).
- Ivia [Ivy] was baptised 12 September at Neston Parish Church and she married James Barker at St Peter's Church, Birkenhead, in late 1937. In the 1939 Register (29 September) they were living at 60 Morpeth Buildings in Birkenhead; Ivy had been born on 20 June 1909 and James (born 5 August 1913) was a bag stitcher for a food manufacturer. Ivy died on Wirral in mid-1962 but the date of James' death is unknown.



Believed to be Ivy Coventry
[Source: Ancestry]

The St Helens Roll of Honour notes, correctly, that the '*Census suggests Arthur was born at Neston, Wirral. His medical records and SDGW say St Helens. [SDGW stands for Soldiers Died in the Great War, a database]. Arthur was an 18 year old labourer living at Poplar Cottages, Neston, Cheshire, when he enlisted at Chester.*' The Roll of Honour also notes that his age of death was 20. [Source: <http://www.sthelensrollsofhonour.co.uk/>]

According to his army documentation Arthur was born on 8 February 1899. The only appropriate recorded birth registration in England/Wales is for Prescott, Lancashire, for January / March 1899 and, although the 1911 census records that he was born in Neston, no record of an appropriate baptism at Neston Parish Church has been found.

Army Form D. 178

To be used (a) for recruits enlisting direct into the Regular Army, and (b) for men of the Territorial Force when they are admitted to Hospitals. Army Form B. 1728 to be used for Special Reserve recruits and Special Reservists enlisting into the Regular Army.

MEDICAL HISTORY OF

Surname *Coventry* Christian Name *Arthur*

TABLE I - General Table.

Birthplace *St Helens*
County *Lancashire*
Enlisted *18 March 1918*
Declared Age *18* years *24* days
Trade or Occupation *Labourer*
Height *5* feet *7* inches
Weight *127* lbs
Chest *34* inches
Measurements *34-36-38*
Physical Development *Good*
Vaccination Mark *None*
When Vaccinated *1917*

TABLE III - Records of Injury, Venereal Disease, etc.
Date *17-5-18*
T.A.B. KINNEL PARK *None*
T.A.B. KINNEL PARK *None*
VACCINATED *None*

Part of Arthur Coventry's military Medical History recording that he had been born in St Helens.

It would appear that, although the family was resident in South Lancashire for some time, some infants may have been brought back to Neston for baptism. Although the 1911 census records *all* the children having been born in Neston, this cannot be verified. It is known, however, that John Coventry had close relatives in Neston - some involved in the building and plastering trades - and it can be concluded that the family retained close ties with the town even when they were living outside the area. For Arthur, therefore, we can say for certain that he was residing in Neston at the time of the 1911 census but it is unlikely that he was born here.

Arthur Coventry's Service Record has survived and so we have some details of him and his military service.

Arthur was aged 18 years 27 days when he enlisted in Birkenhead on 7 March 1917 for the 65th Training Reserve Battalion, later changed to the 213th (Graduated) Infantry Battalion (21 June 1917) which had no regimental affiliation. His Service N^o was then TR/4/34233 and he was recorded as being 5ft 7in tall, weighing 127lb (just over 9 stone / 57.7kg) and with a 33-inch expanded chest.

On 17 July 1917 Arthur was sent for training, as part of the 59th Training Reserve



A postcard produced at Kinmel Park for soldiers there to use to write home.

Battalion, to Kinmel Park near Bodelwyddan, St Asaph. Kinmel Park Camp was built in 1914 as a training camp for Lord Kitchener's Army in preparation for serving in the First World War and it had its own branch railway line connecting to the main line at Foryd Station in Rhyl. It also produced its own postcards allowing the recruits to keep in touch with home.

Whilst at Kinmel Park Arthur's record shows that he was absent without leave for 20 hours between midnight on 16 June 1917 and 8.0pm the

following day. For this offence he was 'admonished and forfeited 1 day's pay'.

On 1 November 1917 Arthur's unit was re-designated as the 51st (Graduated) Battalion

Training Reserve (Cheshire Regiment), a training unit based at the Curragh in Ireland, and on 22 November he was promoted to Lance Corporal. His Service N^o was now 67553.

Place	Date of Offence	Rank	Cases of Drunkenness	OFFENCE	Names of Witnesses
Kinmel Park	16-6-17	Pvt.		Absent off pass from midnight the 16 th until reporting himself at 8pm the 17 th June 20 hours	Documant Pvt. E. H. H. H.

On 31 March 1918, as part of the 16th Bn. Cheshire regiment, Arthur embarked at Southampton and disembarked at IBD Rouen on 2 April 1918. IBDs - Infantry Base Depots - were holding camps situated within easy distance of the Channel ports which received men on arrival from England and kept them in training whilst they awaited posting to a unit at the front. On 9 April 1918 Arthur Coventry was re-posted to the 15th Battalion Cheshire Regiment - he had reverted to the rank of Private on 1 April but, on 9 April was re-instated as Lance Corporal although this was recorded as an unpaid promotion. His move to the 15th Battalion is interesting, although maybe not unusual, in that this was one of the 'Bantam' battalions which had been established to permit the enlistment of men of short stature; recruits had to be under the height of 5ft 3ins, yet Arthur was recorded as being 5ft 7in tall.

Although Arthur Coventry was killed in action on 29 April 1918, and his body was not recovered, the circumstance of his death, and the action in which he was involved are unknown as the 15th Battalion was not, at that time, involved in any front line conflict.

In early 1918 it is known that the battalion was at The First Battle of Bapaume (24 - 25 March) when, after unceasing shelling, the town of Bapaume was evacuated and then occupied by German forces on the 25th. It has been reported that the movements of 25 March were extremely confused with reports from different battalions and divisions being often contradictory, but the outcome was that the Allied troops pulled away from the area. This, however, was a month before Arthur was killed and it is believed that the next major offensives in which the 15th Battalion was involved were the series of battles in northern France and southern Belgium from late September through October 1918 (The Battle of Courtrai and The Fifth Battle of Ypres [also called The Advance of Flanders]).

It would appear, therefore, that Arthur was the victim of a minor, or local, action in late April during the time known as The German Spring Offensive - the War Diary indicates that this was a quiet time for the 15th Battalion and the casualty list for April notes that no one was killed on 29 April although one man was recorded as 'missing':

BOUZINCOURT.
27/4/18. The night was quiet & our positions were found to be greatly improved, it being possible to visit all positions on the line by day through trenches which, however, required much work & improvement in places. The day was quiet except in BOUZINCOURT, which was shelled intermittently and the church steeple knocked down. All Companies were working and carrying all night and good work was done in the way of improvement to trenches etc.

15th Battalion Cheshire Regiment War Diary 27 – 30 April 1918

BOUZINCOURT

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[continued on following page]

It is believed that John Coventry died (probably in Neston) in July / September 1920 when his age was recorded as 64. Sarah Coventry died recorded as 63.

There appears to be no report of Arthur Coventry's death in local newspapers in 1918.

Army Form W. 5080.

Regiment _____ } To be filled in by
deceased } Officer in Charge of
Records.

STATEMENT of the Names and Addresses of all the Relatives of the above-named deceased Soldier in each of the degrees specified below that are now living.

NOTE.—Against those degrees of relationship in which there is no relative now living the word "none" is to be inserted. If the answers are not filled in, much correspondence and delay may be occasioned by the neglect.

Degree of relationship	NAME IN FULL of every relative now living in each degree required (for see note above).	ADDRESS IN FULL of each surviving relative opposite his or her name.
Widow of the Soldier ...	None	
Children of the Soldier and dates of their births...	None	
Father of the Soldier ...	John Barenty	65
Mother of the Soldier ...	Sarah Barenty	58
Brothers of the Soldier	Full Blood ... John Barenty	23 on Police force in Liverpool No help
	Half blood ...	
Sisters of the Soldier	Full blood ... Ruth Barenty	18
	Hilda Barenty	15
	Ivy Barenty	10
Half blood ...	None	

Birkenhead News – Saturday 19 July 1919

As noted previously, Arthur's elder brother, Harry, served emigrated to Philadelphia in 1912 and served with the US forces in Europe in WW1, gaining the DSC in October 1918.

His details are noted on the website:
http://www.homeofheroes.com/members/02_DSC/citaton5/01_wwi_dsc/dsc_05wwi_Army_C.html

COVENTRY, HENRY

First Sergeant, U.S. Army
Company I, 326th Infantry Regiment, 82d
Division, A.E.F.
Date of Action: October 11 - 27, 1918

Citation:

*The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Henry Coventry, First Sergeant, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in action near St. Juvin, France, October 11 - 27, 1918. All the officers of his company having become casualties, Sergeant Coventry assumed command, and by his coolness and good judgment, successfully led it to its objective. He was himself wounded in the leg during the operations, but he refused to be evacuated until his company was relieved. General Orders No. 78, W.D., 1919
Home Town: Philadelphia, PA*

NESTON.

GALLANT NESTON SERGEANT.

We have much pleasure in recording that the D.S.C. has been awarded to Sergt. Harry Coventry, 1st Coy. 326th Infantry, American Army, for bravery of action near St. Jervin, France, in October last year. All the officers of his company having become casualties, he assumed command, and by his coolness and good judgment, successfully led it to its objective. He was wounded in the leg, but refused to be evacuated until his company was relieved. He is the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. John Coventry, Neston, and went to Philadelphia seven years ago. When America entered the war he was among the first to join, and took part in the march of the U.S.A. Army past the King in London. He is one of four brothers who have served in the great war, and the youngest, Pte. Arthur Coventry, was killed in action on the 29th April last year.

This report appears to be inaccurate in stating that Harry was one of four brothers serving in WW1 - he was one of three known brothers.

736018	4/10/20	Coventry	15th Bn 29th Div Shrewsbury	3	9	3	3	9	3	am. a. q. 18	21.9.18	for John	3	9	3
Arthur Coventry			Cheshire In	7/18						5/11/19			Fa. John 11		
			Rgt. action												
			(impr. for 6/553)												
			WAR GRATUITY												
			Effects	1/20.22.29											
			Transfer	6.228											
			Reg. Paper	26035.2108											
			Serial No.	28446											
			A. F. W. 5070 SENT												
			DATE 4-4-19												

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.

Arthur Coventry had accrued a credit of £3 9s 3d and this was paid to his father, John Coventry, as was the War Gratuity of £4. The total payment, £7 9s 3d, 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.

B/21598

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of the
British War and Victory Medals
granted in respect of the service of No. 67553
Pte. A. Coventry, Cheshire Regiment.
Date 22/6/22
Signature Sarah Coventry



Road scene at Bouzincourt,
26 March 1918
[Source:
<http://www.ww1cemeteries.com/ww1frenchcemeteries/bouzincourtridge.htm>]



The German Spring Offensive, March-July 1918
 German prisoners, some of them wounded, and British infantrymen resting on the roadside in Bouzincourt, 26 March 1918
[\[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_German_Spring_Offensive,_March-july_1918_Q8634.jpg\]](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_German_Spring_Offensive,_March-july_1918_Q8634.jpg)

The German Spring Offensive, March-July 1918
 French and British officers by the German A7V tank "Elfriede", captured near Villers-Bretonneux on 24 April 1918
[\[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_German_Spring_Offensive,_March-july_1918_Q70017.jpg\]](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_German_Spring_Offensive,_March-july_1918_Q70017.jpg)



Arthur Coventry's body was not recovered, or his grave was later lost, and so he is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial around 6km north-east of the town of Albert on The Somme.

The Pozieres Memorial relates to the period of crisis in March and April 1918 when the Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields, and the months that followed before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8 August 1918. The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21 March to 7 August 1918.... There are now 2,758 Commonwealth servicemen buried or commemorated in this cemetery. [CWGC]

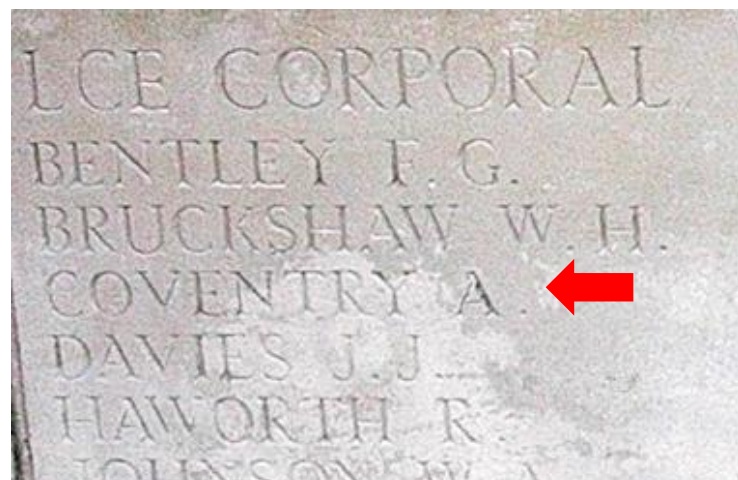
Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
COVENTRY Arthur	Ches R	Pte	67883

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	J/2/101 B22	7180	
BRITISH	"	"	
STAR			

Theatre of War first served in
 Date of entry there: 11

K. 1989

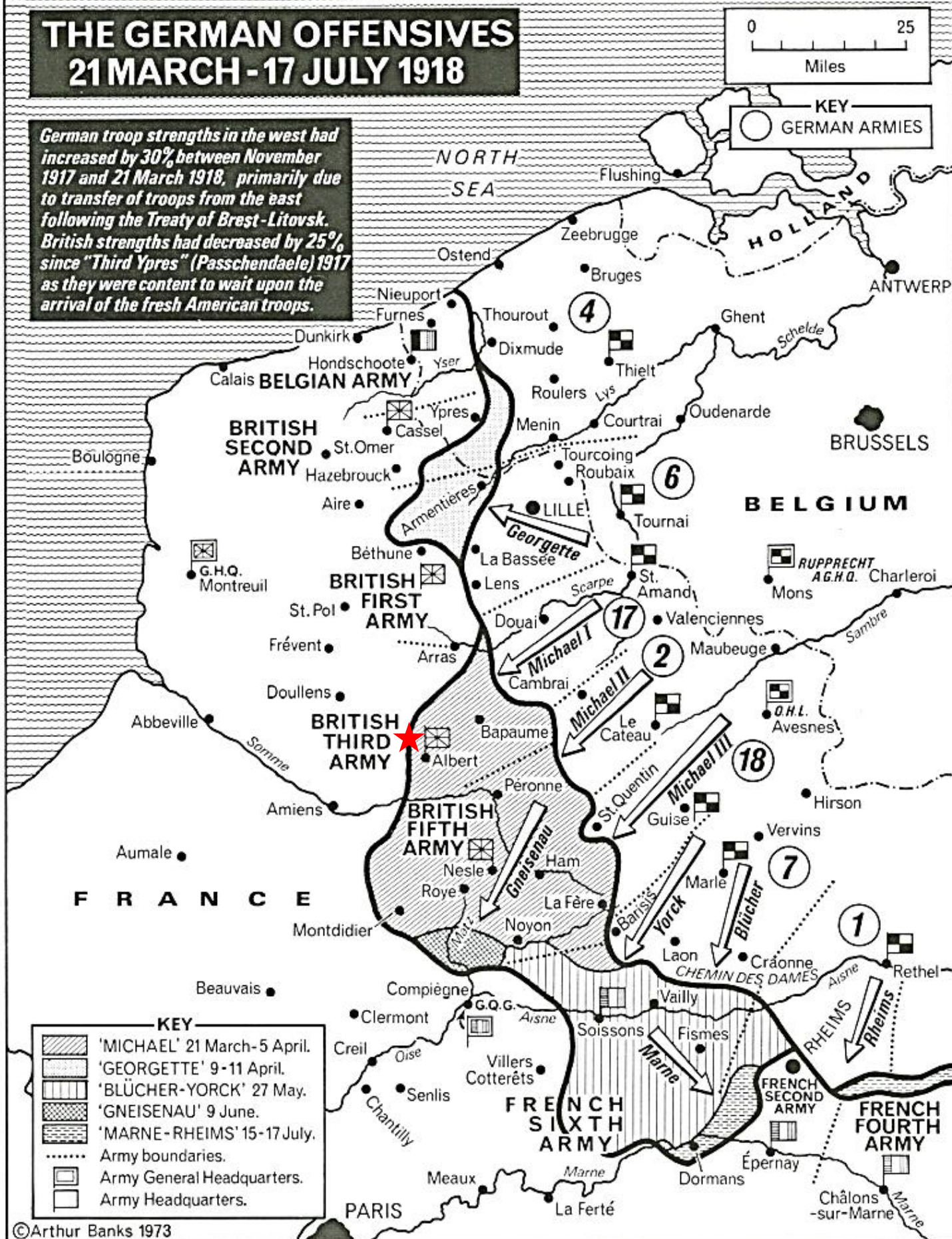
British Army WWI Medal
 Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920



The inscription on the Pozieres Memorial commemorating Lance Corporal Arthur Coventry.

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES 21 MARCH - 17 JULY 1918

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.



©Arthur Banks 1973

The location of Bouzincourt, north of Albert, where Arthur Coventry died, is indicated by the red symbol.
[Source: *A Military Atlas of the First World War* Arthur Banks Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]