

## 131: Richard Duncan MM

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: R. Duncan MM  
 Rank: Private  
 Battalion / Regiment: 1st / 4th Bn. Cheshire Regiment  
 Service Number: 201007 Date of Death: 12 October 1919 Age at Death: ?  
 Buried / Commemorated at: Neston Cemetery, Raby Road, Neston  
 Additional information given by CWGC: None

Richard Duncan was the (probably) sixth child of agricultural worker / labourer Thomas and Annie Duncan of Parkgate. Thomas Duncan married Annie Hobson at St John's Church, Liverpool, in late 1874 and they had twelve children of whom ten survived. In 1881, before Richard was born, and in 1891, the family was living in Parkgate:

Thomas Duncan	Head	26	26	ag lab.	do do
Annie do	Wife	27	27		Warwickshire Ripple
Thomas M.C. do	Son	7		Scholar	Liverpool
Margaret A. do	Daughter	5		do	Cheshire Parkgate
Ellen do	Daughter	2		do	do do
Charles F. do	Son	9 mo		do	do do

#### 1881 census (extract) – Parkgate

Thomas Duncan	26	agricultural labourer	born Parkgate
Annie	27		born Ripple, Warwicks.
Thomas M.C.	7		born Liverpool
Margaret A.	5		born Parkgate
Ellen	2		born Parkgate
Charles F.	9 months		born Parkgate

Richard Duncan, and older brother John, were both baptised at Neston Parish Church on 30 January 1885.

Thomas Duncan	Head	38	38	labourer	do do
Annie do	Wife	37	37		Ripple Warwick
Thomas do	Son	17		labourer	Liverpool
Margaret A. do	Daughter	15			Neston Cheshire
Ellen do	Daughter	12			do do
Charles F. do	Son	10			do do
John do	Son	8			do do
Richard do	Son	6			do do
William do	Son	1			do do
Cecilia M. do	Daughter	2 mo			do do

#### 1891 census (extract) – Parkgate

Thomas Duncan	38	labourer	born Neston
Annie	37		born Ripple, Warwicks.
Thomas	17	labourer	born Liverpool
Margaret A.	15		born Neston
Ellen	12		born Neston
Charles F.	10		born Neston
John	8		born Neston
Richard	6		born Neston
William	1		born Neston
Cecilia M.	2 months		born Neston

In 1901 the family was still in Parkgate and Richard, 19, was a domestic gardener:

James						
Thomas Duncan	Head	M	50	✓	Contractor's carter	Do
Annie Do	Wife	M	49	✓		Warwickshire
John Do	Son	S	21	✓	Farm Labourer	Parkgate
Richard Do	Son		19	✓	Gardener domestic	Do
William Do	Son		13	✓		Do
Margery Do	Daughter		10	✓		Do
Joseph Do	Son		8	✓		Do
Edith Do	Daughter		7	✓		Do

1901 census (extract) – Parkgate

Thomas Duncan	50	contractor's carter, farm	born Parkgate
Annie	49		born Warwicks.
John	21	farm labourer	born Parkgate
Richard	19	gardener, domestic	born Parkgate
William	13		born Parkgate
Margery	10		born Parkgate
Joseph	8		born Parkgate
Edith	7		born Parkgate

In 1901 Thomas M C Duncan, 28, was a platelayer lodging with fisherman Thomas and Clara Bushell in Parkgate. In the 1911 census he is still recorded (39, born Toxteth) as a platelayer and living on Neston High Street with his wife Louisa (42, born West Derby) and two small sons. Thomas Duncan had married Louisa Harrison at a Civil Marriage in Liverpool in April / June 1902.

Margaret Duncan has not been located with certainty in the 1901 and 1911 census returns and it is probable that she had married and moved away from Neston by 1901.

In 1901 Ellen Duncan (22) was at The Elms, a lodging house in Torquay. A domestic nurse, she may have been with the Hepton family from Yorkshire who were staying in the resort with their young family. Ellen has not been located in the 1911 census.

Although Charles Frederick Duncan has not been located in the 1901 census he was living, in 1911, with his wife Bessie on Beech Street, Middlewich. Charles was a chemical (alkali) labourer and he had been married to Bessie (who had been married previously - stepson Horace Bratherton was in the household) for ten years and they had three young children. In fact, Charles had married Betsy Bratherton at St Michael and All Angels Church in Middlewich in 1901.

By the time of the 1911 census Annie had died (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 1907 in Neston), although her age was given as 51 and Thomas died in Neston in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1915 aged 65.

In 1911 widower Thomas was living with three unmarried children and a grandchild - it is not clear as to this child's parentage:

1	Thomas Duncan	Head	60	Widower	-	Labourer for builder	234	Widow	Parkgate Cheshire
2	William Duncan	Son	21	Single	-	Farm Labourer	140	Widow	Parkgate Cheshire
3	Joseph Duncan	Son	18	Single	-	Farm Hand	1	Widow	Parkgate Cheshire
4	Marjory Duncan	Daughter	-	20	Single	-	General Servant Domestic	010	Parkgate Cheshire
5	Mary Duncan	Daughter	-	2	-	-	-	-	Parkgate Cheshire

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

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

Total	
Males	Females
3	2
5	

Initials of Enumerator: *SLB*

(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 scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

3

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

Signature: *Thomas Duncan Swift Cottage*

Postal Address: *Parkgate Cheshire*

1911 census (condensed) – Swift’s Cottage, Parkgate

Thomas Duncan	60	widower, labourer for builder	born Parkgate
William	21	farm labourer	born Parkgate
Joseph	18	farm labourer	born Parkgate
Marjory	20	general servant, domestic	born Parkgate
Mary	2	granddaughter	born Parkgate

Thomas recorded that ten of his twelve children had survived.

Richard Duncan married Margaret Peters at Our Lady & St Nicholas & St Anne Church, the Liverpool Parish Church, in early 1908 and their first child, Annie, was born in the third quarter of the same year. Another daughter, Miriam, was born in early 1910 but died in late 1911 aged 1. A third child, Joseph, was born in early 1915 and he survived. In 1911 the family was at Eldon Terrace off the Burton Road:

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

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.	
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.				Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.
1	<i>Richard Duncan</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Gardener (Domestic)</i>	<i>at home</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>Parkgate Cheshire</i>	
2	<i>Margaret Duncan</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Married</i>									<i>Parkgate Cheshire</i>	
3	<i>Annie Duncan</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>2 years</i>										<i>Neston Cheshire</i>	
4	<i>Miriam Duncan</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>1 year</i>										<i>Neston Cheshire</i>	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

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

Total	
Males	Females
1	3
4	

Initials of Enumerator: *SLB*

(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 scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

4 rooms

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

Signature: *Richard Duncan*

Postal Address: *Eldon Terrace, Neston, Cheshire*

1911 census – 8, Eldon Terrace, Neston

Richard Duncan	26	gardener (domestic)	born Parkgate
Margaret	23		born Parkgate
Annie	2		born Neston
Miriam	1		born Neston

Richard and Margaret had been married for three years and both children had survived although Miriam died later that year.



8 Eldon Terrace, Neston

No details of Richard's army career or of his death are known as his Service Record has not been found. However, it is recorded that his initial Service Number was 3169.

The 1/4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment, a Territorial force, was formed in August 1914 in Birkenhead as part of the Cheshire Brigade, Welsh Division. On mobilisation the battalion moved to Shrewsbury and Church Stretton but by the end of August 1914 had moved to Northampton. In December 1914 they moved again, to Cambridge, and by March 1915 the troops were at Bedford.

On 13 May 1915 the formation became the 159<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) Division and, in July 1915, they sailed from Devonport, going via Alexandria to Gallipoli where they landed on 9 August 1915.

Those who survived the disastrous campaign in Gallipoli were withdrawn in December 1915 and moved to Egypt. The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion then moved eastwards into the developing Sinai and Palestine Campaign, fighting against the German-supported Ottoman Empire. This started with an Ottoman attempt at raiding the Suez Canal in 1915, and ended with the Armistice of Mudros in 1918, leading to the cession of Ottoman Syria and Palestine. However, during 1917 as the British forces, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, moved into Gaza and Palestine they encountered strong opposition and were not assisted by significant levels of disorganisation amongst the British forces. During late 1917 the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment was involved in:

- ◆ The First Battle of Gaza (26 - 27 March): the first attempt by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) to invade the south of Palestine in the Ottoman Empire. Fighting took place in and around the town of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast when infantry and mounted infantry from the Desert Column, a component of the Eastern Force, attacked the town. Late in the afternoon, on the verge of capturing Gaza, the Desert Column was withdrawn due to concerns about the approaching darkness and large Ottoman reinforcements: this, therefore, was considered as a British defeat.
- ◆ The Second Battle of Gaza (13 - 19 April): following the defeat of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) at The First Battle of Gaza in March, Gaza was now defended strongly by the entrenched Ottoman Army garrison, which had been reinforced after the first battle by substantial forces. They manned the town's defences and a line of strong redoubts which extended eastwards along the road from Gaza to Beersheba. The defenders were attacked by Eastern Force's three infantry divisions, supported by two mounted divisions, but the strength of the defenders, their entrenchments, and supporting artillery destroyed the attackers with some units suffering a 50% loss. This was an even more significant defeat of British forces than the earlier conflict in March.

◆ The Third Battle of Gaza (27 October - 7 November): Following British defeats at The First and Second Battles of Gaza in March and April 1917, Lieutenant General Philip Chetwode, commanding the EEF's Eastern Force, and Kress von Kressenstein's Ottoman Empire force had each adopted a defensive posture and a stalemate had developed in Southern Palestine. Entrenched defences approximately on the lines held at the end of the second battle were strengthened, and both sides undertook regular mounted reconnaissance into the open eastern flank. In late June Allenby replaced General Archibald Murray as commander of the EEF, which he quickly reorganised. At about the same time, the Ottoman Fourth Army was also restructured. As the stalemate continued in terrible conditions through the summer, reinforcements began to arrive to replace the large number of casualties suffered by the EEF during the previous fighting for Gaza, while several additional divisions also arrived. The Ottoman defenders were also reinforced at this time, and both sides carried out training while manning the front lines and monitoring the open eastern flank. By mid-October, as The Battle of Passchendaele continued on the Western Front, the last of the British reinforcements arrived as Allenby's preparations to commence a campaign of manoeuvre neared completion.

Beginning on 27 October, the EEF began a heavy and almost continuous bombardment of heavily-fortified Gaza. During this time, the EEF's XXI Corps., holding the Gaza section of the line, had been mostly passive until the night of 1 - 2 November, when a series of determined night-time assaults were mounted against the Gaza defences. Yet these attacks were only partially successful due to the strength of the garrison. The bombardment of Gaza intensified on 6 November and during the night of 6 - 7 November successful attacks were launched on several trench systems.

On the morning of 7 November, Gaza was found to have been evacuated during the night. The Gaza to Beersheba line subsequently collapsed and the Ottoman Seventh and Eighth Armies were forced into retreat. Following several battles during the pursuit, the EEF captured Jerusalem on 9 December 1917.

It was, presumably, during The Third Battle of Gaza that Richard Duncan was wounded when he was 'struck by a bomb'.

Having recovered from this injury Richard went on to serve on the Western Front where, on 24 January 1919, he was gazetted for the award of the Military Medal for actions on 25 July 1918. Whilst we have no details of why Richard was awarded this honour, it is probable that it was during the early Battles of the Marne, specifically The Battle of the Soissonais and of the Ourcq in which the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment is known to have featured.

Awarded "The Military Medal."	
Surname	Duncan
Christian Name	Richard
Rank	Pte
Corps	1st Bn. Cheshire Regt (I.F.)
Regimental Number	201007
Date of Gazette	24.1.19
Registered Paper	68/21/414
Schedule Number	194986
<small>W854/II3978 20000 4/17 [X3282] W. &amp; Co. H17/611  68/Gen. No./2730 (M.S. 3(D)) W5286/IRP1211 12,000 27S [X617d]</small>	

In order to avoid duplicate issues of Medals it is imperative that the cards be referred to before any names are gazetted

Record of the award of the Military Medal to Richard Duncan

Having been withdrawn from Palestine to France on 31 May 1918 the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment left the 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) Division and, on 1 July 1918, was attached to the 102<sup>nd</sup> Brigade in the 34<sup>th</sup> Division. At Soissonais and Ourcq the 34<sup>th</sup> Division fought alongside the 15<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division and the French XX Corps. and French XXX Corps. The British Official History gives the following information of the early days of this conflict:

*In the French Tenth Army the XXX Corps, of which the British 34<sup>th</sup> Division formed part, was to make the principal attack and reach the high ground north of Grand Rozoy, between Servenay and the Bois de St. Jean, the XI Corps coming up on its right, and the XX, in which was the British 15<sup>th</sup> Division, and I Corps, covering its left. General Mangin had received no reinforcements except the 128<sup>th</sup> Division from the Third Army in exchange for the tired 1st Division, but the 127<sup>th</sup> and 17th from the Second Army (Verdun) were expected to begin detraining on the 29<sup>th</sup>.*

*The operations of the XXX Corps involved a left wheel, pivoting on Tigny, and the British 34<sup>th</sup> Division was now on the wheeling flank. During the afternoon of the 26<sup>th</sup> Major-General Nicholson had been warned by General Penet (XXX Corps) that the 34<sup>th</sup> Division would be shifted to the right to take part in the attack on the 30<sup>th</sup>. So during the night of the 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> the infantry and the machine-gun battalion of the 34<sup>th</sup> had been relieved, after considerable difficulties, in the sector opposite Hartennes by the extension inwards of the flanks of the French 19<sup>th</sup> Division on the right, and the 12<sup>th</sup> (which had taken the place of the 58<sup>th</sup>) on the left. With its artillery, withdrawn the same night, it was assembled by 2 am among the woods south of Villers Helon.*

## Neston Men Wounded.

Private John Harris, youngest son of Mr. F. Harris, of Little Neston, has been seriously wounded while serving with his regiment abroad. The official document describes the scalp wound as severe, and further news is being anxiously awaited. Pte. Richard Duncan, of the Cheshire Regt., has been struck by a bomb, and is now in hospital in Palestine, where he has been serving over 12 months. Both are natives of this district, and their many friends wish them a speedy recovery.

Transcript

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Birkenhead News – Saturday 17 November 1917

Richard Duncan cannot have been in Palestine for 'over twelve months' as the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion did not arrive in the Gaza area until March 1917.

John Harris - who appears to have recovered and survived the war - was the younger brother of Private Frederick Harris who died on 27 August 1918 [entry [36: Frederick Charles Burkey Harris](#)].

The details of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment's involvement in the early days of the conflict, when Richard Duncan gained his Military Medal (25 July 1918) were recorded by Arthur Crookenden:

**MARNE, 1918. 20th July to 2nd August.**  
**SOISSONNAIS OURCQ. 23rd July to 2nd August.**

Maps p. 151, 153

The 4th and 7th Battalions had come from Palestine into the reconstituted 34th Division. With all the rest of the infantry of the Division, they had had no experience of war as waged in France, except in one respect, this was no great drawback, as open warfare was expected. The one exception was that they knew nothing of gas. So, they were slow to recognize gas shelling. This caused casualties which troops accustomed to gas would have avoided.

Before they went into action in France, it had not been possible to send more than a small proportion of the men home on leave. Many of the men who were killed in this fighting had been abroad on service for over 18 months without seeing their families.

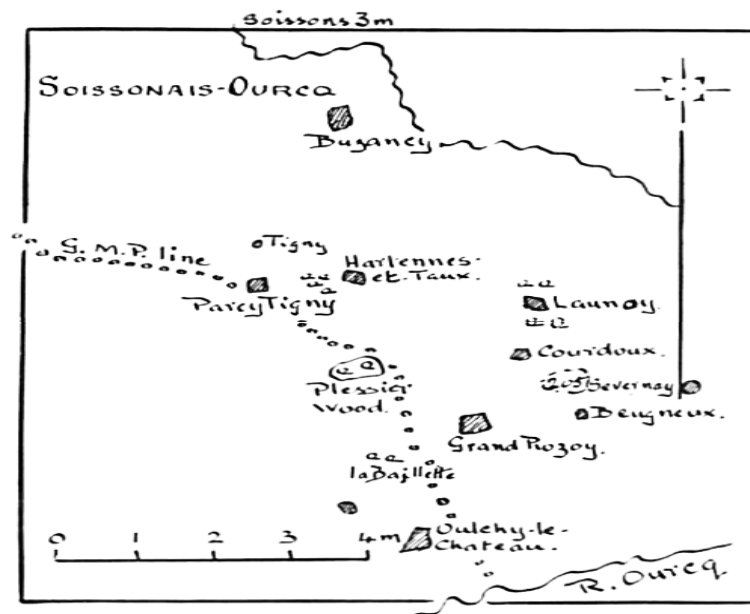
The Battalions reached France in June. Soon after this, the Division was transferred to the 30th French Corps.

On account of its experience in open warfare, French G.H.Q. had asked for this Division to assist in these operations, which were to storm the ridge dominating the whole country-side between the Aisne and the Ourcq, and so bite off the big salient which the German attacks in May already described, had driven into the Allied front.

On the 18th of July, the 10th French Army attacked the west side of the German salient, north of Soissons, and drove the enemy back some five miles, taking prisoners and guns. The 34th Division was to take part in the exploitation of this victory.

Orders on the 21st to relieve a French Division in the line, near Parcy Tigny, were quickly followed by orders for an attack to take place on the 23rd.

The 34th Divisional history says "In the most favourable circumstances, this would have been difficult for any troops. But, for a newly constituted Division, composed of troops which had not yet been in action in France and which had just completed a trying move by rail, bus and march route, it was a severe test. The country was entirely new.



"There was no time for reconnaissance. There were no organized trench systems on either side. The enemy's positions were never more than approximately known till they had been captured. To all these difficulties, were added those inseparable from acting for the first time with foreign troops."

On the 23rd July the Division advanced on Launoy with two French Divisions, while other French troops made turning movements round the woods on either side of that place.

The country was looking its best. The battlefield was a stretch of fields of ripe corn, surrounded by glorious forests.

The plan was for the 7th Battalion to take Reugny Wood, and then for the 4th Battalion to pass through and secure Hartennes.

The advance was planned to begin twenty minutes after a rocket signal, but the message reached the signal station late, and even then, when the rockets did go up, they were not visible to the troops. However, orders were received in sufficient time by telephone and wireless.

Owing to the standing corn, the advance of the 7th Battalion was difficult to control, and Lewis guns had to be fired from the hip. After gaining some 1,200 yards under heavy machine gun fire, they were held up, owing to the failure of the French to capture Tigny. The companies instinctively moved into dead ground and here dug in, suffering severe casualties from shell, gas and machine guns.

During the night, the line was advanced and our two Battalions were in touch with each other and with the French.

On this day the 4th Battalion lost 4 officers and 276 others and the 7th Battalion 180 of all ranks, including Captain Thomas Furnell, who died of wounds. He had been with the Battalion since mobilization, and had gained his rank by keenness and hard work. Both Battalions were heavily shelled on the 24th by our own guns.

On the 25th, the enemy was kept alive by very active patrolling, and by continual pushing forward of small parties from trench to trench and by the construction of forward strong points.

On the night of the 27th/28th both Battalions were relieved by the French. On the next night, the Division concentrated in the Baillelte Wood, prior to launching an attack on Beugneux and Grand Rozoy. The Brigade (102nd) was in Reserve.

As soon as the main attack was held up, which became evident about 10-50 in the forenoon, the Brigade was ordered to outflank Beugneux by the west, and then to push on to the original objective.

Preparations took till 2-30 p.m., when the attack began. The 4th Battalion moved to fill a gap caused by French withdrawals on the left. Shelling was heavy and snipers in Grand Rozoy were very troublesome.

A German counter-attack delayed the advance, and the troops were halted and reorganized in the G.M.P. line (Government Militaire de Paris—outer Paris defences).

The French took Grand Rozoy on the 30th.

On the 1st August, the advance was resumed. The 4th Battalion and 1st Herefords had the task of following the attack, and holding a spur south east of Bucy Le Gras, to cover the advance of the 12th French Division.

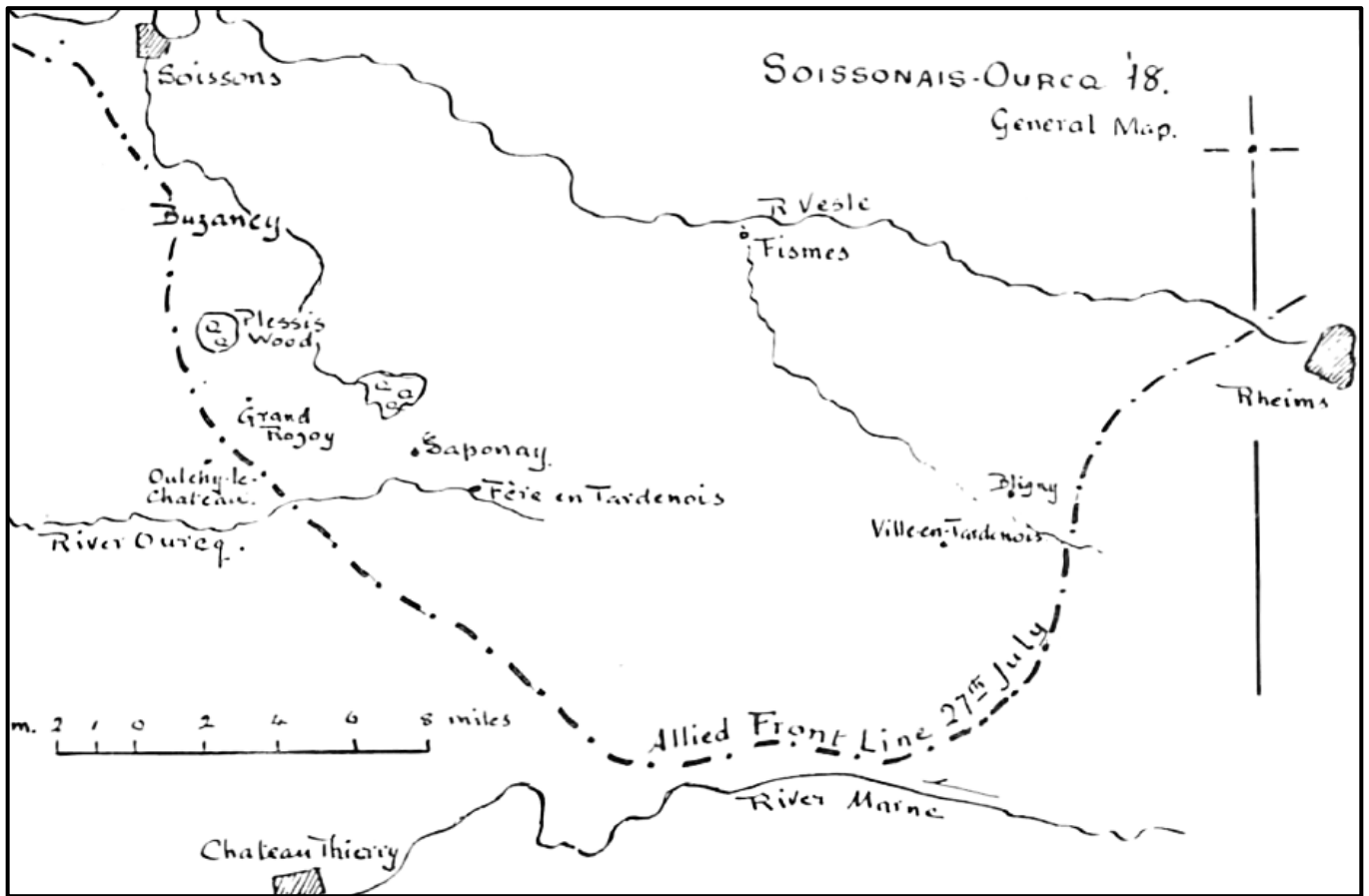
The 4th Battalion, carrying out their tasks in a way that earned the warmest praise of the French Generals, reached a line just south of the Beugneux-Courdoux Road. But they suffered a very great loss. Their gallant commanding officer, Colonel G. H. Swindells, was killed. He had commanded the 4th Battalion since October, 1914, when he was transferred from the 7th Battalion. With the exception of a short break recovering from wounds received at Suvla, Swindells had been at duty the whole war. In peace, he had been one of the keenest and most studious officers in the Cheshire Brigade. In war, he earned the devotion and affection of all who served under him.

A further advance of some 4,000 yards was necessary to command the valleys on either side of the hill 192, whence the Germans could get observation into Severnay.

However, the Germans had had enough, and began to withdraw on the 2nd August.

A feature of the operations was the splendid work done by signallers and runners. The French were most appreciative of the work of the Division and bestowed decorations promptly and handsomely on our troops.





[The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War : 1914 – 1918 Arthur Crookenden, Colonel of the Regiment WH Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. 1938]

## M.M. FOR NESTON SOLDIER

Another Neston soldier has gained the Military Medal, viz., Pte. Richard Duncan, who belongs to a well-known Parkgate family, and whose wife and children reside in Eldon-terrace, Neston. He was among the first to volunteer when war broke out, and has seen much active service, taking part in the Egyptian and Palestine campaigns, after which he was transferred to the Western front, where he gained his decoration. He has received the following letter from Brigadier-General Hilliam:—"I wish to congratulate you on behalf of all ranks of the ---- Brigade. During the action in conjunction with the French at ---- on July 25th, 1918, your work has been excellent and beyond praise. It has been a great pleasure to me to forward your name for the decoration you have so gallantly earned, and I trust that I shall be able to congratulate you on many future occasions. Your example to the company has been of great service to the C.O. of the company and to myself as your Brigadier. Wishing you the best of luck in the future.—Yours very sincerely, E. Hilliam."

Birkenhead News – Saturday 12 October 1918

Transcription:

### M.M. for Neston Soldier

Another Neston soldier has gained the Military Medal, viz. Pte. Richard Duncan, who belongs to a well-known Parkgate family, and whose wife and children reside in Eldon-terrace, Neston. He was among the first to volunteer when war broke out, and has seen much active service, taking part in the Egyptian and Palestine campaigns after which he was transferred to the Western front, where he gained his decoration. He has received the following letter from Brigadier-General Hilliam:- 'I wish to congratulate you on behalf of all ranks of the ---- Brigade. During the action in conjunction with the French at ----- on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1918 your work has been excellent and beyond praise. It has been a great pleasure to me to forward your name for the decoration you have so gallantly earned, and I trust that I shall be able to congratulate you on many future occasions. Your example to the company has been of great service to the C.O. of the company and to myself as your Brigadier. Wishing you the best of luck in the future – Yours very sincerely, E. Hilliam

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
DUNCAN	Lobes. R. - " -	PL	3169 201007
Richard			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	52/101 B 26	8782	
BARRAGE	do -	do	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

As we have no details of Richard's army service, other than that gleaned from the newspaper reports, it is not possible to state the reasons for his death on 12 October 1919, some 11 months after the Armistice. Clearly, as he is buried in Neston, he must have returned at the end of the war but it is not known whether he died in hospital or, more probably, at home, in

Neston, or whether his death was linked to the injuries he received in Palestine in 1917. His age was recorded as being 34.

Following Richard Duncan's death in 1919 his widow, Margaret (34), married John Meadows (36) at Neston Parish Church on 29 January 1921. Both Margaret and John lived on Eldon Terrace and John, like Richard Duncan, was a gardener. Presumably both families were well acquainted <sup>1</sup>.

The 1939 Register recorded the family at 85 Mayfield Gardens, Neston:

John Meadows	born 29 December 1884 domestic gardener
Margaret Meadows	born 26 September 1887
Annie Duncan	born 8 August 1908 single domestic servant

Two lines of the record have been redacted



Annie Duncan, the first child of Richard and Margaret Duncan, married Alfred Jones at Neston Parish Church in mid-1957.

<sup>1</sup> John Meadow's father was deceased gardener Samuel Meadows. Margaret's father was labourer Joseph Peters. Witnesses to the marriage were George Edwin Thomas and Alice Peters.

No children of John Meadows and Margaret are known. It is believed that Margaret Meadows died on Wirral, aged 71, in mid-1959 and that John Meadows died on Wirral, aged 85, in mid-1967. Both are buried in Neston Cemetery; the head of the grave is marked by Richard Duncan's War Graves headstone.

Joseph, the third and second-surviving child of Richard and Margaret Duncan, married Margaret Gertrude Cottrell at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in mid-1938. In the 1939 Register they are recorded at Mill Street in Neston (the house number was not recorded):

Joseph Duncan	born 22 March 1915	ARP work, concreting
Margaret G	born 9 January 1909	

It is not known when Joseph and Margaret died but it is believed that they had a son, Andrew Graham Duncan, who was registered in early 1943.

Of the siblings of Richard Duncan it is known that

Cecilia married Thomas Gynane at Our Lady & St Nicholas & St Anne, the Liverpool Parish Church, in early 1912 and at the time of the 1939 Register they were living at 124 Phythian Street in Liverpool:

Thomas Gynane	born 14 December 1889	fitter, steam engineering
Cecilia M	born 28 February 1891	
Thomas jnr	born 1 January 1916	single transport driver
Two lines of the record have been redacted		
Joseph	born 19 March 1922	single general labourer
Eric	born 22 June 1923	single bakehouse assistant
Two lines of the record have been redacted		

Thomas died on Wirral, aged 74, in late 1963. Cecilia died in West Cheshire, aged 78, in December 1967.

Edith Duncan married Edward George Welch at Our Lady & St Nicholas & St Anne in Liverpool in mid-1915 and in the 1939 Register they are recorded at 39 Green Lane, Shotton:

Edward George Welch	born 24 July 1895	roller steel worker
Edith	born 9 June 1894	
William T P	born 27 January 1916	single coal wheeler, steel works
Ethel	born 29 April 1922	single packer, silk works

One line of the record has been redacted

Edward Welch died in the Hawarden district in early 1971 (his date of birth was noted as 28 July). Edith Welch died in the Alyn & Deeside district in mid-1975.

It is believed that Thomas Duncan, the eldest child of Thomas and Anne, died on Wirral in late 1956 aged 83. He has not been located in the 1939 Register.

Richard Duncan's war grave in Neston Cemetery.



The Duncan / Meadows family grave, and Richard Duncan's headstone, Neston Cemetery.

The grave is inscribed on both long edges: 'In loving memory of my beloved wife Margaret Meadows Died [stone weathered] Age [stone weathered]' and 'Also her Dear Husband John Meadows [rest of inscription obscured]'.

