

132: John Edwards

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: J. Edwards

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: Royal Army Service Corps.

Service Number: M/408302

Date of Death: 18 November 1919

Age at Death: 46

Buried / Commemorated at: Neston Cemetery, Raby Road, Neston

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of John Edwards and the husband of C. G. Edwards of Dean Cottages, Winsford. Born at New Ferry

John Edwards was a son of labourer John and Sarah Edwards of Bebington. John Edwards had probably married a Sarah Edwards at St Mary's Church, Chester, in early 1864. Sarah was from the small settlement of Barton, south of Chester and close to the Welsh border. In 1871, before John was born, the family was at 22 Bebington Road, New Ferry, but they had moved to Higher Bebington by 1881:

John Edwards	Head	Male	46	Labourer General	do	Moreton
Sarah do	Wife	Female	42	Wife	do	Barton
George do	Son	Male	17	Labourer do	do	B. Road
Mary do	Daughter	Female	13	Schooler	do	New Ferry
John Edwards	Son	Male	7	Schooler	do	New Ferry
Alfred do	Daughter	Female	5	do	do	do

1881 census (extract) – Derby House, Park, Higher Bebington

John Edwards	45	labourer, general	born Moreton
Sarah	42		born Barton
George	17	labourer, general	born Birkenhead
Mary	13		born New Ferry
John	7		born New Ferry
Alfred	5		born New Ferry

By the time of the 1891 census John, still living at home, was working as a general labourer:

John Edwards	Head	Male	55	Cowkeeper & Dairyman	do	Moreton
Sarah do	Wife	Female	52	Dairywoman	do	Barton
Samuel do	Son	Male	19	General Labourer	do	New Ferry
John do	do	Male	17	do	do	New Ferry
Alfred do	do	Male	15	do	do	New Ferry
Fanny Roberts	Grand Daughter	Female	12	do	do	New Ferry
Samuel Minnis	Servant	Male	23	Milk Carrier	do	Woolton

1891 census (extract) – Derby Park, Bebington

John Edwards	55	cowkeeper & dairyman	born Moreton
Sarah	52	dairywoman	born Barton
Samuel	19	general labourer	born New Ferry
John	17	general labourer	born New Ferry
Alfred	15	general labourer	born New Ferry
Fanny Roberts	12	granddaughter	born New Ferry
Samuel Minnis	23	servant, milk carrier	born Woolton, Lancs.

Derby House was actually in Rock Ferry, an occasional seat of the local Minshull family until the 17th century. The house was secluded in its own grounds in the Manor Park which, as far as can be determined, extended from the River Mersey to what is now Old Chester Road. This park, which formed part of the manor lands of Higher Bebington appears to have covered most of modern Rock Ferry

John jnr married Catherine Gertrude Murphy at St Mary's Church, Kirkdale, Liverpool, in early 1893; she was a barmaid, the daughter of ship's steward William and Catherine Murphy of Everton. By the time of the 1901 census John and Gertrude were living in Rock Ferry where John was a sawyer's labourer:

John Edwards	Head	M	27	Sawyer's Labourer	Worker	Cheshire Rock Ferry
Gertrude	Wife	M	27			Lancs Liverpool
Lilian	Daughter	F	7			Cheshire Neston
John	Son	M	5			Lancs Blundellsands
Samuel	do	M	3			Cheshire Bebington
Robert L.	do	M	1			do Rock Ferry

1901 census (extract) – Derby Park Cottages, New Chester Road, Rock Ferry

John Edwards	27	sawyer's labourer	born Rock Ferry
Gertrude	27		born Liverpool
Lilian	7		born Neston
John	5		born Blundellsands
Samuel	3		born Bebington
Robert L.	1		born Rock Ferry

However, Lilian Edwards was born in Neston and baptised at the Parish Church on 10 September 1893 when John's occupation was recorded as a coachman.

Ten years later, in 1911, John was again recorded as a domestic coachman and the couple now had five children, all living at home:

1	John Edwards	Head	37	Married	18	5	6	0	Coachman	476	Domestic Worker	Worker	New Ferry, Cheshire	120
2	Gertrude Edwards	Wife	37	Married	18	5	5	0	House Duties				Liverpool, Cheshire	058
3	Lillian Edwards	Daughter	17	Single					General Servant (Domestic)	010			Neston, Cheshire	020
4	John Edwards	Son	15	Single					Shop Boy at Druggist's	270	759	0	Blundellsands, Cheshire	050
5	Samuel Edwards	Son	13	Single					at Home	School			New Ferry, Cheshire	120
6	Robert Edwards	Son	11	Single					at Home	do			Rock Ferry, Cheshire	
7	Thomas Fredrick Edwards	Son	8	Single					at Home	do			Ormskirk, Lancashire	050

1911 census – 43, Nelson Road, Rock Ferry

John Edwards	37	coachman, domestic	born New Ferry
Gertrude	37	house duties	born Liverpool
Lillian	17	general servant, domestic	born Neston
John	15	shop boy at druggist's	born Blundellsands
Samuel	13		born New Ferry
Robert	11		born Rock Ferry
Thomas Fredrick	8		born Ormskirk

John and Gertrude had been married for 18 years and all five children had survived.

There is no evidence that John and Gertrude had any further children after the date of the 1911 census.

In 1911 John's parents were living in New Ferry and John snr provided details of their children although some were now dead and the others were married and living away from home:

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.												Number of Schedules (To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection)		
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.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on their Account.	Whether Working at Home.						
John Edwards	Husband	75	45	Married	54	10	6	14				Barton County, Chester		
Sarah Edwards	Wife	72	42	Married								Moreton		
Thomas Edwards	Son											Birkenhead		
Martha Edwards	Daughter	58	58	Married								Birkenhead		
William Edwards	Son											Birkenhead		
George Edwards	Son	47		Married								Birkenhead		
Fanny Edwards	Daughter	45		Married								Rock Ferry		
Mary Edwards	Daughter											Rock Ferry		
Samuel Edwards	Son											New Ferry		
John Edwards	Son											New Ferry		
Alfred Edwards	Son											New Ferry		

1911 census – 3 Napier Road, New Ferry

John Edwards	75		born Barton
Sarah	72		born Moreton
Thomas	-		-
Martha	52	married	born Birkenhead
William	-		-
George	47	married	born Birkenhead
Fanny	45	married	born Rock Ferry
Mary	-		born Rock Ferry
Samuel	40	married	born New Ferry
John	37	married	born New Ferry
Alfred	35	married	born New Ferry

Information scratched out 'away from home'

John and Sarah had been married for 54 years and six of their ten children were still living.

John appears to have been a little confused when he completed the census return as not only did he include all (absent and dead) members of his family but he reversed the birthplace of himself and Sarah.

John Edwards snr died in late 1915 aged 79 and Sarah died in early 1928 aged 88.

As John's Service Record has not been located we have no details of his army career or the circumstances of his death. However, it is recorded that he served with the Royal Army Service Corps. and died on 18 November 1919, just one year and one week after the Armistice. It is possible that he died of wounds or of an unknown illness.

The Royal Army Service Corps. (RASC) was a corps. of the British Army responsible for land, coastal and lake transport, air despatch, barracks administration, the Army Fire Service, staffing headquarters' units, supply of food, water, fuel and domestic materials such as clothing, furniture and stationery and the supply of technical and military equipment.

The Long, Long Trail website [<http://www.1914-1918.net/>] notes:

The officers and men of the ASC - sometimes referred to in a joking, disparaging way as Ally Sloper's Cavalry - were the unsung heroes of the British Army in the Great War. Soldiers cannot fight without food, equipment and ammunition. They cannot move without horses or vehicles. It was the ASC's job to provide them. In the Great War, the vast majority of the supply, maintaining a vast army on many fronts, was supplied from Britain. Using horsed and motor vehicles, railways and waterways, the ASC performed prodigious feats of logistics and were one of the great strengths of organisation by which the war was won.

At peak, the ASC numbered an incredible 10,547 officers and 315,334 men.

The ASC was organised into units known as Companies, each fulfilling a specific role. In most cases the Company also had a sub-title name describing its role.

Some of the Companies were under orders of the Divisions of the army; the rest were under direct orders of the higher formations of the Corps, Army or General Headquarters of the army in each theatre of war. They were known as part of the Lines of Communication. Many men of the ASC were not, however, with ASC Companies, for many were attached to other types of unit in the army - for example, as vehicle drivers.

It is quite likely that, as John Edwards had been recorded as a coachman in the 1911 census (and he would have been about 40 on the outbreak of war), he would have been used as a driver in the RASC. This is further evidenced by his Service Number, M/408302, as those serving in the Mechanical Transport usually had the letter M as a prefix to their number. The Long, Long Trail notes, for the Mechanical Transport:

The British Army was already the most mechanised in the world when the Great War began, in terms of use of mechanical transport. It maintained that leadership, and by 1918 this was a strategically important factor in being able to maintain supply as the armies made considerable advances over difficult ground.

All Mechanical Transport Companies were part of the Lines of Communication and were not under orders of a Division, although some (unusually known as Divisional Supply Columns and Divisional Ammunition Parks) were in effect attached to a given

Division and worked closely with it. Those in the Lines of Communication operated in wide variety of roles, such as being attached to the heavy artillery as Ammunition Columns or Parks, being Omnibus Companies, Motor Ambulance Convoys, or Bridging and Pontoon units.

It is not known why John Edwards is buried at Neston (although his death was recorded as Neston) or why, following his death, his widow's address is recorded as being Winsford. However, Catherine G Edwards died on Wirral in early 1965 aged 91.

Of John and Gertrude's children, none of whom have been located in the 1939 Register:

Lilian Edwards married William Brooks in April / June 1913 at St Mark's Church, New Ferry.

John Edwards *may* have died in the Birkenhead area in mid-1982 aged 86.

Samuel Edwards *may* have died in the Birkenhead area in late 1946 aged 48.

Robert Edwards *may* have died in the Birkenhead area in late 1970 aged 70.

Thomas Frederick Edwards died in Birkenhead in July / September 1976 aged 74. It is believed that he married Nora Simmonds at Christ Church, Claughton, in mid-1926.



The war grave of John Edwards at Neston Cemetery.



War Recruitment posters