

## 139: Edward Hughes

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Edward Hughes

Rank: Lance Corporal

Battalion / Regiment: 1st Bn. Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 4829

Date of Death: 24 August 1914

Age at Death: 41

Buried / Commemorated at: La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial, La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, Departement de Seine-et-Marne, Île-de-France, France

Additional information given by CWGC: Stepson of Roger Henry Bellis, of "Oak Dene," Chester Rd., Flint, and son of the late Annie Bellis (formerly Hughes).

Edward Hughes was the son of labourer Joseph and Annie Hughes of Ness; he was born in Ness in late 1874 a short time after his parents were married at St Peter's Church in Liverpool in July / September 1874. Edward was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 6 September.

Joseph Hughes was an agricultural labourer, a son of agricultural labourer Edward and Sarah Hughes; Annie was (Sarah) Ann Cottrell, a daughter of agricultural labourer Edward and Mary Cottrell of Ness.

Joseph Cottrell died on 4 May 1876, aged 27, and he was buried at Burton on 7 May. In the 1881 census Annie was recorded, with her two young children, living with her parents in Ness:

Edward Cottrell	Head	Man	55	Ag. Lab	do do
Mary do	Wife	Wife	48	Wife of do	do Thornton-le-Moor
Sarah Ann Hughes	daur	Wid	24	Employed at Home	do Ness
Rebecca Cottrell	daur	Girl	8	Scholar	do do
Andrew do	son	Man	19	Ag. Lab	do do
Edward Hughes	Grandson	Boy	6	Scholar	do do
George H do	Grandson	Boy	1	Wid	do do

### 1881 census (extract) – Ness

Edward Cottrell	55	agricultural labourer	born Ness
Mary	48	wife of above	born Thornton-le-Moor
Sarah Ann Hughes	24	widow, employed at home	born Ness
Rebecca Cottrell	8		born Ness
Andrew Cottrell	19	agricultural labourer	born Ness
Edward Hughes	6	grandson	born Ness
George H.	1	grandson	born Ness

George Henry was, clearly, not Joseph's son and he was baptised at Neston on 9 November 1879 as George Henry Cottrell, son of Anne Cottrell of Ness. On the baptismal record no father was recorded.

Ann Hughes married Roger Henry Bellis at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1888. In the 1891 census Roger, a chemical labourer, and Ann were living at Northop, between Mold and Flint. George Henry, now 12, had taken the Bellis name:

Crystal Terrace	1	Roger Bellis	Head	M	35	Labourer (Chemical)	Flint	Flint	England
		Annie do	Wife	M	35		Neston	Neston	do
		George Hy Bellis	Son	M	12		do	do	do

1891 census (extract) – 2, Crystal Terrace, Northop

Roger Bellis	35	labourer (chemical)	born Flint
Annie	35		born Neston
George Hy.	12		born Neston

Roger Henry Bellis was one of three children of Sarah Bellis (she appears to have been unmarried) and in 1881 he was living with his mother and siblings in Duke Street, Flint:

Duke Street	1	Sarah Bellis	Head	W	51	Domestic	Bagill	do
		Elizabeth do	Daugh	W	33	do	Holywell	do
		Roger H. do	Son	M	28	Chemical Labourer	do	do
		Edward do	Son	M	9	Scholar	Bagill	do

1881 census (extract) – Duke Street, Flint

Sarah Bellis	51	widow, domestic	born Bagill
Elizabeth	33	domestic	born Holywell
Roger H.	28	chemical labourer	born Holywell
Edward	9		born Bagill

By the time of the 1891 census, when Roger and Annie were living in Northop, Edward Hughes was working for farmer Samuel Mealor in Ness:

Ness	1	Samuel Mealor	Head	M	35	Farmer	Ness	Ness
		Annie Mealor	Wife	M	39		Parkgate	do
		Sarah E. Mealor	Daughter	S	11		Ness	do
		Samuel L. Mealor	Son	M	10		Ness	do
		Beatrice Chilton	Visitor	S	11		Liverpool	do
		Edward Hughes	Farm servant	M	17		Ness	do

1891 census (extract) – Ness Edward Hughes, farm servant, 17 for Samuel Mealor

Samuel Mealor	35	farmer	born Ness
Annie	39		born Parkgate
Sarah E.	11		born Ness
Samuel L.	10		born Ness
Beatrice Chilton	11	visitor	born Liverpool
Edward Hughes	17	farm servant	born Ness



Edward has not been found in the 1901 census (he may have been in the army) but his mother, now Annie Bellis, was with Roger and their two young children in Flint. George Henry Hughes/Cottrell/Bellis has not been located in this, or the 1911, census:

28/26 Duke St	1	Roger H. Bellis	Head	M	45	Chemical Labourer	Wales	Flint	Flint
		Annie	Wife	M	44			Cheshire	Neston
		Mary E.	Daughter	S	8			Flint	Flint
		Joseph	Son	S	1			Flint	Flint

1901 census (extract) - 26 Duke Street, Flint

Roger H. Bellis	45	chemical labourer	born Flint
Annie	44		born Neston
Mary E.	8		born Flint
Joseph	1		born Flint

By the time of the 1911 census Roger and Annie were still living in Duke Street, Flint (now a street of newer houses) although they had moved a short distance from N<sup>o</sup>. 26 to N<sup>o</sup>. 32:

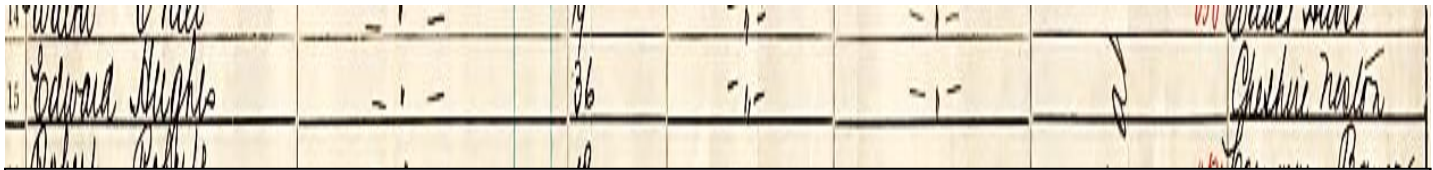
CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.												
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.												
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as 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.	LANGUAGE SPOKEN.
1 Roger Henry Bellis	Head	45	Married	22	2	2	4	lime labourer	Flint	Wales		Welsh
2 Annie Bellis	Wife	44	Married	22	2	2	4		Cheshire	De		English
3 Mary Eliz. Bellis	Daughter	19							Flint	De		English
4 Joseph H. Bellis	Son	12						school	Flint	De		English

1911 census (condensed) – 32 Duke Street, Flint

Roger Henry Bellis	55	lime labourer, Flint chemical works	born Flint
Annie	54		born Cheshire
Mary Eliz.	19		born Flint
Joseph H.	12		born Flint

Roger and Annie had been married for 22 years and only two of their six children had survived.

Edward Hughes had, according to the newspaper report of his death, joined the army in about 1896 and in the 1911 census he is recorded as one of 220 soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment stationed at Chester Castle:

A photograph of a handwritten census record on aged paper. The record is for Edward Hughes, aged 36, a Private in the Cheshire Regiment, born in Neston. The handwriting is in dark ink, and the record is part of a larger sheet with other entries visible in the background.

1911 census (extract) – Chester Castle & Barracks

Edward Hughes

36

Private, Cheshire Regiment

born Neston

Roger Bellis was an alkali worker at the Flint chemical works, the major employer in the area at that time.

Following the decline of the lead mining and smelting industry around Flint in the 1840s, the smelting plant was superseded by a factory producing alkali and chloride of lime. It was said to be one of the most extensive works of the kind in the world, and it expanded over the site of earlier wharves and a shipbuilding yard, on the site which became known as the Courtauld's Castle Works within the area of the present-day Castle Park Industrial Estate.

Like the lead works, at their height, these works employed many hundreds of workers. Many of those engaged in the alkali works were newcomers, including a sizeable contingent of Irish families seeking employment. These chemicals, produced from sea water and sulphur, were used in the manufacture of bleaching powder, disinfectant and soap. Alkali works were notorious for the pollution they created, particularly from emissions of hydrochloric acid fumes which tended to have a devastating effect upon the neighbouring countryside.

Flint had now developed a reputation as an industrial town, as expressed in the *Chester Chronicle* in 1879:

*at the best of times Flint does not wear a very attractive appearance, being generally enveloped in a halo of sulphurous smoke.*

[Adapted from 'Industry in Flint' <http://www.fflint.co.uk/industry> ]

When Edward died on 24 August 1914 he was a Lance Corporal with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment (15<sup>th</sup> Brigade 5<sup>th</sup> Division) and he died following the first major conflict, at Mons, just three weeks after the declaration of war. A member of 'C' Company, it is probable that Edward Hughes was the first local soldier to be killed in the war.

Although Edward Hughes was killed in action on 24 August 1914 his family did not receive notification of his death until November 1915, some 15 months later.



Arthur Crookenden, the Colonel of the Cheshire Regiment, gives some details of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's movement to France and the front line at Mons in August 1914:

## MONS.

Maps p. 18

THE 1ST BATTALION arrived at le Havre at 3-30 p.m. on the 16th August. Brigade Headquarters, the 1/Norfolk, 1/Bedford and 1/Dorset landed in the course of the afternoon and completed the concentration of the 15th Infantry Brigade.

The Battalion spent the night in a rest camp about six miles outside the town, and entrained at le Havre at 11-0 p.m. the following day for an unknown destination.

At Bohain, the news of General Grierson's sudden death temporarily damped the spirits of the officers, who knew of their Corps Commander's reputation, both as a soldier and as a student of the German Army. General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was not appointed to succeed him until two days later, and did not reach his headquarters until the afternoon of the 21st August.

Le Cateau was reached at about 8-0 p.m. and there the Battalion detrained. Lieutenant Woodyer, who had developed a bad attack of fever, was admitted to hospital and subsequently invalided home.

The troops rested at Pommereuil, near le Cateau, for three nights while the remainder of the Expeditionary Force completed concentration. The time was well employed in company marches to harden up the reservists. The 1st Battalion was visited in billets by Major-General Sir Charles Fergusson, the G.O.C., and Brigadier-General Count Gleichen, the Brigade Commander. The G.O.C. made a short speech to the men in which he emphasised the gravity of the situation they were likely to have to face, and the necessity for fighting to the last man and the last round.

The German plan was to seize the initiative, move through Belgium with an overwhelmingly strong force, outflank the French by the west, and drive them eastwards towards the Swiss frontier.

On the 21st August, a further advance was made in a north-easterly direction, Gommignies being reached about mid-day, after a hot march of fifteen miles. Here the Brigade billeted for the night. During the march, the French peasants had given the troops a wonderful welcome all along the route. Their eagerness to force gifts upon the men became almost embarrassing at times and some difficulty was experienced in keeping them clear of the ranks. In return, many men gave their cap badges and shoulder titles, which, later, made identification of units difficult. It had been a hard day for the reservists, who were unaccustomed to carrying a heavy pack, and there were a few stragglers. They

were willing to a man and all arrived in billets later, but the heat, together with the weight they were called upon to carry, was too much for their physical capabilities after the comparative ease of civilian life.

The march was continued next morning to Boussu (fifteen miles), by Dour. The pleasant agricultural countryside of the previous day gradually gave place to a more thickly populated industrial area. Once the Belgian frontier was crossed, the difference became more marked, and the inhabitants, too, who turned out to see the troops pass, were of a different type from the courteous French peasants of the preceding days. The road, consisting of uneven pavé bordered by strips of unmetalled track, made marching a painful and tedious affair even for the fittest troops, and, as before, the reservists suffered badly. Several fell out, but all but four re-joined in billets later. The march discipline of the rest was good, organized singing keeping up the morale.

During the afternoon, rumours came through that the Germans were in strength beyond the Mons-Condé Canal, some two miles to the north, which was already held by British troops. Of the 5th Division, the 13th and 14th Infantry Brigades were on the canal line, the 15th Infantry Brigade in its billeting area forming the divisional reserve.

About noon on the 23rd August, the Brigade was ordered to dig in on a defensive position which had been selected by the Brigadier that morning, and on which trenches had already been started by the impressed labour of Belgian miners.

The 1/Norfolk was allotted the left sector from Wasmes Station eastwards; the 1st Battalion was on its right (but thrown back a little in very enclosed country); while the 1/Bedford and 1/Dorset occupied some trenches on a high railway embankment further to the east. It was a hopeless position for a force which relied mainly on rifle fire for its defence. There was little field of fire, owing to excrescences such as pit-heads, buildings and innumerable slag heaps, and artillery observation was difficult. But there was no better alternative for miles.

During the night, Lieutenant Matterson (Scout Officer) and a Battalion scout, crossed the Mons-Condé Canal, gained touch with the enemy and brought back useful information.

The Brigadier had visited Battalion headquarters during the day and had informed Colonel Boger that the army was establishing a line of strong points, or "points d'appui," and that the French were about to attack or re-inforce between them. The point is mentioned for it led to some misunderstanding later on.

Next morning, the 24th August, orders came that the Division would stand and fight. The Norfolks and Cheshires were to be in Reserve, on relief.

Crookenden goes on to describe in some detail the role of the Cheshire Regiment at Mons and this, which is not possible to reproduce in this account, can be read in the first chapter of *The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War, 1914-1918*, Arthur Crookenden, 1938, WH Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. (available on the internet at: <http://lib.militaryarchive.co.uk/library/infantry-histories/Cheshire-Regiment-in-Great-War-1914-1918.asp>).





Until the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment arrived in France on 16 August 1914 the troops had been stationed in Londonderry. On 14 August they moved, in the morning to Belfast and marched to York

Docks to embark on the Anchor Line steamship *Massilia*, a 5150-ton vessel built in 1902 in Glasgow for the Indian service.

Having disembarked at Havre on 16 August the activity of the troops was described by Crookenden (see above) and the actions on 23 and 24 August, the day on which Edward Hughes died, is outlined in the War Diary:

At noon 23<sup>rd</sup> August  
 at 8 p.m. 23<sup>rd</sup> August  
 At 3 a.m. 24<sup>th</sup> August  
 at 8 a.m.  
 at 10 a.m.  
 11-45 a.m.  
 1 p.m.

A & B Coys moved out and entrenched a position 1 1/2 miles East of Bois de Boussu facing North & North West under Lt. Col. Boger  
 C & D Coys moved to Hornu under Major Stapylton and took up and commenced to entrench a position facing North East astride the Mons road  
 C & B Coy rejoined A & B Coys to Dour station arriving there at 11 a.m.  
 The Manchester Regt. relieved us  
 The Battalion marched from to Dour Station arriving there at 11-45 a.m.  
 The G.O.C. 5<sup>th</sup> Division gave Col. Ballard Norfolk Regt. orders to take the 1 Cheshire Regt., Norfolk Regt. and 119<sup>th</sup> Battery and take up a position facing West along the Elouges - Audregies road and act as a flank guard to the Manchesters and the troops entrenched round Wasmes in their retirement.  
 In position Norfolk right on the Railway embankment. Cheshire Right on the 4<sup>th</sup> Kilo. store Star & Coy, Cheshire Left, B Coy holding the village of Audregies - Order of Coys B A C S.  
 Masses of the enemy were seen moving out of Questrain and their artillery & machine guns opened a very hot fire on the Infantry and Cavalry & H.A. who were operating against the German Cavalry in the valley to the S. E. of Questrain

(9 26 6) W 257-976 100,000 -1/12 H W V 79 3298

- At noon, 23<sup>rd</sup> August A & B Coys moved out and entrenched a position 1½ miles East of Bois de Boussu facing North & North West under Lt. Col. Boger.
- At 8.0 pm, 23<sup>rd</sup> August C & D Coys moved to Hornu under Major Stapylton and took up and commenced to entrench a position facing North East astride the Mons road.
- At 3.0 am, 24<sup>th</sup> August C & B Coy rejoined A & B Coys to Dour station, arriving there at 11 am.
- At 8 am The Manchester regt. relieved us.
- At 10 am The Battalion marched from to Dour Station arriving there at 11.45 am.
- 11.45 am The GOC 5<sup>th</sup> Division gave Col. Ballard, Norfolk Regt., orders to take the 1 Cheshire Regt., Norfolk Regt. and 119<sup>th</sup> Battery and take up a position facing West along the Elouges – Audregies road and act as a flank guard to the Manchesters and the troops entrenched round Wasmes in their retirement.

[continued on following page]



[continued from previous page]

1 pm In position. Norfolk right on the Railway Embankment, Cheshire's Right on the 4<sup>th</sup> Kilo store, D Coy. Cheshire left, B Coy holding the village of Audregies – Order of Coys B, A, C D. Masses of the enemy were seen moving out of Quievrain and their artillery & machine guns opened a very hot fire on the Infantry and Cavalry & R.H.A. who were operating against the German Cavalry in the valley 1¼ miles to the S.E. of Quievrain.

WAR DIARY		Army Form C. 2118.
or		
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.		
(Erase heading not required.)		
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.		
Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<p>2.30 p.m. 24<sup>th</sup> August</p> <p>4.45 p.m.</p> <p>9 p.m.</p> <p>25<sup>th</sup> 20 a.m. 25<sup>th</sup> inst Aug</p> <p>3 a.m. 26<sup>th</sup> inst Aug</p>	<p>I am informed Col Ballard gave orders for all troops to retire in an Easterly direction - These orders never reached the 2 front platoons of D Coy under command of Capt W. S. Rich, who held on to the position he had reached in front of the rest of the line till 4 p.m. by which hour all troops had retired. Lieut W. G. R. Elliot behaved with great gallantry in returning during the retirement and carrying away a wounded man under an intensely hot fire, he being shot through both ankles when within 3 yards of the sunken road to which he eventually took this man - Lt Elliot was left on the field. (witness Corporal Oford / Cheshire Regt)</p> <p>about 100 men were collected in bivouac</p> <p>at roll call in Bivouac at Lis Bavy there were 6 Officers &amp; 1 Warrant Officer and 199 men - The strength marching out at 7.30 a.m. on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> inst was 27 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 933 men - a loss of 78% most of which was caused in the withdrawal.</p> <p>Left Lis Bavy and marched to Le Cateau thence to Bivouac at La Sotiere at 3 p.m. (24 miles) A Coy in the trenches till 3.30 a.m. 26<sup>th</sup> inst.</p> <p>Stood to arms at 3.0 a.m. - Reserve Battalion to the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade in position ½ mile East of Troisvilles</p>	<p>attached in field</p> <p>Return A B 213</p> <p>Giving names of Officers Reported Killed wounded or missing in the actions of Aug 24<sup>th</sup> 26<sup>th</sup>.</p>

2.30 pm 24 August I am informed Col. Ballard gave orders for all troops to retire in an Easterly direction. These orders never reached the 2 front platoons of D Coy under command of Capt. W. S. Rich who held on to the position he had reached in front of the rest of the line till 4 pm by which hour all the troops had retired. Lieut. W. G. R. Elliot behaved with great gallantry in returning during the retirement and carrying away a wounded man under an intensely hot fire, he being shot through both ankles when within 3 yards of the sunken road to which he eventually took this man – Lt. Elliot was left on the field (witness Corporal Oford 1/ Cheshire Regt.).

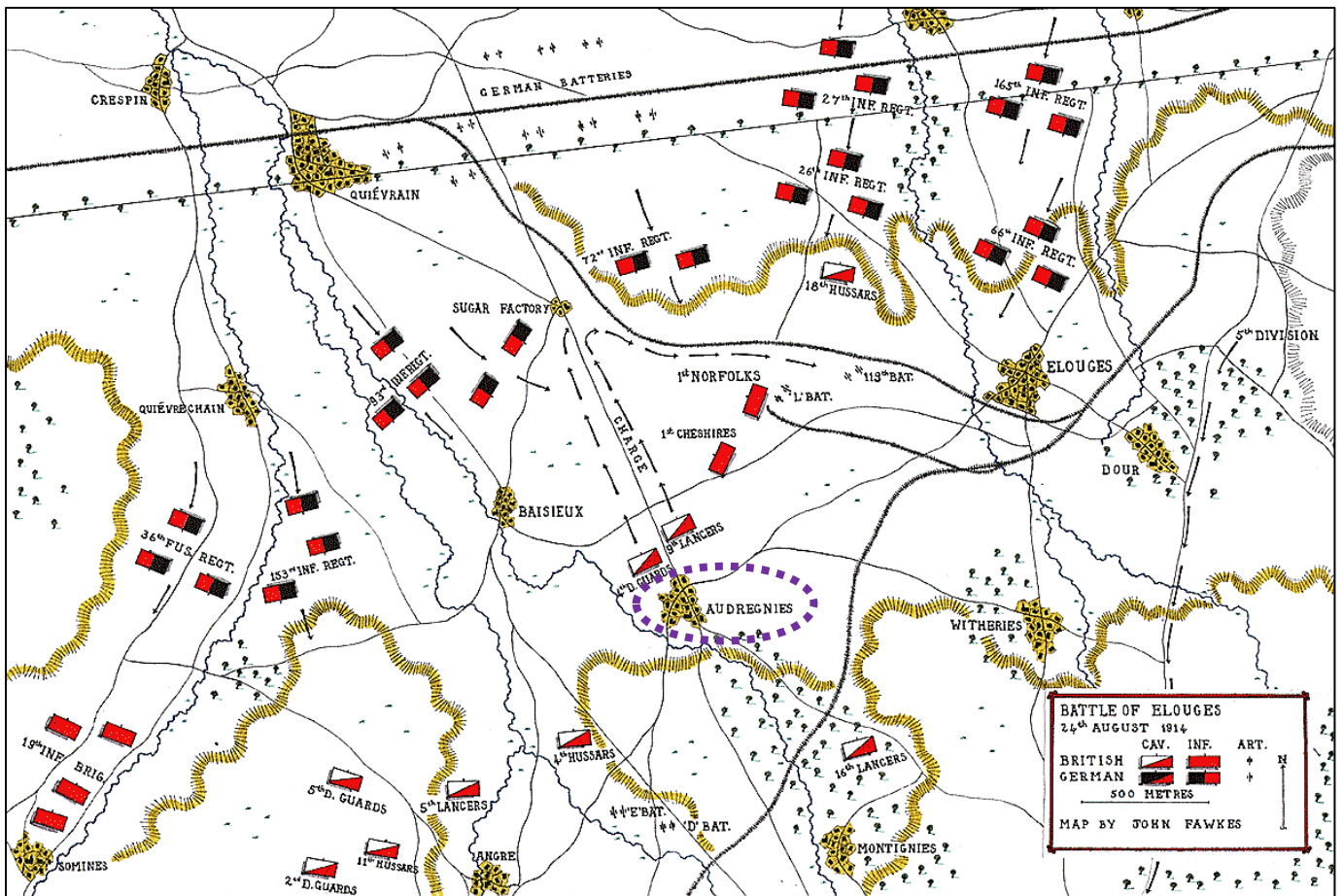
4.45 pm About 100 men were collected in (?).

9 pm At roll call in Bivouac at Lis Bavy there were 6 Officers & 1 Warrant Officer and 199 men – The strength marching out at 7.30 am on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> inst was 27 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 933 men – a loss of 78% most of which was caused in the withdrawal.

2.20 am 25<sup>th</sup> inst. August Left Lis Bavy and marched to Le Cateau thence to Bivouac at La Sotiere at 3 pm (24 miles). A Coy in the trenches until 3.30 am.

3 am 26<sup>th</sup> August 26<sup>th</sup> inst. Stood to arms at 3.0 am. – Reserve Battalion to the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Position ½ mile East of Troisvilles.





### Battle of Elouges – 24 August 1914

The 1<sup>st</sup> Cheshire's and 1<sup>st</sup> Norfolk's occupied the central zone, north of Audregnies (encircled in purple), with the German forces to the north.

Following the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Force II Corps during the night of 23/24 August 1914, following the German assault on the Mons Canal line, the BEF occupied a line about 17 miles long facing NE about 3 miles S of Mons. [Source: <http://www.britishbattles.com/firstww/battle-mons-day-2-elouges.htm>]

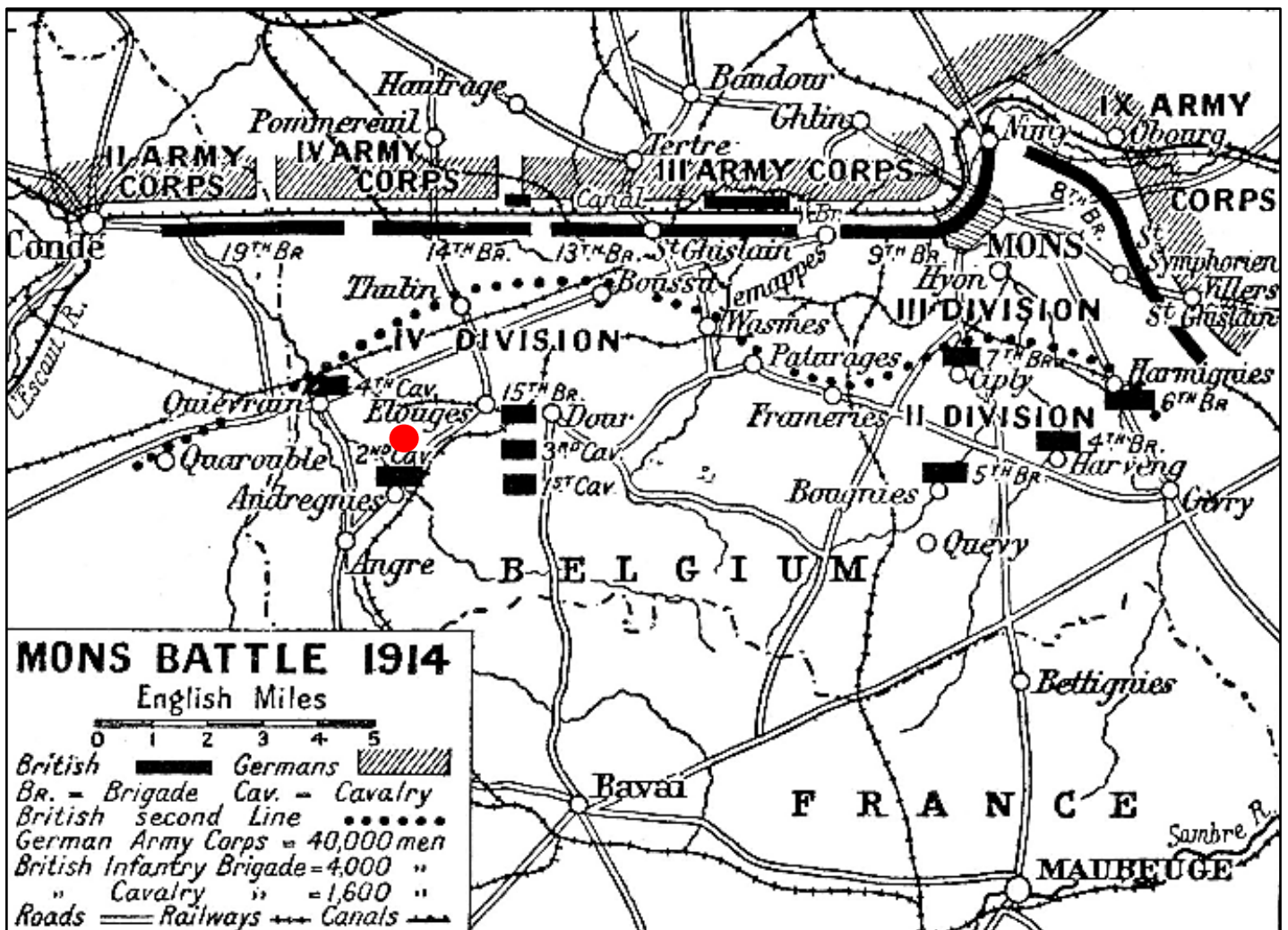
24 August 1914 was the second day of The Battle of Mons and the first day of The Retreat from Mons and the Battle around Elouges and Audregnies. The British Expeditionary Force comprised 2 corps. of infantry, I and II Corps., and a cavalry division, a total of 85,000 men and 290 guns. In contrast, General von Kluck's opposing 1<sup>st</sup> Army comprised 4 corps and 3 cavalry divisions, around 160,000 men and 550 guns.

*The BEF at this stage in the Great War comprised around 30% current regular soldiers and 70% reservists with previous service in the Regular British Army. The British Army was the only major European army with recent experience of active service; in South Africa in the Boer War from 1899 to 1901 and on the North West Frontier of India. The German Army had not fought a war since the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1.*

*In these early battles the British soldiers outfought the Germans, although forced to retreat by pressure of numbers and the withdrawal of the French armies on their flanks. The British units' ability to move about the battlefield in cover and their facility to deliver high rates of accurate rifle fire repeatedly enabled them to repel attacks by massed German infantry. The British artillery units consistently provided support to the infantry with accurate gunfire, while manoeuvring about the battlefield with speed and resource.*

*This was the force the Kaiser described as a 'Contemptible Little Army'. German officers were stunned by the way the British troops brought their attacks to a standstill time and again.*

[<https://www.britishbattles.com/first-world-war/battle-of-mons-2nd-day-elouges/>]



The Battle of Mons (20 - 24 August 1914) : the overall situation [Source: www.memoireonline.com]

The location of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cheshire regiment on 24 August is indicated by the red circle.  
On this map the town of Audregnies is shown, incorrectly as Andregnies.

218210	£/188534	27 MAY 1919	Hughes Edward	1 <sup>st</sup> Bn Cheshire Regt Lt Col 4829	24-8-14. Shrewsbury 11/15	13 14 1	13 14 1	m.o. 6/16.5-6-16	Mo of Gratuee 13 14 1									
				<table border="1"> <tr> <td>WAR GRATUITY.</td> <td>1919</td> <td>25/6/19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transfer 1913(-)</td> <td>1919</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Serial No.</td> <td>2576</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		WAR GRATUITY.	1919	25/6/19	Transfer 1913(-)	1919	23	Serial No.	2576		5 - -			
WAR GRATUITY.	1919	25/6/19																
Transfer 1913(-)	1919	23																
Serial No.	2576																	
a.f.W5070 sent				15-12-19 Mo of Gratuee Annie Bellis 5 -														
27 MAY 1919																		

### Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In mid-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 May 1919 Edward's mother, Annie Bellis, received a payment of outstanding wages of £13 14s 1d from the army and a War Gratuity of £5. This, a total value of £18 14s 1d, is equivalent to a labour value (wages) of around £2900 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.



# THE BRITISH RETREAT FROM MONS

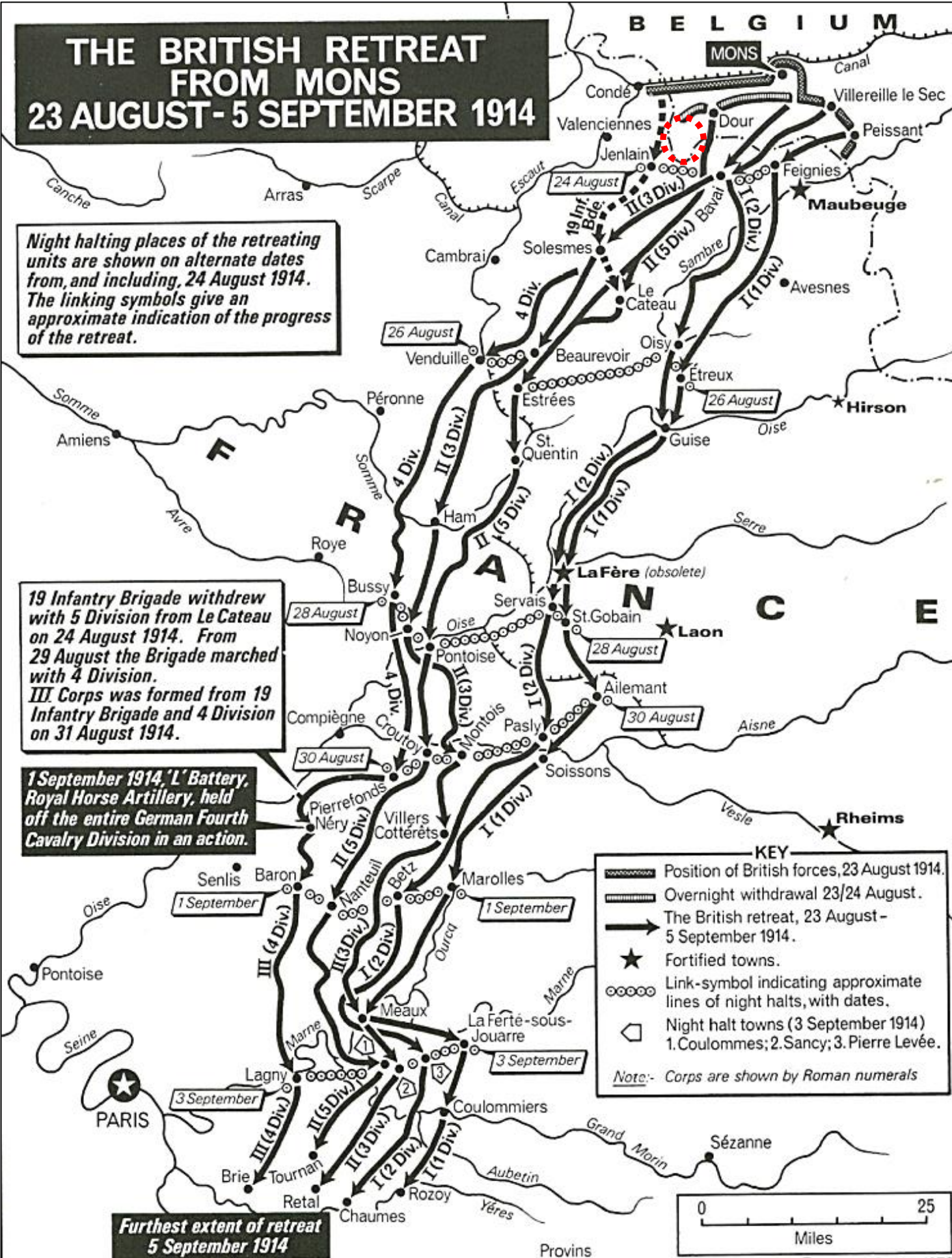
## 23 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 1914

Night halting places of the retreating units are shown on alternate dates from, and including, 24 August 1914. The linking symbols give an approximate indication of the progress of the retreat.

19 Infantry Brigade withdrew with 5 Division from Le Cateau on 24 August 1914. From 29 August the Brigade marched with 4 Division. III Corps was formed from 19 Infantry Brigade and 4 Division on 31 August 1914.

1 September 1914, 'L' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, held off the entire German Fourth Cavalry Division in an action.

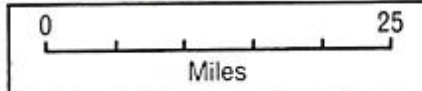
**Furthest extent of retreat**  
5 September 1914



**KEY**

- Position of British forces, 23 August 1914.
- Overnight withdrawal 23/24 August.
- The British retreat, 23 August - 5 September 1914.
- Fortified towns.
- Link-symbol indicating approximate lines of night halts, with dates.
- Night halt towns (3 September 1914)  
1. Coulommiers; 2. Sancy; 3. Pierre Levée.

*Note:- Corps are shown by Roman numerals*



Source: A Military Atlas of the First World War Arthur Banks 2001 Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) The area in which Edward Hughes died is encircled in red



Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
HUGHES Edward	Ches. R.	Pte	4829
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	J/2/107 B.	197	Kin A 24.8.14
BRITISH	do	do	
14 STAR	J/2/5.	123	
<i>blatp 2/24/23</i>			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal  
Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

**LANCE-CORPORAL E. HUGHES.**  
After having waited in suspense since his regiment—the 1st Cheshires—covered itself with glory in the great retreat from Mons, the many friends of Lance-Corporal Edward Hughes have at length received official intimation of his death. He was an old soldier with almost twenty years service to his credit, and had seen service in South Africa and the East Indies. He belonged to a very old Ness family.

*Birkenhead News* – Saturday  
20 November 1915

Edward Hughes is commemorated on the La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial to the Missing, 66km to the east of Paris. The Memorial commemorates 3,740 officers and men of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who fell at the battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the

Marne and the Aisne between the end of August and early October 1914 and have no known graves.

Annie Bellis died, aged 57, in the Flint/Holywell district in April/June 1914 and just a few months before Edward was killed.

It is believed that Roger Henry Bellis died, aged 79, in early 1932 in the Flint/Holywell district.

Roger and Annie Bellis had two children who survived. The eldest child, Mary Elizabeth, married Thomas Davies at a Civil Marriage in Hawarden in mid-1911 and it is believed that they had several children. However, nothing further is known of Roger and Annie. The second child, Joseph Henry Bellis, married Lily Howard at a Civil Marriage in Holywell in mid-1924 and the 1939 Register records them at “Tan-y-Dderwan”, Coleshill Bungalows, Bagillt, Flintshire:

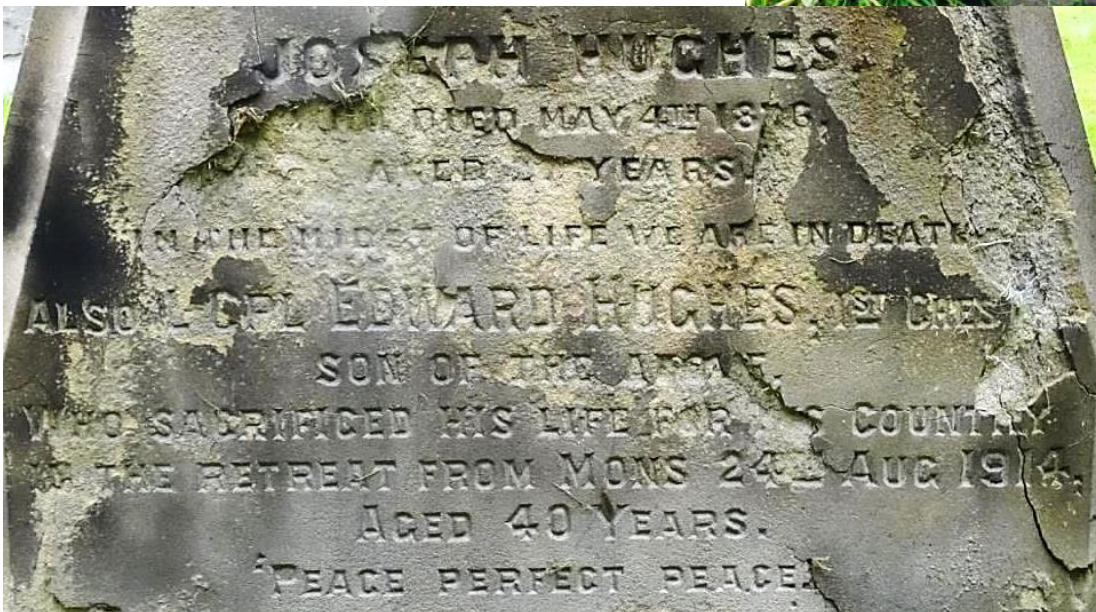
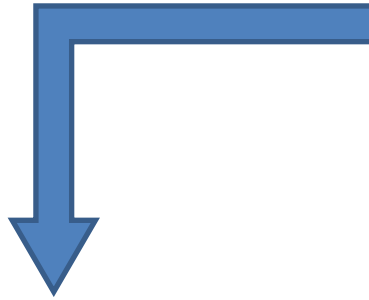
- Joseph H Bellis            born 6 July 1899            (occupation is illegible)
- Lily                            born 19 June 1896
- Elaine                        born 5 November 1927    single
- Kathleen Robertson    born 7 September 1911    married
- Ian Robertson            born 4 May 1935

One line of the record has been redacted

It is understood that Elaine was the only child; nothing is known of Kathleen Robertson. Lily died in the Ruthin district, aged 70, in early 1967 and Joseph died in mid-1978.

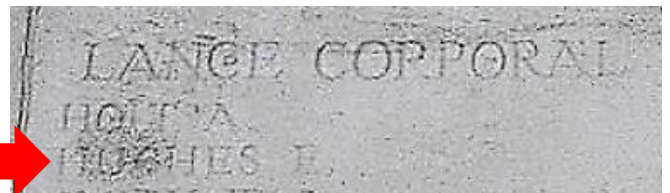


Detail of inscription



Transcription of weathered family gravestone,  
Burton Parish Church

**Joseph Hughes**  
Who Died May 4<sup>th</sup> 1876  
Aged 27 Years  
In the Midst of Life We are in Death  
Also L. Cpl. Edward Hughes 1<sup>st</sup> Ches.  
Son of the above  
Who Sacrificed his Life for his Country  
In the Retreat from Mons 24 August 1914  
Aged 40 Years  
Peace, Perfect Peace



The name of Edward Hughes on  
the La Ferte-sous-Jouarre  
Memorial, Île-de-France, France

## The Retreat from Mons - the role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment

### Overview

The Battle of Mons, a subsidiary action of the Battle of the Frontiers, in which the Allies clashed with Germany on the French borders, was the first major action of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the First World War.

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 and on 9 August the BEF began embarking for France. The British reached Mons on 22 August. On that day, the French Fifth Army, located on the right of the BEF, was heavily engaged with the German 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> armies at the Battle of Charleroi.

At the request of the Fifth Army commander, General Charles Lanrezac, the BEF commander, Field Marshal Sir John French, agreed to hold the line of

the Mons–Condé Canal for twenty-four hours, to prevent the advancing German 1<sup>st</sup> Army from threatening the French left flank. The British thus spent the day digging in along the canal.

Although the British fought well and inflicted disproportionate casualties on the numerically superior Germans, they were eventually forced to retreat due both to the greater strength of the Germans and the sudden retreat of the French Fifth Army, which exposed the British right flank. Though initially planned as a simple tactical withdrawal and executed in good order, the British retreat from Mons lasted for two weeks and took the BEF to the outskirts of Paris before it counter-attacked in concert with the French, at the Battle of the Marne. [Wikipedia]

### The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment

On the outbreak of war the Reservists of the Cheshires were immediately recalled to the colours. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were stationed at the time in Londonderry and began immediate preparations for embarkation to France. By the time the Battalion set sail from Belfast on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1914 over 550 Reservists had joined the regular complement. At 6.00 a.m. that morning the Battalion marched out of their Barracks and entrained for Belfast where they made ready to sail to Le Havre. With a strength of 26 Officers and 980 NCOs and men the Battalion could be said to be at full strength as it headed into action to meet the German Armies near Mons. That meeting took place between the two small villages of Audregnies and Elouges, right on the Franco-Belgian border. Here the Battalion engaged four German regiments for most of the day and allowed the 5<sup>th</sup> Division to complete its withdrawal.

The War Diary states that at the end of this day: *"At roll call in Bivouac at Les Bavay there were 6 Officers, a Warrant Officer and 199 men - The strength marching out at 7.30 a.m. on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> inst was 27 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 933 men - A loss of 78% most of which was caused in the withdrawal."*

By the end of the month 3 Officers were dead, 15 more wounded and/or captured, 57 NCOs and men had been killed and a further 490 captured. Uncounted others were wounded, many to die later, either in field hospitals or as prisoners of war.

*"I had no intention of sacrificing the Cheshire - but I firmly believe now that the sacrifice saved the 5<sup>th</sup> Division.....It was due to the gallantry of these two Battalions (1<sup>st</sup> Cheshires & 1<sup>st</sup> Norfolks) that the Division was able to extricate itself." - Lieut.-Colonel C. R. Ballard the Norfolk Regiment (O.C.).*



British troops await the Imperial German Army from behind the embankment of the Mons-Condé Canal

Adapted mainly from: <http://grandadswar.mrallsophistory.com/>