

145: John Robert Jones

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: John Robert Jones

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 1st Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers

Service Number: 10657 Date of Death: 16 May 1915 Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Le Touret Memorial, Richebourg-l'Avoue, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Although the Service Record of John Robert Jones has been found, and this gives much detail of his time in the army, little is known of John's background and family life. The Service Record reveals that John's parents were Grif (or John) and Anna Jones, that he was born in Ness, that he had no brothers and had two sisters named Ethel and Annie. No baptism for John has been found at either Neston or Burton and little further detail is known; census returns for the family, other than Ethel, have not been found. The enigma posed by this family is considered briefly at the end of this account.

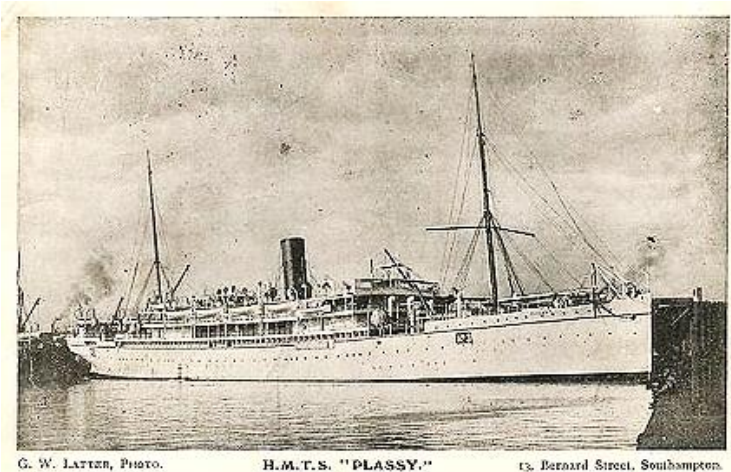
John appears to have been a career soldier; the first record of his military service is on 9 October 1907 when he attested in Chester for the Cheshire Regiment although this form makes it clear that he was already serving with the 3rd Battalion Cheshire Regiment and had served with the militia. Originally having the Service Number 7760, this changed to 8645 and it seems that he moved to the 2nd Battalion Cheshire regiment. At that date he recorded that he had been born in Ness, was aged exactly 20, and he was a farm labourer by trade. The attestation form signed at this time was for 12 years' service, 7 years with the Colours and a following 5 years with the Reserve.

The October 1907 form recorded that John was 5ft 7½ins tall, weighed 10 stone 3lb (65kg), had a 37-inch expanded chest, a fresh complexion, good physical development, brown eyes and dark-brown hair. As distinguishing features it was noted that John had an oval scar on the front of his abdomen and another scar at the back of his right shoulder.

Accepted for service (although it was noted that he had a tendency to flat feet and had enlarged tonsils), John was formally accepted at Chester on 11 October 1907 and was posted on 5 December to the 1st Battalion. John appears to have served in the UK until 2 February 1909, a period of 1 year 17 days, and it was recorded that he spent six days in hospital (from 13 November 1908) with tonsillitis. Most, if not all, the time spent in the UK was at the army camp at Bordon in East Hampshire and his Conduct Sheet recorded a number of offences including:

13 January 1908 Last case of drunkenness (previous Conduct Sheets had been destroyed and the implication was that there had been earlier cases).

- 3 June 1908 Making an improperly (word missing) to a Non Commissioned Officer. Confined to Barracks for 5 days.
- 30 Sept. 1908 Very dirty on parade at 2.0 pm. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 13 Nov. 1908 Telling a lie to an NCO ie denying that he had any money in his possession when admitted to hospital. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 22 Dec. 1908 1: Absent from (?) parade at 7.30 am. 2: Very dirty and improperly dressed on parade at 2.0 pm. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 23 Dec. 1908 Refusing to get his hair cut when ordered. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 24 Dec. 1908 Absent from Defaulter's Roll Call at 8 pm until found in his Company's Hut about 8.30 pm Drunk. Confined to Barracks for 5 days; fined 2s 6d.



G. W. LATEN, PHOTO. H.M.T.S. "PLASSY." 13, Bernard Street, Southampton.

On 3 February 1909 John moved, with his unit, to India aboard HM Troopship *Plassy*. *Plassy* was built by Caird of Greenock for the P & O Steam Navigation Co. and launched on 23 November 1900. She was a 450 foot, 6,500 ton, steamship capable of carrying around 200 passengers and operated mostly as a troop transport during the Boer War and then on the Indian Garrison rotation run.

http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/PO_Liners2.html#Plassy1900

On 16 February, apparently whilst still in transit, John was transferred to the 2nd Battalion Cheshire Regiment. Even on board the troopship, John fell foul of the regulations:

- 23 February 1909 1: gambling on board ship contrary to orders. 2: making an improper reply to Cl. Sgt. Hammond. 24 hrs DTM (the meaning of this punishment is unknown).

The troops moved, at least initially to Secunderabad (on 26 February), the twin city of Hyderabad in the Indian state of Telangana. John continued, almost routinely, to infringe the regulations:

- 18 May 1909 Failing to answer his name at the Guard Room when ordered. Confined to Barracks for 2 days.
- 19 May 1909 Absent from answering his name when a defaulter at 12 noon. Confined to Barracks for 4 days.
- 14 June 1909 Inattention in the ranks. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.

- 26 June 1909 Being deficient of five rounds of blank ammunition. Confined to Barracks for 5 days
- 11 August 1909 Using obscene language to a NCO. Confined to Barracks for 7 days.
- 18 Dec. 1909 Not turning out to scrub the Section tables when ordered. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 10 June 1910 Dirty when parading for Regimental Piquet. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 12 Sept. 1910 Not getting out of bed when ordered. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.
- 5 Dec. 1910 (Thedchal Camp) Continually losing blank ammunition. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.

By 1911 the 2nd Battalion Cheshire Regiment had moved 780km northwards to Jubbulpore (now Jabalpur), a city in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The 2nd Battalion Cheshire Regiment was one of the ten battalions which comprised the Jubbulpore Brigade of the 5th (Mhow) Division, a regular division of the British Indian Army and part of the Southern Army.

John's persistence in infringing the regulations continued:

- 24 March 1911 Using obscene language in a barrack room. Confined to Barracks for 5 days.
- 30 May 1911 Not bringing his bedroll into the Company bungalow at Reveille. Confined to Barracks for 3 days.

John was recorded as a serving soldier in India in the 1911 census:

Return of all Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Trumpeters, Drummers and Rank and File.							
NAME IN FULL.	RANK.	AGE (last Birthday).	CONDITION as to MARRIAGE.	UNIT, or ARM OF SERVICE.	TRADE or OCCUPATION (if any).	BIRTHPLACE.	If absent on Census Night, write "Absent," and for those in the United Kingdom specify whether in England, Wales, Scotland, or Ireland.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
John Robert Jones	Private	23	Single	C.A.	Soldier	Ness Neston Cheshire	
Thomas Jones	Private	27	Single	C.A.	Soldier	Neston Cheshire	

1911 census (extract) – servicemen in India (location not noted)

John Robert Jones Private 23 single soldier born Ness, Neston

The name recorded below that of John Robert Jones is Private Thomas Jones, 27, born Neston. It is not known if there is any relationship as it has not been possible to trace this person with any certainty.

On 1 July 1911, whilst still serving in India, John transferred to the 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers and his Service Number became 10657; this was just 3 months after the 1911 census. The 2nd Battalion had, on 9 January 1911, returned to India from service in Burma. John moved 1500km north-westwards to join his new regiment in Quetta (now in Pakistan and close to the border with Afghanistan). His misconduct showed no signs of abating!:

- 8 August 1911 Drunk in barracks at 10.45pm when answering his name at the Guard Room. Fined 5s.
- 29 Sept. 1911 Disobedience of Reg^t Standing Orders (attempting to strip his rifle). Confined to Barracks for 7 days.
- 27 October 1911 (Spin Karez Camp, Quetta) Making an improper reply to a NCO absent from defaulter's parade at 8pm till 8.5pm (5 minutes.) Confined to Barracks for 2 days.

Throughout 1912 and to the end of 1913 offences continued to be recorded and penalised:

Squadron, Troop, Battery and Company Conduct Sheet.

Army Form B121.

Regiment of *Royal Welsh Fusiliers*

Number of Sheet *Third*
Signature of O. C. Company *Captain*

Regimental Number and Name No. <i>10657</i> <i>Jones J.R.</i>		Enlistment Age on <i>20</i> years <i>0</i> months	Trade <i>Farmer</i>	Good Conduct Pay, Service Pay or Proficiency Pay.
Joined <i>Regt. Co. R.</i> Date <i>9.10.07</i>		Period of with Colours <i>7</i> years. with Reserve <i>5</i> years.	Religion <i>6 of E.</i>	
Joined <i>Co. R.</i> Date <i>5.12.07</i>				
Joined <i>2 Co. R.</i> Date <i>16.2.09</i>				
Joined <i>2 R. W. Fus.</i> Date				

Place.	Date of Offence.	Rank.	Amount of Drunkenness.	OFFENCE.	Names of Witnesses.	Punishment awarded.	Date of award or of order of discharge with trial.	By whom awarded.	REMARKS.
Quetta.	17th Nov.	Pte		Late falling in for Musketry Drill parade. (15 minutes).	Cpl. Thomas.	3 days C.B.	17 th Nov.	Leat. Thomas.	G.S.
Quetta.	1912. Mar. 26	Pte		Late for parade. 10 mins. Dirty in G.O.C.'s inspection parade.	Cpl. Rose	2 days C.B.	1912. Mar. 28	2 nd Lt. C. Fitz. Mgr.	C.F.
Quetta.	22.5.12	Pte		Not complying with an order	Pl. Sheppard	2 days C.B.	22.5.12	Capt. G. Bullock	H.W.D.
Marsabit Camp. Quetta.	25 Sept.	Pte		I. Striking a comrade. II. Drunk in Camp.	C.Sgt. Williams C.Sgt. Thomas Cpl. Evans Pl. Baylis	4 days C.B. Fined <i>2/-</i> <i>15/-</i>	26 Sept.	Capt. G. Dickson	C.S.F.
Quetta.	1912. July 11.	Pte		Insolence to a N.C.O. to be carried over	Cpl. Becken Cpl. Fisher	2 days C.B.	1912. July 12	2 nd Lt. C. Fitz. Mgr.	C.S.F.

Col. Singh & Sons, Calcutta—No. 81 Army-B—25-10-10—29,000.

Army Form B121.

Quetta	1913 4 th Dec	Pte		Brought forward ... Not complying with an order	Ce. Gd. Major G. L. Ross. Ce. Gd. Prnted. Debaton		1913 6 th Dec	Pl. Col. H. DeLune - Radcliffe.	Forfeits 1. G.C.B. A.C.P.
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In 1913, whilst in Quetta, John had two periods of illness which required hospital treatment:

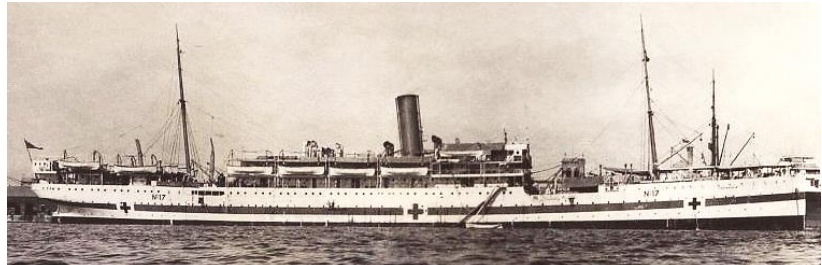
3 May – 28 May (26 days in hospital) Measles; profuse rash and high temperature for three days.

5 November – 25 November (21 days in hospital) Boil; right ear.

On 1 May 1914 it was recorded, at an assessment, that John Robert Jones was being employed by the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on the Regimental Transport, that his military character was 'fair' (the average of the grades) and that he was insubordinate although

considered to be *hardworking, smart and intelligent*. Whilst he had never been found to be drunk whilst on duty, four 'ordinary cases of drunkenness' had been noted. Interestingly, in October 1907, John's character whilst serving with the Cheshire Militia had been stated to have been 'good'.

John's service in India was 5 years 36 days and technically ended on 10 March 1914 when the 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers landed back at Southampton. The troops had sailed from Karachi on 17/18 February and, stopping over in Malta on 2 March, had met with the 1st Battalion who were also returning to England. John's record notes that he sailed on H.S. *Dongola*, a ship built for P&O by Barclay Curle & Company of Glasgow and launched in September 1905. During WW1 the ship operated as a troop transport and as a makeshift hospital ship and this may suggest that John was requiring medical treatment whilst travelling back to Britain.



Hospital Ship *Dongola* in September 1914.
[Source: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au>]

Back in Britain the 2nd Battalion were, initially, based at Bovingdon Camp in Dorset before, on 4 August 1914 (the day on which Britain declared war on Germany) the unit moved to its base at Portland. John continued to offend:

W. out	1914 4.7.14	1/2	Not complying with an order (not having a filled water bottle)	1st Lt. Bowen	3 days C.B.	1914 5.7.14	Capt. Phillips	JOT JE
Bournemouth Camp	18 th 1/14	Ple	Incivility to a N.C.O.	Sgt. Thomas 1st Lt. Bowen	10 days C.B.	18 th 1/14	Lieut. Col. H. Delme Radeloff	18 th 1/14 21 st 1/14
Portland	2 nd 9/14	Ple 5	Drunk on parade at 9.45/ -	Sgt. Thomas 1st Lt. Stephens Sgt. Patterson	5 th 1/14 168 hrs Detention	11 th 9/14	Lieut. Col. H. Delme Radeloff	11 th 9/14 11 th 9/14

The 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers were mobilised and landed at Rouen on 11 August as part of the Line of Communication network being formed in France by the Allied troops on the outbreak of war. John's Service record indicates, however, that he remained in Britain and it appears that, on 23 August, he was posted to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion. This Battalion, a training unit, was then based in Wrexham and it remained in the UK throughout the war.

On 23 November 1914 John Robert Jones was again posted, now to the 1st Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers (which he joined 'officially' on 1 December), moving to France on this earlier date. He was serving with this unit when he died on 16 May 1915.

On the outbreak of war in August 1914 the 1st Battalion was stationed in Malta but the troops returned to England, landing at Southampton on 3 September 1914 to join the 22nd Brigade of the 7th Division before moving to Lyndhurst in Hampshire where the 7th Division was concentrating in the New Forest.

On 7 October 1914 the Battalion was mobilised for war and landed at Zeebrugge to assist in the defence of Antwerp and moved to Zeebrugge Billets Oostcamp. However, they arrived too late prevent the fall of the city and so, the following day, marched to Oudenberg. On 9 October they moved to Ghent and the following day moved on to Meirelbeke Entrenched Position and, on the 13th, to Thielt; these were mainly defensive positions at important bridges and junctions to aid in the retreat of the Belgian army.

By 14 October the 7th Division became the first British troops to entrench in front of Ypres, suffering extremely heavy losses in The First Battle of Ypres; it was five weeks later that John Robert Jones joined the battalion and it appears that it was at this time, or shortly afterwards, that he may have been promoted to Lance Corporal although this rank was not acknowledged in later documents.

By February 1915 the Division had been reinforced to fighting strength and they were in action during The Battle of Neuve Chapelle (10 - 13 March 1915), a British offensive which attempted to break through the German lines. Only partially successful on the first day, the British attempted to renew the advance but a large German counter-attack by twenty infantry battalions (c. 16,000 men) early on 12 March repulsed the British troops. Sir Douglas Haig, the First Army commander, cancelled further attacks and ordered the captured ground to be consolidated, preparatory to a new attack further north. An acute shortage of artillery ammunition made a new attack impossible, apart from a local effort by the 7th Division, which was another costly failure. The Germans strengthened the defences opposite the British and increasing the number of troops in the area.

In late-February/early-March 1915, whilst serving in France, John was treated twice for neuralgia (intermittent pain along the course of a nerve, especially in the head or face):

26 February 1915 - admitted to N^o. 7 Casualty Clearing Station (believed to be at Merville, west of Armentières).

3 March 1915 - admitted to N^o. 9 Casualty Clearing Station (believed to be at Sainte-Omer, inland of Boulogne). John was moved to N^o. 13 Stationary Hospital in Boulogne and was *discharged to duty* from there on 13 March. On 27 March John was *reposted to Bn. from Harfleur*.

On 9 May the Battalion was engaged at The Battle of Aubers Ridge, part of the British contribution to The Second Battle of Artois, a Franco-British offensive intended to exploit the German diversion of troops to the Eastern Front. The French 10th Army was to attack the German 6th Army north of Arras and capture the Vimy Ridge, preparatory

to an advance on Cambrai and Douai. Meanwhile, the British 1st Army on the left (northern) flank of the 10th Army was to attack on the same day and widen the gap in the German defences, expected to be made by the 10th Army and to prevent German troops from being moved south of La Bassée canal. Unfortunately, intelligence about the newly strengthened German positions was not available or given sufficient attention and no surprise was achieved. The duration and weight of the British bombardment was wholly insufficient to break the German wire and defences, or to destroy or suppress the front-line machine-guns. Trench layout, traffic flows and organisation behind the British front line did not allow for easy movement of reinforcements and casualties and much of the British artillery equipment and ammunition were in poor condition. It soon became impossible to tell precisely where British troops were; accurate close-support artillery fire was impossible and the battle was considered to be an unmitigated disaster for the British army with no ground being won and no tactical advantage gained. It is doubted if it had the slightest positive effect on assisting the main French attack 15 miles to the south.

The battle was renewed slightly to the south, from 15 May (The Battle of Festubert) and it was probably during this conflict that John Robert Jones died.

The attack, on the Western Front, lasted for 10 days and was made by the British 1st Army under Sir Douglas Haig against a German salient between Neuve Chapelle to the north and the village of Festubert to the south. The first assault, initially by Indian troops, was along a 3-mile front and was the first British army night attack of the war.

The battle was preceded by a 60-hour bombardment by 433 artillery pieces that fired about 100,000 shells but this bombardment failed to significantly damage the front line defences of the German 6th Army. However, the initial advance made some progress in good weather conditions and the attack was renewed on 16 May, the day when John Jones was killed. However, by 19 May the British 2nd and 7th divisions had to be withdrawn due to heavy losses. Eventually, between 20 - 25 May, the attack was resumed and Festubert was captured with the overall offensive had resulting in a 3-kilometre advance.

More than 16,000 casualties were sustained in the attack at Festubert, in support of the much larger French offensive to the South at Vimy Ridge. French losses there were over 102,000, against German losses of almost 50,000, including those at Festubert. The British 7th Division lost 4,123 of which 167 were officers.

[<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmyview.php?pid=7366#sthash.A57A4ls2.dpuf>]

Some details of the Battle Order for 16 May 1915 are given on the following pages.

The CWGC notes that, for the Le Touret Memorial,

Almost all of the men commemorated on the Memorial served with regular or territorial regiments from across the United Kingdom and were killed in actions that

took place along a section of the front line that stretched from Estaires in the north to Grenay in the south. This part of the Western Front was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting of the first year of the war, including the battles of La Bassée (10 October - 2 November 1914), Neuve Chapelle (10 - 12 March 1915), Aubers Ridge (9 - 10 May 1915), and Festubert (15 - 25 May 1915).

16 May 1915

12.45am: 2nd Division orders a further bombardment as planned, to coincide with the attack to be made by 7th Division. The support battalions of 6th Brigade (2/South Staffordshire and 1/King's) are unable to leave the British front trench to move up to the captured position due to heavy cross-fire from the area between the two Divisional attacks, which had not been suppressed by the bombardment. German resistance in the area to the front of the captured trenches is stiffening. The support battalions of the Gharwal Brigade also attempt to move forward, but are immediately cut down and the movement ceases (1/3 London and 2/3 Ghurkas).

2.45am: The bombardment intensifies on the 7th Division front, including six field guns firing from the front line, opening gaps in the German breastwork (a tactic tried with some success by the Division at Aubers), although in places the lines are only 80 yards apart and great care is taken to avoid shelling the British troops forming up.

3.10am: first platoons of the 20th Brigade (led by 2/Scots Guards and 2/Border) leave their front line, to close up with the German before the barrage lifts. Considerable casualties are incurred as they advance too far, into the British shells.

3.15am: although the 2nd Division has failed to reorganise ready for a supporting advance, the 850-yard frontal attack of the 7th Division goes in. 22nd Brigade on the right, attacking across Duke's Road towards the School House and the Northern Breastwork (a sandbag-parapet German communication trench), with 2/Queens and 1/Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the first wave, is hit by heavy machine-gun fire. The advance is halted for an extra 15 minutes shelling. On their left, 20th Brigade are slowed by a deep ditch, and crossfire from the Quadrilateral position on their left front, untouched by the bombardment as it lay in the area between the two Divisional attacks.

3.45am approx.: 22nd Brigade moves forward, now supported by 1/South Staffordshire on the right. Despite suffering more casualties, they reach the German front and work along the trench system using bombs (grenades).

5.40am: Haig redraws the boundary of the area to be attacked, and halts any fresh attacks by the Meerut Division, directing the Sirhind Brigade to move to the support of 2nd Division.

6.00am: the Queens and Staffords of 22nd Brigade reach the Northern Breastwork, and the bombers of the latter battalion continue to move through the system of communication and support trenches facing Festubert. They secure the position from Stafford Corner to the old German front, and also La Quinque Rue in the area: the objective of the attack had thus been achieved. By 6.30am, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers have advanced too - now joined by some 2/Royal Warwickshire and 2/Scots Guards of 20th Brigade - and meet up with the Queens near the Orchard. The Scots Guards are forced to withdraw a little, after being hit by British artillery (firing by the map and timetable, unaware of the precise position of their infantry) and by German fire from Adalbert Alley. They also repulse a German counter-attack. Further attempts proved fruitless and costly, and by 9.00am the attack has come to a halt. The men in the most advanced positions near the Orchard and along the Northern Breastwork were by now under intensive German shellfire.

[continued on following page]

[continued from previous page - **16 May 1915**]

10.00am General Monro (I Corps) directs attacks to close the gap between the Divisions, by converging advances towards Ferme Cour d'Avoué. The 1/Grenadier Guards of 20th Brigade, having moved across No Man's Land by a new trench being dug by the 1/6th Gordon Highlanders, bomb their way along 300 yards of enemy trench, but cannot advance over open ground, being assailed by fire as they make the attempt. No units of the 2nd Division are yet in position to make an attack. Meanwhile the bombers of 1/South Staffordshire (joined now by some bombing specialists from Brigade) continue to take more of the German trench system, 800 yards as far as Willow Corner (facing the front of the 47th Division) being captured in yard by yard fighting: they capture more than 190 Germans in doing so.

7.30pm The 1/Royal Welsh Fusiliers near the Orchard end of the Northern Breastwork withdraw to La Quinque Rue, forced out by lack of support from 20th Brigade on their left, and heavy German shelling. During the night, the remnants of the Queens, RWF and Border were withdrawn; the position of the British front being: 1/7 Londons (temporarily attached to 22nd Brigade) holding the line from Willow Corner, meeting the 1/South Staffords holding the Northern Breastwork as far as Stafford Corner, where they joined with the 2/Scots Guards, who continued to the junction of Prince's Road (coming down from Chocolat Menier Corner) and Rue des Cailloux.

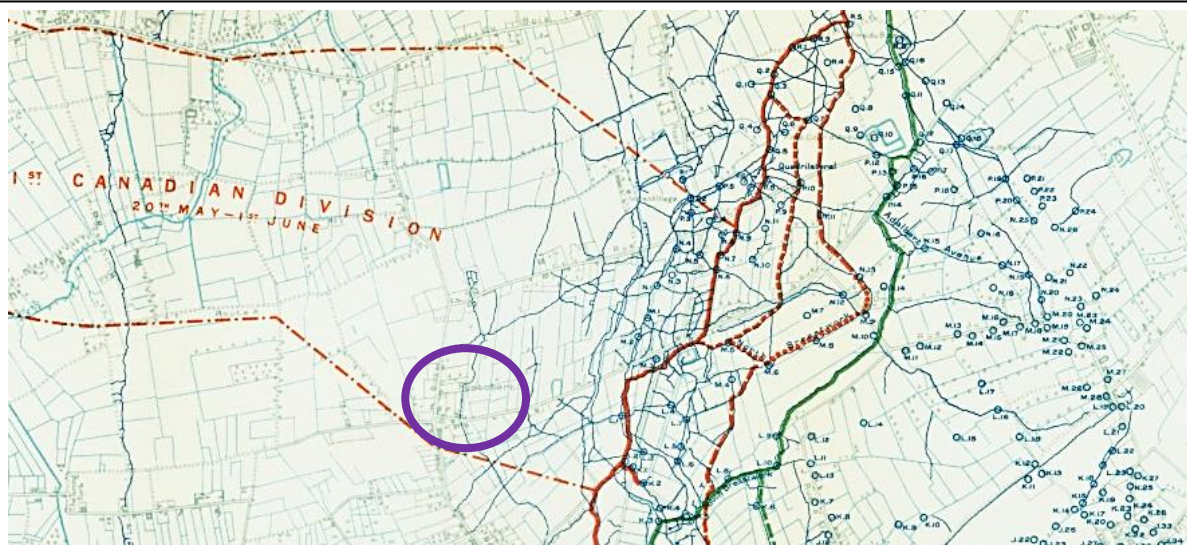
11.45pm Having assessed the situation reports coming in from the Divisions and Corps, First Army decides to continue the offensive of I Corps and place all other actions on hold. Orders were given for the gap between the two Divisions to be closed, with a view to continuing an advance towards Chapelle St Roch and Rue d'Ouvert.

17 May 1915

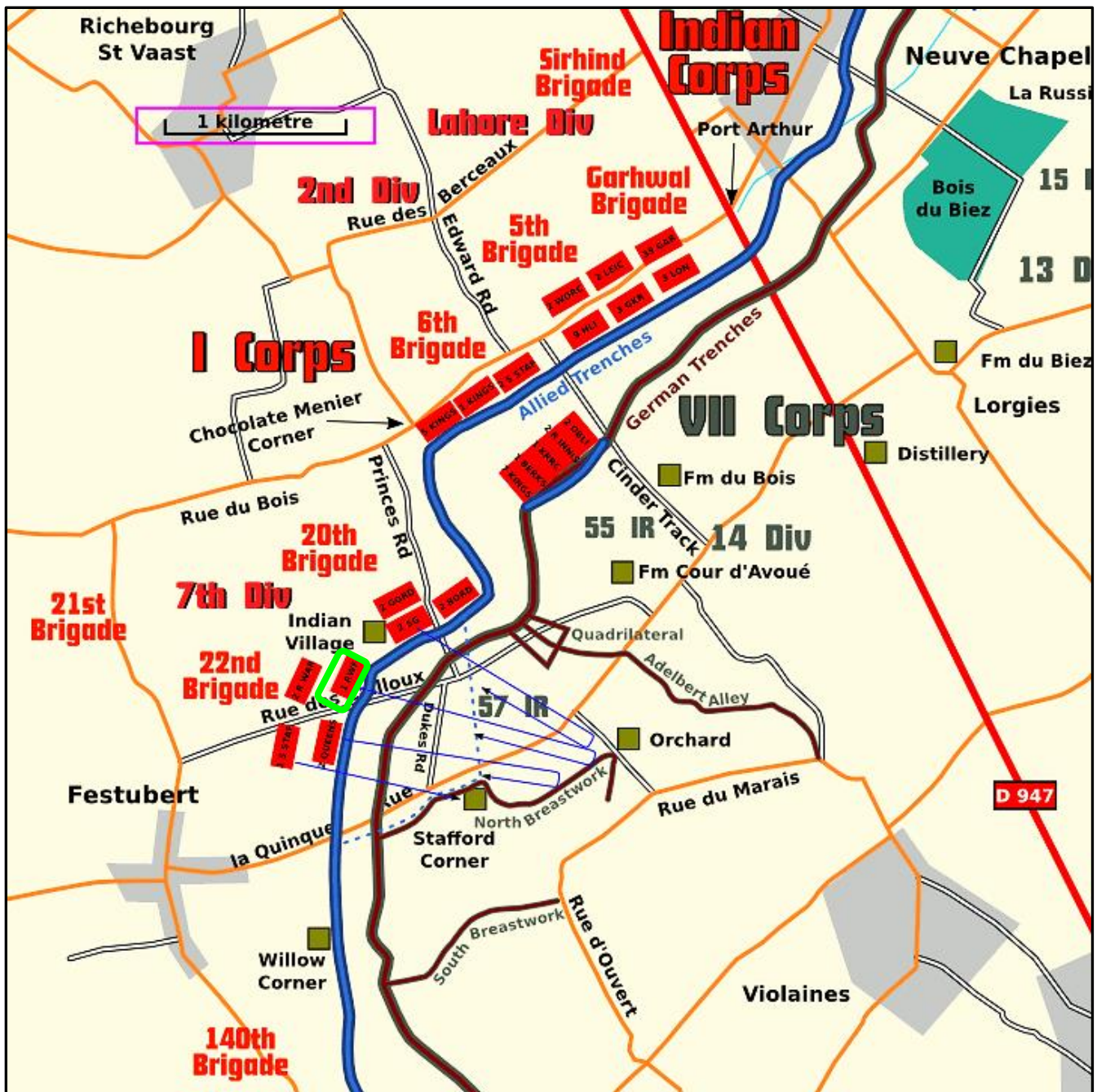
A day of heavy rain, and low cloud. The German units in the area between Ferme du Bois and the Southern Breastwork (opposite Willow Corner) began a systematic withdrawal to a new line, some 1200 yards to the rear. Enough rearguard troops and artillery support were to be provided to enable and hide this action from their assailants.

[Source: <http://www.1914-1918.net/bat11A.html>]

The same information is repeated at: <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battle-of-festubert/>



A Canadian map produced after the Festubert operation showing the tangle of ever-changing defensive saps and trenches. The village of Festubert is encircled in purple. Front line positions are represented by the north/south lines: Allied line on the morning of 18 May – continuous orange; Allied line after the action of 18 May – dashed orange; German line on the morning of 18 May – continuous green; final line – dashed green. [Source: <http://ww1blog.osborneink.com/?p=8086>]



Festubert, the attack by 7th Division, 16 May 1915 [Source: <http://www.webmatters.net/>]
 The opening position of the 1st Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers is shown left of centre, in red outlined in green.

1st	Missing since last list 26001	16.5.1915
1st	Death accepted for official purposes as having died on or since 16.5.1915. W.O. letter 6.2.1916. E/188706/1 dt 2.8.1916	16.5.1915

Although John was listed as missing in action on 16 May 1915, and later his *Death accepted for official purposes as having died on or since 16.5.1915*, this information was not conveyed to his relatives until many months later. Indeed, in March 1916 Ethel Bedson, John's sister, wrote to ask if there was any news of him:

The War Office already had formal acknowledgement of John's presumed death, and it is possible that a copy of this letter was sent to Ethel:

SHREWSBURY
22 MAR 1916

3 Watney Road
Wrexham

(T.S.) March 21 1916

Sir,
It is now eight months since I heard any news of my brother, (10657) Lt. Cpl. John R Jones. R. W. Fusiliers would be glad to know if any further information has reached you. I am his sister.

Yours truly
Ethel M. Bedson

Lot of Claremont Cottages
22 Bebbington

H/82a sent in reply
letter annexed
3 1916

W 1537-5428 5000 3/16 H W (P 279) 11 10/20 16.
Casualties Form D.P.

Any further letter on this subject should be addressed to—
The Secretary,
War Office,
Alexandra House,
Kingway, London, W.C.
and the number below quoted.
(Note.—Personal enquiries should be made at the War Office in Whitehall.)

WAR OFFICE,
LONDON, S.W.,
2nd March 1916.

C 2. Casualties D.P.
E/188706/1.

To
The Officer in Charge
Infantry Records,
Shrewsbury.

No. 10657.

Rank Lance Corporal Name J. P. Jones

Regiment 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers

The Army Council has decided that this soldier is to be regarded for official purposes as having died on or since the 16th May 1915.

The next-of-kin should be notified accordingly on Army Form B. 104—82A and the usual papers prepared, if this has not already been done.

C. F. Wilkinson

INFANTRY RECORDS
NO 4 DISTRICT
3 MAR 1916
SHREWSBURY

(4 15 100) WOOD—HP5722 80,000 4/10 HWV(P000) H332
3114—HP6320 40,000 9/10 Effects—Form 118A.

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Officer in charge of Infantry Records,
No. 2. Shrewsbury.

Any further communication on this subject should be addressed to—
The Secretary,
War Office,
Imperial Institute,
South Kensington,
London, S.W.7,
and the following number quoted.

WAR OFFICE,
IMPERIAL INSTITUTE,
SOUTH KENSINGTON,
LONDON, S.W.7,

12th November, 1919.

E./188706/4/ (Accounts 4.)

Will you please note that any articles of personal property now in your possession or subsequently received by you belonging to the late NO. 10657, Lance Corporal John Robert Jones 1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers should be despatched to:—

Mr. John Jones,
5, Pleasant Cottages,
New Road, South Sea
Nr. Wrexham, Wales.

Any medals granted to the deceased that are now in your possession or that may hereafter reach you should be disposed of to:—
the same person.

10 NOV 1919
Assistant Financial Secretary.

After the war, in 1919, the military contacted close relatives of deceased servicemen in order to return any effects, outstanding wages and present service awards and certificates.

John (or Grif) Jones, John Robert Jones's father, was the closest relative and it was he whom the army wished to correspond with. In November 1919 a standardised letter was sent from the War Office to the Infantry Records Office in Shrewsbury to inform them that any effects should be sent to John's father at 5, Pleasant Cottages, New Road, South Sea, near Wrexham [in June 1916 the army had recorded the address as 5 Pleasant Villa, New Broughton, Wrexham].

Southsea is a small village on the Gwenfro river to the west of Wrexham, between New Broughton and Coedpoeth. The village served the old Broughton Hall Brickworks and Plas Power Colliery.

DEBENTHSHIRE LOCAL COMMITTEE

LC/4466/DH.

Ref. MPS/W/362.
Your Ref.

BODHYFRYD
CHESTER STREET
WREXHAM
24-8-20.

Please address all communications to the Secretary

The Officer in Charge Records,
The Riding School,
Shrewsbury.

Dear Sir,

re Mr. B. Jones, 5. Pleasant Villas,
Newford Rd, Wrexham, Father of late
10657. Pte. J.R. Jones, R. Welsh Fusiliers

With reference to your letter of the
10th inst. (which is returned herewith as
requested), relative to the above named,
I beg to inform you that our Visitor is
unable to trace the whereabouts of Mr.
Jones.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary.

See all
See all
See all

PS 36
435520

However, when the army attempted to contact John's father at this address in August 1920, he was no longer living there (the letter was returned to the Local war Pensions Committee in Wrexham) and the person sent subsequently to the address to attempt to verify his whereabouts (a 'Visitor') could not trace him. In fact, in May 1919, the Infantry Records Office in Shrewsbury wrote to 'Mr G. Jones' at 3, Bunkers Hill, Bersham, near Wrexham (prior to the despatch of the Memorial Plaque & Scroll in August) and 'Mr G. Jones' had responded that he would, at that time, be at 5 Pleasant Villas.

In August 1921, when John's medals were sent to his father, he was living at a different address in Southsea, Wrexham:

B/2936/R.W.T.

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of the
BRITISH WAR MEDAL & VICTORY MEDAL
granted in respect of the service of 10657.
J.R. Jones. R1 Welsh Fus

Date 31 Aug 1921
Mr. J. Jones,
36 Elanypfon Cokk.
Tandron Rd.
Southsea Wrexham

Signature John Jones

John's Attestation Form of October 1907 records that Anna, John's mother, was in Upton Asylum (Upton-by-Chester); this information, undated on the form, may have been added at some later date.

MILITARY HISTORY SHEET.

1. Service at Home and Abroad (including former service of re-enlisted men, when allowed to reckon towards G. C. Pay or Pension).

COUNTRY	FROM	To	YEARS	DAYS	N.B.—The Country only to be shown—it is not necessary to show separately the service in the different stations of the same Country. England, Scotland and Ireland to be shown under the general term "Home." For mode of computing Service abroad, see King's Regulations.
Home	9. 10. 1904	2. 3. 1909	1	114	
India	3. 2. 1909	10. 3. 1914	5	36	
France	11. 3. 1914	22. 11. 1914		257	
France	23. 11. 1914	16. 5. 1915		146	
			4	220	

The extract from John Robert Jones's Military History Sheet records that he served for a total of 7 years 220 days, over 5 years being spent in India.

263642	E/18894 Jones John Robert	1st Bn R. Welsh Fus Pte	On or Shrewsbury Bence 16.5.15 Death 10657 promoted.	12 12 11	12 12 11	P.O. 6.16.	20-6-19	Fa: John	12 12 11	
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> WAR GRATUITY. 14/20 Transfer 5/19/19 Regd. Paper 3000 on 24 Serial No. 5826 </div>	5 - -	12 11 4.					5 - -
			17 JUN 1919							

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. In June 1919 John's father, also recorded here as John, received a payment of outstanding wages of £12 12s 11d from the army and (in July) a War Gratuity of £5. This, a total value of £17 12s 11d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £2800 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.

(To be rendered in duplicate.)

ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS. **Regiment or Corps when Decoration was earned.**

Category (b). **ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the Decoration granted under Army Order 20 of 1919.** No. 96.

To be left blank.	On Date of Disembarkation.		NAME.	Date of Disembarkation.	REMARKS.	Record of disposal of decoration.	To be left Blank for use in War Office.
	Regtl. No.	Rank.					
✓	10657.	Pte.	JONES. John, Robert.	23/11/14	(1). Death accept: 16/5/15.		

I certify that according to the Official Records the individuals named in this ROLL are entitled to the Decoration as detailed above.

Place **SHREWSBURY.** Date **1 - NOV 1919**

Signature and rank of Officer certifying. *J. Johnston Major.*

FOR O. I/c RECORDS No 2, SHREWSBURY

WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920

The body of John Robert Jones was not recovered as the Le Touret Memorial commemorates over 13,400 British soldiers who were killed in this sector of the Western Front from the beginning of October 1914 to the eve of the Battle of Loos in late September 1915 and who have no known grave.

British Army WWI Medal Rolls
Index Cards, 1914-1920

Name	Corps	Rank	Regtl. No.
JONES	R. W. Fus.	Pte	10657
JOHN. R			

Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	J/2/10.2.13	868	Death Accept. 16-5-15
BRITISH	da	da	
15. STAR	J/2/201	96	

Theatre of War first served in	(1) France
Date of entry therein	23-11-14

As noted at the opening of this account, the family of John Robert Jones has proved elusive to trace. No definite record of John's father, named as both Grif and John, has been found although it appears that he lived in various locations in and around Neston and in the Wrexham district.

John's mother, named as Anna, has also left little trace although the fact that John's 1907 notes that she was in Upton Asylum may hold some clue to the condition of the family. The Cheshire County Lunatic Asylum opened in September 1829, under the auspices of the 1808 County Asylum Act which allowed for Justices of the Peace to levy a county rate in order to establish asylums to accommodate pauper lunatics.



CHESHIRE LUNATIC ASYLUM. Engraving by Dean at the 7, 1855, by Messrs. Col. Hemmingsway's Chester, 1857

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countess_of_Chester_Hospital]

This imposing establishment on Liverpool Road, on the outskirts of Chester, was built on land purchased from the Egerton estate; the architect was William Cole Jr and the contractor was W. Quay of Neston. The original building underwent many modifications and changes of name:

- Cheshire County Lunatic Asylum (1829 - 1855)
- Cheshire Lunatic Asylum (1855 - 1870)
- Variously as the Chester Lunatic Asylum, Cheshire County Lunatic Asylum, Cheshire County Pauper Lunatic Asylum and Cheshire County Lunatic Asylum (1870 - 1921)
- County Mental Hospital (1921 - 1948)
- Upton Mental Hospital (from the formation of the NHS in 1948 - c.1955)
- Deva Hospital (c.1955 - c.1965)
- West Cheshire Hospital (c.1965 - 1984)
- Countess of Chester Hospital (1984 onwards - after a new general hospital and an accident unit were opened on the West Cheshire Hospital site. The Asylum closed in 1991 and was mostly demolished by 2008/2009.

The 1901 census does not list Anna Jones, or anyone of a similar name, as a patient or inmate and the 1911 census is of no help as all patients are recorded only by initials eg 'R. B.'. No date for the death of Anna Jones has been found. However, in 1911, the institution was recorded as housing 995 lunatics (531 were female), 62 imbeciles (23 were female) and had a total of 103 officials.

It was recorded in his Service Record that John Robert Jones had two sisters, named as Ethel and Annie:

11. Name and Address of next of kin. ...

*Father, Grel Jones not known
 Mother, Ann " Upon at Syke
 Brothers " "
 Sisters Ethel, Annie, 12 South View, Bromborough, Merseyside*

Christian and Surname of Woman to whom married and whether ...

Mary Ethel Jones' birth was registered in early 1885 and it appears that she was born in Raby. Ethel, as she seems to have been known, appears to have been an inmate (aged 6) of Clatterbridge Workhouse in 1891 and in 1901 she was recorded as a general servant in a large house in Ledsham.

In mid-1907 Ethel gave birth to a son - presumably illegitimate - named Eric Jones. In July / September 1909 Mary Ethel married, at St Barnabas Church, Bromborough, widowed domestic gardener Albert Alexander Bedson of Eastham and in 1911 they were recorded as living at Holly Cottage in Eastham with Eric and their young son, Leslie Albert William:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1	Albert Bedson	Head	27	Married					Gardener (Domestic)	Gentleman	Worker		Cheshire Eastham		
2	Mary Ethel Bedson	Wife	26	Married 15. 1	1	1	-						Cheshire Raby		
3	Eric Jones	Son	3										Cheshire Spital		
4	Leslie Bedson	Son	9mths										Cheshire Eastham		

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

Total.		
Males	Females	Persons
3	1	4

(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, Terrace, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

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

Signature: *Albert Bedson*
 Postal Address: *Holly Cottage, Eastham.*

[This Holly Cottage is, most probably, not the large black-and-white Holly Cottage on Eastham Village Road which appears to have been built in 1912].

It is possible that Ethel and Albert had two further daughters:

- Joyce Margaret - born late-1912
- Thelma Kathleen - born mid-1914

Nothing further is known of any of the children.

It appears that, by March 1916, Albert and Ethel had moved to Claremont Cottage in Lower Bebington. It is also believed that, on some previous date (probably before her marriage) that Ethel lived at 3 Watery Road, Wrexham.

An Albert A Bedson died in the Stoke area in mid-1925 aged 45 and a Mary E Bedson (widow, born 11 December 1884) was living at 49 Watergate Street, Ellesmere, Shropshire, in 1939. An Ethel M Bedson died in the Oswestry district in mid-1946 aged 62.

Leslie A W Bedson, a son of Albert and Ethel, married Margaret A Dodd in the Whitchurch area in late 1946.

Nothing is known of Annie Jones, John's second sister, although she was recorded as living at 12, South View, Bromborough Pool - this section of housing has since been demolished - in 1914. However, Annie was not living here at the time of the 1911 census.

In conclusion, although it has been noted that nothing has been determined of the early life of John Robert Jones a child of this name, with a recorded age of 11, born Spital, was in the Wirral Union Workhouse at Clatterbridge at the time of the 1901 census. Perhaps this was a different person - but he has also not been traced in the 1911 census.

Even with no further definitive information, it appears that the family of John Robert Jones suffered hardship and may, perhaps, be considered dysfunctional. It was, perhaps, to escape from this background that John decided at an early age to become a career soldier.