

## 151: James McDowell

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: James McDowell

Rank: Lance Serjeant

Battalion / Regiment: 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. Grenadier Guards

Service Number: 13062 Date of Death: 22 July 1917 Age at Death: 28

Buried / Commemorated at: Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Vleteren, Arrondissement Ieper, West Flanders, Belgium

Additional information given by CWGC: The husband of Emma Letitia McDowell, of 14, Narborough St., Fulham, London.

James McDowell, the second son of publican William and Elizabeth McDowell, was born in Neston and baptised at the Parish Church on 12 May 1889.

William McDowell had married Elizabeth Jones at St. Oswald's Church, Chester, in the first quarter of 1884 and their first child, William Alexander McDowell, was born shortly afterwards in Chester in the April/June quarter of 1884.

William and Elizabeth came to Neston in, or soon before, 1885, and their second child, Margaret Elizabeth, was baptized at the Parish Church on 20 November 1885. William may have come to Neston to work in one of the numerous public houses although he is not recorded as a publican at that time.

By the time of the 1891 census the family, now extended, were probably in residence at the Malt Shovel on Liverpool Road:

Liverpool Rd	1	William McDowell	Head	35	Publican	x	Ireland, Killashandra
		Elizabeth	Do.	31			
		William A.	Do.	6			
		Margaret E.	Do.	5			
		Lily	Do.	3			
		James	Do.	1			

1891 census (extract) – Liverpool Road, Neston

William McDowell	35	publican	born Ireland, Killashandra
Elizabeth	31		-
William A.	6		-
Margaret E.	5		-
Lily	3		-
James	1		-

Whilst the enumerator has recorded that William originated from Killashandra (a small town in County Cavan, Southern Ireland), he has failed to note the birthplace for the other members of the family. However, it is known that William McDowell was, from 1887 to 1892, the proprietor of the Malt Shovel and it is presumed that the family lived on the premises.



The Malt Shovel in October 2017

Lily McDowell was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 6 April 1888 and, as noted previously, James on 12 May 1889. One further child, Norma, was born in Neston and baptised at the Parish Church on 2 January 1892.

Between 1898 and early 1899 William was the publican at the Red Lion on The Parade at Parkgate but, on 29 March 1899, he died aged 44 and was buried at Neston Parish Church on 1 April. Elizabeth, William's widow, took over briefly as the landlord of the Red Lion but was succeeded in

1900 by Alfred George Humber. The location of William and his family between 1892 and 1898 is unknown.

In April/June 1900 Elizabeth McDowell married labourer Samuel Evans at a Civil Marriage in Chester and at the time of the 1901 census they, and Elizabeth's children, were living on the High street (since developed) in Connahs Quay:

333	335	1			Samuel Evans	Head	33	General Labourer	born Flint, Connahs Quay	English
					Elizabeth	Wife	39		born Salop, Whitchurch	English
					Willie MacDowell	Son	16	Ironworks Labourer	born Chester	English
					Maggie	Step daughter	15		born Neston	English
					Lily	Daughter	13		born Neston	English
					James	Son	11		born Neston	English
					Norah	Daughter	9		born Neston	English

1901 census (extract) – 333 & 335, High Street, Connahs Quay

Samuel Evans	33	general labourer	born Flint, Connahs Quay
Elizabeth	39		born Salop, Whitchurch
Willie MacDowell	16	step son, ironworks labourer	born Chester
Maggie MacDowell	15	step daughter	born Neston
Lily MacDowell	13	daughter	born Neston
James	11	son	born Neston
Norah	9	daughter	born Neston

Note: The enumerator has misspelled the name McDowell and it is unknown why two of Elizabeth's children are shown as stepchildren, but then crossed through, or why the youngest three are not shown as being stepchildren.

By 1911 James McDowell, then 21, had left the family and he is recorded as being a police constable in London:

27	James McDowell	21	single	City of London police constable	born Cheshire, Neston
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1911 census (extract) – London (no address recorded)

James McDowell	21	single	City of London police constable	born Cheshire, Neston
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In 1911 Elizabeth Evans, James' mother, was recorded as visiting Lily Davies, her married daughter, in Llwydiarth, a small settlement about 22km north-west of Welshpool:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	
1	William Davies	Head	32	Married	4	none	—	—	Sawyer	461	Estate work	working	—	Whitchurch Salop	29°	—	English
2	Lily Davies	Wife	23	Married	4	none	—	—	—	—	—	—	Whitchurch Salop	170°	—	English	
3	Elizabeth Evans	Visitor	49	Married	11	1	—	—	Dressmaker	280	—	at home	Whitchurch Salop	270°	—	English	
4	Lily Owen McDowell	Visitor	2	Single	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Connah's Quay	450°	—	English	

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

(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.	I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.
5 rooms	Signature: William Davies Postal Address: Warren Cottages Park Llwydiarth on Welshpool

1911 census (condensed) – Warren Cottages, Park Llwydiarth, nr. Welshpool, Montgomeryshire

William Davies	32	sawyer, estate worker	born Whitchurch, Salop
Lily	23		born Neston
Elizabeth Evans	49	visitor, dressmaker	born Whitchurch, Salop
Lily Owen McDowell	2	visitor	born Connahs Quay

Elizabeth had been married 11 years and, although she and Samuel Evans had one child, that child had died. The identity of the child Lily Owen McDowell (born in late 1908) is unknown but could be the daughter of Elizabeth's eldest son, William Alexander McDowell (although no marriage has been found).

It is believed that, of James' other sisters, Margaret married a James Rogers in Ellesmere in early 1914 and Nora married in the Holywell district in April/June 1914 (although the name of her husband is not known).

In the same census Samuel Evans, Elizabeth's second husband, is recorded as being an inmate in the Holywell Union Workhouse:

NAME AND SURNAME.	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family or position in Institution.	AGE (last Birthday).	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.	PERSONAL OCCUPATION.	Industry or Service with which Worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.	BIRTHPLACE of every Person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.	LANGUAGE SPOKEN.
3 Samuel Evans	Inmate	42	Married	formerly a General Labourer	370			Flints, Connah's Quay		Inmate from	English

1911 census (extract) – Holywell Union Workhouse

Samuel Evans	42	formerly a general labourer	born Flints., Connahs Quay
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The Holywell Union Workhouse was built in 1838 -1840 near St Winefride's Well and at the time of the 1911 census contained 188 persons (excluding the 8 staff) composed of: sick – 51; old & infirm – 99; able-bodied – 10; children – 12; vagrants – 16. A total of 175 (including staff) were recorded in the workhouse, rather than hospital, section but it is impossible to know from the return where, or why, Samuel Evans was included in the institution.

At some time after the 1911 census, possibly in early 1914, James left the police force and enlisted with the Grenadier Guards. As James' Service Record has not been found, details of his service are limited although it is known that he was serving with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion at The



Third Battle of Ypres when he died on 22 July 1917. The National Roll of the Great War, acknowledges that James served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion but records that *He was mobilised in August 1914, and immediately drafted to France, where he took part in the Battles of Mons, La Bassée, Ypres.....* It is known, however, that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards was one of the few (possibly the only) regular Battalions which remained in Britain on the outbreak of war in August 1914 and were not mobilised and moved to France until August 1915. Certainly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was not involved in the 1914 battles noted above.

It is most probable that James McDowell initially joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and this seems to be verified by his British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Card which notes him as a Private with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Service Number 13062) and a 'Qualifying Date' of 13 August 1914.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards, on the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, were stationed at Chelsea as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> (Guards) Brigade of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

On 15 August they mobilised for war, landed at Havre, and the Division engaged subsequently in the first major actions of the British Expeditionary Force in France including the significant conflicts named above. Whilst no detail of these actions will be described here it is worth noting that, after The First Battle of Ypres (19 October - 22 November 1914), only 4 officers and 140 men remained of the Battalion.

On 20 August 1915 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Brigade of the Guards Division and it may have been around this time that James moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (and, possibly, achieved promotion to Corporal); certainly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had finally left Britain in late July 1915 and, whilst in France, transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade of the Guards Division on 19 August.

It is clear that at some time in the Spring of 1915 that James had managed to return to Britain as, in April/June, he married invoice clerk Emma Letitia Wagner, 23, in Fulham. Emma was the eldest of two daughters of gas stoker Conrad William Wagner and Charlotte; born in Fulham she was living, aged 19, with her parents at 14 Narborough Street, Bridge Road, Wandsworth.

Whichever battalion James served with during 1916, both the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions Grenadier Guards were in action at The Battle of Flers-Courcelette and The Battle of Morval in that year. By July 1917 Allied forces had pushed the German units over 1½ miles to the east of Ypres and the intention, at the forthcoming Third Battle of Ypres, was to continue this push eastwards.

The War Diary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards records that on 1 - 2 Jul 1917 *The Battn. was at WYLDERS in very scattered billets. The first three days were taken up in making practice trenches for the proposed coming offensive. On 3 July Owing to the billets being so scattered, the Battn. moved then to HERREEZE close to where the training area was.*

*On 4-5 July The attack of the Blue and Black lines (the first two objectives) was practiced. The actual lines etc. were considerably modified with a view to the inspection by H.M. the King.*

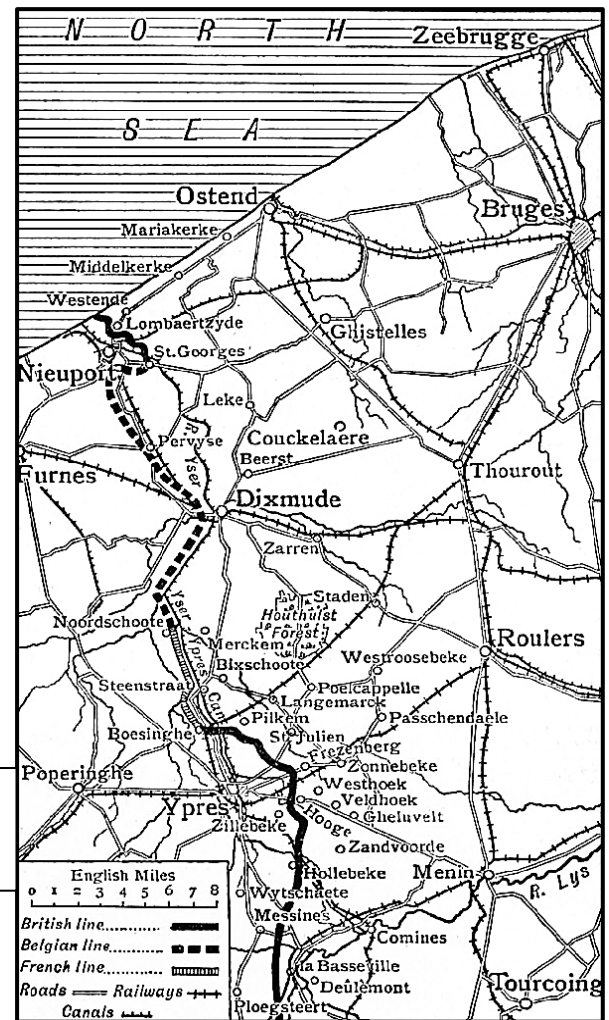
From 6 - 9 July it was recorded that *The inspection took place on the 6<sup>th</sup>, after which training continued on more definite lines, & the advance to the Green Line (which was to be our objective) was practiced.*

*Battn. training continued till the 10<sup>th</sup> when Bde. training began.*

*On 10 July it was noted that This consisted in the Battn. advancing in artillery formation & passing through the 1<sup>st</sup> Battn. Scots Guards. A plan of the Bde. area of the attack on the BOESINGHE sector was made at BHQ with all the prominent objectives marked. Coys had the use of the plan about 1 hour daily & thus learnt all the principal features of the country near which the attack was to be made.*

The Northern Flank of the Allied Line, July 1917.

Source: <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/maps/northern17.jpg>



Over the following days the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion continued to move eastwards and closer to the front line and the following page in the War Diary provided a sketch map of the area immediately east of Ypres:





This sketch map can usefully be compared to the modern satellite view of the same area in which the eastern suburbs of Ypres can be seen in the south-western corner (the front line lay to the east of the map):



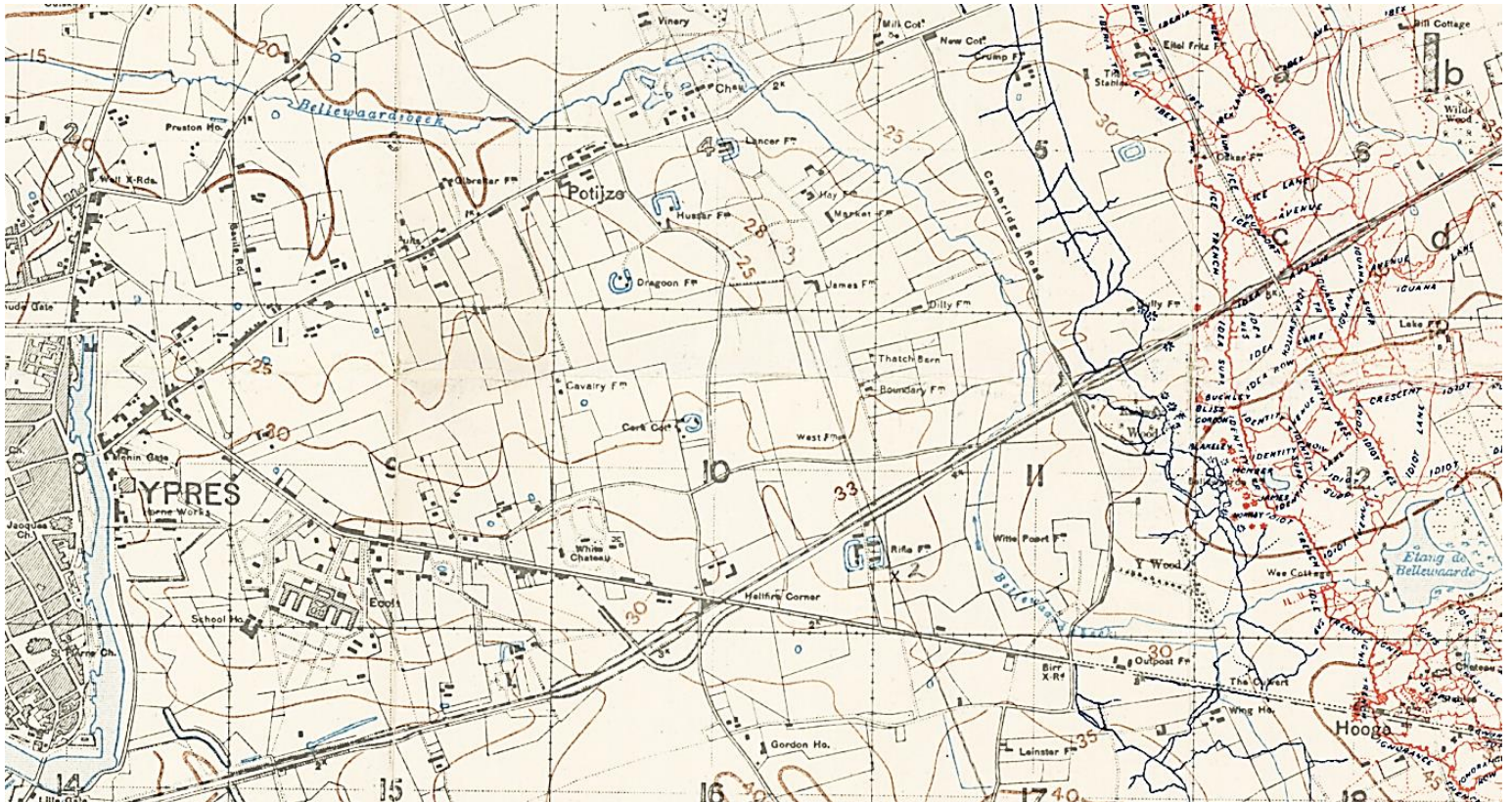
The area east of Ypres, Belgium, can be compared to the sketch map of the corresponding area on the 1917 sketch map on the facing page.

The Menin Road, the route from Ypres through Hooze (just off this map to the east) and on to the city of Kortrijk (Courtrai) [Source: Google Earth]

The N37 road; in 1917 this was the line of the railway

On 14 July the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved to a temporary camp close to the front line and probably near Potijze (near the top of the map and satellite image) the Headquarters being located in a farmhouse with the men in bivouacs around two fields. However, ... *great attention had to be paid to camouflage, as German aeroplanes were constantly flying over, & there was a certain amount of shelling....During the stay (at the camp) fatigue was done nightly. About 300 men on average were employed nightly. Fatigues consisted chiefly of carrying T.M. ammunition to front line & sandbags, wire etc. to various places. The Battn. suffered a few casualties during this period. After the Battn. had been here a few days the camp was shelled by 5.9" but owing to good fortune little damage was done. The only training done was a new class of signallers and stretcher bearers.* The abbreviation T.M. refers, most probably, to trench mortar.





Trench map showing the positions to the east of Ypres; the trench positions on this map are accurate for 30 June 1917. The grid lines on this map are spaced at 1000 yard intervals; British trenches were, in some places, only 100 yards from the facing German positions.

Enemy Trenches.	Any trench apparently organised for fire ... ..	
	Other Trenches ... ..	
	(Important ones are shown by thick line. Old or disused by dotted line).	
British Trenches	... ..	
Wire Entanglement or Other Obstacle	... ..	
Enemy's Tracks	... ..	
Buried Pipeline or Cable	... ..	
Airline	... ..	
Supply Dumps	△ Gun Emplacements	○ Observation Posts
Ammunition ,,	△ Machine Gun ,,	○ Listening Posts
Earthworks	● Trench Mortar ,,	○ Mine Craters
Dug-outs	● Hutments	○ ,, Fortified

All heights in metres.

Between 21 and 25 July the battalion moved about 3½ miles north-west of Potijze to the area of Boesinghe, just north of Ypres and probably just to the west of the Ieperlee (or Ypres-IJzer Canal). The Diary notes that *On the night of 21/22 the Battn. relieved the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battn. Irish Guards in the Right Bde sector of the BOESINGHE Area.*

*Dispositions were:*

*No 1 Coy 3 platoons in right front line, 1 in WALL KRANTZ (this had to be evacuated due to heavy shelling).*

*No 2 Coy 3 platoons in left front line 1 in S line.*

*No 3 Coy in X line*

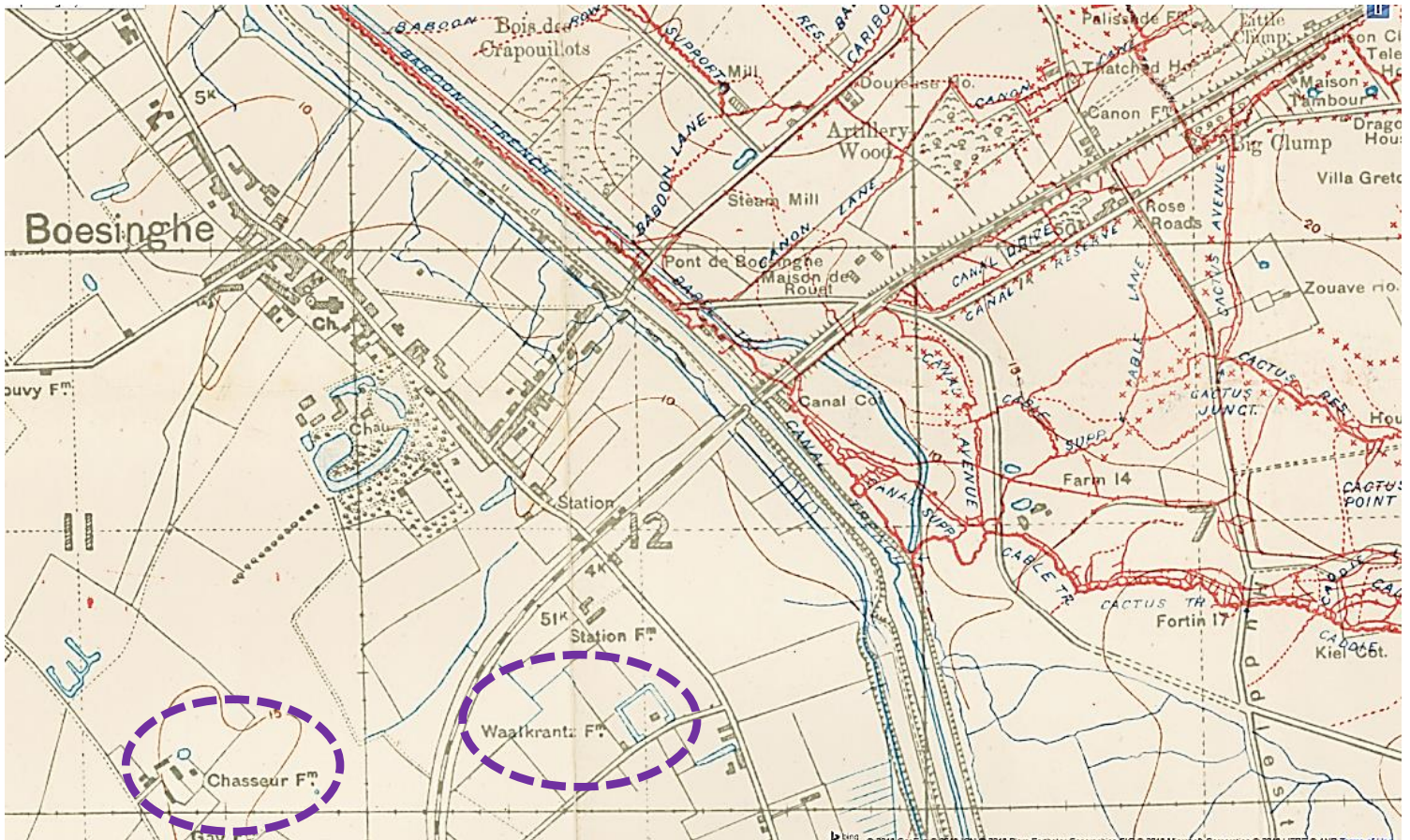
*No 4 Coy 1 platoon in Y line (which was also evacuated) & 3 platoons at BLLIET FARM.*

*HQ at CHASSEUR FARM*

*There was a great deal of shelling during this time in the line & the Battn. suffered the following casualties in the five days up:- 27 killed; 11 Died of wounds, wounded 45 O.R. Gassed 10 O.R. Concussion 7 O.R. Wd & D at 2 Officers & 2 O.R.*



The location of Blliet farm has not been found but the map extract shows the positions of Chasseur farm and Waalkrantz Farm in relation to the village of Boesinghe and the canal:



Map showing the German trench position, east of Boesinghe, on 30 June 1917. Whilst the British trenches are not shown on this map, the locations of Waalkrantz Farm and Chasseur Farm have been encircled. The distance between the two farms is about 850 yards. [Source: <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/>]

On 25 July 1917 the War Diary recorded that, during the night, N<sup>o</sup>. 4 Coy relieved N<sup>o</sup>. 1 Coy in the front line owing to the latter's heavy casualties. N<sup>o</sup>. 4 Coy was to have carried out a raid across the canal on this night to ascertain what enemy were holding the opposite front & to discover if the YPER LEE was a serious obstacle. On the previous night (24/25) 2/Lt G. Webster had made an excellent reconnaissance of the canal & had marked four places over which the canal could be crossed without the men getting very wet, as in many places the water reached well up their middles.

However, it is recorded that James McDowell died on 22 July. Whilst it is recorded also that he was killed in action his Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects record notes that he died at the 4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station in Belgium; however, at this date, the Clearing Station was located at Lozinghem, to the west of Béthune in northern France and around 28 miles to the south-west of Ypres. It is, therefore, most probable that James was wounded during the movement of the unit to Boesinghe, or very shortly after their arrival, and was immediately evacuated to the safer area of the Casualty Clearing Station where he probably died very soon after his arrival.



Following James' marriage to Emma Letitia Wagner in Fulham in the Spring of 1915 he must have returned home on leave at least once as Emma gave birth to a son, named as James A. in the Fulham area, in December 1917. Sadly, this child (probably named as James Alexander McDowell) died in the Lewisham area of London in early 1922 and is commemorated also on his father's war grave in Belgium.

533467	5887/10	Mc Dowell James.	5 <sup>th</sup> Bn Gren Gds. Lt. Sgt. 13062.	22-7-14. London. 10-14. Belgium.	1 14 10 ✓	1 17 10	m.o. 11.17.	6.11.14 Wid Emma L	1 14 10	6.12.19 Wid Emma L	18 - -
A. F. W. 5070 SENT DATE..... 129				WAR GRATUITY 1920 5094 8/15/14 transfer 2/1/20 8/23 Regd. Paper Serial No. 9956		18 - -					

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

In June 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. James McDowell had accrued a credit of £1 17s 10d which was received by his widow, Emma L. McDowell, in July 1919. In addition a war Credit of £18, an unusually large amount, was paid to Emma in August. This, a total of £19 17s 10d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £3050 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.

Although the Medal Rolls Index Card identifies James as a Corporal his Effects record, and the CWGC, records that he was a Lance Sergeant; this was an appointment (strictly, not a rank) given to a corporal so

**MCDOWELL, J., Sergt., 3rd Bn. Grenadier Guards.**

He was mobilised in August 1914, and immediately drafted to France, where he took part in the Battles of Mons, La Bassée, Ypres, Loos, Albert, Vimy Ridge, and the Somme. He was killed in action during the third Battle of Ypres on July 22nd, 1917, and was entitled to the Mons Star and the General Service and Victory Medals.  
14, Marlborough Street, Chelsea, S.W.3. X21497.

National Roll of the Great War

he could fill a post usually held by a sergeant. During the time that James was serving in the army, or immediately following his death, Emma was living at 14, Narborough Street in Fulham, now a prestigious area north of the Thames and just to the east of South Park. Emma McDowell married, in April/June 1933, a Horace G Cooke in Fulham but it is not known whether she had further children or when she died.

Campaign :- **1914** (A) Where decoration was earned.

(B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) <b>McDOWELL</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Gds.</b>	<b>PTE</b>	<b>13062</b>	M.F.D.A. 211 PAG VIC *55/103 59 494 BRITISH do do 16
(B) <b>James</b>		<b>*Cpl</b>		14 STAR G.G.S. 89. D.G.W.

Action taken  
*6/12/1929*

QUALIFYING DATE. **13. 8. 14.**

(6 34 48) W234—HP5590 200,000 4/10 HWV(P210) K508 [OVER]

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920





Elizabeth McDowell, James' mother, died on 21 June 1912 aged 54 and is buried in Neston churchyard. The grave, where William McDowell is also buried, commemorates the death of James in 1917.

It is understood that James is commemorated on the War Memorial at Connahs Quay.

No one of the name of McDowell was recorded in Neston in the 1939 Register.

14, Narborough Street, Fulham [Source: Google StreetView]. The adjoining properties have a value (2016) of between £1.2 and £1.7 million each.



James' War Grave in Dozinghem Military Cemetery is inscribed, near the base,

*AT REST  
ALSO IN MEMORY OF  
HIS LITTLE SON  
GONE TO DADDY*

[Source: <http://www.findagrave.com/>]

Connahs Quay War Memorial

[Source: [www.dailypost.co.uk](http://www.dailypost.co.uk)]



The McDowell grave in Neston Parish Churchyard

In Memory of  
WILLIAM McDOWELL  
Red Lion Hotel, Parkgate  
Died March 29, 1899, Aged 44 Years  
Also ELIZABETH, Wife of the Above  
Died June 21, 1912, Aged 54 Years  
Also JAMES, son of the above  
KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE JULY 22 1917  
Aged 28 Years  
INTERRED IN DOZINGHEM BRITISH CEMETERY  
Gone But Not Forgotten

