

152: Evelyn James McKiernan

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: E. J. McKiernan
 Rank: Sub-conductor
 Battalion / Regiment: Supply and Transport Corps
 Service Number: ? Date of Death: 14 June 1916 Age at Death: ?
 Buried / Commemorated at: Basra War Cemetery, Al Basrah, Basra, Iraq & Willaston Christchurch
 Additional information given by CWGC: None

The CWGC records the name as *McKiernan*, the family grave at Willaston (and the newspapers) shows *M'Kiernan*, presumed to be the correct form of the name. However, *McKiernan* appears to have been the version of the name used in most records. The name is of Irish derivation.

Evelyn James McKiernan was the son of Henry and he was born in Malta in 1880. Henry was a career soldier (the record of his birth has not been found) and, in the 1871 census he was recorded in the Tynemouth Garrison barracks in Northumberland:

10	<i>McKiernan</i>	<i>No McKiernan</i>	<i>unmarried</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Corporal</i>	<i>born Staffordshire, Wolverhampton</i>
11	<i>Henry</i>	<i>No McKiernan</i>	<i>unmarried</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Corporal</i>	<i>born Staffordshire, Wolverhampton</i>

1871 census (extract) - 35th Regiment, Tynemouth Garrison, Tynemouth Castle, Northumberland

Henry McKiernan	unmarried	23	Corporal	born Staffordshire, Wolverhampton
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It has not proved possible to locate Henry's marriage with certainty. However it is possible that he married a Jane Edgar in Sunderland in early 1870, but that he did not formally acknowledge this marriage at that time - he was recorded as being unmarried in the 1871 census. Certainly, a Henry Greear McKiernan married Jane Rutherford M Edgar in 1870 and, in the 1871 census, a Jane Edgar (26) was recorded as a 'soldier's wife', a visitor in the household of builder and carpenter William and Frances Cottman in Hedon near Hull.

It is clear, from the birth records of Henry's children, that the family (or, perhaps, just Henry's wife) moved with him as the 1st Battalion Sussex Regiment moved around the world.

In 1875, the 35th (Royal Sussex) Regiment of Foot - as the regiment was then known - proceeded to Barbados and served there until 1880, when it moved to Malta. Why the Regiment was in Barbados is unclear, but Katherine, Henry's first child, was born at St Ann's Garrison just south of Bridgetown.

On 22 January 1879 the 1st/35th (Royal Sussex) embarked at Barbados and disembarked at Malta on 1 Mar 1879; it was here, the following year, that Evelyn James was born.

In 1881 the regiment moved to Cyprus - where the third child, Gerald, was born (19 July 1882) - and later that year it united with the 107th Regiment of Foot (Bengal Light Infantry) to form the Royal Sussex Regiment.

Following its formation, the Royal Sussex Regiment was sent to Egypt in 1882 as part of General Wolseley's expedition to crush the Urabi Revolt and conquer Egypt and the 1st Battalion was engaged in several of the decisive land battles in that short-lived conflict. Later, in 1884, the regiment was part of the Nile Expedition, the unsuccessful attempt to save General Gordon and his garrison at Khartoum during the Mahdist War. Twenty men of the regiment, led by Lt. Lionel Trafford, led the advanced party towards Khartoum. Having been informed that the enemy would flee at the sight of the British in their red coats, the Royal Sussex contingent, who had been issued with a grey serge campaign uniform, borrowed scarlet frocks from the Guards regiment of the Camel Corps. Nevertheless, the British relief force was two days too late, as Khartoum had fallen and Gordon was killed. Following the actions in Egypt and the Sudan the 1st Battalion returned home in 1885 and appears to have been stationed at Aldershot in early 1887 when Laura Eileen McKiernan was born.

It does seem that Henry's wife died sometime before the 1891 census although there appears to be no record in England/Wales of the death of a Jane McKiernan who would have been of a suitable age. However, as it is clear that the family moved extensively around the world, it is possible that Henry's first wife may have died and been buried overseas shortly after the birth of Laura.

Henry McKiernan married his second wife, (Eliza) Ann Field, at Holy Trinity Church, Birkenhead, in July/September 1890. Ann was the unmarried daughter of Thomas and Maria Field; Thomas was recorded in the 1871 census as a coal merchant and lime dealer living on Liverpool Road, Neston, and Eliza Ann (13) had been born at Hooton. By the time of the 1891 census, shortly after Henry's marriage to (Eliza) Ann, the family was based at Fulwood Barracks to the north of Preston:

15	Henry Mr. McKiernan	Head	m	42	Quarter Master	X	Wolverhampton	British Subject
16	Ann Mrs. McKiernan	Wife	m	33		X	Hooton	British Subject
17	Kathleen Mrs. McKiernan	Daughter		14	Scholar		Barbados	British Subject
18	Evelyn J. Mrs. McKiernan	son		10	oo		Malta	British Subject
19	Gerald S. Mrs. McKiernan	son		8	oo		Mount Troodos	British Subject
20	Laura E. Mrs. McKiernan	Daughter		4	oo		Aldershot	British Subject
21	William Johnston	Head						

1891 census (extract) – Fulwood Barracks, Preston [47th Regimental District]

Henry McKiernan	42	Quarter Master First Royal Sussex Regiment	born Wolverhampton
Ann	33		born Hooton
Kathleen	14		born Barbados, W. Indies
Evelyn J.	10		born Malta
Gerald S.	8		born Mount Troodos, Cyprus
Laura E.	4		born Aldershot

Somewhat confusingly, Laura Eileen McKiernan (recorded as Eileen) was also shown in the 1891 census as being in the household of William (25, marine draughtsman, born Ilkeston) and Georgina (24, born Neston) Townsend at 146 Craven Street, Birkenhead, together with Thomas Field (58, coal merchant) and Maria (56). Georgina was the youngest child of Thomas and Maria Field and the sister of (Eliza) Ann McKiernan.

Henry McKiernan, Evelyn's father, died aged 60 on 4 May 1910 in the Wallasey district. Henry seems to have served with the Royal Sussex Regiment throughout his career and he had been promoted from Quartermaster Sergeant to Quartermaster of the 4th Battalion on 6 May 1882, was raised to the Honorary Rank of Captain on 6 May 1892 and retired on 29 August 1894.

However, no member of the McKiernan family has been located in the 1901 census in England and Wales although it is probable that Evelyn and Gerald were serving overseas in the armed forces. Indeed, records from the Anglo-Boer War (1899 - 1902) indicate that Evelyn was serving as a Sergeant (Service Number 4709) in South Africa with The Royal Sussex Regiment ¹.

In the 1911 census, widowed for 11 months, Eliza was living with her widowed father and Eileen in a small tenement in Birkenhead and living on Henry's army pension:

GENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.															
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.															
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.															
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE last Birthday and SEX.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.						PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.			BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.	
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—		Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)		Total Children Born Alive.		Personal Occupation.		Industry or Service with which worker is connected.				
1	Eliza Ann McKiernan	Head	53	Widow	19	None	-	-	Penioner	360	0	0	Wotton Cheshire	1200	-
2	Eileen McKiernan	Wid Daughter	24	Single					Ironie Stelp				Aldershot Berks	760	-
3	Thomas Field	Father	78	Widower					Retired	598	0	0	Dewsbury Yorkshire	941	-

1911 census – 20 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead

Eliza Ann McKiernan	53	widow, pensioner	born Hooton
Eileen	24	step-daughter	born Aldershot
Thomas Field	78	father, retired	born Dewsbury, Yorkshire

Although Henry McKiernan had died in May 1910 Eliza recorded that they had been married for 19 years and had no children.

¹ He was awarded The Queen's South Africa Medal with Clasps indicating that he served in the actions at Johannesburg (29 May 1900), Diamond Hill (11 June 1900), Witterbergen (1 July 1900) and the later actions at Cape Colony (up to 31 May 1902). Evelyn also got The King's South Africa Medal with the Clasps "South Africa 1901" (which was awarded to all troops who served in South Africa between 1 January 1901 and 31 December 1901 inclusive) and "South Africa 1902" (awarded to all troops who served in South Africa between 1 January 1902 and 31 May 1902 inclusive).

(Laura) Eileen McKiernan (born 6 February 1887) married Ernest John Lionel Vincent (born 14 November 1868) at Holy Trinity Church, Birkenhead, in April/June 1911. In the 1939 Register (29 September) they are recorded as living at "Mayburne", Treburbie Water, Liskeard, Cornwall; Ernest was described as an air raid warden master mariner (retired) and an additional note states that he was a late Lieutenant Commander of the Royal Naval Reserve. Ernest died, aged 85, in mid-1954 but it is not known when Laura died.

Kathleen Maud McKiernan, Evelyn's older sister, had married James Maurice Trier in Lambeth, London, April/June 1894 but they have not been found in the 1901 census. In the 1911 census she was recorded, aged 34 (married 16 years with one child) at 2 Regent House, Wellington Place, London. In the household was one servant but neither her husband nor child were in the household. It is believed that James Trier may have worked at the London Stock Exchange and he died in late 1931, aged 65, at Steyning, Sussex. It is possible that Kathleen and James divorced as a Kathleen M Trier married a John W Smith in early 1912 in Marylebone. It is not known when Kathleen died and nothing further is known of her.

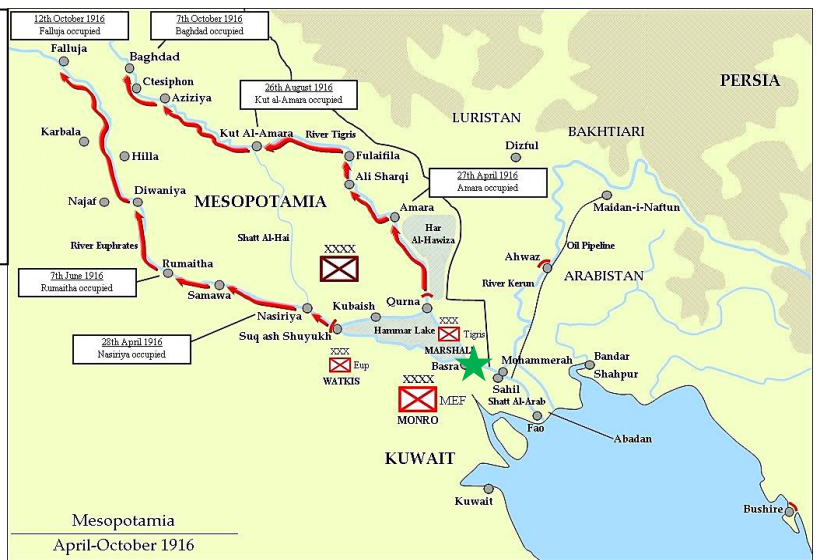
It appears that the son of James and Kathleen, Patrick (14), was a cadet on the School Ship HMS *Conway* on the Mersey at Rock Ferry at the time of the 1911 census. HMS *Conway* was a naval training school founded in 1859 which moved to the Menai Strait during World War II. While being towed back to Birkenhead for a refit in 1953, she ran aground and was wrecked and later burned. Nothing further is known of Patrick.

Gerald Sydney McKiernan married Florence Louisa Jones (born 31 July 1885) at St Oswald's Church, Bidston, in early 1927. It is understood that he served as a Staff Serjeant in the Supply Transport Corps. of the Leicestershire Regiment during WW1 (Service Number 1059) and that he died at St Asaph, Flintshire on 4 May 1951 aged 68. In the 1939 Register (29 September) they were recorded as living at "Melda", Bryn Newydd, Prestatyn where Gerald was noted as a *Capt. RASC India, Retired*.

As noted above, no record of Evelyn James McKiernan has been found in the 1901 census return and he has also not been found in the 1911 census when, most probably, he was in India. There is no record of his army service or circumstances of his death.

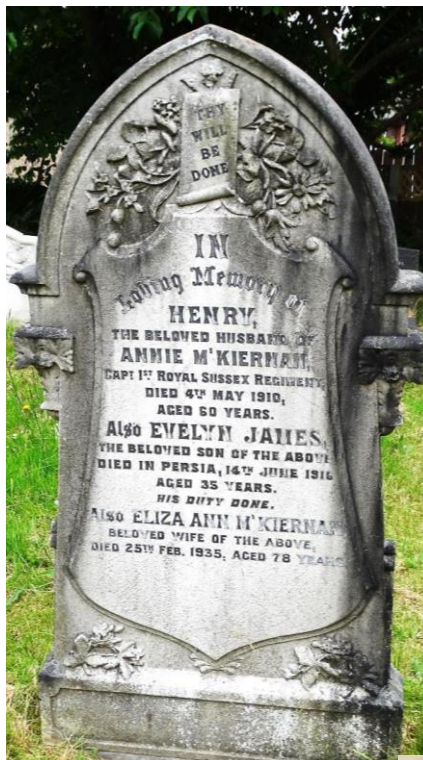
The Supply & Transport Corps, Indian Contingent, was an arm of the Indian Army. Around 10% of the 1.44 million Indian Army troops who fought in WW1 served in France & Belgium, the rest being sent to Gallipoli, Salonika, East Africa and the Middle East. Here they successfully defended the Persian and Iraqi oil fields, which Britain needed against the Turks (the Ottoman Empire) who were allies of the Germans. In total 675,000 Indian troops were sent to Mesopotamia (now largely Iraq). With the exception of aircraft, all the supplies for Indian and British troops in the campaign came from India. By the end of the war there were three times as many Indian troops fighting in the region than British troops.

Mesopotamia: April – October 1916 The location of Basra, in the south of the country, is indicated by the green star. [Source: <https://forum.paradoxplaza.com/forum/index.php?threads/1914-1924-british-interests-british-honour-british-obligations.147311/page-34>]



The British-Indian force captured Baghdad in March 1917 and in October 1918, after The Battle of Sharqat, the main Turkish force in Mesopotamia surrendered. Nearly 30,000 Indian troops died fighting in Mesopotamia, which was one of the main fronts against the Turkish army.

On 11 January 1879, a Royal Warrant established conductors of supplies (in the Army Service Corps) and conductors of stores (in the Ordnance Store Branch) as warrant officers, ranking above all non-commissioned officers. In 1892, conductors of supplies were renamed staff sergeant majors 1st class, but conductors of stores remained in what in 1896 became the Army Ordnance Corps. Staff sergeant majors in the new Corps. were renamed sub-conductors. In February 1915, with the general introduction of warrant officers throughout the army, conductors and sub-conductors became warrant officers class I. [Wikipedia] It seems, from the wording in the newspapers and on the headstone, that Evelyn was not killed but, perhaps, died of some illness. Although he was ‘buried under the palm trees’ Evelyn was reburied at the Basra War Cemetery.



The M’Kiernan grave, Christchurch, Willaston.

In Loving Memory of
HENRY
The Beloved Husband of
ANNIE M’KIERNAN
Capt. 1st Royal Sussex Regiment
Died 4th May 1910,
Aged 60 Years
Also EVELYN JAMES,
The Beloved Son of the Above
Died in Persia, 14th June 1916
Aged 35 Years
His Duty Done
Also ELIZA ANN M’KIERNAN
Beloved Wife of the Above
Died 25th Feb. 1935, Aged 78 Years

During the First World War, Basra was occupied by the 6th (Poona) Division in November 1914, from which date the town became the base of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force.

NESTON.
DIED AT THE PERSIAN GULF.—News has been received by Mrs. M’Kiernan, “Lynwood,” Hinderton-road, Neston, of the death of her step-son, Sub-conductor Evelyn James M’Kiernan, Supply and Transport Corps, Indian contingent, who died at the Persian Gulf on the 14th June. Possessing marked ability and a particularly fine and manly disposition, he early won the respect and esteem of his officers and men. He went through the South African War, and was in several severe engagements. At the close of that war he returned with his regiment to India, where he remained until the commencement of the present hostilities. He was the eldest son of the late Capt. M’Kiernan, who survived the Soudan and Nile Expeditions, and who was one of the mounted horsemen sent to the relief of General Gordon of Khartoum. Letters of sympathy received by Mrs. M’Keirnan include a message of condolence from the King and Queen. One of his officers had stated in a letter that he had been buried under the palm trees, and that they were erecting a headstone over the spot.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 12 August 1916

SUB-CON. E. J. M'KIERNAN.

News has been received by Mrs. M'Kiernan, Lynwood, Hinderton-road, Neston, of the death of her son, Sub-Con. Evelyn James M'Kiernan, supply and transport, Indian contingent, who died at the Persian Gulf on the 14th June. He went through the South African War, and was in several severe engagements. He was the eldest son of the late Captain M'Kiernan, who survived the Soudan and Nile Expeditions, and was one of the mounted horsemen bent on the relief of General Gordon of Khartoum.

Liverpool Echo - Thursday 10 August 1916
The same report appeared in the Birkenhead News of Saturday 12 August 1916

A number of cemeteries were used by the MEF in and around Basra; Makina Masul Old Cemetery was used from December 1914 to October 1916 and the Makina Masul New Extension was

begun alongside the old cemetery in August 1917. These two sites, enlarged later when more than 1,000 graves were brought in from other burial grounds, now form Basra War Cemetery. The cemetery now contains 2,551 burials of the First World War, 74 of them unidentified. [CWGC]

Supply and Transport Corps Unit or Department with Supply and Transport Corps Permanent Unit				which the decoration(s) ^{was} were earned. or Department.						
Roll of individuals entitled to (1) The British War Medal, 1914-18. (2) The Victory Medal.				(Strike out either medal if not claimed.)						
Regiment No.	Rank.	Name.	In sequence units and Corps previously served with by each individual and regimental numbers thereof the highest rank, whether substantive, acting or temporary received as being held for any period in a direction of war, unless received for misconduct, being given against the name of the Regiment or Corps which is to be inscribed on the Medal.	Theatres of war in which served.	Whether (1) The British War Medal or (2) The Victory Medal or BOTH ARE CLAIMED.	If non-effective or forfeited, question facts and cause.	In the case of deceased British officers and British warrant and non-commissioned officers state name and address of next-of-kin or legal representative.	In the case of retired British officers and British warrant and non-commissioned officers state pension status.	Record of disposal of decorations.	Remarks (if any) and address to which decorations should be sent.
Sub- Condr.		M'Kiernan, G. S.	S. & T. Corps.	I. E. F. "A" 11-8-14 to 28-12-15. East Persian Gordon Baluchis- tan Field Force 11-9-18 to 9-11-19. Egyptian Expeditionary Force, 27-11-20 to 11-6-21.	Yes Yes					Center

I certify that according to the official records (the individual(s) named in this roll is/are entitled to the medal ^{or medals detailed above.})
*(Strike out if not required.)

No: 157-25120
Place: Simla.
Date: 27th July 1921.
SOP48-74 AD-20-1-21-20000

Charles Keay Major,
for Controller of Contracts.
Signature and rank of officer.
(The signature of claimants themselves to certificates on their own rolls will not be accepted.)

WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920 – entry for Evelyn’s brother, Gerald Sydney M’Kiernan

Evelyn’s mother, Eliza Ann, was recorded as living on Hinderton Road, Neston, at the time of Evelyn’s death in 1916. She died aged 78 on 25 February 1935 and is buried with Henry at Christ Church, Willaston.

Note: The booklet ‘Lest We Forget : Willaston Remembers Its First World War Fallen’ notes that:

Evelyn’s father married Ann McKiernan in 1891, a widow aged 53 at Birkenhead. She was born in 1858 at Hooton...Evelyn married Eliza Ann. She died aged 78 in 1935.

This is believed to be erroneous since (Eliza) Ann Field was aged 32 or 33 and a spinster when she married Henry and it is believed that Evelyn remained unmarried (the gravestone inscription has been misinterpreted); it would have been a remarkable coincidence if he also had married an Eliza Ann.