

169: Charles Whitley MC

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Charles Whitley

Rank: Captain

Battalion / Regiment: 7th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps

Service Number: Date of Death: 11 April 1917 Age at Death: 28

Buried / Commemorated at: Hibers Trench British Cemetery, Wancourt, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: Born at Halewood, Liverpool. Son of Mr. Ed. and Elizabeth Eleanor Whitley, of Primley, Paignton, Devon.

Charles Whitley, the second son of wealthy prominent solicitor and Everton Member of Parliament Edward and Elizabeth Whitley, was born on 9 October 1888 in Halewood and baptised on 11 February 1889 at Halewood and Tarbuck.

Edward Whitley and Elizabeth Eleanor Walker were married in early 1878 at St Mary's Church, Walton, Liverpool, and they had two residences, *The Grange*, Halewood and his 'town address' was 185 Piccadilly, London (a boarding house). Following their marriage the Conservative Party presented him '*...with a service of plate worth £750*'.

At the time of the 1881 census they were boarding at 185 Piccadilly; Edward Whitley, 55, was recorded as a solicitor, Member of Parliament and Magistrate & Town Councillor of Liverpool. Elizabeth Eleanor was 33 and had been born in Bootle and their son, Edward, was with them and recorded as being 1 year old and born in Anfield.

It has proved impossible to locate the family, or individuals, in the 1891 census but Edward Whitley died at The Grange, Halewood, on Thursday 14 January 1892

'...from the effects of a severe chill contracted on Monday night'.

At the time of the 1901 census Charles Whitley and his widowed mother were living at Bromsgrove, about 13 miles south west of Birmingham:

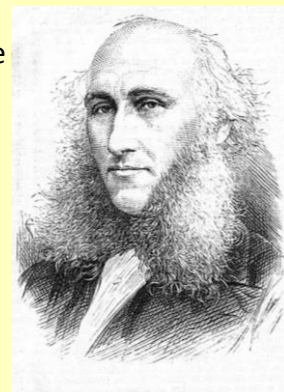
Edward Whitley was the son of John and Isabella Whitley of Liverpool. Edward was educated at Rugby School and was admitted as a solicitor in 1849, becoming a partner with his father in the Liverpool firm of J. & E. Whitley & Thomson. Upon the death of both John Whitley and Thomson the firm became Whitley & Maddock before expanding as Whitley, Maddock, Hampson, & Castle in which Edward Whitley was a senior partner. In 1865 he entered the Council for the Everton Ward, became a member of the Corporation of Liverpool and was the leader of the Liverpool Conservative Party. He was elected as Mayor of Liverpool in 1867 and was also a local JP. In 1877 he was elected as the President of the Law Society.

In February 1880, aged 55, Edward Whitley was elected (with a majority of 2221) as one of three MPs for Liverpool and he held the seat until the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 when he was elected MP for Everton, a seat he held until his death aged 66 on 14 January 1892.

On election the Conservative Party '*...made him a gift of a carriage and a pair of horses*'.

He was buried in Alvanley Churchyard, near Helsby.

Edward Whitley is commemorated by Whitley Street, off Love Lane in the Vauxhall district of Liverpool and a statue in St George's Hall.



MR. EDWARD WHITLEY, THE NEW M.P. FOR LIVERPOOL.

Elizabeth E. Whitley	Head	wid		53	Living on own means	Employer	Lucas Bootle
Charles do	Son	S	12				do Halewood
Kate S. Hugh Jones	Niece	M		35			do Wargrave
Mary Aland	Serv.	wid		66	Housekeeper	Worker	Ireland Coleraine
Elizabeth Blues	"	wid		46	Housemaid	do	do do
Amelia S. Emerson	"	S		32	Maid	do	London Lime House
Susan Taylor	"	S		37	Cook	do	Ireland Ballisknort
Jane Wright	"	S		22	Washer	do	Salop Glasgow

1901 census (extract) – Elmhurst, 2 Stoney Hill, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Elizabeth E. Whitley	53	living on own means	born Bootle
Charles	12		born Halewood
Kate S. Hugh Jones	35	niece	born Wargrave

Five servants were also present in the household.

Charles had three other brothers, not present in the household on census night: Edward born 1879; William, born 1883; Herbert, born 1886. William (15) and Herbert (17) were boarding at Bromsgrove School and Charles attended the same school. Herbert (1886 - 1955) had an interest in animals and went on to be a founder of Paignton Zoo which he opened in 1923.

Charles Whitley attended Balliol College, Oxford, between 1906 -1909 and the *Balliol College War Memorial Book (vol. 2)* documents his life:

Charles Whitley

CHARLES WHITLEY, son of the late Edward Whitley, M.P., of Liverpool, came up from Bromsgrove in 1906 as a Brackenbury Scholar. He showed considerable promise in his scientific work, but ill-health compelled him to go down at the end of his third year. He played Rugby football for the College and was Captain in 1908-9. When he came of age he entered upon the unrestricted possession of a large income. It would be true to say that it was to him something of a burden: he cared nothing for comfort, was intolerant of all display, and would have been perfectly happy as a poor man. A tithe of his income sufficed for his personal needs; the rest he devoted to public purposes carefully selected and examined with businesslike shrewdness.

To his old school, Bromsgrove, he was a generous benefactor: he gave several new buildings and spent large sums on land and house-property which he made over to the school. He took an active interest in the Liverpool University Settlement, and in conjunction with a friend he started a dental clinic as an experiment; this proved so valuable that it was taken over by the local authorities and formed the model for several clinics in connection with the elementary schools in Liverpool.

His mind was restlessly at work on all social subjects: superficially his views were socialistic, but those who knew him best were aware that this was only the expression of an intense desire to give everyone a chance. He would even support financially objects of which he hardly approved, in order that no cause might be precluded by lack of resources from gaining a hearing.

The real man was known to very few; shy and sensitive to the verge of timidity; sharp of tongue and merciless in criticism, he was often misunderstood and seemed to be merely destructive. Beneath the surface his life was governed by two fixed principles—a fearless pursuit of truth at all costs, and a passionate desire to be of use. He never failed a friend and wealth was to him but the opportunity of service.

In August 1914 he enlisted as a private, and in April 1915

was commissioned to the 7th Battalion K.R.R.C. He went to France in June 1915 and served in the Ypres salient, being wounded in the attack on Bellewarde Ridge on September 25. He was promoted Captain in July 1916, and on August 17, 1916, he was again wounded when leading the assaulting company in the final attack to clear Delville Wood, when he received the Military Cross for "Conspicuous Gallantry in Action." He rejoined his old battalion, and early in 1917 he refused an offer of an appointment at Headquarters, saying that he was too much attached to his company and that he felt it his duty to remain a Company Officer as long as he could carry on. On April 11, 1917, he was killed in the Battle of Arras, leading his company in the attack on Wancourt. He fell in a gallant attempt, single-handed with a Lewis gun, to silence the enfilade fire from Hill 90, which had brought the attack to a standstill in front of uncut wire. He was twice mentioned in Despatches.



By the time of the 1911 census, having recently inherited from his late father, he had bought 'Weatherstones', the large house on the Chester High Road in conjunction with an Edmund Page, possibly someone he had been at school with at Bromsgrove:

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.	
			For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.	Write "Single," or "Married," or "Widower," or "Widow," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Completed years the present Marriage has lasted.	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Total Children Born Alive.	Children who have Died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.				Whether Working at Home.
1 Charles Whitley	Joint owner	22	—	Single.						Private Means.	370			Halewood, Doncaster.	Engl.	
2 Edmund Page	and occupiers	23	—	Single.						Private Means.				Selly Oak, Worcestershire.	Engl.	
3 Lyndon Henry Morris	Visitor	22	—	Single.						Solicitor's Articled Clerk	428	worker		Bakewell, Derbyshire.	Engl.	
4 Frederick William Spratt	Visitor	21	—	Single.						Solicitor's Articled Clerk		worker		Bombay, India.	Engl.	
5 Ellen Whelan	Servant	38	—	Single.						Cook. (Domestic.)	019	worker		Ballinamona, Ireland.	Engl.	
6 Evelyn Griffiths	"	28	—	Single.						Housemaid. (Domestic.)		worker		Chester, Cheshire.	Engl.	
7 Edith Annie Harley	"	22	—	Single.						Kitchenmaid. (Domestic.)		worker		Marsh Brooks, Shropshire.	Engl.	
8 John Edwards	"	15	—	Single.						House-boy. (Domestic.)		worker		Willaston, Cheshire.	Engl.	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Total.		
Males	Females	Persons
5	3	8

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

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

Signature: Charles Whitley

Postal Address: Weatherstones, Weston, Cheshire.

1911 census (condensed) – Weatherstones, Neston

Charles Whitley	22] joint owners	private means	born Halewood
Edmund Page	23] and occupiers	private means	born Selly Oak, Worcs.
Lyndon Henry Morris	22	visitor, solicitor's	articled clerk	Halewood Bakewell, Derby.
Frederick William Spratt	21	visitor, solicitor's	articled clerk	born Bombay, India
Ellen Whelan	38	cook, domestic		born Ballinamona
Evelyn Griffiths	28	housemaid (domestic)		born Chester
Edith Annie Harley	22	kitchenmaid (domestic)		born Marsh Brooks
John Edwards	15	house boy (domestic)		born Willaston

The Balliol College War Memorial Book notes that Charles enlisted in August 1914 and in April 1915 was commissioned to the King's Royal Rifle Corps. His army career is summarised in the obituary in the Regimental Chronicle in 1917:

CAPTAIN CHARLES WHITLEY, M.C.

The youngest son of the late Edward Whitley, M.P., of Liverpool, and of Mrs. Whitley, of Primley Hill, Paignton. He joined the 14th Battalion as a private in 1914, and was given a temporary commission in the 7th Battalion in the following year. Whitley saw much service whilst serving in this Battalion, being promoted Captain in 1916, and was awarded the Military Cross, October 1916, "for conspicuous gallantry in action. Though shot through the arm, he remained in command of his Company, advanced with it, captured and consolidated the enemy's trench, and remained on duty for twelve hours after being wounded until relieved." He fell in action on April 11th, 1917, whilst leading his Company to the attack of the German position at Wancourt. He was 27 years of age when he met his death.

Lieut. Whitley, of Warren Hall, has received the D.C.M. (Distinguished Conduct Medal) for his services in France. Although wounded in the forearm by shrapnel, he remained in command of his men for twelve consecutive hours. We congratulate him and hope he may live long to enjoy the honour.

The Hawarden Parish Magazine, early 1917

It appears that the action for which he was awarded the MC was for leading 'C' Coy at the attack on Orchard Trench north of Longueval on 18 Sep 1916.

Charles's death occurred on the third day of The Battle of Arras, a conflict which continued until 16 May costing nearly 160,000 British and 125,000 German lives.



Although significant gains were made on the first day of the battle, a stalemate position then meant that little new progress was made and the Allied troops were unable to achieve a breakthrough of the German trench positions. The attack in which Charles died, leading an attack on Hill 90, was ill-conceived but went ahead despite the opposition of the commanding officer. The details of the action are well-recorded in the War Diary; the relevant section of this is reproduced on the following pages together with the ill-fated orders to attack.

By the time of his death Charles Whitley appears to have moved from 'Weatherstones', Neston to Warren Hall at Broughton and it is quite possible that he had moved by 1914 as he is not listed in Neston in Kelly's Directory for that year.

Warren Hall, an Italianate-style villa of about 1850, was owned for some time by Gladstone's Hawarden Estate.



The war grave of Charles Whitley at Hibernia Trench British Cemetery, Wancourt, France [CWGC]

Charles died a very wealthy young man, his Probate recording: *Whitley, Charles of Warren Hall, Broughton, Flintshire. Captain 7th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps. Died 11th April 1917 in France. Probate London, 19 October to William Whitley & John Trengone Lance, gentlemen. Effects £208,743 0s.9d.* This is equivalent, in 2018, to a labour value of around £50 million.



Warren Hall, Broughton [<http://www.visionwebsites.co.uk/>]

11th 1 A.M. The night passed quite quietly. About 1 A.M. the Brigadier came up & talked over the situation. He agreed that it was quite impossible to push on until Hill 90 had been taken by the 56th Divⁿ & that all we could do was to remain on the defensive. Any advance up the valley was sheer madness until the machine guns on Hill 90 which enfiladed the whole valley had been put out of action.

11th 4:30 A.M. The attached orders arrived & in spite of all protests we were ordered to carry them out. There was no time to copy them out & the originals had to be sent up to the forward Coys. B & C Companies supported by the 8th R.B. were to advance up the valley & to try & push on to WANCOURT. The 56th Division never left their trenches or made any attempt to take HILL 90.

Graps & Order attached.

1577 Wt. W10791/1773 500,000 1/15 D. D. & L. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

12th B Coy under WHITLEY made a most gallant attempt to push forward but from the start it was an impossible task & the Staff who had ordered the attack, if they had ever come near enough to have looked at the ground would have realized it too & would never have ordered the attack. WHITLEY was alas killed, gallant soldier that he was & his body was found nearest to the German wire which was totally uncut. The artillery preparation which had been ordered in a great hurry never materialised - in fact the orders in many cases never arrived in time & the whole show was a complete failure from want of preparation & organisation on the part of the staff. The rest of the day was spent in our original positions & towards evening heavy snowstorms set in & before long there were two inches of snow on the ground. It was impossible to get in the wounded until after dark so that their sufferings were very much aggravated by the cold. That night we were relieved by the 8th K.R.R. & moved back to the old COJEUL SWITCH line, where a bitterly cold night was spent in the open, without any dugouts & with fresh snow showers all night.

The 12th was spent in these trenches & the 8th K.R.R. & 8th R.B. occupied WANCOURT without a casualty as HILL 90 had been evacuated during the night. The whole Division was relieved by the 50th Divⁿ & the Battn. marched back to ARRAS. It was an awful march in the dark - the mud was very deep & men had to be dug out of it at times but by 2 A.M. we reached the town & went into billets.

Casualty list.

Our casualties during these four days were :-

<u>Officers</u> :-	Captain C. WHITLEY, M.C. KILLED.	Capt. G. H. WILLIAMSON, M.C. Died of Wounds.
	Lieut. F. J. ST AUBYN - "	Lieut. K. H. WILLIAMSON, - "
	2 nd Lieut. F. R. WILLIAMS - "	Lieut. C. C. OMMANNEY, Wounded
	" P. F. WALFORD - "	Lieut. J. G. JOHNSTON, SCOTTISH RIFLES, WOUNDED
	" G. D. FERRARD, WOUNDED	2 nd Lieut. G. E. PULLINGER, WOUNDED
	" S. WIGGINS, - "	" W. O. DRING, - "

<u>Other Ranks</u>	KILLED	DIED OF WOUNDS	WOUNDED	MISSING	
Sergeants	1	1	9	-	This total includes 5 ORs. wounded and to duty.
2 nd Lieut. + Coys	3	-	6	-	
Private men	17	14	129	9	
Totals	20	15	140	9	

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(Continued from previous page)

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 LIEUT. F.J. ST AUBYN " " 2 Lieut. K.H. WILLIAMSON, " "
 2nd LIEUT. F.R. WILLIAMS " " LIEUT. C.C. OMMANNEY, Wounded
 " " P.F. WALFORD " " LIEUT. J.G. JOHNSTON, SCOTTISH RIFLES, WOUNDED
 " " G.D. FERARD WOUNDED 2nd Lieut. C.E. PULLINGER, WOUNDED
 " " S. WIGGINS " " " " W.O. DRING, " "

Other Ranks

	KILLED	DIED OF WOUNDS	WOUNDED	MISSING
Sergeants	-	1	9	-
L/Sgts & Cpls	3	-	6	-
Riflemen	17	14	125	9
Totals	20	15	140	9

This total includes 5 O.R.s wounded and to duty

"A" Form. Army Form 65121 (in part of 190.) No. of Message.

MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.

Prefix: Code: Words: Change: This message is an obj of: Recd. at: in: Date: From: To: By: (Signature of "Planking Officer")

TO: 7/50 8/6th 7/1st B.R.C. 41st Lanch MG Coy

Sender's Number: B 298. Day of Month: 11/14. In reply to Number: AAA

The attack will be renewed tomorrow at 6 am 3rd Div's address to attack GUEMAPPÉ area by 6 am 56th Div's hope to be on Hill 90 N.21 d to N.22 C. AAA at 6 am 30th & 21st Divs attack COJEUL SWITCH in N.27.28.23 & 30th Div's have further objectives HENINEL and high ground N.29. b. AAA 41st Bde will attack WANCOURT at 6.30 am as follows: AAA Troop in occupation of BROWN second line it will be necessary to start barrage on BROWN original enemy front line and then fire will draw to the best cover available about 200 to 300 yards in rear by 6.30 am AAA Creeping barrage comes down on BROWN original front line

From: Place: Time: (Z)

Signature of Addressor or person authorized to telegraph in his name: [Signature]

"A" Form. Army Form 65121 (in part of 190.) No. of Message.

MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.

Prefix: Code: Words: Change: This message is an obj of: Recd. at: in: Date: From: To: By: (Signature of "Planking Officer")

TO:

Sender's Number: Day of Month: In reply to Number: AAA

at 6.30 am and lifts off it at 6.40 am. by which hour leading wave must have advanced again as close under the barrage as possible AAA barrage lifts back at rate of 100 yards in 14 minutes to the N and S line between HENINEL N.23 and N.24 where it remains for 10 minutes and then ceases AAA Northern limit of barrage N.16 Central to N.18. C.O.O Southern limit from N.22 a. Central to N.24. C.O.5 AAA No troops of BLUE to be South of line N.23. C.O.6 and N.24. C.O.6 as this ground is likely to be shelled during attack on HENINEL AAA After capture of WANCOURT 41st Bde will establish line on high ground N.24 d facing S.E and establish posts connecting with 3rd Div in O.13. C

From: Place: Time: (Z)

Signature of Addressor or person authorized to telegraph in his name: [Signature]

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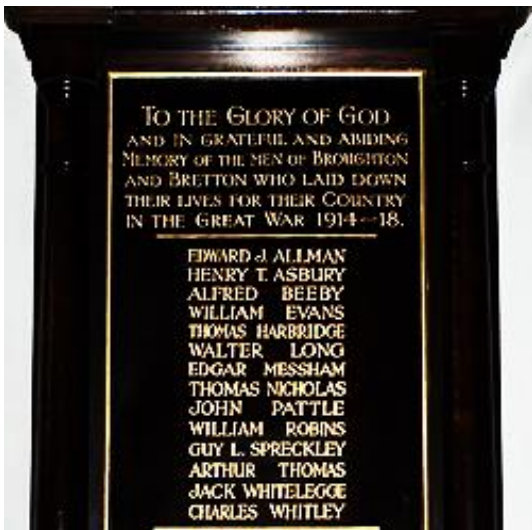
Sender's Number: Day of Month: In reply to Number: AAA

and with 56th Div in N.13. a. AAA The attack of the 41st Bde will be carried out as follows: AAA in first line 7.5. R.R.C on right 7. R.B. on left dividing line between battalions road through village from N.23. a. G. to Cross Roads in N.23. G.2. A. to 7. K.R.R.C inclusive AAA 8. R.B. will cooperate in support AAA 8. K.R.R.C will be in reserve AAA 13. a. H.Q. will remain as at present AAA O.C. M.G. Coy will endeavour to keep down enemy fire from Hill 90 N.21 d to N.22. C and high ground to the EAST of WANCOURT until occupied by our troops AAA Should the attack be successful the Division will be prepared to advance.

From: Place: Time: (Z) [Signature]

Signature of Addressor or person authorized to telegraph in his name: [Signature]

The orders, enclosed within the War Diary, received by the 7th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps to attack Hill 90 on 11 April 1917 and which led to the death of Charles Whitley close to the German position.

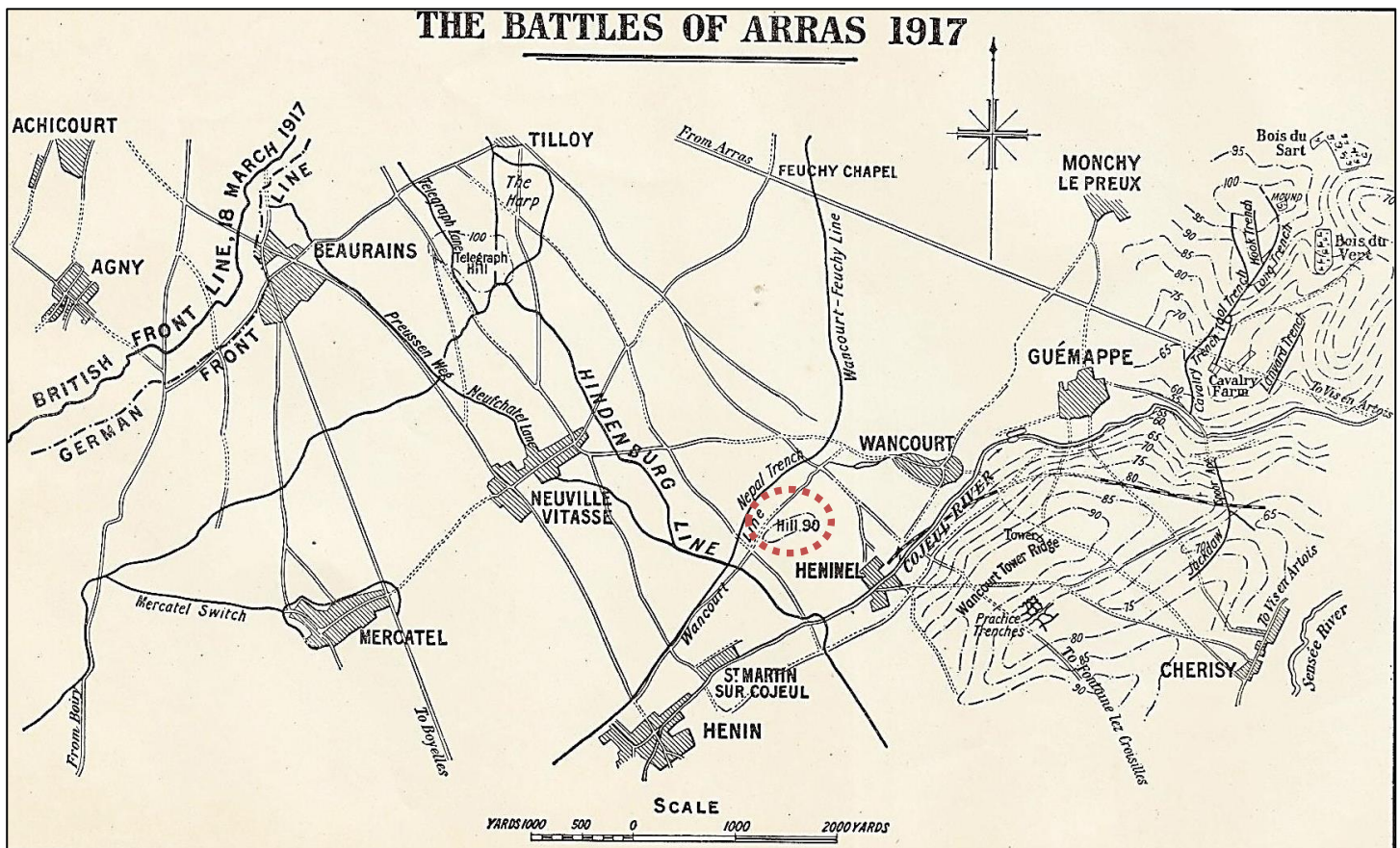


Charles Whitley is commemorated as the final name on the Broughton War Memorial in St. Mary's Church, Broughton, and on the Hawarden War Memorial.

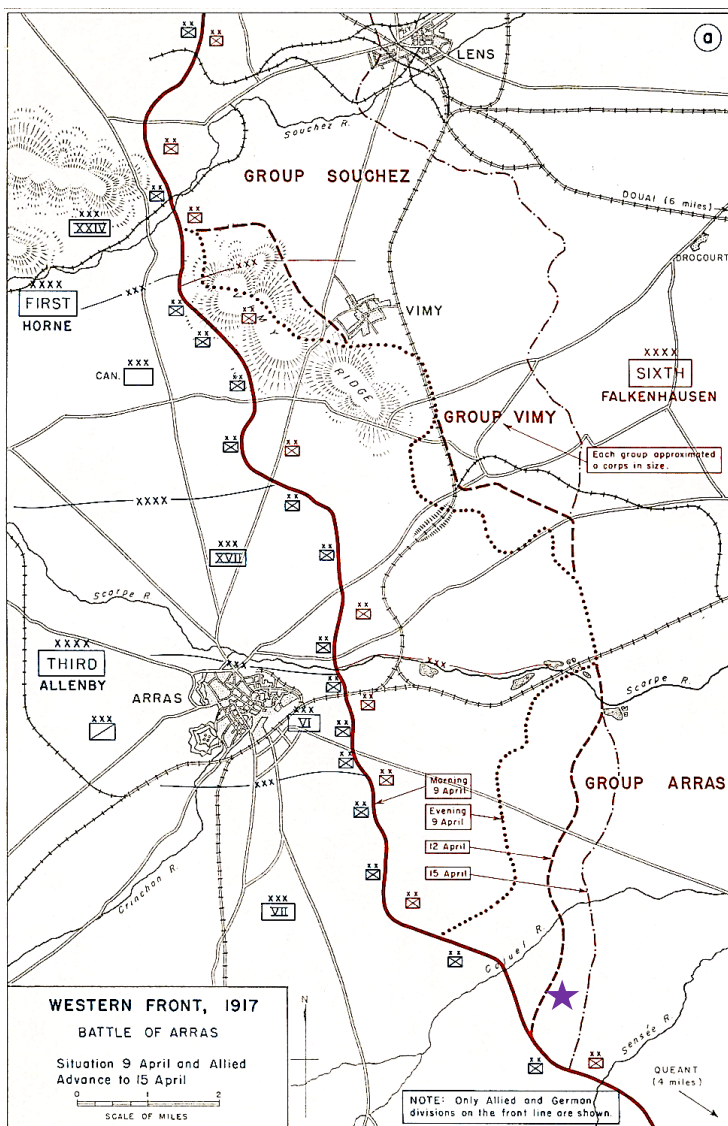
The Times – Saturday 21 April 1917

WHITLEY.—Killed in action, on the 11th April, CAPTAIN CHARLES WHITLEY, M.C., King's Royal Rifles, of Warren Hall, near Chester, youngest son of the late Edward Whitley, M.P., of Liverpool, and of Mrs. Whitley, Primley Hill, Paignton, aged 27.

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS 1917

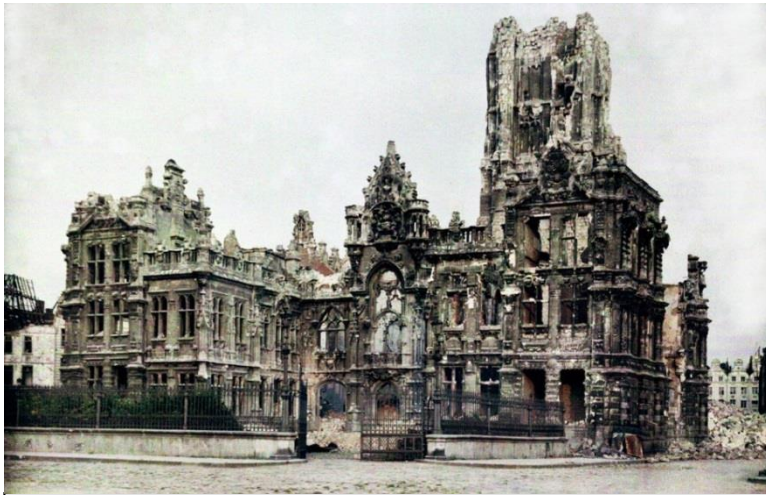


The position of Hill 90, north of Henin and commanding the western route to **Wancourt**, is encircled in red. The German machine gun posts which caused many casualties – including Charles Whitley – were on the southern side of this hill. On the night of 11 April the troops withdrew after their failed attempt on the hill and moved west to the Cojeul Switch line, the name given to the Hindenburg Line, now occupied by Allied forces, to the east of Neuville Vitasse. [Source: <https://andrewparkrunner.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/frederick-fred-jacobs/>]



Map of the Battle of Arras (1917) showing Allied advances from 9 - 15 April. The approximate location of Charles Whitley's death near Wancourt (not shown on this map) is indicated by the purple star to the south-east of Arras. On 12 April the remnants of the 7th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, having being relieved at the front, marched back from this position in the dark and through deep mud the 4½ miles to Arras [Map source: ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk]

Additional detail of the Whitley family is given at: <https://worldwarzoogardener1939.wordpress.com/2014/08/28/war-and-the-whitleys-para-medics-peacocks-and-paignton-zoo/>



The ruined town hall and belfry in Arras, 1917 [Source: <http://worldwaroneincolour.tumblr.com/post/132004657526/photographer-jean-baptiste-tournassoud-year>]



British cavalry riding through Arras, 11 April 1917 [Source: www.iwm.org.uk]

which the Rector added to the
Memorial Service.—On Sunday evening, April 22nd, a Memorial Service was held for Captain Charles Whitley. The Church was full, and the service was reverently and devotionally rendered by the choir and congregation.

Mr. Whitley, who was only twenty-seven years of age, was a graduate of Brasenose College, Oxford. He, together with Mr., now Captain Edmund Page, had been at great pains, before the war, to strike out a special and scientific line in farming and cattle breeding. To this interesting labour he hoped to return as soon as the war should end. Though the war and everything connected with it was distasteful to him, he cheerfully volunteered his services, and enlisted as a private soon after war was declared. He went out to France on August 4th, 1915, the anniversary of the declaration of war, where he was continuously—except for the periods during which he was invalided owing to his wounds—until the end came. He was killed, together with all, or nearly all his company, early in the morning of Wednesday, April 11th, while leading his men to the attack on Wancourt, just south-east of Arras.

He was a devout and regular communicant, and was ever generously ready to help forward all good causes. He wrote his last letter to his mother (Mrs. Whitley, of Primley Hill, Paignton), on Easter Day.

Broughton and Bretton and district have lost a churchman, a friend, and a true Knight of the Cross. May he go from strength to strength in the nearer presence of God, and may he increase his life begun and continued here in union with the Lord of Life and Glory, who was dead and is alive for evermore. Amen.

A. E. T.

Hawarden Parish Magazine, 1917

25322	1193/4	Whitley Capt.	m.c. R.R. R.C. C.	11.4.17	Boyle	6/12.				✓ 9 11 11
				In Action	Transfer 2096	4/17				104 76
					C.P. Base	5/17				3 8 1

WAR GRATUITY
 1565 2/15/20
 Transf. 4-12-17
 Recd. 2/1/20

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. A considerable payment of outstanding wages of £117 17s 6d from the army was made together with a War Gratuity of £5. This, a total value of £122 17s 6d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £19100 in 2016. Part of this payment was made to Cox & Co., the banking service preferred by many officers, but the largest amount was made as a 'transfer' although the significance of this is unknown.

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.