

## 21: John Davies

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: J. Davies

Rank: Private      Shown as Rifleman by CWGC

Battalion / Regiment: 1 / 5 Bn. South Lancashire Regiment

Service Number: 36208      Date of Death: 11 April 1918      Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Beuvry Communal Cemetery Extension, Beuvry, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: Husband of Mrs. M. Davies, of 12, Strand St., Ramsey, Isle of Man

Known from his military record to be John Davies who was born in either Thurstaston or Neston and who, enlisting in Birkenhead, was a resident of Neston.

He was killed in action whilst serving with the Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment) 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a Territorial Force.

John Davies was the son, and eldest child, of collier / farm labourer James and Mary Davies. James Davies was probably the son of Matthew & Margaret Davies of Heswall, baptised 18 July 1869 and he married Mary Ellen Taylor of Neston in a Civil Marriage in early 1888. John was born in April / June of that year, possibly in Thurstaston, probably Neston. Certainly, John was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 22 April 1890 when his father, James, was a collier in the town.

In 1891 James, Mary and John were living on Liverpool Road, Neston:

James Davies	Head	Mr	26	Coal Miner	X	Cheshire	Heswall
Mary D.	Wife	Mrs	24			Do.	Neston
John D.	Son		3			Do.	Do.

1891 census (extract) – Liverpool Road, Neston

James Davies	26	coal miner	born Heswall
Mary	24		born Neston
John	3		born Neston

Their second child, Mary Jane, was born in Neston and baptised at the Parish Church on 20 October 1893 but James and Mary had eight children who did not survive; those who are known are (James' occupation at the baptism is shown in brackets):

Thomas	baptised 9 February 1889	buried, aged 1 day, 15 February 1889	[labourer]
James	baptised 22 April 1890	buried, aged 2 months, 3 May 1890	[collier]
Joseph Henry	baptised 10 July 1891	buried, aged 7 months, 5 December 1891	[collier]
Maggie	baptised 10 May 1895	buried, aged 10 months, 15 February 1896	[collier]
Maggie	baptised 12 February 1897	buried, aged 8 months, 13 September 1897	[labourer]

Another daughter, Mary Ellen, was baptised 14 May 1899, when James was recorded as a labourer, and she was recorded in the 1911 census.

Ten years later, in the 1901 census, the family was still living on Liverpool Road, possibly in the same house although James was now recorded as a farm labourer and Mary's widowed father, William Taylor (64) was living with them. It seems that William Taylor's age was recorded incorrectly as it was probably he, recorded as living on Liverpool Road, who was buried at the Parish Church on 24 October 1903, aged 72.

James Davies	Head	M.	39	✓	Labourer on farm	Worker	Liverpool, Lancs.
Mary	Wife	M.	37	✓			Heswall, Cheshire
John	Son		13	✓			Neston, do
Mary J.	Daughter		6	✓	Scholar		Thurstaston, do
William Taylor	F. in Law	wid	64	✓			Neston, do
Mary Meir	Servt.	S.	16	✓	Servt. general, domestic		do do

1901 census (extract) – Liverpool Road, Neston [near the Malt Shovel]

James Davies	39	labourer on farm	born Heswall
Mary	37		born Neston
John	13		born Thurstaston
Mary J.	6		born Neston
William Taylor	64	father-in-law, widow	born Neston
Mary Meir	16	servant, general, domestic	born Neston

By the time of the 1911 census the family had moved from Liverpool Road to Lion Yard, Neston (behind the present-day Concept Interiors); William Taylor, Mary's father, had lived here before he was widowed.

1	James Davies	Head	M.	48	✓	Coal Miner	Hewer	Heswall, Cheshire	British
2	Mary Davies	Wife	M.	44	✓			Neston, Cheshire	British
3	John Davies	Son		23	✓	General Labourer		Neston, Cheshire	British
4	Mary E. Davies	Daughter		12	✓			Neston, Cheshire	British
5	Martha Davies	Daughter		9	✓			Neston, Cheshire	British

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that -		Total	
(1) All the ages in this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.		Males	Females
(2) I have counted the males and females in Column 2 and 3 separately.		2	3
(3) I have counted the males and females in Column 4 and 5 separately.		5	5
(4) I have checked the necessary entries in the Schedule with the original returns.			
(5) I have checked the necessary entries in the Schedule with the original returns.			

(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 (Kitchens, Tenements or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; see warehouse, office, shop.

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

Signature: James Davies  
Postal Address: Lion yard Neston

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1911 census (condensed) – Lion Yard, Neston

James Davies	48	coal miner, hewer	born Heswall
Mary	44		born Neston
John	23	general labourer	born Neston
Mary E.	12		born Neston
Martha	9		born Neston

James and Mary had been married for 23 years but only four of their twelve children had survived. There are some discrepancies in the ages recorded.

It is possible that John Davies was a labourer at the colliery although there is no definite evidence of this. However, the Neston Colliery Injuries Record Book records that a James Davies (stated to be 46 and living at Lion Yard) was injured on 20 March 1912 when there was a fall of stone from the roof of the area where he was working.

It may also be the same James Davies - although his age was recorded as being 53 - who was injured on 23 April 1923 when he suffered a head injury whilst working underground at the colliery.

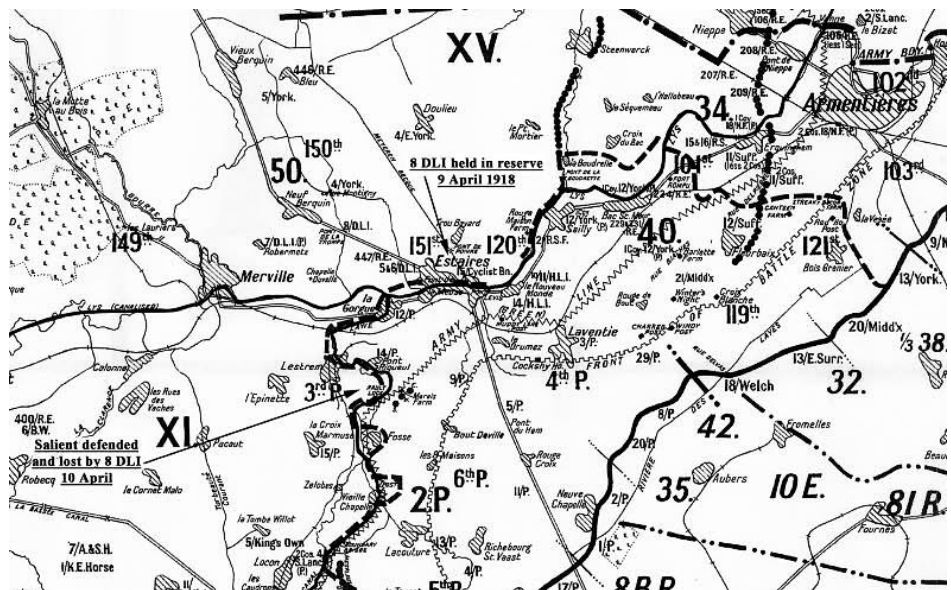
The CWGC record for John Davies notes that he was the husband of Mrs. M Davies, of 12, Strand St., Ramsey, Isle of Man. Whilst there is no definitive record of John's marriage it is known, from his army documentation, that his wife's name was Mabel.

John Davies enlisted in Birkenhead. Unfortunately, we have no further record of John other than, when he died (probably just after his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday), he was serving with the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, a Territorial Force which, at the outbreak of war, were part of the South Lancashire Infantry Brigade, West Lancashire Division with their headquarters in St Helens. On 13 February 1915 they moved to France, landing at Le Havre, and joined the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division. They were in action in The Second Battle of Ypres and spent the winter on the Somme attached to the 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Division, with the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade training the newly arrived Division.

On 6 January 1916 the 1/5<sup>th</sup> South Lancashires transferred to the 166<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the newly reformed 55<sup>th</sup> (West Lancashire) Division in the Hallencourt area. On 16 February 1916 the Division relieved the French 88<sup>th</sup> Division south of Arras moving to the Somme in late July to take over a section of front line near the village of Guillemont. They were in action at The Battle of Guillemont, The Battle of Ginchy, The Battle of Flers-Courcelette and The Battle of Morval.

The Division moved to Flanders in October 1916 and took over the front line between Wieltje and Railway Wood. In 1917 they were in action at Pilckem Ridge and Menin Road Ridge during The Third Battle of Ypres. They moved south to Cambrai where they suffered very heavily during the German Counter Attacks on 30 November 1917.

In the Spring of 1918 they were in action in The Battle of the Lys including The Defence of Givenchy between 9 - 17 April and it is possible that John Davies was killed at The Battle of Estaires (9 - 11 April) following a German bombardment against the southern part of the Allied line between Armentières and Festubert.



Map of the Battle of Estaires, 9 - 11 April 1918.  
[Source: [http://www.ossett.net/WW1/George\\_E\\_Jessop.html](http://www.ossett.net/WW1/George_E_Jessop.html)]

[Adapted from: <http://www.wartimemoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmy-view> ]

Early in the morning of 10 April 1918 the Germans launched heavy attacks covered by artillery fire at the river crossings at Lestrem and Estaires, and succeeded in reaching the left bank at both places. However, on each occasion, in each case were driven back. The Germans continued to exercise great pressure at Estaires, and fierce street fighting took place, in which both sides lost heavily. However, by the evening the German forces moved into Estaires and, to the east of the town, the enemy had already crossed the Lys in strength with artillery in close support of the infantry.



British troops blinded by tear gas during the Battle of the Lys, 10 April 1918. [Source: en.wikipedia.org]

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
DAVIES	S. Lan. R.	Pte	36208
John.			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	J/1/103 B9	1621	
BRITISH	do	do	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1350

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	CREDITS			CHARGES			Date of Authority	To whom Authorised	Amount Authorised			No. of List in which advertised	
					Account and Date	£	s.	d.	Account and Date	£			s.	d.			
706106	1/58694	Davies John	1st S.L. Coy Pte 36208	11.4.18 in action France	Shrewsbury 5-18	2	-	5	5	12	11	1916-8-18	Wid: Mabel	5	12	11	
						3	12	6				6/12/19 Wid: Mabel	14				910
						WA: GRATUITY. Effects 19 19 20 18/11/19 Transfer 6665 Regd. Paper 255 Dec 24 Serial No. 66147											
						A. F. W. 5370 SENT DATE 5 JUL 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.

John Davies had accrued a credit of £5 12s 11d and this was received by his widow Mabel in two instalments. Mabel received also the £14 War Gratuity. The total payment, £19 12s 11d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £3000 in 2018.

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.

Nothing further is known of any of the family of John Davies.