

29: Thomas Ellis

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: T. Ellis
 Rank: Private
 Battalion / Regiment: 13th Bn. Cheshire Regiment
 Service Number: W/28 Date of Death: 08 November 1915 Age at Death: ?
 Buried / Commemorated at: Tancrez Farm Military Cemetery, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium & Neston Parish Church headstone
 Additional information given by CWGC: None

The son of collier Mark & Emma Ellis of Ness, Thomas was baptised (privately) at Neston 26 February 1898 and he was just 17 when he died.

Edward Mark Ellis married Emma Cottrell, a daughter of Thomas and Margaret Cottrell of Ness, at Toxteth Park in July / September 1895. Emma already had an illegitimate son, Charles Cottrell, who had been baptised at Neston on 30 June 1893 when Emma was recorded as *single woman, Ness*. Thomas Cottrell, Emma's father, was recorded as a colliery labourer in the 1881 census (aged 54) but in 1891, now a widower (and recorded as being aged 62) with unmarried children Emma (27) and Alfred (12) at home in Ness, he was listed as a labourer.

Margaret Cottrell, Emma's mother, was buried at Neston Parish Church on 9 October 1889 when she was aged 65.

Emma's age is variously recorded but it is known that she was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 17 August 1866 when her father was recorded as a labourer.

On 1 May 1896 Mark and Emma baptised their first child, John, at Neston. John died on 3 October 1897 and was buried, aged 17 months, on 16 October.

At the time of the 1901 census Mark and Emma and their family were living with Emma's father, Thomas, in Ness:

Thomas Cottrell	Head	M	73	Farm Labourer	Worker	Ches Ness.
Mark Ellis	Son-in-law	M	34	Coal Miner und.	Worker	Do Heswall
Emma Ellis	Daughter	F	32			Do Ness.
Charles Do	Son	M	7			Do Ness.
Thomas Do	Do	M	3			Do Neston.
Alfred Ellis	Do	M	2			Do Ness.

1901 census (extract) – Ness

Thomas Cottrell	73	farm labourer	born Ness
Mark Ellis	34	son-in-law, coal miner (under)	born Heswall
Emma	32	daughter	born Ness
Charles	7	grandson	born Ness
Thomas	3	grandson	born Neston
Alfred	2	grandson	born Ness

In the 1901 census Charles Cottrell has been recorded as Charles Ellis.

Thomas Cottrell, Emma's father, was buried at Neston on 5 January 1905 aged 77 and at the time of the 1911 census the Ellis family was living at Sunset Cottages, near the southern junction of Well Lane and Burton Road, in Ness:

CENSUS 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 "one month," "two months," etc.	Write "Single," "Married," "Widower," or "Widow," opposite the name of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to previous Marriage. (If no children born alive to previous Marriage write "None" in Column 7.)	Children who have died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on One Account.	Whether Working at Home.	(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish.	(2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, etc., and of the Province or State.	(3) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country.	(4) If born at sea, write "At Sea."	(5) If of foreign nationality, state whether "French," "German," "Russian," etc.	(6) If of foreign nationality, state whether "French," "German," "Russian," etc.	
1	Mark Ellis	Head	50	Married 15			Coalminer, Hewer	150	Ellis	Heswall	Cheshire						
2	Emma Ellis	Wife	44	Married 15							Heswall	Cheshire					
3	Charles Cottrell	Boarder	17	Single			Labourer	140	Warr	Burton							
4	Thomas Cottrell	Boarder	33	Single			Horseman	130	Warr	Burton							
5	Thomas Ellis	Son	13														
6	Alfred Ellis	Son	11														
7	William Ellis	Son	9														
8	Margaret Ellis	Daughter	5														
9	Samuel Ellis	Son	3														

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Total.	
Males.	Females.
7	2
9	

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

5

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

Signature: Mark Ellis

Postal Address: 2 Sunset Cottages near the Heswall Station

1911 census (condensed) - 2 Sunset Cottages, Well Lane, Ness

Mark Ellis	50	coal miner, hewer	born Heswall
Emma	44		born Ness
Charles Cottrell	17	labourer, farm	born Ness
Thomas Cottrell	33	boarder, horseman, farm	born Ness
Thomas Ellis	13		born Neston
Alfred	11		born Ness
William	9		born Ness
Margaret	5		born Ness
Samuel	3		born Ness

Mark and Emma had been married for 15 years and five of their six children had survived.



The child of Mark and Emma Ellis who died was John; he was baptised at Neston on 1 May 1896 and died, aged 17 months, on 3 October 1897.

Charles Cottrell, shown as 17 in the 1911 census, was Emma's illegitimate son. He died on 18 September 1967.

The identity of Thomas Cottrell, 33, is uncertain although he may have been a nephew of Emma.

On leaving school Thomas Ellis worked as a farm labourer for Thomas Edward Johnson who ran Laburnum Farm (off Mill

Lane, Ness) but when he was aged just 16 years 9 months (this would have been about November 1914) he enlisted, in Neston, for the 'Wirral Battalion', the 13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, part of the 74th Brigade, 25th Division. Thomas was, therefore, below the accepted age for enlistment - it is quite possible that he lied about his age.

The battalion landed in France on 25 September 1915 and concentrated in the area of Nieppe. As Thomas Ellis was killed just 6 weeks after he arrived in France (and just a year after his enlistment), and before his regiment was involved in the principal actions on the Western Front, the circumstances of his death are unknown.



Photo by Mrs. Morris, Church-lane, Neston
PTE. THOMAS ELLIS

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 20 November 1915

17-YEAR-OLD NESTONIAN KILLED.



PRIVATE THOMAS ELLIS.

A deep feeling of sorrow and regret spread throughout Deeside last week when it became known that Private Thomas Ellis, the eldest son of Mr. Mark Ellis, of Ness, had been killed out in France at the beginning of last week. Though not yet 18 he joined the Cheshires in September last year, and had been out in France for some little time. Deceased was a quiet, unostentatious kind of lad, but he had many friends.

Although the available information states that Thomas was killed in France he was buried just over the border at Tancrez Farm Cemetery, 17km south of Ypres in Belgium.

The commune of Ploegsteert remained under Allied occupation for much of the First World War, but was in German hands from 10 April to 29 September 1918. Tancrez Farm Cemetery stands behind a rebuilt farm house which during the war housed an aid post. It was begun in December 1914 and was carried on by field ambulances and fighting units until March 1918. The cemetery now contains 333 Commonwealth burials and commemorations of the First World War. [CWGC]

Birkenhead Advertiser – 20 November 1915

NESS YOUTH KILLED.

Once again the district has been deeply stirred by close touch with the battlefields of France. Another boy will not return to the neighbourhood. He has given his life cheerfully for his country, and much sympathy has been extended to Mr. and Mrs. Mark Ellis, his parents, of Ness. Private Thomas Ellis was their third son, and with the keen enthusiasm of youth enlisted when only 16 years and 9 months of age, joining the Wirral Battalion of the Cheshires. There is an astonishing reserve strength and fresh vigour when roused in these young soldiers, and the officers' letters are a noble tribute to their worth. Wirral has been justly praised for its standard of physique and efficiency, and the Peninsula was the playing ground of Thomas Ellis as a child. Later, he fostered this love of out-door life by seeking agricultural employment, and was frequently seen sowing and harvesting crops on the farm lands of Mr. Johnson, of Ness. Everyone liked him, and he was a regular worshipper and chorister at the Church of England mission services at Little Neston. His letters were bright and cheerful, and in addition to his home he corresponded regularly with Mr. Joseph Wilde, of Ness, who keeps in touch with all the lads of the district, the letters being a boon much appreciated by those on active service. It is understood that two local "chums," who are also "fighting the good fight with all their might," buried him near the battlefield. At home he was known as a boy of quiet, gentle and generous temperament. Abroad, he was daring, plucky and fearless.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 20 November 1915

His officers have sent the following letters to his bereaved parents:—From O.O. Battalion Cheshire Regiment to Mrs. Ellis, Sunset Cottage, Neston, B.E.F., France, 9.11.1915. Dear Madam,—I am writing to tender my sincere sympathy, and ~~that~~ of all in the regiment, on the death in action of your son, Thomas Ellis, the news of which it is my sad duty to convey to you. I trust that you and your family may find consolation in the knowledge that your son died for his country, than which no end to any life can be more noble. His company and the regiment mourn his loss. We were all very fond of your dear lad.—With sincere sympathy, yours truly, J. W. Reeves, Major for Lieut. Col. Commanding."

"In France. Dear Mrs. Ellis,—I have just returned from a short course on bombing and have just learnt that your son, who was in my platoon, has just been killed. I am awfully sorry, and offer you my deepest sympathy. He is also a great loss to me as he was quite one of my best men, and I miss him very much. I knew him better than any other in my platoon, except, perhaps, my servant, because he was my orderly, that is, he used to always be with me in case I had to send any messages at any time to headquarters. He was very reliable, and absolutely fearless. In fact, he was too fearless. Once again, I sympathise with you, and pray that strength will be given you from above, so that you will be able to face your great loss bravely.—I am, yours sincerely, Leslie Carr, Lieutenant, Cheshires."

The Rev. C. Brooke Gwynne, as in the case of each hero fallen on the field, made impressive references in the Parish Church, where the Dead March in "Saul" was played on the organ, also at St. Michael's Mission Church.

218432	8/14/97/10 Ellis Thomas	13 th Bn Cheshire Regt. Pte 4.25	8-11-15 Shrewsbury 12/15 in Action Shrewsbury 1/16 Supp 7	3 9 10 = 10 5	2 11 4 M.O. 2.16. 18 6 10 5	15-1-16 31-1-16 2-16 M.O 2/16	Mo ÷ Sole Legatee Emma. R.P. Shrewsbury Mo ÷ Sole Legatee Emma	2 11 14 18 6 10.5
	at WS 000000 27 MAY. 1919		WAR GRATUITY. 1919/20 Transfer 4760(2) 19/6/19 Regd. Paper 24/1/22 Serial No. 3160	4 10 -		18.8.19 2	Mo ÷ Sole Legatee Emma	4 10

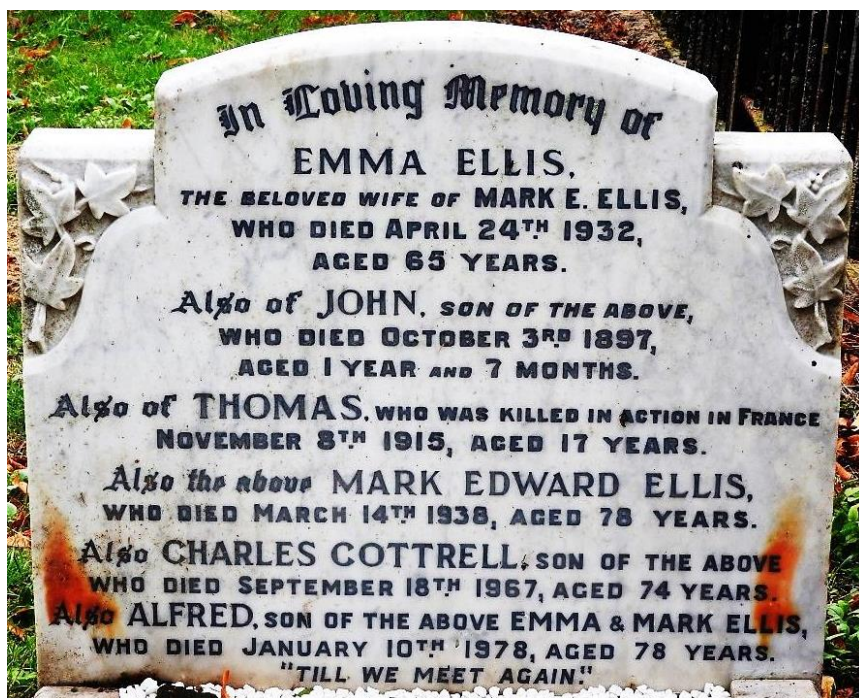
Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

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.

Thomas Ellis had accrued two credits, one of £3 9s 10d and a second of 10s 5d. These were received by his mother Emma, as sole legatee. Emma received also the £4 10s War Gratuity.

The total payment, £8 10s 3d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £1350 in 2017.

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.



The Ellis/Cottrell family gravestone, Neston Parish Church



The War Grave of Thomas Ellis at Tancrez Farm Military Cemetery, Belgium.
[Source: CWGC]



The grave of Thomas and Margaret Cottrell, the parents of Emma Ellis, in Neston Parish Churchyard. The stone is flaking and much of the inscription has fallen away.

32	Name.	Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
	ELLIS.	Ches: R.	Pvt.	W/28.
	Thomas.			
	Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
	VICTORY	J/2/101 B	H	Min A. 8-11-15.
	BRITISH	Dr	Dr	
	15. STAR	J/2/101 B	2.	
	Theatre of War first served in	(1) France.		
	Date of entry therein	25-9-15.		

British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914 - 1920

At the time of the 1939 Register (29 September) Alfred Ellis (born 17 September 1899), Thomas's younger brother, was living at 2 Sunset Cottages in Ness, the long-time Ellis family home. Alfred was unmarried and was recorded as a permanent way labourer - he worked on the local railway track. Alfred died on 10 January 1978 aged 78.

In the household with Alfred was Charles Cottrell (born 20 May 1893), Alfred's half-brother (the illegitimate son of Alfred's mother). Charles was recorded as a cowman. He died on 18 September 1967 aged 74.

Also in the household was Margaret Wildblood (born 16 October 1905), the youngest daughter of Mark and Emma Ellis. Margaret married George William Wildblood (born 14 May 1911) in mid-1936¹ although he wasn't recorded in the household in the Register.

Two lines of the Register entry have been redacted but it is known that George and Margaret had two children:

Douglas A born late 1936

Jean L born late 1939

George William Wildblood died on Wirral in late 1974 but it is not known when Margaret died although she, George and Hector and Jean MacDonald (it is presumed that Jean was the daughter born in 1939) are

commemorated on a slab on the Ellis grave in Neston Parish Church.



In the 1939 Register William Ellis (born 21 July 1901), a builder's labourer, was living at 57 Mayfield Gardens with his wife Sarah. William had married Sarah Abel (born 15 September 1906) in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in July / September 1929 and it is known that they had four children (and four lines of the 1939 Register entry have been redacted):

William K. born early 1930

Margaret M. born mid-1932

Betty born mid-1933

Thomas A. born late 1935

William Ellis snr died on Wirral in late 1976 although it is not certain when Sarah died.

Samuel Ellis (born 24 February 1908), the youngest child of Mark and Emma Ellis, was recorded in the 1939 Register as living at 13 Cottage Close, Burton Road with his wife Joyce. Samuel married Joyce Prosser (born 19 October 1907) in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in mid-1930 and it is known that they had at least two children (although three lines of the Register entry have been redacted):

Molly born early 1931

Thomas E born late 1935

Joyce Prosser was a daughter of William Prosser who died from gas shell poisoning in France in July 1918 [see [72: William Prosser](#) in this work].

It is not known when Samuel Ellis died but it is believed that Joyce Ellis died in Anglesey in early 1977.

¹ Bizarrely, the Birkenhead marriage Register for April / June 1936 records Margaret Ellis having married a *Wildblood* with no details entered of her spouse. For the same quarter-year, the *Birmingham* Marriage Register recorded the marriage of George William Wildblood to an Ellis but without any further details.