

### 33: Benjamin Griffiths

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: B. Griffiths

Rank: Bombardier Recorded by CWGC as Gunner

Battalion / Regiment: 39th Bde. Royal Field Artillery

Service Number: 27353 Date of Death: 20 September 1914 Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre Memorial, La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, Departement de Seine-et-Marne, île-de-France, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Benjamin [Ben] Griffiths was a son of bootmaker George Griffiths (the surname was recorded sometimes as *Griffith*) of Neston, born on 3 June 1885.

George Griffith married Mary Ellen Wylie in Liverpool in early 1873 and, in 1881 (before Ben was born, they were living on Brook Street, Neston:

George Griffith	28	shoemaker	born Chester
Mary E. Wylie	29	shoemaker's wife	born Scotland
Joseph A. Griffith	7		born Neston
Robert W. Griffith	5		born Neston
Andrew Griffith	3		born Neston
George Griffith	under 1 month		born Neston

#### 1881 census (extract) – Brook Street, Neston

George Griffith	28	shoemaker	born Chester
Mary E.	29	shoemaker's wife	born Scotland
Joseph A.	7		born Neston
Robert W.	5		born Neston
Andrew	3		born Neston
George	under 1 month		born Neston

At least one other child, Edith, was born before the 1881 census; she was baptised 9 May 1879 (when George and Mary were recorded as living in Parkgate) but died, aged 1, in July / September 1880. Ben Griffiths was baptised 26 June 1885 and George and Mary Griffiths had at least three further children before Mary died just 3½ months after the birth and death of their last child. As far as it can be determined the children of George and Mary Ellen Griffiths were:

Joseph Alexander baptised 20 November 1873 In 1891 Joseph was a publican's assistant (17) at the Bull's Head Inn on Dock Street, Whitby, Ellesmere Port. In the 1901 census he is recorded as a Private, aged 28, with the Royal Marine Artillery based at Eastney Barracks in Hampshire. In July / September 1904 he married Sarah Tuite in West Derby. In the 1911 census he (37, a carpenter's labourer with the Harbour Board) and Sarah (40) were living with their son Ernest Rowland (4, born Heswall) at 14, Clwyd Street, Birkenhead. He may have died in July / September 1914, aged 40, although this has not been verified.

Robert William      baptised 5 December 1875      Robert William has not been located in 1891 or 1901 census returns but he married Elizabeth Alice Davies of Higher Bebington in early 1907. In 1911 Robert (35) was a dock porter (and recorded as 'Belfast boy') was living with Elizabeth (25) and sons Robert W. (3) and George H. (1) at 51 Bedford Place, Rock Ferry. In WW1 Robert served with the Royal Garrison Artillery. Robert died in late 1955, aged 80.

Andrew?      There is uncertainty surrounding this child for, although 'Andrew, 3, born Neston' is recorded on the 1881 census the only child which meets this description is Andrew, son of shoemaker Joseph and Sarah Griffith(s) of Neston who was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 14 October 1877. There is no other appropriate birth registration for Wirral/Cheshire, or baptism at Neston, for 1878  $\pm$  5 years. In the 1871 census Joseph Griffiths (shoemaker, Parkgate Road) was recorded as being 56 and Sarah (née Edge) was 52 and it is known that Sarah died and was buried, supposedly aged 53, on 6 February 1876. It is also known that Joseph and Sarah's daughter, Elizabeth (22 in 1871), was described in that census as being an 'imbecile from birth'. One possible explanation is that Sarah gave birth to Andrew later in life and that, because of her health problems and the difficulties of dealing with a disabled daughter, Sarah and Joseph 'gave' Andrew to George and Mary Griffiths (it is supposed that Joseph and George were related, both being shoemakers) to raise as their own son. Such an arrangement was not unknown at that time. Following the death of Sarah, Joseph Griffiths married widow Eliza Robbins of Willaston; she was some 24-years Joseph's junior. In the 1891 census Andrew, 15, was recorded as a barman in Seacombe.

Alfred      baptised 21 April 1881      buried, aged 2, 5 March 1883

George      baptised 13 August 1882

Benjamin      born 3 June 1885, baptised 26 June      KIA, France, 20 September 1914  
Benjamin is the subject of this account

James Douglas      baptised 17 February 1888      On 26 July 1913 (25, carter of High Street, Neston) he married Caroline Meredith (25, daughter of Joseph Meredith of High Street, Neston) at the Wirral Register Office. The name he used on the certificate was Douglas Finley Griffiths. A son, Clarence James Griffiths, was born in Neston on 16 November 1913; he died in 1997. Another son, Robert, may have been born in about 1920. In WW1 Douglas - he appears to have been generally known by this name - served with the Royal Field Artillery as a Gunner (267406) and with the Labour Corps (212890). In late 1914 it was reported that he was in hospital after being kicked by a horse. He may have died in 1937.

David?      This may be a mis-entry on the 1891 census. No record of a David Griffiths has been found.

Eliza [Lizzie]      born 6 March 1889, baptised 15 March

Emily Barton      baptised 8 August 1890      buried, aged 3 days, 11 August 1890

Mary Ellen Griffiths died, with a recorded age of 39, and was buried at Neston on 29 November 1890. Just a few months later, in early 1891, George married Ellen Jane Bryan of Neston in Liverpool. Ellen, a daughter of collier/quarry man/labourer James (he had died in late 1874 aged 47) and dressmaker Sarah Bryan (recorded as living on Liverpool Road in the 1881 census) was much younger than George; she was baptised at Neston on 6 July 1873, the same year in which George and Mary Ellen Griffiths had married and baptised their first child.

At the time of the 1891 census George, Ellen and the younger members of George's family were living on Brook Street, probably the same home he had shared with Mary Ellen:

George Griffiths	Head	M	38	Shoemaker	X	Neston
Ellen J. Griffiths	Wife	M	19			Neston
George Griffiths	Son	S	8	School		Neston
Ben Griffiths	Son	S	6			Neston
David Griffiths	Son	S	3			Neston
Lizzie Griffiths	Daughter	S	2			Neston

1891 census (extract) – Brook Street, Neston

George Griffiths	38	shoemaker	born Neston
Ellen J.	19		born Neston
George	8		born Neston
Ben	6		born Neston
David	3		born Neston
Lizzie	2		born Neston

It is presumed that the 'David' recorded in this census was, in fact, James Douglas Griffiths; no 'David Griffith(s)' was recorded as having been born locally in 1887 ± 5 years.

By 1901 Ellen Griffiths had given birth to four children and the enlarged family had moved to Neston High Street:

George Griffiths	Head	M	49	Shoemaker		Neston
Ellen J. Griffiths	Wife	M	30			Neston
George Griffiths	Son	S	18	General Labourer		Neston
Benjamin Griffiths	"	S	16	General Labourer		Neston
Douglas Griffiths	"	S	14	at school		Neston
Emma Griffiths	Daughter	S	9			Neston
Arthur Griffiths	Son	S	6			Neston
Clarence Griffiths	"	S	5			Neston
May Griffiths	Daughter	S	2			Neston

1901 census (extract) – High Street, Neston

George Griffiths	49	shoemaker	born Neston
Ellen J.	30		born Neston
George	18	general labourer	born Neston
Benjamin	16	general labourer	born Neston
Douglas	14		born Neston
Emma	9		born Neston
Arthur	6		born Neston
Clarence	5		born Neston
May	2		born Neston

Emma was baptised on 26 August 1892 (she may have died in April 1976), Arthur on 30 March 1894, Clarence James on 17 July 1896 and May Findley was baptised on 8 October 1899.

Ten years later, at the time of the 1911 census, the size of the family had increased further and they had moved to Chester Road. Ben Griffiths was the only child of George's first marriage still to be living at home:

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			
<p>of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who</p> <p>(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or</p> <p>(2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included. (For order of entries, see Examples on back of Schedule.)</p>														
		For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," 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 present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.	(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish.	State whether— (1) "British subject by birth," (2) "Naturalised British subject," giving year of naturalisation. (3) "Alien," giving year of arrival. (4) "Immigrant," or "Foreigner," giving year of arrival.	If any person included in this Schedule is— (1) "Totally Blind," (2) "Totally Deaf," or (3) "Totally Paralyzed," state the infirmity opposite the person's name, and the age at which he or she became afflicted.		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	
George Griffiths	Head	38	Married	20	27	24	boot maker	300	own ac	neston cheshire				
Ellen Jane Griffiths	wife	38	Married	20	7	7				neston cheshire				
Ben Griffiths	son	24	single				general labourer, contractor's	550		neston cheshire				
Arthur Griffiths	son	17	single				errand boy (assisting father)	300		neston cheshire				
Clarence James Griffiths	son	15	single				errand boy, ironmongery	401		neston cheshire				
May Findlay Griffiths	daughter	10								neston cheshire				
Thomas Griffiths	son	8								neston cheshire				
John Littlemore Griffiths	son	6								neston cheshire				
Sarah Ellen Griffiths	daughter	2								neston cheshire				
<p>(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)</p> <p>Total: Males 6, Females 3, Persons 9</p> <p>(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)</p> <p>Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchens, Parlours, or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count cellars, landings, lobby, closets, bathrooms, nor warehouses, office, shop.</p> <p>I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.</p> <p>Signature: G. Griffiths, Postal Address: Chester Rd. Neston</p>														

### 1911 census (condensed) – Chester Road, Neston

George Griffiths	58	boot maker	born Neston
Ellen Jane	38		born Neston
Ben	24	single, general labourer, contractor's	born Neston
Arthur	17	errand boy (assisting father)	born Neston
Clarence James	15	errand boy, ironmongery	born Neston
May Findlay	10		born Neston
Thomas	8		born Neston
John Littlemore	6		born Neston
Sarah Ellen	2		born Neston

George and Ellen had been married for 20 years and all seven children had survived.

Thomas was born 3 March 1901 and is believed to have died in March 1973. John Littlemore Griffiths was born 10 October 1905 and is believed to have died in March 1981. Sarah Ellen was born in mid-1908.

It is quite possible that further children were born to George and Ellen, but it is not possible to verify this; however, between 1912 and late 1926 nine births in the name of Griffiths, where the mother's maiden name was Bryan, were registered in Wirral. Certainly, George Griffiths appears to have fathered 17 known children through his two marriages!

Although Benjamin, recorded as a labourer, was at home in Neston at the time of the 1901 and 1911 census returns it is recorded (De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour) that he 'served eight years in India; then joined the Reserve, being subsequently employed



with the Birkenhead Corporation...'. This would suggest that this service, about which no details are known, took place between these dates. In fact, the *Army Register of Soldiers' Effects* records that Benjamin first enlisted on 1 October 1902.

Benjamin Griffiths married Margaret Ellen Jenkinson, a daughter of Thomas and Margaret Jenkinson of 8 Apple Grove, Higher Tranmere, on 26 December 1912 at Christ Church, Higher Bebington. A daughter, Elaine, was born on 29 December 1913.

In the 1911 census Margaret was recorded as being 26 and working as a sewing room maid in the Turner Memorial Home on Dingle Road, Toxteth. The home was built for Mrs Anne Turner as a memorial to her recently deceased husband and son. Her husband was Charles Turner, a Liverpool merchant who originated from Yorkshire and who had been chairman of Liverpool Dock Board, and a Member of Parliament. Charles Turner died in 1875, followed by his son five years later. The first full title of the home was "The Turner Memorial Home of Rest for Chronic Sufferers", founded for the care of sick and disadvantaged men.

After their marriage Benjamin and Margaret lived in Higher Tranmere and Benjamin worked for Birkenhead Corporation. On the outbreak of war, Benjamin re-enlisted at Chester as a reservist and went to France, as a Bombardier, with the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade Royal Field Artillery. Although there are no known details of Benjamin's service at this time, or the circumstances of his death, he would have served for only a few weeks before he was killed, aged 28, on 20 September 1914 at The Battle of Aisne.

The Royal Field Artillery was the most numerous arm of the artillery with the (largely) horse-drawn units being responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line. The RFA was organised into brigades, Ben being in the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade. A unit of the pre-war regular army this brigade was originally comprised of numbers 46, 51 and 54 Batteries RFA and the Brigade Ammunition Column. It was placed under the command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division and, as one of the first British formations to move to the continent, went to France with it in August 1914.



*Birkenhead News* – Wednesday 21 October 1914

The RFA were involved in The First Battle of the Marne (6 - 12 September 1914) whose outcome ended the war of movement that had dominated the First World War since the beginning of August. Instead, with the German advance brought to a halt, stalemate and trench warfare ensued. On 9 September the German armies began a retreat northwards, pursued by the French and British, although the pace of the Allied advance was slow - a mere 12 miles in one day. The German armies ceased their withdrawal after 40 miles at a point north of the River Aisne, where the First and Second Armies dug in, preparing trenches on the elevated land that were to last for several years. Casualties at Marne were heavy; the French incurred 250,000 losses, and it is believed that the Germans suffered similar casualties, with the British recording 12,733 casualties among the BEF. Ben Griffiths, however, survived this battle although he was to die a few days later.

The First Battle of the Aisne was a follow-up offensive by the Allied forces against the right wing of the German First and Second armies in retreat after The First Battle of the Marne. The offensive began on the evening of 12 September in the aftermath of their rather belated pursuit of the Germans. Having established a bridgehead north of the river Aisne on 14 September, the Allies continued to assault the Germans on the plateau above them to the north; German counter-attacks were in place within hours however, forcing the Allies back. Once again the German forces demonstrated the present superiority of defensive warfare over its offensive counterpart, deploying machine gun fire and heavy artillery in the defence of their positions. Small advances were achieved by the Allies, but these could not be consolidated and, quite probably, it was during these later offences - action had been scaled back by the Allies on 18 September, and fighting was abandoned on 28 September, the day on which Benjamin Griffiths was killed.

[Source: abbreviated largely from "firstworldwar.com – A multimedia history of world war one"]

The valley of the Aisne runs approximately east and west, varying in width from half a mile to two miles, and having sides sloping up to a height of some four hundred feet both on the north and on the south. In places the slopes are steep, with bluffs and quarries, bold spurs and ravines; here and there under-features crop up, to form downs or minor plateaux, while elsewhere the ground rises, from the wide, sluggish, and unfordable river, gently upwards, and is cultivated, more especially in the vicinity of the farms and villages, of which there are several. Each side of the valley is dotted with woods, extending up to the crest, and in a great measure concealing the actual edge of the plateau above. That portion of the river which came within the British sphere of action, viz., between Soissons and Villers (about 15 miles), had eleven crossings, all of which it was found were under the enemy's artillery fire from the northern slopes of the valley. And the German batteries were too far distant from the southern ridge to be silenced by our guns.

[Source: <http://www.lightbobs.com/1914-the-battle-of-the-aisne.html>]

Although there is no record pertaining specifically to Benjamin's unit, Captain C J Paterson of the 1<sup>st</sup> South Wales Borderers (3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, I Corps) kept his own diary and this provides useful details of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's advancement from the Marne to the slopes above the River Aisne:

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1914

*As there is only one road by which the whole 1<sup>st</sup> Division can push on, it takes some time and we get orders not to move to 9am. At about 8 it is discovered that the bridges over the River Aisne have been so damaged that we cannot even move at 9, and as a matter of fact we move at 2pm. When we do move it is not for very long. We crossed the river with shells dropping around us. The Germans have destroyed most of the bridges and are shelling or trying to shell the ones they have left, hoping to catch us on them. However, we cross and line a ridge to the north of Bourg. The cavalry pushes out and we billet in Bourg.....Orders to move at 5am."*

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1914

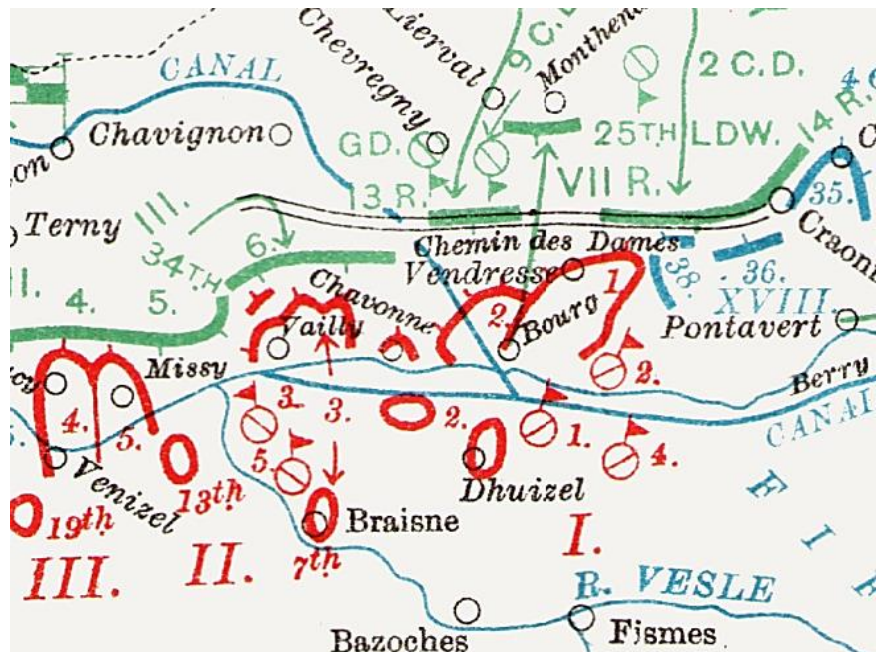
*I have never spent and imagine that I can never spend a more ghastly and heart-tearing 48 hours than the last. Not a moment in which to write a word in my diary. We have been fighting hard ever since 8am on the 14<sup>th</sup> and have suffered much. At about 6am at Moulins we hear a good deal of firing going on and shells begin dropping about. We are then on the road moving north.....We reached the shelter of the high ground which rises quickly and steeply from the plain and then we advance over the crest and take up our position in a wood, ready to move out when required. Shrapnel and rifle fire fairly heavy.*

*It is a high ridge opposite, i.e. west of us, that we have got to go for and nasty work it will be.....Swarms of the Germans on the ridge, rather massed. Our guns opened on them at 1800 yards, and one can see a nasty sight through one's glasses. Bunches of Germans blown to pieces.*

*We again suffered some casualties and eventually had to retire, or rather the Companies which have gone out have to come back to our ridge again. Here we stay firing and being fired at for some 8 hours and then another effort. Meanwhile our guns are having a huge duel. Not much success, and Germans are too numerous to really push back properly.*

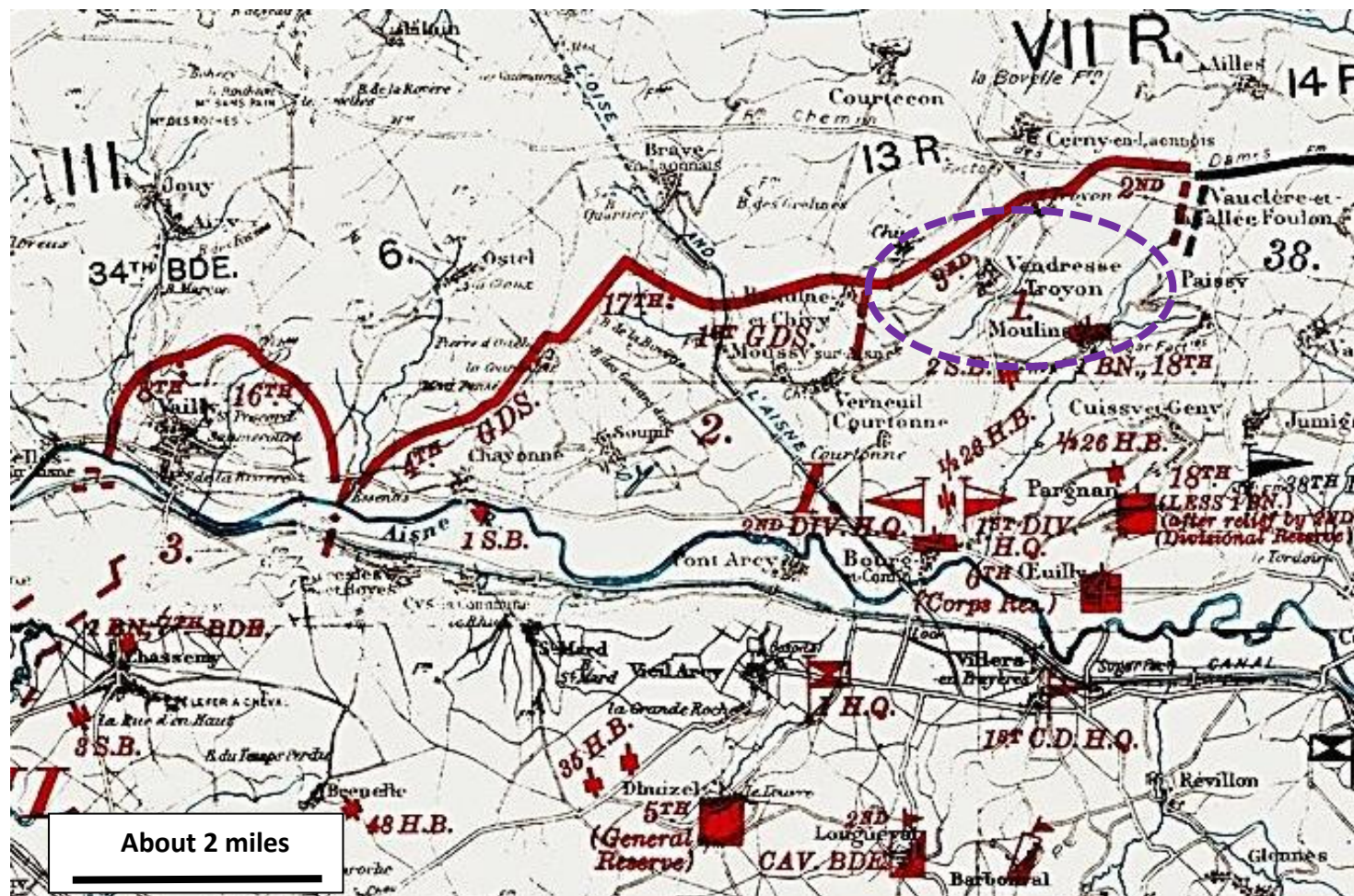
*At dusk we are ordered to move up the valley towards the T of Troyon, which we did.....On we go. It is now too late to be fired at by rifle fire and we go on well, but in the dark C and A Companies go ahead, and D lost touch. Most annoying. On reaching the ridge at the head of the valley we find only B and D companies, and as we were looking for the others, shots rang out and we were soon at it again. Short and sharp. Germans withdrew.*

*I have a horror of a night firing. One is so very likely to kill one's own men, and from wounds I have seen since, I am sure some of them were hit like that on this very occasion. The Brigadier and his staff came along and rode right past us, and in a few minutes they were fired on. General and Staff Captain of an Brigade Major, and one or two NCOs and men have got away, the rest were missing the next*



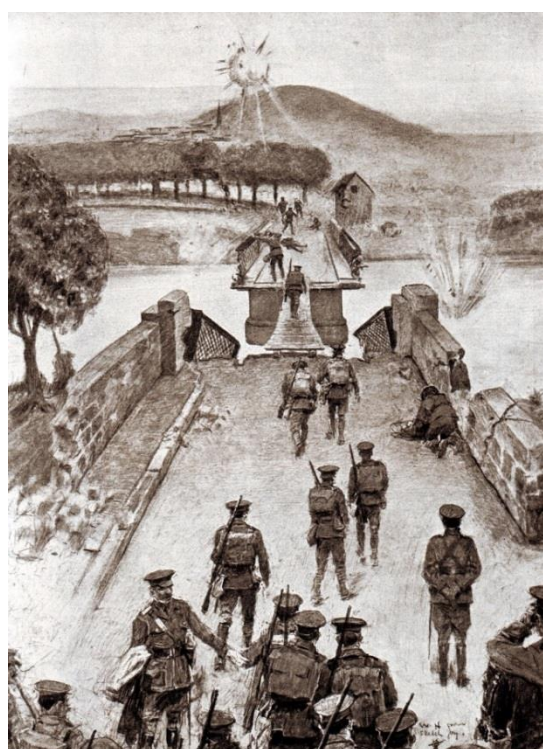
Extract from a map contained in the *British Official History of Military Operations, France and Flanders, 1914* volume I. British Divisions are in red, French in blue, German in green.





An extract from a map contained in the *British Official History of Military Operations, France and Flanders, 1914 volume I*. The British Divisions are shown in red, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division holding the area north of the Aisne around the ancient settlement of Vendresse-et-Troyon (encircled in purple).

[Source: <http://www.lightbobs.com/1914-the-battle-of-the-aisne.html>]



British troops crossing the broken bridge over the Aisne at Vailly on 13 September 1914. [Source: <http://www.britishbattles.com/battle-of-the-aisne/>]

morning and have just been found by some of our search parties some distance ahead of our position. They have been fed by the Germans and looked after, but have been there for two days. We then spent the night in trenching our position, and at dawn a force of enemy was seen advancing. One of the officers called up to us that he wished to speak to an officer, but....we weren't having any of that. I have no doubt that they really did wish to surrender but they must do it properly as one man did this morning and march up with his hands above his head and no arms upon him. So we opened fire, and although we lost some men we wiped them out at 200 yards, and there they lie in front of us. Poor devils. Later on the enemy's guns enfiladed us. We were told we were to hang on at all costs, and at all costs it had to be. We lost severely and it was a very bad business.

[Source, map and text (much abbreviated):

<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battle-of-the-aisne-1914/>]



Mr. and Mrs. George Griffiths, of Chester-road, are also very proud of their four sons, who are serving with the Army, two are in France, and the other two are shortly expecting to be called from their present training headquarters. Letters have been received which show that they are in the best of health and spirits.

Birkenhead News – Saturday 10 October 1914

Birkenhead Advertiser – Saturday 17 October 1914

Benjamin Griffiths was recorded as being Neston's first fatality of the war although this was only because the news of the death of Lance Corporal Edward Hughes (24 August 1914) was delayed [see [139: Edward Hughes](#)].

It was reported that Benjamin was a keen member of the Wirral Athletics Club and a member of the Independent Order of Good Templars, a fraternal temperance society founded in Utica, New York, in 1851 (and which came to Britain in 1868) which originated from the Order of the Sons of Temperance, and which adapted its distinctive ritual and regalia. It is known that Arthur Griffiths, one of Benjamin's brothers, served in the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment (Wirral Battalion) during WW1 and that, in late 1914, four of the Griffiths' sons were serving in the army.

Benjamin Griffiths is commemorated on the La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial to the Missing - his body was never recovered. The Memorial commemorates 3,740 officers and men of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who fell at the battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and the Aisne between the end of August and early October 1914 and have no known graves.

## NESTON'S FIRST WAR VICTIM.

The news of the death of Mr. Benjamin Griffiths was received at Neston with deep regret. He was a bombardier in the Royal Field Artillery, and had spent a number of years in India. The son of Mr. George Griffiths, of Chester-road, he leaves a widow and one child. He was drafted to the Continent at the beginning of the war, and from his letters seemed to be in the best of spirits. He was 28 years of age. Three of his brothers are in the Army, Douglas (R.F.A.), who is at present in hospital owing to being kicked by a horse; Robert (R.G.A.); and Arthur (Wirral Battalion Cheshire Regiment). This is the first Nestonian to be killed in the war.

## NESTON & PARK-GATE.

### FOUR SONS FIGHTING. TWO PROUD NESTON FAMILIES.

Mr. and Mrs. Davies, of Liverpool-road, whose four sons are in the Navy, have heard from them that all is going well up to the present. A son-in-law, too, is serving his country. They are a fine type of youth, and a credit to their home and district. Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Griffiths, of Chester-road, are also very proud of their four sons serving with the Army. By a curious coincidence they, too, have a son-in-law also serving. Ben writes home from the Royal Field Artillery that "We're having a fine time, as good as 'The New Brighton Hop.' Health is good. Not dropped on any other Neston boys yet. Getting plenty to eat and drink, and can't grumble at tobacco, but could do with a little more."

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 3 October 1914.

By the time that this was published Ben Griffiths had already been killed.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
GRIFFITHS	RFA	Ser.	27353
Benjamin			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	RFA/1468	9075	Dead 20-9-14
BRITISH	"	"	
14 STAR	* R.F.A./2	27.	
61/2/2759.			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			
E/56442/2 NW/2/2479 K. 1380.			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920



De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1919

**GRIFFITHS, BENJAMIN**, Gunner, No. 27353, R.F.A., s. of George Griffiths, Shoe Maker; b. Neston, co. Chester, 3 June, 1885; educ. there; served eight years in India; then joined the Reserve, being subsequently employed with the Birkenhead Corporation; was called up on the outbreak of war 4 Aug. 1914; served with the Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders, and was killed in action at the Battle of the Aisne 20 Sept. following. He was a well-known trainer of athletes, being connected with the Wirral Athletic Club, and was also a member of the Good Templar Order, in connection with which he had many silver medals. He m. at Christ Church, Higher Bebington, 26 Dec, 1912, Margaret Ellen (8, Apple Grove, Higher Tranmere), dau. of Thomas Richard Jenkinson, and had a dau., Elaine, b. 29 Dec. 1913.



British RFA 18-pounder field gun in action during the Battle of the Aisne.

[Source, both photos:

<http://www.britishbattles.com/battle-of-the-aisne/>]



British RFA 18-pounder field gun and crew during the Battle of the Aisne.

Griffiths Geo. boot ma. Chester rd  
Griffiths Robert, boot & shoe maker,  
Park street  
Griffiths Thomas, boot ma. The Cross

George Griffiths was just one of three boot and shoe makers with that surname operating in Neston in 1914  
[Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1914]

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	Place of Birth, Date of Enlistment, Trade on Enlistment	(1) Whether Will left, and if so, Name of Legatee and how disposed of (2) If no Will, Next of Kin as stated by Regiment	CREDITS			CHARGES			Date of Authority	To whom Authorised	Amount Authorised	No. of List in which Advertised		
							Account and Date	£	s.	d.	£	s.					d.	Account and Date
135529	66442	Griffiths Benjamin	39 Bde. R.F.A. Gunner 27353	20-9-19 In action	Neston Cheshire 1-10-02 Labourer	Wid. Margaret Ellen	Woolwich No. 11/4	11	-	7	4	-	7	M.O. 1/15 26-1-19	Widow Margaret Ellen	11	-	7
<div>WAR GRATUITY. 350 Transfer 3500 30/9/19 Regd. Paper 30/9/19 Serial No. 689</div>																		

#### Army Register of Soldiers' Effects, 1901 – 1929 (extract)

In March 1919 Benjamin's widow, Margaret Ellen, received his outstanding army payment of £4 0s 7d together with a War Gratuity of £5, a total of £9 0s 7d. This equates, in 2016, to around £764 in *labour value* (equivalent to wage value).

The form notes also that Benjamin first enlisted on 1 October 1902 and confirms that he had one child.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to those men, or their relatives, 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.

The 1939 Register (29 September) provides a little more information:

George Griffiths (born 8 May 1852), the father of the family), was a retired bootmaker living at 3 Pear Tree Crescent off Bridge Street with unmarried daughter May (born 7 September 1899, general domestic servant).

George Griffiths died on Wirral in early 1944 aged 91 and May Findley Griffiths married Thomas Jones, at a Civil Marriage on Wirral, on 8 February 1945.

Also in the 1939 household was Elsie May Griffiths (born 12 May 1921) - the Register of Births for Wirral notes her mother's maiden name as Griffiths so she *may* have been May's illegitimate daughter. Elsie married Alfred Harold Francis Hodgson at Neston Parish Church on 17 March 1947 and it is known that they had a son who was born in early 1954.

Arthur Griffiths (born 4 March 1894), a half-brother of Benjamin, was recorded as a newsagent and tobacconist at 'Alpha' on Badger Bait in 1939. Arthur married Nellie Lewis (born 28 November 1895) at St Peter's Church, Heswall, in late 1921 and it is believed that they had at least one child; one line of the Register entry has been redacted and the birth of an Edna Griffiths was registered on Wirral in late 1921.

Of Ben's other half-brothers, it is believed that:

Clarence James Griffiths married Irene Sutton at Christ Church, Claughton, in July / September 1937 and he may have died in the South Liverpool area in early 1938 aged 40.

John Littlemore Griffiths (although his name was recorded as John *Leonard*), married Annie Clark in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in late 1927 and he died, in Birkenhead, in early 1981 aged 75.

Ellen Jane Griffiths, Ben's step-mother, died in July / September 1929 aged 56.



You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,  
Or wounded in a mentionable place.

You worship decorations; you believe  
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.

You make us shells. You listen with delight,  
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.

You crown our distant ardours while we fight,  
And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed.

You can't believe that British troops 'retire'  
When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,  
Trampling the terrible corpses--blind with blood.

O German mother dreaming by the fire,  
While you are knitting socks to send your son  
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.



**"Glory of Women"**  
**Siegfried Sassoon**  
**(1886 -1967)**

