

## 36: Frederick Charles Burkey Harris

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: F. Harris

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. Grenadier Guards

Service Number: 22649

Date of Death: 27 August 1918

Age at Death: ?

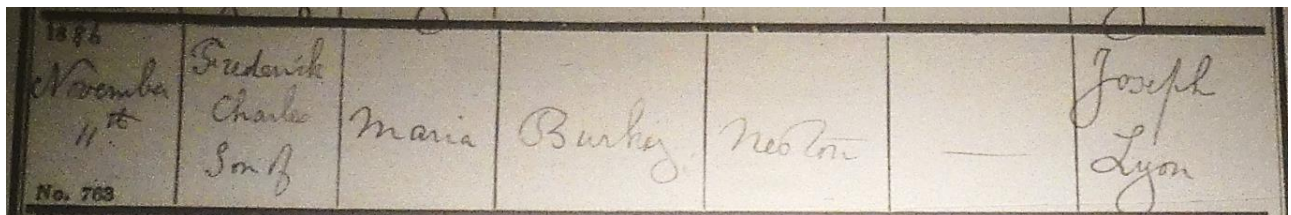
Buried / Commemorated at: Mory Abbey Military Cemetery, Mory, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Frederick Charles Burkey Harris was the eldest child of coalminer hewer Frederick and Maria Harris of Little Neston.

Frederick snr had married Maria Burkey, the eldest child of stone mason George and Mary Burkey of Ness, in Liverpool in April/June 1886 and Frederick jnr was born in late 1886. The name Burkey was incorporated into the names of several of their children.

Interestingly, although Frederick snr and Maria had married, only Maria's details were entered on Frederick jnr's baptismal record at Neston Parish Church on 11 November 1886:



At the time of the 1901 census the family was living at 9, Pritchard Row in Little Neston and Frederick snr, still a coal miner, was recorded there in 1911.

Frederick Harris	Head	M	36	✓	Coalminer hewer	Widder	Yarmouth
Maria	Wife	F	33	✓			Neston
Frederick C.	Son		15	✓	Plasterer's improver	Widder	Little Neston
George E.	Son		12	✓			Garston
Mary E.	Daughter		11	✓			Little Neston
Annie B.	Daughter		9	✓			do
James	Son		7	✓			do
John	Son		3	✓	Coalminer hewer		do

1901 census (extract) – 9, Pritchard Row, Little Neston

Frederick Harris	36	coalminer, hewer	born Yarmouth, Norfolk
Maria	33		born Neston
Frederick C.	15	plasterer's improver	born Little Neston
George E.	12		born Garston, Lancs.
Mary E.	11		born Little Neston
Annie B.	9		born Little Neston
James	7		born Little Neston
John	3		born Little Neston

Annie Harris's birth was registered as Annie Burkey Harris.

Maria Florence Harris died on 20 January 1905 having given birth to a daughter, also named Maria. Maria Florence, aged 37, was buried at Neston on 23 January and her daughter was buried, aged 4 days, two days later on 25 January.

John Harris (recorded in the 1911 census as Jack) also fought in WW1 in the Coldstream Guards and, in November 1917, it was reported [*Birkenhead News*, 17 November 1917] that he '*...had been seriously wounded while serving with his regiment abroad. The official document describes the scalp wound as severe, and further news is being anxiously awaited*'. However, John recovered and survived the war.

By the time of the 1911 census Frederick jnr had left home as he had married Rhoda Jones at St Nicholas's church in Liverpool on 12 February 1907. Frederick, 21, was a plasterer and he gave his address as Great Crosshall Street, Liverpool.

Rhoda, born Neston, was the eldest child (of 5) of coalminer William and Mary Jones who, at the time of the 1891 census, were living on Eldon Terrace, Neston.

William Jones died, aged 38, and was buried at the Parish Church on 26 January 1892 and, subsequently, Mary married Joseph Oxton, a bricklayer's labourer. In the 1901 census Joseph, Mary and Mary's children were living in Golden Lion Yard in Neston. On the marriage certificate Rhoda, 20 (and also of Great Crosshall Street) noted that her father was deceased and that he had been a labourer.

Meanwhile, in 1911 Frederick jnr, Rhoda and their young family were living at Eldon Terrace, Neston:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. Fred Harris	Head	25		Married 4 yrs	3	0			Plasterer	736	Buddy, kids	Woolley	Little Neston		
2. Rhoda Harris	Wife	24			4	3	3	0					Neston (Chesham)		
3. Bertha Harris	Daughter	3											Neston (blue)		
4. Fred W. Harris	Son	2											Neston (blue)		
5. Mary Harris	Daughter	1											Neston (blue)		

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)			(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>I certify that —</p> <p>(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper age columns.</p> <p>(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 5 and 6 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.</p> <p>(3) After making the necessary inquiries I have completed all entries on this Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.</p> <p>Initials of Enumerator: <i>W. W.</i></p>			<p>Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the Kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.</p> <p><i>4 Rooms</i></p>											
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Total</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Males</th> <th>Females</th> <th>Persons</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Total			Males	Females	Persons	2	3	5	<p>I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.</p> <p>Signature: <i>Fred. W. Harris</i></p> <p>Postal Address: <i>10 Eldon Terrace, Neston, Cheshire</i></p>		
Total														
Males	Females	Persons												
2	3	5												

#### 1911 census (condensed) – 10 Eldon Terrace, Neston

Fred Harris	25	plasterer, building trade	born Little Neston
Rhoda	24		born Neston
Bertha	3		born Neston
Fred W.	2		born Neston
Mary	1		born Neston

Fred and Rhoda had been married for four years and all three children had survived.

In 1911 the rest of the Harris family were still living at Pritchard Row, Little Neston:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.
1. F. C. Harris	Head	48	Widower	20	9	7	2		Coal Miner (House)	Worker			Norfolk, Yarmouth	171	
2. George Ernest Harris	Son	22	Single						Painter (House)	Worker			Lancashire, Garston	058	
3. Mary Ellen Harris	Daughter	21	Single						House Keeper				Cheshire, Little Neston		
4. Annie Harris	Daughter	19	Single						Works at home				Cheshire, Little Neston		
5. James Harris	Son	17	Single						Labourer on farm	Worker			Cheshire, Little Neston		
6. Jack Harris	Son	13	Single						School				Cheshire, Little Neston		
7. Bertha Harris	Daughter	9	Single						School				Cheshire, Little Neston		
8. Jessie Harris	Daughter	7	Single						School				Cheshire, Little Neston		

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)			(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in charge, of this dwelling.)		
I certify that—			I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.		
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.	(2) I have entered the male and female in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.			
Initials of Enumerator			Signature		
Total			Postal Address		
Males	Females	Persons			
4	4	8	F. C. Harris		
			Pritchard Row Little Neston		

## 1911 census (condensed) – Pritchard Row, Little Neston

F.C. Harris	48	widow, coal miner	born Norfolk, Yarmouth
George Ernest	22	painter (house)	born Garston
Mary Ellen	21	house keeper	born Little Neston
Annie	19	works at home	born Little Neston
James	17	labourer on farm	born Little Neston
Jack	13		born Little Neston
Bertha	9		born Little Neston
Jessie	7		born Little Neston

The census records that Frederick snr and Maria would have been married for 25 years (they had been married for 19 years when she died) and that seven of their nine children had survived.

The newspapers recorded that Frederick Harris lived at Eldon Terrace in Little Neston, had initially joined the Scots Guards, had seen much active service, and left a widow and six children.

In addition to the children recorded in the 1911 census it is believed that Frederick and Rhoda had 3 further children, more details of which are given towards the end of this account:

John Burkey Harris	born 28 February 1912	died late 1998
Leslie Burkey Harris	born 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter 1914	
Rhoda Harris	born 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 1917	

Frederick's Service Records have not been located but it is known that on 12 October 1917 he was mentioned in the army lists as having been wounded.

It is believed that Frederick Harris, 31, was killed in the action in and north of the village of Mory, between Arras and Bapaume, and about 2 kilometres east of the village of Ervillers, during the mid-stages of The Second Battle of Bapaume (21 August - 3 September 1918).

Mory village was occupied by Commonwealth troops in the middle of March 1917 but was then lost after obstinate defence by the 40<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Divisions a year later and recaptured towards the end of the August 1918, after severe fighting, by the 62<sup>nd</sup> (West Riding) and Guard Divisions. The War Diary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards for 20 - 25 August 1918 records the following:



AUG:20/25

On the night August 20/21st the Battalion withdrew to the Reserve line, Centre Brigade, at RANSART. The two support companies, the reserve company and Battalion H.Q. left at dusk while No. 1 Company remained until relieved by the Coldstream Guards. Enemy shelling was not above normal and there was no reason to suppose that he had discovered the British plans. The attack began at 4.55 a.m. August 21st.

On the 23rd the Battalion moved up into trenches and dugouts in BOIRY, this position being now unshelled owing to the advance, and remained here until the 25th.

AUG:25

On the 25th the Battalion ~~marched off~~ moved up to take over the front line. The Battalion marched off at 5.0 p.m. - halted until dark in a field W. of MAISON ROUGE - then moved up to relieve the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards.

A70921. Wt. 11285g/Mfcp 750,000. 1/17. D. D. & L., Ltd. Forms/C2118/14.

AUG:26

The enemy appeared to be apprehensive, firing heavily at dawn and early morning on all positions which might be used as forming-up areas.

On the night of the 26th 2/Lieut. H. A. FINCH and 8 O.R. went out on patrol to get in touch with the enemy. The patrol did not return. 2/Lieut. FINCH was found killed 1,000 yards in front of our line when the Battalion advanced on the 27th.

(For the account of operations on the 27th and 28th see attached narrative.)

The following, taken with some minor omissions from *The Grenadier Guards in the Great War of 1914 - 1918* vol. 3 [The Right Hon. Sir Frederick Ponsonby Macmillan & Co., London 1920] also relates to the actions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards over the period 25 August - 27 August 1918 in the vicinity of Mory / Saint-Léger:

*On the afternoon of the 25<sup>th</sup> the Battalion marched off to relieve a battalion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guards Brigade. A three hours' uncomfortable halt was made in a field at Hamelincourt, and as the ground had been well covered with gas, the companies had to move about to escape the drifting fumes. Respirators had to be worn, which rendered the eating of the evening meal no easy matter.*

*The relief in the front line of St. Leger was carried out without a hitch, although complicated by the fact that the Battalion was taking over a wide and sketchy front from the remnants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Scots Guards. During the night Second Lieutenant H. A. Finch and eight men went out as a patrol to get in touch with the enemy and never returned. Second Lieutenant Finch was found killed 1000 yards in front of the line, when the Battalion advanced, which showed how thoroughly he had carried out his instructions.*

*August 26 was a very quiet day, with occasional shelling around Mory Trench. Judging by the extent to which he fired his machine-guns after dark, the enemy seemed very apprehensive.*

*At midnight on the 26<sup>th</sup> a conference held at Battalion Headquarters was attended by all 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt. Company Commanders, at which Lieut. Colonel Rasch explained the general situation and the objectives of the advance for the following day as far as they were known.*

*Definite orders were not received until 1.30 a.m. on the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup>. The instructions the Battalion received were to push forward at zero hour (7 a.m.), with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Coldstream Guards on its left, and the Sixty-second Division on its right, and to secure the enemy's trenches in and south of Ecoust and Longatte. Before dawn the Battalion was to be reorganised and disposed in battle formation. No. 3 Company under Captain J. C. Cornforth, M.C., extended along the whole Battalion frontage of 1500 yards, along the road in No Man's Land, running from Mory Copse to St. Leger. No. 2 Company under Captain O. M. Smith in left support lay concealed until zero in Hally Copse. No. 4 Company under Lieutenant Morgan was in right support in Mory Copse, and No. 1 Company under Lieutenant M. Ponsonby in reserve, with Battalion Headquarters in Mory Trench.*

*There were three points in these orders which caused a little uneasiness. In the first place, a very short space of time before dawn was allowed to re-dispose the Battalion, although fortunately strong patrols had been sent out earlier in the night to secure the Mory Copse - St. Leger road. In the second place, dawn being at 4.30 a.m. and zero at 7 a.m., No. 3 Company would be in an exposed position during daylight at some points within fifty yards of the enemy. It was a clear night, and even in the darkness this company got into difficulties, for while they were forming 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt. up, they were observed by the enemy, who spent the rest of the night sweeping the ground and putting up innumerable lights, probably thinking it was a patrol. Fortunately there were a number of large felled tree-trunks along the road, which enabled this Company to escape detection from ground observation, and from the low-flying aeroplanes, which continually patrolled No Man's Land at dawn. In the third place, although Bank's Trench was known to be held all along the whole front, the barrage table showed that on the left of the Battalion the barrage would open a considerable distance behind the trench, probably owing to the proximity of our front troops to the enemy position.*

*The reorganisation and forming up of the Battalion were successfully carried out before dawn.*

*Unfortunately, while No. 1 Company was moving across the open to take up its position in reserve, a shell fell in the centre of No. 1 Platoon, mortally wounding Lieutenant M. Ponsonby, and causing casualties to the whole platoon, with the exception of three other ranks. Lieutenant Jesper took command of the remaining three platoons, and brought them to their allotted positions.*

*At zero hour (7 a.m.) the field-gun barrage came down on a line about 300 yards in front of No. 3 Company, creeping forward at the rate of 100 yards every two minutes. As soon as our troops moved off from their forming-up positions to close up to the barrage, the enemy covered his front with a deadly and accurate screen of bullets, fired from numerous carefully - sighted machine-guns, which were so well protected that our field-gun barrage had little or no effect upon them. In consequence we suffered heavy casualties from the very outset. On the left the troops of the leading company were mown down as soon as they got on to their feet, and were unable to advance. The right of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Coldstream Guards had also suffered severely, and was unable to push forward.*

*As No. 2 Company, under Captain O. Martin Smith, debouched from Hally Copse, it was caught by the machine-gun fire, and nearly cut to pieces before it could extend from artillery formation. Captain O. Martin Smith made a determined effort to reinforce the left of No. 3 Company, and push forward the advance, but long before his Company reached the front troops it had suffered over 50 per cent casualties. Captain O. Martin Smith and Lieutenant de Lisle were wounded, and Lieutenant Gwyer, who was pluckily pushing forward in spite of the storm of bullets, was killed. Captain O. Martin Smith ordered his Company to lie down in the open, while the N.C.O.'s collected the men who were nearest to them, and eventually got in close support of No. 3 Company. As, however, the enemy was entrenched on the top of the rise, 200 yards in front, the slightest movement attracted a torrent of lead. This made it impossible to get communication in any direction or to collect the wounded, who had to remain in the open on the fire-swept ground until dark.*

*Lieutenant R. M. Oliver, who had been in charge of the left platoon of No. 3 Company, had been killed earlier, so the left half of the Battalion was now without an officer.*

*In the centre, during the first 200 yards, the machine-gun fire, although equally intense, was slightly less accurate; but on nearing the St. Leger - Homme Mort road Captain Cornforth found it swept by a practically impassable hail of machine-gun bullets, fired from three directions- the Homme Mort on the south, Bank's Trench on the east, and outskirts of St. Leger on the north. This last enemy position was off the Battalion frontage, and the troops opposite it had been held up. The only method of relieving this pressure on the left was to push on at all costs in our centre and right.*

*Lieut. Colonel Rasch sent up No. 1 Company to reinforce the thinned ranks of No. 3, and to help in the capture of Homme Mort and the rushing of Bank's Trench. While going up this Company came under heavy fire, and Lieutenant Jesper and Lieutenant Giles were both wounded. Captain Cornforth therefore took over command of this Company in addition to his own.*

*With these reinforcements Lieutenant White and Second Lieutenant Langley led their platoons forward against the machine-gun nest at Homme Mort, but in advancing up the slope they were met with an increasing volume of accurate fire, and both the officers were mortally wounded before the position was reached. These platoons, however, with an inspired dash and determination took the position after a hard fight. Twenty prisoners were captured, in spite of the fact that, in the short rush up to the position, these platoons had been practically decimated.*

*At the same time Captain Cornforth decided to rush Bank's Trench, although the road was still swept by enfilade fire from the left, and by frontal fire from the trench itself. A party of men was sent over the road to cover the advance, but few succeeded in crossing it. Captain Cornforth thereupon collected a small number of men, led them across the road, and by short rushes succeeded with three other men in gaining Bank's Trench. Here fortunately they found a large supply of German hand-grenades, which they quickly detonated, and by this means succeeded in clearing the trench for 500 yards northwards, knocking out six German machine- guns and taking 40 men prisoners. Several other men soon succeeded in joining them, and this party, which eventually numbered one officer and 25 men, found that they were completely isolated. No other troops could be located on their flanks, and the ground was being swept by machine-gun fire from Bank's Copse in the front, from the high ground on the right, and from the outskirts of St. Leger on the left. It was impossible to advance farther, and the rest of the day was spent in resisting the efforts of the Germans to turn them out, and in endeavouring to gain communication on the flanks.*

*Lieutenant Morgan with No. 4 Company was more successful. At zero he advanced along Mory Switch and the southern end of Bank's Trench, eventually establishing a position in Vraucourt Trench. The lie of the land and the cover afforded by the trenches enabled this Company to keep up with the barrage, and to avoid coming under the intense fire that the remainder of the Battalion had experienced.*

*During the advance this Company captured a German Battalion Commander and 180 men - a remarkably fine performance. Lieutenant Morgan led his Company forward with such dash that they succeeded in penetrating the enemy's position to a depth of 2000 yards. However, it was soon clear that they were completely isolated, as they were being fired at from all directions. When it was dark Lieutenant Morgan decided that it would be unwise to remain in such an advanced position, since neither the Sixty-second Division on his right nor our own troops on his left showed any signs of coming into line with him, and he consequently withdrew his Company until he was in touch with troops on his flanks.*

*During the night the enemy retired from our front, and in the morning the remnants of the Battalion were reorganised, and continued the advance over the original frontage for about 1700 yards to a marked-out trench called Bank's Reserve. Here some machine-guns were encountered, but a good and continuous line was established with connection on both flanks.*



The following letter has been received by the 1st Guards Brigade from Major General G. P. T. Feilding, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

I wish to thank all ranks of the 1st Guards Brigade for their gallantry and staunchness in action from August 26th to August 28th.

When the 1st Guards Brigade relieved the 3rd Guards Brigade in the line, the enemy was fighting hard with fresh troops to maintain his positions on the high ground between MORY AND CROISILLES while countering the thrust delivered to the north by the XVIIIth and Canadian Corps. The Guards Division had been ordered to press him continually and to gain all ground possible towards ECUST as as to prevent him from disengaging troops and guns while the attack of XVIIIth and Canadian Corps was being pressed on our left flank.

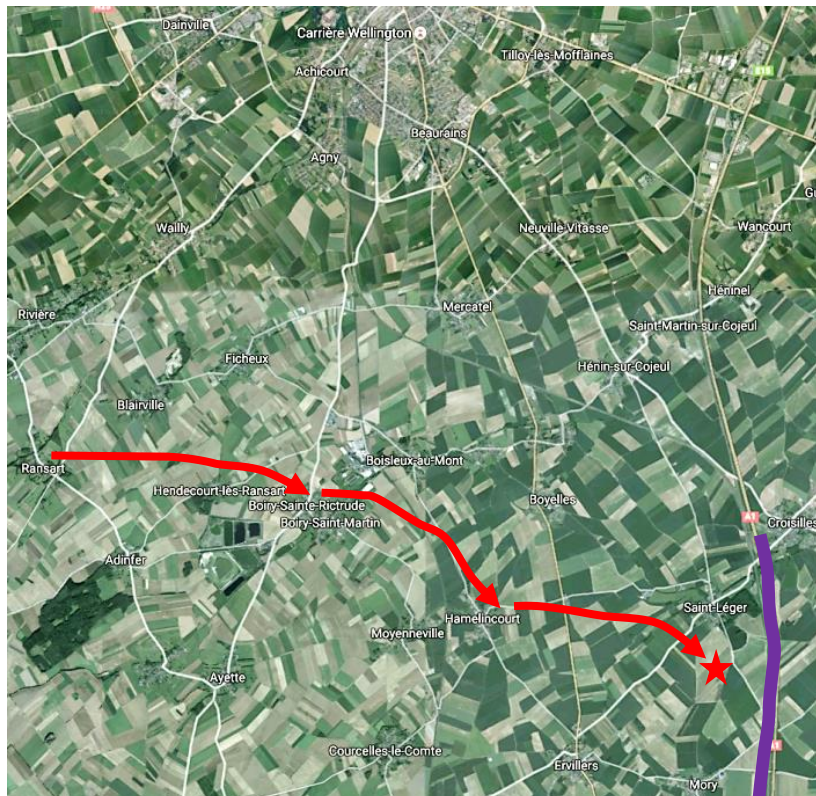
All Battalions of the 1st Guards Brigade discharged this duty splendidly. The attack was delivered by the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Gds. and 2nd Battalion Coldstream Gds. On August 27th not only inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and brought in large numbers of prisoners but also compelled him next day to relax his hold upon the high ground south of CROISILLES. The 1st Battalion Irish Guards did most valuable work under trying conditions in taking over part of the line after the attack on the 27th, and distinguished themselves by their vigorous patrolling forward on the following day. The full result of the hard fighting done by the Brigade was gathered only after its relief on the night of August 28/29th; for, on the morning of the 29th, the patrol of the relieving Division were able to push right forward into the outskirts of ECUST.

Nos. 1 & 3 Companies, 4th Bn. Guards Machine Gun Regiment, deserve all full share of credit for their work while attached to the 1st Guards Brigade.

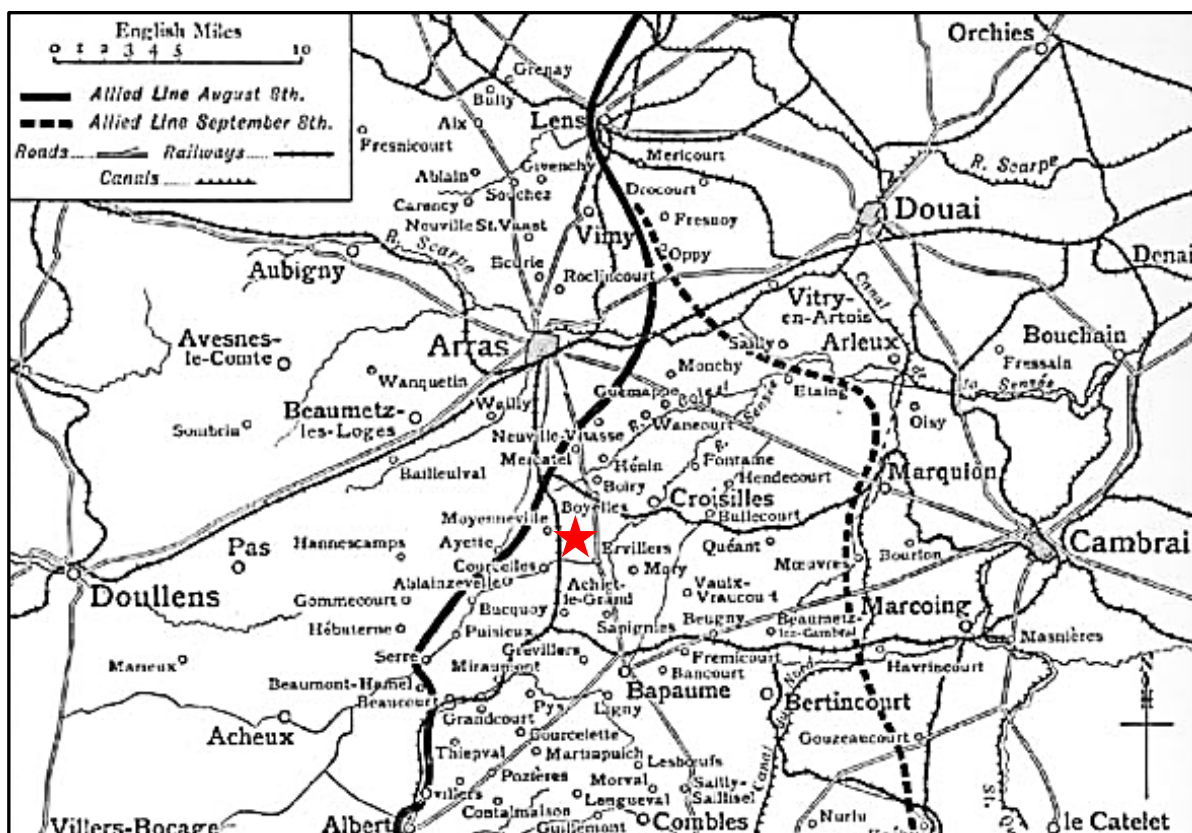
The 1st Guards Brigade has never fought more gallantly and I wish to thank all ranks most warmly for the endurance and devotion which they displayed,

(Signed) G. Feilding,  
Major General,  
Commanding Guards Division.

August 31st 1918.



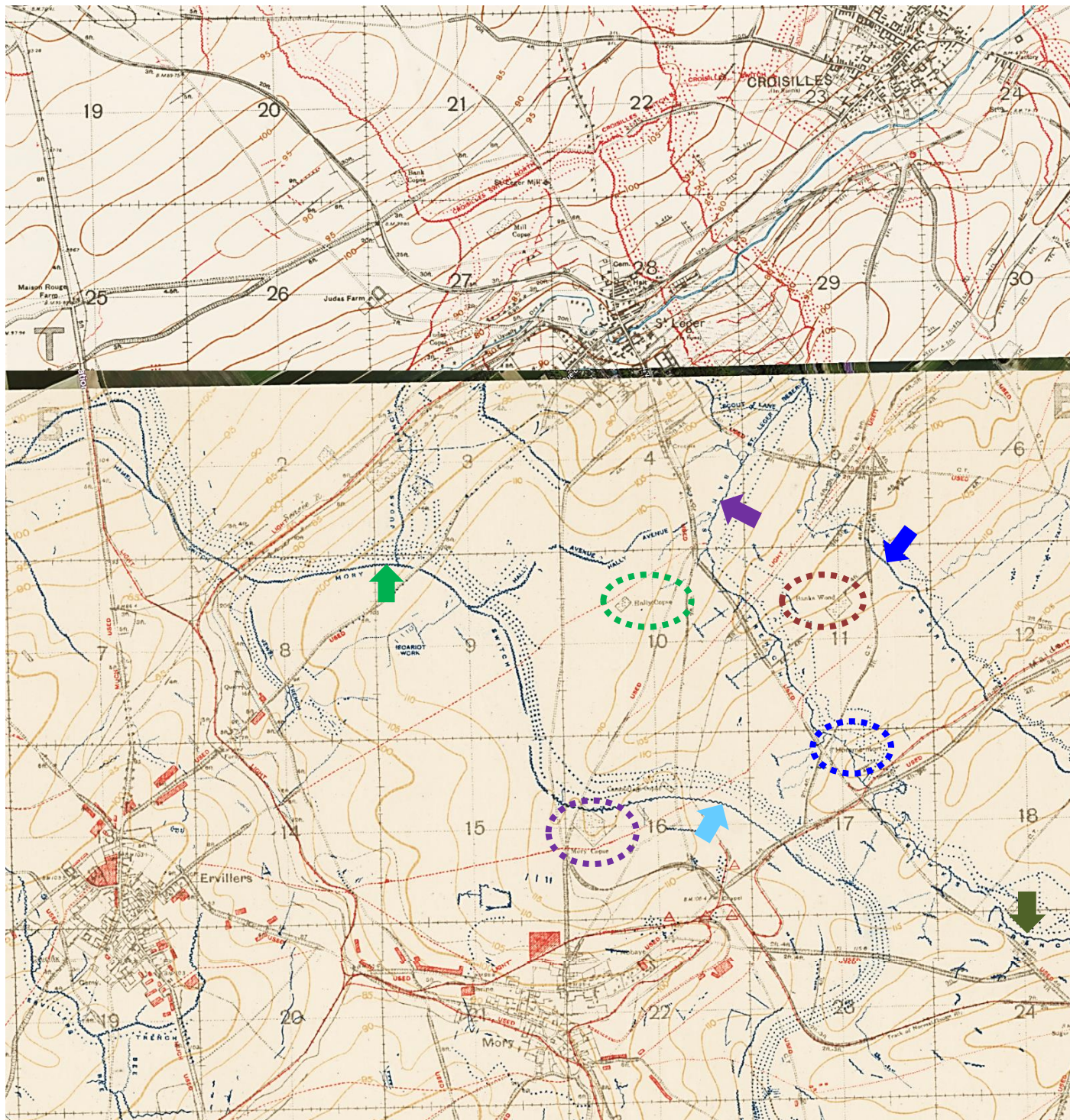
Fred Harris' movements from 20 – 27 August 1918 plotted on a modern satellite map [Google Earth]. Arras is the large town in the north. The red star marks, approximately, where Fred Harris died on 27 August. The purple line marks the front line in that sector.



The Allied front line (shown in black) between 8 August and 8 September, 1918, in the region north of Albert.

At this time the Allied forces were moving westwards rapidly. The area in which Fred Harris died on 27 August 1918 is indicated by the red star. [Source: <http://www.1914-1918.net/maps.htm>]





A composite trench map showing the area of conflict in late August 1918 between Mory (south central), Saint-Léger (north central) and Croisilles (north east).

A number of the locations named in Ponsonby's description of the action (see text) can be located and some have been identified on this map:

- Encircled: Light green – Hally Copse    Dark red – Banks Copse (shown as Banks Wood)  
 Purple – Mory Copse    Dark blue – Homme Mort    Olive green – Vraucourt Trench  
 Sky Blue – Mory Trench (probably – unnamed on map)
- Arrowed: Green – Mory Switch    Purple – Banks Trench    Dark blue – Banks Reserve Trench

As the two maps forming this composite do not quite coincide the narrow E-W strip represents a 'missing' area. The map in the north is dated 25 April 1918 and the map in the south is dated 4 July 1918. On both maps the Allied positions are shown in blue and German positions are in red. Between these dates the Allies overran part of the German front line positions; consequently, 'ownership' of the German trenches shown on the northern map sector had, by July 1918, fallen to the Allies.



The Second Battle of Bapaume was a continuation of The Battle of Albert, also referred to as the second phase of that battle. The attack, by British and Commonwealth troops, was part of what was later known as the Allies' Hundred Days Offensive. The following is extracted from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Battle\\_of\\_Bapaume](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Bapaume):

*On 8 August 1918, the Hundred Days' Offensive commenced on the Western Front and it would prove to be the last major campaign of the First World War. It began with the Battle of Amiens, an attack by the Canadian and Australian Corps at Amiens, which rolled the German lines back 8 km (5.0 mi). The advance petered out after four days after the Germans began to regroup and shore up their defences. The commander of the British Expeditionary Force, Field Marshal Douglas Haig, recognised that it was time to put pressure elsewhere on the German front and for this, decided to use General Julian Byng's Third Army. Haig decided that the Bapaume sector, with the town of Bapaume at its centre, was to be the new focus of operations.*

*Bapaume itself was a small town linked by rail to Albert and Arras. There were also four major roads running through the town; running to Albert in the south-west, to Peronne in the south-east; to Cambrai in the east and to the north lay Arras. Captured by the forces of Imperial Germany in the early stages of the war, it had been the focus of the British forces on the opening day of the Battle of Somme in 1916. Still in German hands, it had been largely destroyed in early 1917 following their withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line. Extensive booby traps had also been left and these troubled the Australians that moved into the town afterwards. It was subsequently recaptured by the Germans during the Spring Offensive. The land surrounding Bapaume was relatively flat and thus was conducive to the use of tanks.*

*Byng allocated the Third Army's IV Corps to the forthcoming operation, which was to become known as the Second Battle of Bapaume. IV Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General George Harper comprised five divisions, all of which would be employed during the battle. The first three to be involved were the New Zealand Division along with the 37<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Divisions. The other two divisions, the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 63<sup>rd</sup> Divisions, were held in reserve before being deployed later in the battle. Of all these divisions, only the New Zealand Division was at full strength. Facing the Third Army was the German 17<sup>th</sup> Army, commanded by General der Infanterie (General of the Infantry) Otto von Below, made up of eight divisions which, apart from the 4<sup>th</sup> Bavarian Infantry Division, were all second class formations. A further two divisions were in reserve.*

*The battle was planned to have two phases, the first being the Battle of Albert. The second phase, scheduled to begin on 23 August, was to capture Bapaume and then advance further east to Reincourt-les-Bapaume and Bancourt-Fremicourt and the high ground beyond. The New Zealanders were to play a key role; the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigades of the New Zealand Division, kept in reserve, were to be ready to exploit any breakthrough on the front. To distract the Germans from the main attack being carried out by the Third Army, the French Tenth Army conducted diversionary attacks to the south.*

*The opening phase of the battle began on 21 August, when two battalions of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, covered by artillery and fog which reduced visibility to less than 100 m (110 yd), moved forward and seized Puiseux, capturing over 100 prisoners. It established a new line 1,000 m (1,100 yd) beyond the village and secured the flanks of the neighbouring divisions making their own move forwards. The British 5<sup>th</sup> Division then passed through the brigade's positions to take over the advance. Little progress was made the next day as Byng directed that the focus for the day was to simply consolidate the gains made and prepare for a further movement forward on 23 August.*

*As a result of the operations of 21–23 August, the frontline had been established to the east of the Albert-Arras railway line with all but one of the ridges to the south and west of Bapaume held by IV*

*Corps. However, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division had been unsuccessful in its attacks which left the ridge running from Loupart Wood to Grévillers and then onto Biefvillers still in the hands of the Germans.*

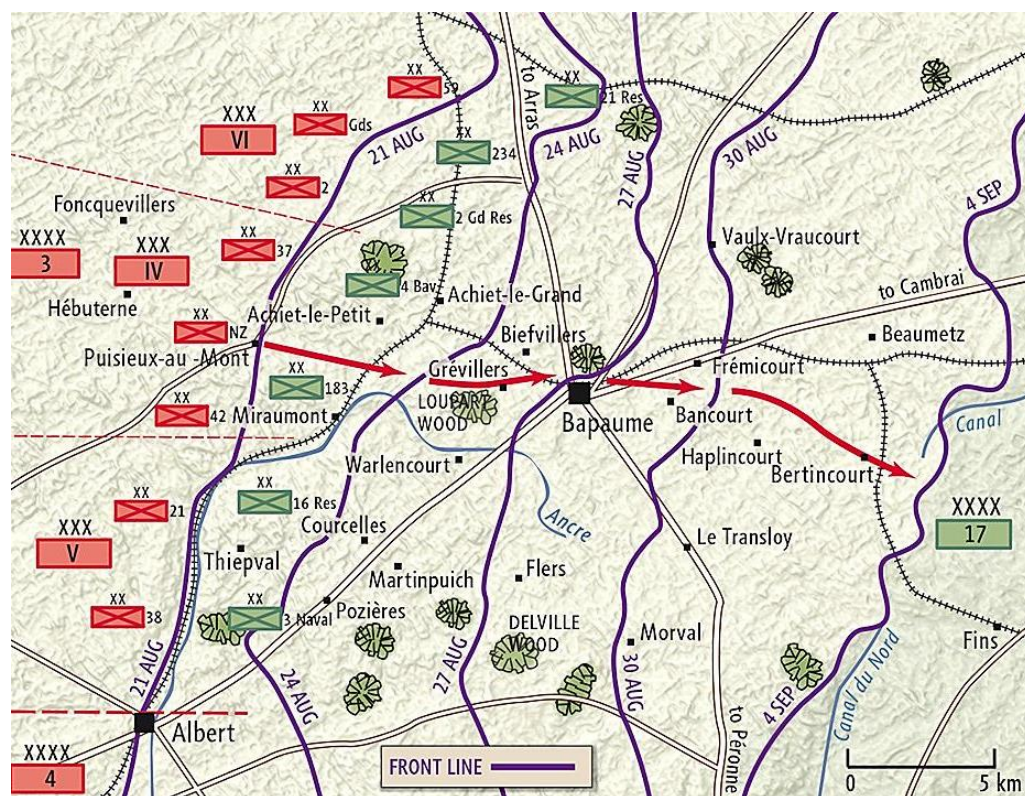
Following the eastwards advance of the Allies, plans were made to push further and take Bapaume - by 24 August the town was just 5km from the front line.

The first advance began at 5:00 am on 25 August under the cover of fog and was only partially successful as the supporting British tanks were put out of action by German fire.

On 26 August New Zealand forces, supported by the British, continued their efforts to encircle Bapaume. Although progress was made (particularly north-east of Bapaume) the Allies lacked a covering barrage and, with no armoured support, heavy German resistance was encountered. Nevertheless, 26 August saw the front line advance by some 910m along a frontage of 2,300m and Bapaume was now encircled entirely from the north although south of the town less progress had been made. The German commanders, on the night of 26 August, realised that their troops would be surrounded if the Allies continued their progress and so ordered their men to retreat to positions 24km to 32km west of the Hindenburg Line.

On 27 August the Allies continued to press eastwards although efforts to capture Thillo, a village immediately south of Bapaume, were strongly resisted by the Germans. Both Bapaume and Thillo were heavily bombed during the day but despite this Thillo continued to hold out. In fact, Bapaume continued to hold out; during the evening and night of 28 August the town was bombed heavily and troops closed in from the south. German retaliation was noted to be light and by early

morning of 29 August there was no gun fire being returned from Bapaume. In fact, overnight, Bapaume was abandoned and this was confirmed by troops entering the town from the north. Germans troops were seen making for Bancourt, to the east. It was found also that the Germans had retreated from Thillo and the 5<sup>th</sup> Manchester Battalion, of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division, moved through the village and secured it.



<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/battle-bapaume-map>



deceased eldest son of Mrs. M. Hall, late of  
burne-place, Liverpool.  
HARRIS—August 27, killed in action, aged 32 years.  
FREDERICK HARRIS, Grenadier Guards, eldest  
son of Frederick and the late Maria Harris, of  
Fritchard's-road, Little Neston.—Sadly missed by  
Dau Sisters, and Brothers. (Peace, perfect peace)

Liverpool Echo - Thursday 19 September 1918

SOLDIER'S DEATH.—With deep regret we  
record the death in action of Pte. F. Harris,  
Elden-terrace, Neston. He joined the Scots  
Guards at the commencement of the war. He  
leaves a widow and six young children. The  
deepest sympathy is extended to them

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 14 September 1918

**Popular Neston Soldier Killed.**  
The death in action is reported of Pte.  
Frederick Harris, who was well known in  
the Little Neston district. He was a fine  
specimen of British manhood, every inch  
a soldier. A very sympathetic letter has  
been received from his captain stating  
that he would be greatly missed by his  
comrades with whom he was very popular.  
He belonged to the Grenadier Guards, and  
had seen much active service. The news  
of his death has occasioned much sorrow  
in his native village, and much sympathy  
is felt for his widow and six children in  
their great loss.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
HARRIS	G Gds	Pte	22649
Frederick			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	29/103BY	540B	
BRITISH			
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal  
Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Birkenhead News – Saturday 14 September 1918

769920	6-3917	Harris Frederick	2 Pw, 278-18 London 15 9 - 15 9 - 27.12.18 1.12.18	Widow sole leg Rhoda	15 9 -
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## Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In mid-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. Frederick Harris had accrued a credit of £15 9s and this was received by his widow Rhoda, as sole legatee. Rhoda received also the £16 10s War Gratuity. The total payment, £31 19s, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £4850 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.





The Harris family grave in Neston Parish Churchyard

10 Eldon Terrace, Neston - Frederick and Rhoda Harris were living here at the time of the 1911 census and Rhoda was recorded as being here in 1918 when Frederick was killed.



### Of Frederick Harris's siblings:

George Ernest (born 10 May 1888, often named as Ernest, died 23 January 1968), 32, married Mary Coventry, 30, at Neston Parish Church on 27 November 1920. George was a painter living in Little Neston and his father, Frederick Charles Harris, was recorded as a labourer. Mary was a daughter of Arthur Coventry (deceased) of Mill Street, Neston, and the witnesses were George's siblings, John and Bertha Harris. No record has been found of any children from this marriage and Mary died on 31 May 1923 aged 33 and was buried with her parent at Neston Parish Church (see photo on a following page).

At the time of the 1939 Register (29 September) Ernest was living at 4 Town Lane, Little Neston and he was still a house painter. With him was his father, Frederick C Harris (born 21 July 1864, died 7 August 1955 aged 91), a retired general labourer and three of Ernest's unmarried siblings:

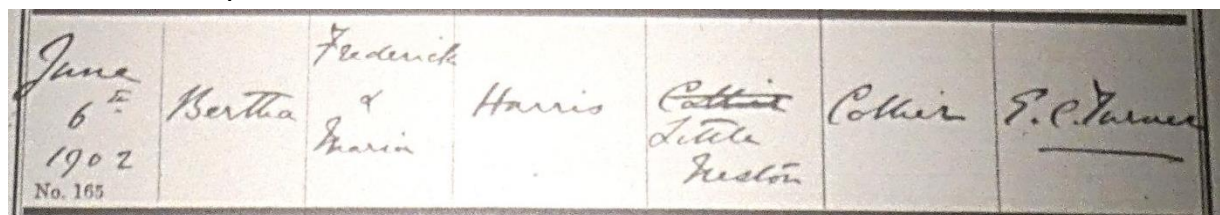
Mary E	born 23 October 1890	Mary, recorded as May, died on 1 February 1947 aged 57 and is buried in the Harris family grave in Neston (see photo above)
Annie B	born 12 September 1891	Annie died in mid-1976
James	born 3 December 1893	A general labourer, James died on 23 January 1953, aged 59, and is buried in the Harris family grave in Neston (see photo above)



John Harris (born 4 February 1898) was recorded in the 1939 Register as a house painter living at 'Medway' on Liverpool Road, Neston. John married Doris Phillips (born 7 June 1907) at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1934 and it is known that they had at least one child, John, who was born in mid-1937 (although two lines of the Register entry have been redacted).

It is believed that John Harris died in late 1967 aged 69 and Doris died in mid-1978.

Bertha Harris (the daughter of Frederick and Maria Harris) was born on 8 February 1902) and she was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 6 June 1902:



Bertha married John Herbert Mellor (born 27 November 1902) in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in July / September 1927. In the 1939 Register they are recorded as living at 1 Dale Hey, Wallasey where John was a cashier. No children are known from the marriage and John died in the Wallasey area, aged 63, in mid-1966. It is not known when Bertha died.

Jessie May Harris was born in late 1903 and she married Joseph William Roscoe in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in April / June 1930; no record of children of the marriage has been found and Jessie died in the Birkenhead area in mid-1960 aged 56.

At the time of the 1939 Register (29 September):

Frederick Charles Burkey Harris's widow, Rhoda (born 13 November 1886) was living at 10 Talbot Gardens, off Talbot Avenue, Little Neston with three of their unmarried children:

Frederick	born 16 September 1908	plasterer
	Frederick remained unmarried and he died in 1994	
John	born 28 February 1912	motor driver, haulage
	John Burkey Harris remained unmarried and he died in 1998	
Rhoda	born 15 August 1917	
	Rhoda married Albert Steve Jones in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in April / June 1957 and it is believed that they had three children. Rhoda died in 1995	

Also in the household was Joseph Oxton (born 10 July 1862), a general labourer. Joseph was the step-father of Rhoda Harris sn. Joseph died in late 1946 aged 84 and Rhoda Harris died in late 1979.

10	258	1	Harris Rhoda	F	13 Nov 86	W Unpaid dom. duties
		2	Harris Frederick	M	16 Sept 08	56 Plasterer
		3	Harris John	M	27 Feb 12	5 Motor Driver - Haulage
	251057 C6882 DT	4	Harris Rhoda (m)	F	15 Aug 17	5 Unpaid dom. duties
		5	Oxton Joseph	M	10 July 62	W Gen. Labourer.

The 1939 Register entry for Rhoda Harris and part of her family at 10 Talbot Gardens

Bertha Harris, the daughter of Frederick Charles Burkey Harris and Rhoda (born 30 June 1907), married James Johnson at Neston Parish Church in late 1927 and in 1939 she was living at 10 Eldon Terrace, Neston, with two children:

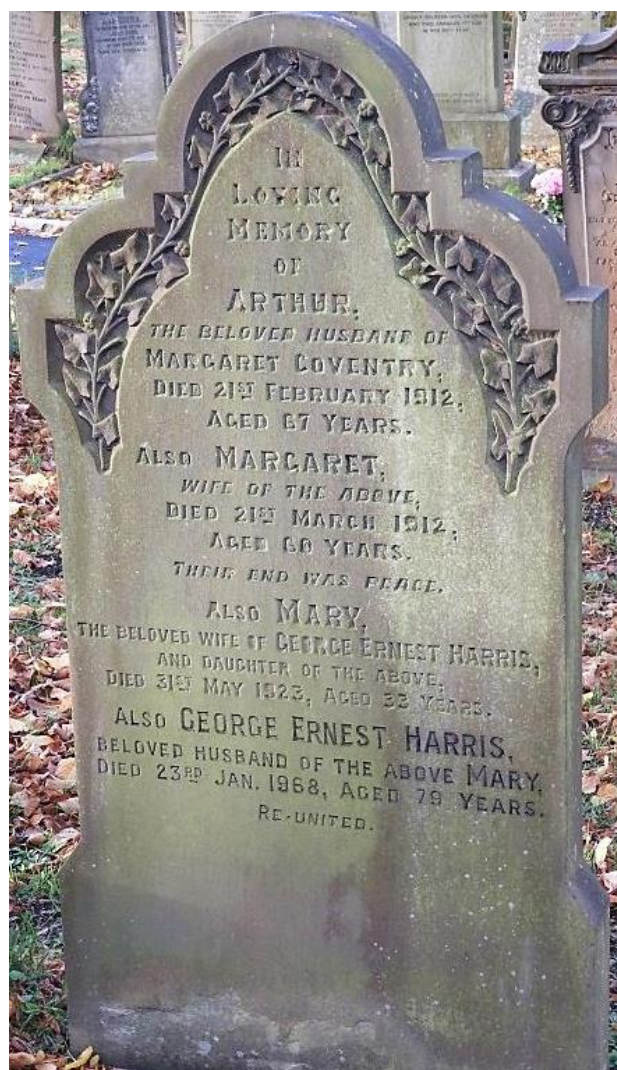
James                      born 9 January 1928

Kenneth                born 27 March 1930

Another son, Ivor, was born on 22 July 1936.

James was not present in the household at the time of the Register. It is believed that Bertha died on Wirral in early 1946 aged 38.

Leslie Burkey Harris (born 31 January 1914), the youngest son of Frederick Charles Burkey Harris and Rhoda, married Freda Evelyn Plumridge (born 16 August 1917) in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in mid-1936. In September 1936 they were living at 2 Ffrith



Cottages, Caerwys, Holywell where Leslie was recorded as a painter and decorator. No record of children has been found and it is believed that Freda died, aged 22, in the Ruthin area in late 1939. Leslie married Dorothy May Hilton Taylor at Neston Parish Church in mid-1947 and a son, Frederick Burkey Harris, was born in early 1949. Leslie died, on Wirral, in early 1971.

In 1939, in the same household, was unmarried Mary Harris (born 27 February 1910, domestic), Leslie's older sister. Mary married George Charles Davidson at Neston Parish Church on 14 June 1948 and they had one daughter, Barbara, born in September 1950. Mary Davidson died on Wirral in late 1973

*[Acknowledgement: to Barbara Davidson, daughter of Mary and George Davidson, for additional details of later members of the family]*

The Coventry / Harris grave at Neston Parish Church where George Ernest and Mary Harris are buried with Mary's parents