

37: (Charles) Gordon Harrison MC

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Charles Gordon Harrison

Rank: Lieutenant MC Shown in CWGC records as being a 2nd Lieutenant

Battalion / Regiment: 3rd Bn. attd. 2nd Bn. South Lancashire Regiment

Service Number: ? Date of Death: 26 September 1918 Age at Death: 24

Buried / Commemorated at: Westoutre British Cemetery, Heuvelland, West Flanders, Belgium

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Harrison, of Willow Way, King's Gap, Hoyle, Cheshire. Native of Blundellsands, Liverpool.

Charles Gordon Harrison - he appears to have been commonly known as Gordon - was the second child of wool broker Frank and Edith Marianne Harrison (although the *Birkenhead News*, on the report of his death, refers to him as the eldest son). Born in Sefton in late 1894, little is known of Gordon although it is clear that his family was well-off; in the 1901 census they were living on a leafy road, with spacious houses, in Blundellsands and four servants were recorded in the household.

1901	Household	Name	Age	Sex	Relationship	Occupation	Home
1	1	Frank Harrison	35	M	Head	Wool Broker	Lancs - Liverpool
	2	Edith M. Harrison	31	F	Wife		Scotland
	3	Clifford Harrison	7	M	Son		Lancs - Sefton
	4	Gordon Harrison	6	M	Son		do - do
	5	Edith D. Harrison	5	F	Daughter		do - do
	6	Ailsa May Harrison	2	F	Daughter		do - do
	7	Elizabeth B. Boring	60	F	Servant	House - Domestic	Shropshire - Bath
	8	Lillian Waters	18	F	Servant	House - Domestic	Warrington - London Road
	9	Caroline Pritchard	38	F	Servant	Cook - Domestic	Lancs - Liverpool
	10	Martha Lynam	20	F	Servant	Housemaid - Domestic	do - do

1901 census (extract) – 'Balholm', Merrilocks Road, Blundellsands, Great Crosby

Frank Harrison	35	wool broker	born Liverpool
Edith	31		born Scotland
Clifford	7		born Sefton
Gordon	6		born Sefton
Edith D.	5		born Sefton
Ailsa May	2		born Sefton

Also in the household were 4 servants, 2 domestic nurses, a domestic cook and a housemaid.

Clifford was registered as Frank Clifford Harrison and Edith was Edith Doreen Harrison.

Despite a comprehensive search the family has not been located in the 1911 census (a different family was living at 'Balholm') although Charles Gordon Harrison (16, born Blundellsands) and his older brother, Frank Clifford Harrison (17, born Blundellsands) were two of the 36 boarders at Uppingham School, Rutland.

At the time of Gordon's death in September 1918 the family was living on Hinderton Road, Neston, and it would appear that they moved to King's Gap, Hoyle, sometime after January 1919, the probate date - probate of his estate was obtained at London on

Neston Officer Killed in Action.

The death in action is reported of Lieut. Gordon Harrison, which has occurred during the heavy fighting on the Western front. He was the eldest son of Mrs. Harrison, Hinderton-road, Neston, and deep sympathy is felt for her and the other members of the family in their bereavement.

Birkenhead News – Saturday 5 October 1918

27 January 1919 by Edith Marianne Harrison (wife of Frank Harrison). His home address was given as 'Glencairne', Neston, Cheshire, and his effects were valued at £1053 11s 5d.

Although it is understood that Charles Gordon Harrison first served with the Grenadier Guards as a Guardsmen, it

was with the South Lancashire Regiment, the Prince of Wales's Volunteers, that he served for the longest period.

The 2nd Battalion was in Britain, at Tidworth Garrison on the Hampshire/Wiltshire border, on the outbreak of WW1, as part of the 7th Brigade, 3rd Division. The troops were deployed to the Western Front in August 1914, where they remained, but on 18 October 1915 they transferred with the Brigade to the 25th Division and on 26 October 1915 they transferred again, now to the 75th Brigade in the same Division. On 21 June 1916 they were transferred to the 64th Brigade in the 21st Division. On 30 June 1918 they transferred once again, now to the 89th Brigade in the 30th Division.

In 1914 the troops were in action at: The Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, The Battle of Le Cateau, The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne, The Battles of La Basse and Messines 1914 and The First Battle of Ypres.

In 1915 they were involved in The Winter Operations 1914-15, The First Attack on Bellewaarde, The Actions of Hoge and The Second Attack on Bellewaarde.

In 1916 they were engaged in the German attack on Vimy Ridge, The Battle of Albert, The Battle of Bazentin, The Battle of Pozieres and The Battle of the Ancre Heights.

In 1917 they were at The Battle of Messines and The Battle of Pilckem and in 1918 at The Battle of St Quentin, The First Battle of Bapaume, The Actions at the Somme Crossings, The Battle of Rosieres, The Battles of Kemmel Ridge, The Battle of the Scherpenberg, the capture of Neuve Eglise and the capture of Wulverghem (3 - 28

2nd Lt. Charles Gordon Harrison, S. Lanc. R., Spec. Res., attd. 2nd Bn.

On 24th-25th September, 1918, near Wulverghem, he commanded a raiding party with great courage and skill, and attacked a nest of machine guns that was holding up our advance. He captured one gun, disposing of the crew. Any further advance was held up by concentrated machine-gun fire, and he withdrew his men in perfect order to our lines, having successfully accomplished the object with which he started, and obtained information of vital importance.

September). It was, during the later stages of this last action that Charles Gordon Harrison died on 26 September 1918 and it was here that he gained his Military Cross. Until March 1918 Charles Harrison had been considered part of an Officer Cadet Unit but, on 7 March, he was commissioned as a temporary 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion.

[Source: *Supplement to The London Gazette*, 18 March 1918]

Supplement to The London Gazette, 31 January 1919, and *Supplement to the Edinburgh Gazette*, 5 February 1919

The final action in which Charles Harrison was involved, in which he gets an individual mention, was documented in 'A Brief History of the 30th Division':

From this time to the 28th the line did not change materially. The Divisional front was extended to Gooseberry Farm, on the south, which gave the 89th Brigade two Battalions in the line—2/17th Londons on the right and 2nd South Lancashire Regiment on the left. There A Company of the 2nd South Lancashire Regiment advanced their line about 150 yards one morning, but there was no attack on a large scale. The weather was bad almost consistently, and there was an entire lack of accommodation from Boeschepe—Westoutre forwards, save what could be improvised or made. The tail of the Division—the transport and the hundred and one other units or parts of units that go to make up a Division—had for the most part swung round to the right and occupied the valley south of the Mont Rouge Hills from Koudekot eastwards, though the addition of Kemmel to the Divisional area gave us some more room on its slopes. Divisional Headquarters moved to the site of the old Corps Headquarters Camp on Mont Noir.

There was a good deal of artillery fire these days and nights, and a fairly liberal use of gas, both in front and back behind Daylight Corner, where the batteries were; and a certain amount further back still—on Dranoutre, Locre, and even Boeschepe. But the enemy Infantry were not of the best. The 8th Division had been relieved—not before it was time—by the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division. And on our right the very indifferent *morale* of the 11th Reserve Division had been stiffened by a Matrosen, or Naval Battalion. Neither of these were good Divisions and, with teaching, came to understand that "No Man's Land" was ours and not theirs. The 21st Infantry Brigade continued the same policy in the few days that remained in the nine days following the 14th, when they relieved the 89th Brigade in the Wulverghem Sector.

Before being relieved nine nights later the 21st Brigade had, as the Divisional Commander put it in congratulating them on their work, "established complete mastery over 'No Man's Land.'" Hardly a night passed but brought its quota of prisoners, the result of successful raiding. On the night of 20th-21st, Captain H. Cooke, commanding C Company of the Cheshires, led a most successful small attack on an enemy strong point, covered by a smoke barrage from the field guns. The party advanced about 400 yards and cut out a *re-entrant* in our line, netting fourteen prisoners, one of them a sergeant-major, and a machine gun. Most of the prisoners were caught in gas respirators, having mistaken our smoke for gas shell. The G.H.Q. summary, in its laconic way, reported next day that "we improved our positions slightly last night west of Messines, capturing a German strong point together with several prisoners." The 7th Royal Irish were no less enterprising. On the night of 18th-19th, Second-Lieutenant W. J. Trueman, with No. 9 Platoon, captured two prisoners and a machine gun in a raid to

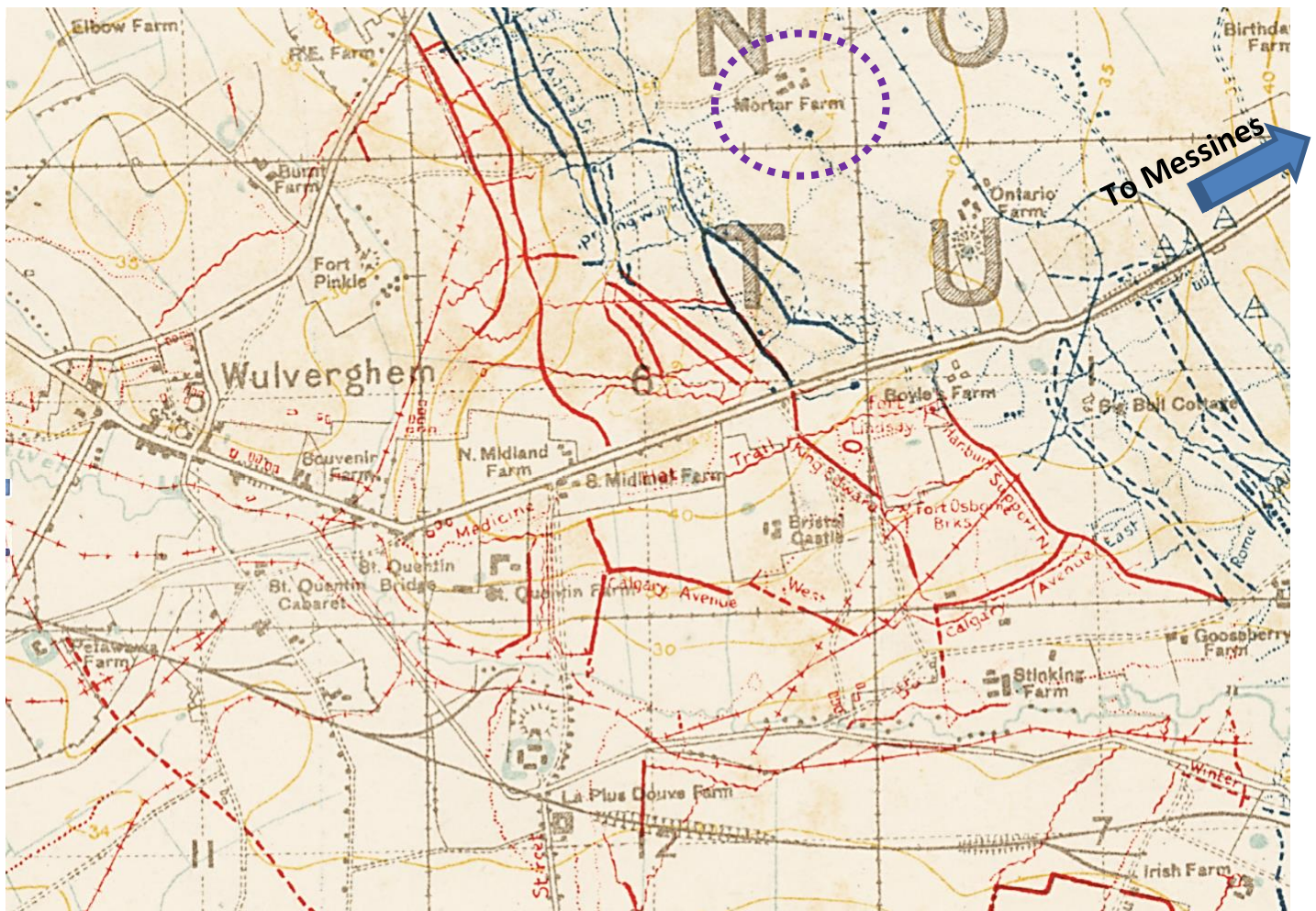
secure identifications, and the same night another party from the same Battalion, under Second-Lieutenant McNeight, similarly raided another strong point. The relieving troops of 89th Brigade continued the same policy in the few days that remained before the attack. On the night of 24th-25th a fighting patrol of D Company of the 7/8th Royal Inniskillings brought in two prisoners and a machine gun. The South Lances, on their left sent out two Platoons of B Company in the night of the 25th, under Second-Lieutenant C. G. Harrison, to raid Mortar Farm, which they succeeded in doing despite considerable opposition. They returned after bombing the posts with a prisoner and a machine gun. On the right for the 90th Brigade the London Scottish raided La Hutte Chateau the same night, likewise capturing a prisoner and a machine gun. They had taken five prisoners two nights earlier. All this contributed most usefully in the preparation for the attack to be launched on the 28th.

A Brief History of the 30th Division from its Reconstitution in July 1918 to the Armistice, 11 November 1918 R. Flenley (late Captain R.F.A.)
The Naval & Military Press in association with the Imperial War Museum Originally published 1919

Although no mention is made of it, it was undoubtedly during this action that Charles Gordon Harrison was wounded, dying the following day.

Some time ago (date unknown - possibly April 2015) 'A poignant contemporary framed MC pair and Plaque to 2/Lieut C. G. Harrison 3rd South Lancs. Regt.' was sold by Harland Military Antiques for £2325.





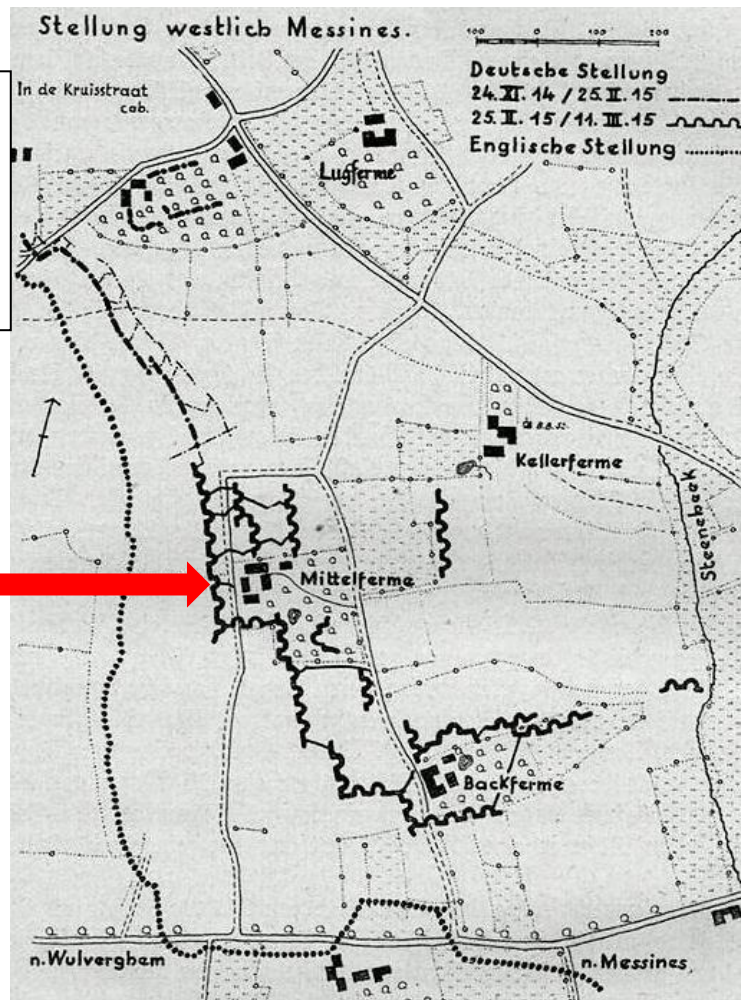
Trench map of 25 September 1918 (three days before Charles Gordon Harrison died) of the area around the Wulverghem – Messines road. German trenches and positions are shown in blue, British trenches in red. The location of Mortar Farm, where Gordon led a raiding party on the evening of 25 September (and where he probably received the wounds from which he subsequently died) is encircled in purple. [<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=16&lat=50.7570&lon=2.8678&layers=101464921&b=1>]



A satellite view of the area of Wulverghem (lower left) and Mortar Farm (encircled in yellow) [Google Maps]

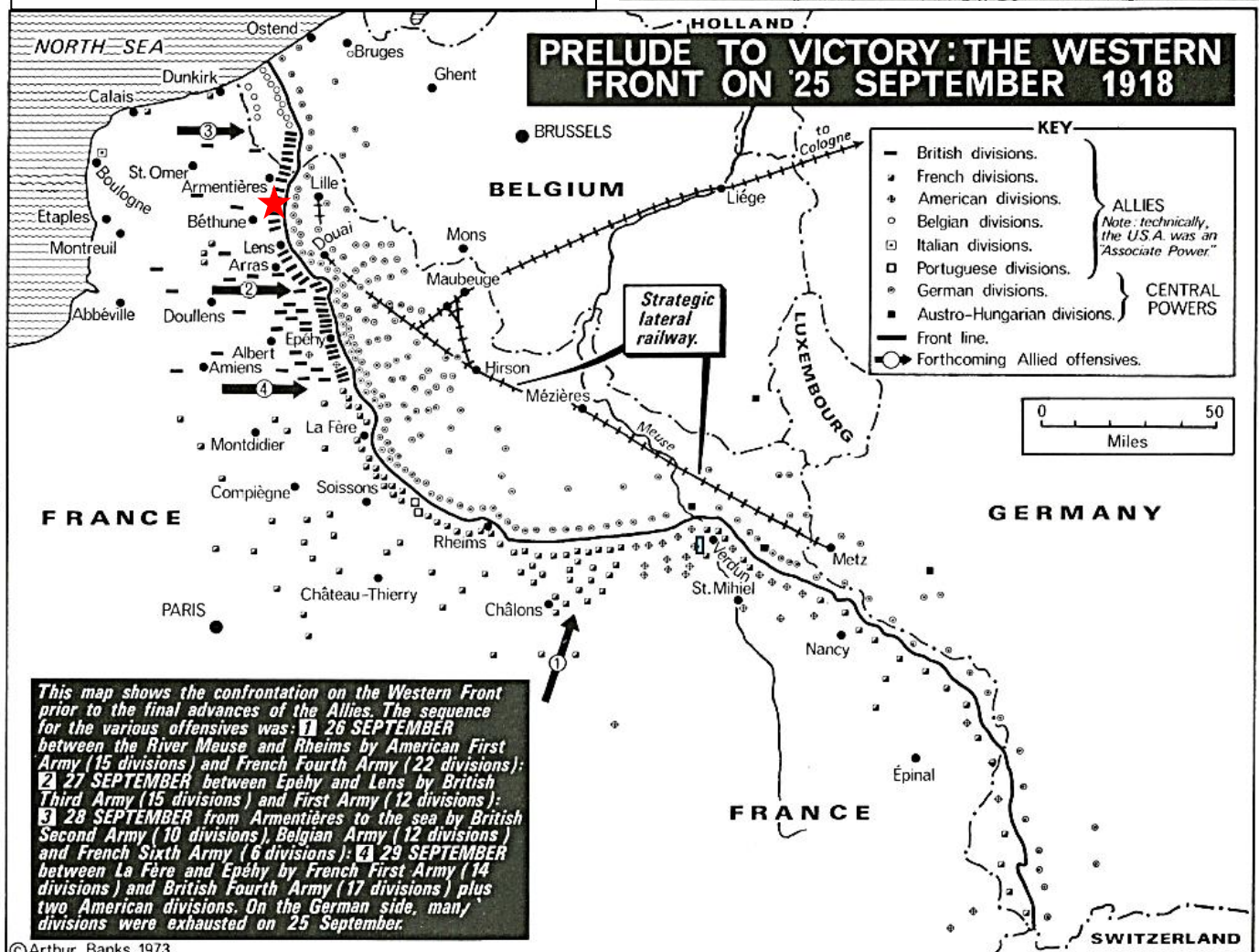
This earlier map (of the winter of 1914/15) shows the area of Mortar Farm (Mittelferne) and, slightly further south, Ontario Farm (Backferme).
[https://stevesmith1944.wordpress.com/2015/12/24/a-christmas-tale-2/]

Mortar Farm



The location of Wulverghem, where Charles Gordon Harrison died on 26 September 1918, is shown by the red star

[Source: *A Military Atlas of the First World War* Arthur Banks Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]



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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.

Charles Gordon Harrison had accrued a large credit of £72 7s 0d and a War Credit of £12.

The total payment, £84 7s 0d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £11 250 in 2016.

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.

DIED FROM WOUNDS.
HARRISON—September 26, died of wounds, Second-Lieutenant C. GORDON HARRISON, dearly-loved second son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Harrison, Neston, Cheshire.

Liverpool Echo - Tuesday 1 October 1918

It is believed that Frank Clifford Harrison (born 2 June 1893), Charles Gordon Harrison's brother, served as an officer with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and the Rifle Brigade in WW1. In the 1939 Register (29 September) he was living, unmarried, at 57 Cable Road, Hoylake (a boarding house) where he was recorded as a cotton merchant. Nothing further is known of him.

The CWGC records Frank and Edith Harrison living at Willow Way, King's Gap, Hoylake - this suggests that they had moved from Neston by about 1920.

Ailsa May Harrison married Harry Graners at St Hildeburgh's Church, Hoylake, in early 1929, but nothing further is known.

Edith Doreen Harrison married William A Hood in Wirral in early 1931 and it is believed that she died, aged 77, in Surrey in late 1973 aged 77.

Frank Harrison, Charles' father, may have died in Wirral in April / June 1947 aged 81.



The War Grave of Charles Gordon Harrison at Westoutre British Cemetery, West Flanders, Belgium [CWGC photo]