

## 38: William Healey

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: William Healey

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 2nd. Bn. Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 25871

Date of Death: 03 October 1915

Age at Death: 41

Buried / Commemorated at: Loos Memorial, Loos-en-Gohelle, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of George and Elizabeth Healey, of Thornton Hough and the husband of Maria Healey, of Mill St., Neston

William Healey was the eldest child of gardener George and Elizabeth Healey.

At the time of the 1901 census - the family has not been located in the 1891 census - William was 24, single and a horseman living at the family home in Thornton Hough.

The family had moved around the region and William had been born at Bangor-on-Dee, south-east of Wrexham:

98	The Foxes	1			George Healey	Heal	M	45	1	Gardener	Worker	Chas Malpas
					Elizabeth do	Heal	M	46	1			Denbighshire
					William do	Heal	S	24	1	Horseman on farm	Worker	"
					Martha do	Heal	S	22	1	Domestic	Worker	Bangor Wrexham
					George do	Heal	S	20	1	Domestic	Worker	Chas Raby
					Fred do	Heal	S	12	1			Lanc Lpool
					May do	Heal	S	5	1			Chas Raby

1901 census (extract) – 'The Foxes', Neston Road, Thornton Hough

George Healey	48	gardener, domestic	born Malpas
Elizabeth	46		born Denbighshire
William	24	horseman on farm	born Bangor, Wrexham
Martha	22	servant, domestic	born Raby
Fred	12		born Liverpool
May	5		born Raby

William married Maria Peers of Neston in early 1906 in a Civil Marriage in Chester. Maria was a daughter of labourer Joseph and Helen Peers of Neston. Joseph was probably a labourer at the colliery as he and his family lived at New Houses in Ness, houses built - and long-since demolished - for colliery workers. Maria had been baptised at Neston Parish Church on 2 May 1873.

In the 1911 census William, now a general labourer, and Maria were living on Mill Street in Neston:

# CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 405  
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

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	
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of —	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Completed years the present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year write "under one year."	Total Children born alive.	Children who have died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.				
1 William Healey	Head	35	Married	5					General Labourer	530				Bangor-on-Dee	456
2 Maria Healey	Wife	37	Married	5										Ness	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that —  
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper age column.  
(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 2 and 3 separately, and have compared the totals with the total number of persons.  
(3) After making the necessary corrections 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 *W.H.*

(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 (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count outhouses, outhouses, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.

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

Signature *William Healey*  
Postal Address *Mill Street Nelson N. Chester*

## 1911 census (condensed) - Mill Street, Neston

William Healey	35	general labourer	born Bangor-on-Dee
Maria	37		born Ness

William and Maria had been married for five years and they had no children.

Although William's Service Record has not been found it is believed that he enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment in Birkenhead towards the outbreak of war although, at that time, the Battalion was based at Jubbulpore, India, and didn't return to England until 24 December 1914. Interestingly, William was in the same battalion as Harry Jones and was killed on the same day, in the same action [See [46: Harry Jones](#)].

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was under the orders of the 84<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division and they sailed from Britain, landing at Le Havre, on 17 January 1915 although it appears from William's Medal Rolls Index Card that he did not arrive in France until 24 June.

It seems probable that he was lost in The Battle of Loos which lasted from 25 September - 18 October 1915 <sup>1</sup>, a major offensive involving six Divisions and which was commonly called 'The Big Push'. The British forces were ill-prepared for this action and lacked sufficient stock of ammunition and heavy artillery. Poison gas was used by the British army in the opening stages of the conflict and, despite heavy casualties, there was considerable success on the first day in breaking into the deep enemy positions near Loos and Hulluch. However, the British reserve forces needed to replace the fallen troops were too far behind the front line and the early successes could not be capitalised upon and the forces became bogged down and the battle degraded into attritional warfare for minor gains. William, it seems, was missing in action on 2 October and was declared as dead the following day.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which included the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment, had moved into the front line on the night of 30 September / 1 October to relieve the 83<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion being with the Northumberland Fusiliers in the southern sector of the

<sup>1</sup> Sources give different dates for the culmination of The Battle of Loos ranging from 8 to 19 September



Hohenzollern Redoubt and adjoining trenches and with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion occupying the west face. No opportunity had arisen for the officers to reconnoitre the trenches or even the approach to them and the troops found the communication trenches to be very narrow and complex in their arrangement. Arthur Crookenden recorded that:

When the 84th Brigade was trying to move in, three disorganized brigades were using all available means of leaving the front line, and Central Alley, which had been allotted to the Fusiliers and ourselves, was a funnel into which poured to the rear scores of wounded and leaderless men from many units.

The loss of the Brigadier and Brigade Major of the 85th Brigade at the outset of a difficult and confusing situation handicapped the troops very seriously. Throughout the operation, the great difficulty was the movement of troops along the trenches. Parties arriving at the wrong places, and having to retrace their footsteps, found the places allotted to them occupied by other troops. This hampered and delayed all preparations for offensive movements. To keep the troops supplied with water, bombs and food, required the ceaseless employment of large fatigue parties. These parties took many hours to come and go and so the troops in reserve got little rest.

On this day, the 2nd Battalion had received its first issue of Lewis guns, in the use of which Lieut. Cole and four men had had some elementary instruction. The guns were taken into the line. Trenches, so full of dead, and so knocked about that they averaged only 18 inches in depth, were taken over from the Royal Fusiliers. Part of this line was a piece of the German second line, about 300 yards long and terminated at each end by a barricade, on the other side of which were Germans. The trenches were taken over under a fairly stiff barrage of shelling from guns, minen werfer and hand grenades. Many men had been lost through machine gun fire on the way up.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising to learn that the Battalion had hardly finished taking over, about 9-30 a.m. on the 1st, when it was found that the Germans were occupying a portion of the line allotted to the Northumberland Fusiliers on our right, near the point of junction of the Hohenzollern Redoubt and Big Willie. When this report reached Divisional H.Q., howitzers were turned on to the point and on all communication trenches leading to it from the German side. The Northumberland Fusiliers attacked, but in spite of every effort, did not succeed in turning the Germans out. Bombing continued all day, and towards evening our men began to establish some superiority.

On the night of the 1st, an attack was ordered, on the "Chord" by us, and on Little Willie, on our left, by the Welch. At first, it was thought that we had captured the Chord, but daylight showed that we had not. The fact is that the Chord was unrecognizable even by day and still more so by night among the maze of trenches and ditches with which this area was covered. Although Major Roddy had reported the state of affairs and advised making no further attacks, there is no doubt that Brigade

and superior head-quarters entirely failed to realize the conditions in and around the Redoubt, and ordered attack after attack in a way that can only be described as ruthless and senseless. The troops were bombed all day, and although there were officers and men in this maze of trenches, they were completely disorganized, and mixed, mainly owing to the heavy loss in officers and senior non-commissioned officers. It was beyond the power of human endeavour to collect and sort them out for an organized attack. However, all through the 2nd, in the most gallant way, our men, Northumberland Fusiliers and Welch delivered individual bayonet and bomb attacks in their efforts to dislodge the Germans and to comply with orders.

One of the many plucky deeds performed during this fighting was the way Lieut. Cole, Sergeant Rimington and his section served their Lewis gun. During an enemy attack, the gun, fouled with mud, jammed, and the section were all killed, Lieut. Cole persisted in his efforts to clear the gun, but was himself, too, finally killed.

After nightfall, the Suffolk Regiment made an attack on Little Willie, but was heavily repulsed. The only thanks they received was a demand to rally and attack again. This was beyond human endurance and was not done.

On 3rd October, the Germans attacked all along the line of the 84th Brigade, but were repulsed except on the left where they gained a footing. Our men put up a wonderful resistance. All our bombers were killed. A bayonet counter-attack, led by Major Roddy, was met with a hail of bombs and driven back to the British front line. Brigade H.Q. ordered fresh attacks but this was quite out of the question, having in view the exhaustion of the individuals and the congestion in the trenches. It was quite clear to anyone who visited the front line that further attacks were not feasible, even by fresh troops, until the congestion of wounded and dead had been overcome. Nevertheless, another attack was ordered, and gallantly carried out by the East Yorkshire Regiment and one company of the K.O.V.L.I. early on the 4th. This attack, too, failed, at great loss of life, and confirmed the judgment of Major Roddy which he had given in a report to Brigade H.Q. on the evening of the 1st.

Later in the morning, the Germans swung in a surprise attack on the left of the 84th Brigade, drove through the Welch, and swept down on our men in their trenches. Our war diary says "The enemy broke through " part of the trench occupied by the Welch on our left flank and advanced " with great rapidity, throwing hundreds of bombs, their bombers being " supported by machine guns and rifle men. The attack came as a " complete surprise."

Our line was driven back till the Germans were held up by " C " Company of the Northumberland Fusiliers at their block at the end of Big Willie.



On the night of the 5th/6th October, the Brigade was relieved by the 2nd (Guards) Brigade. The relief took 13 hours of daylight, although ample time was given for reconnaissance by officers, the trenches cleared of all obstacles to movement, and all arrangements most carefully organized. This shows, in some measure, the impossibility of the demands made on men of the 28th Division during the previous five days.

Our casualties were very heavy. Six officers, the Adjutant Major A. Rowland Hill, Captain F. L. Lloyd, Lieuts. S. Cole, D. C. B. Brien, W. E. Hartley and M. McGregor, and 43 men were killed ; 7 officers and 153 men wounded, and two officers and 166 men missing, of whom none were ever recovered.

The survivors had all but reached the limit of human endurance. This phrase is often used, but it is, unfortunately, justified. The unpreparedness of England in 1914 threw on a handful of her willing servants a burden which demanded the most extreme exertions of which the human frame is capable. Their bodies were sustained by their spirit which rose superior to all trials and dangers.

[The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War Arthur Crookenden (Colonel of the Regiment) W.H. Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. 1938]

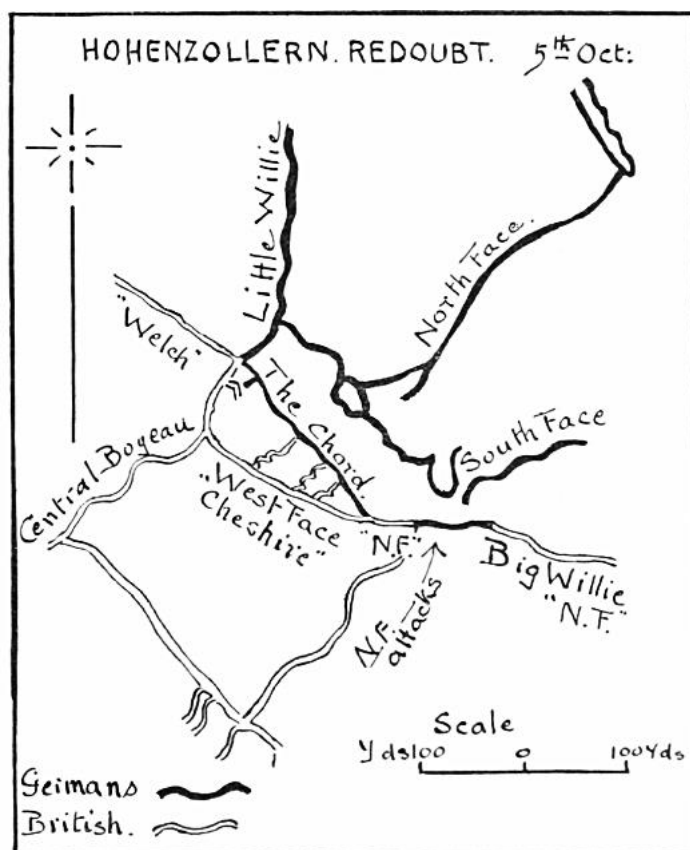
#### The Hohenzollern Redoubt

(Hohenzollernwerk) was a defensive strongpoint of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army at Auchy-les-Mines near Loos-en-Gohelle in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France.

A number of pit-heads (Fosse) and auxiliary shafts had been built around Loos-en-Gohelle when the area was developed by the mining industry; Fosse 8 de Béthune was close to the north end of a spoil-heap (Crassier) known as "The Dump". The Crassiers had been tunnelled or hollowed out by both sides, to provide observation-posts and machine-gun nests. The Dump was 20-foot (6.1 m) high, with an excellent view in all directions. New fortifications were built as quickly as possible, after the Franco-British offensives in May and June 1915. At Dump and Fosse trenches, on a slight rise 400 yards (370 m) in front of the original front line, a new defensive work wired for all-round defence was built and named the Hohenzollernwerk. The face of the

redoubt was 300 yards (270 m) long and curved, with extensions to join with "Big Willie" Trench to the south and "Little Willie" Trench to the north. British planners judged the Hohenzollern Redoubt to be the strongest defensive-work on the whole of the front. In the area of Fosse 8, more fortifications were built in July by the German 117<sup>th</sup> Division, after it had fought at Vimy Ridge in May and June; once a period of reorganisation at Roubaix was over, the division returned to the line on 9 July.

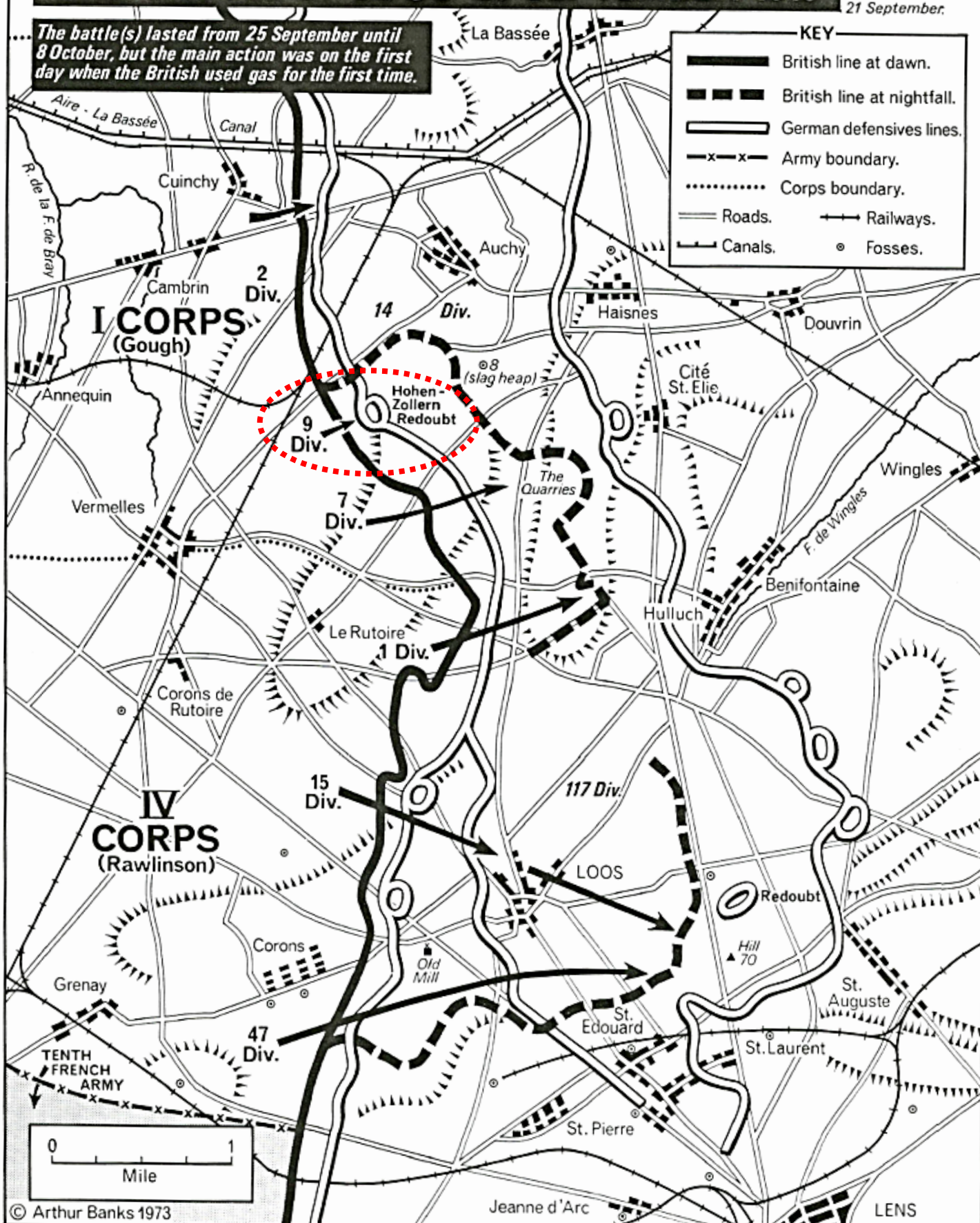
[Adapted from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern\\_Redoubt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern_Redoubt)]



# THE BATTLE OF LOOS 25 SEPTEMBER 1915

*Note: the British opened an artillery bombardment on 21 September.*

*The battle(s) lasted from 25 September until 8 October, but the main action was on the first day when the British used gas for the first time.*



The position of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, has been encircled in red  
 [Source: *A Military Atlas of the First World War* Arthur Banks Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]



# WAR DIARY

or

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

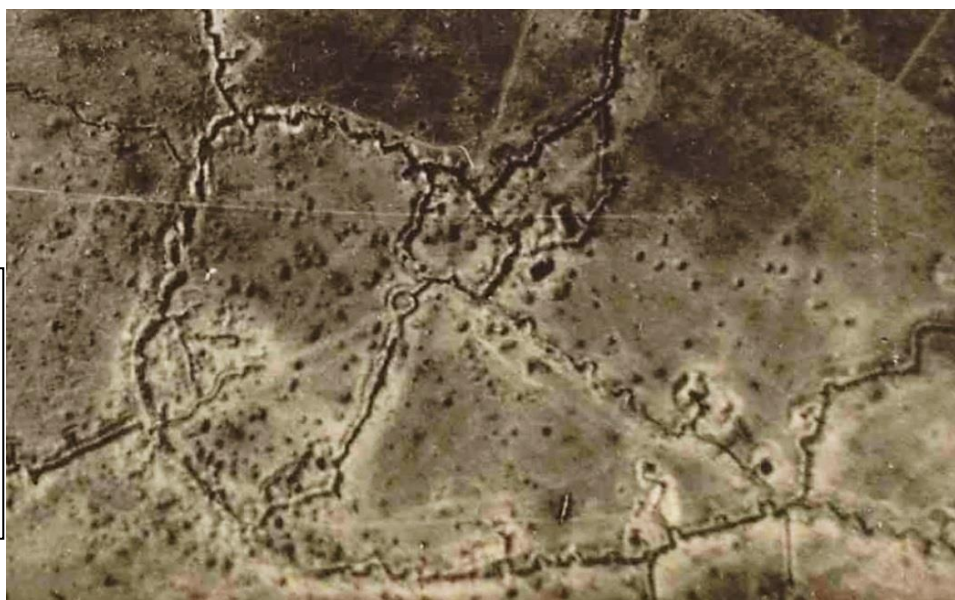
(Erase heading not required.)

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

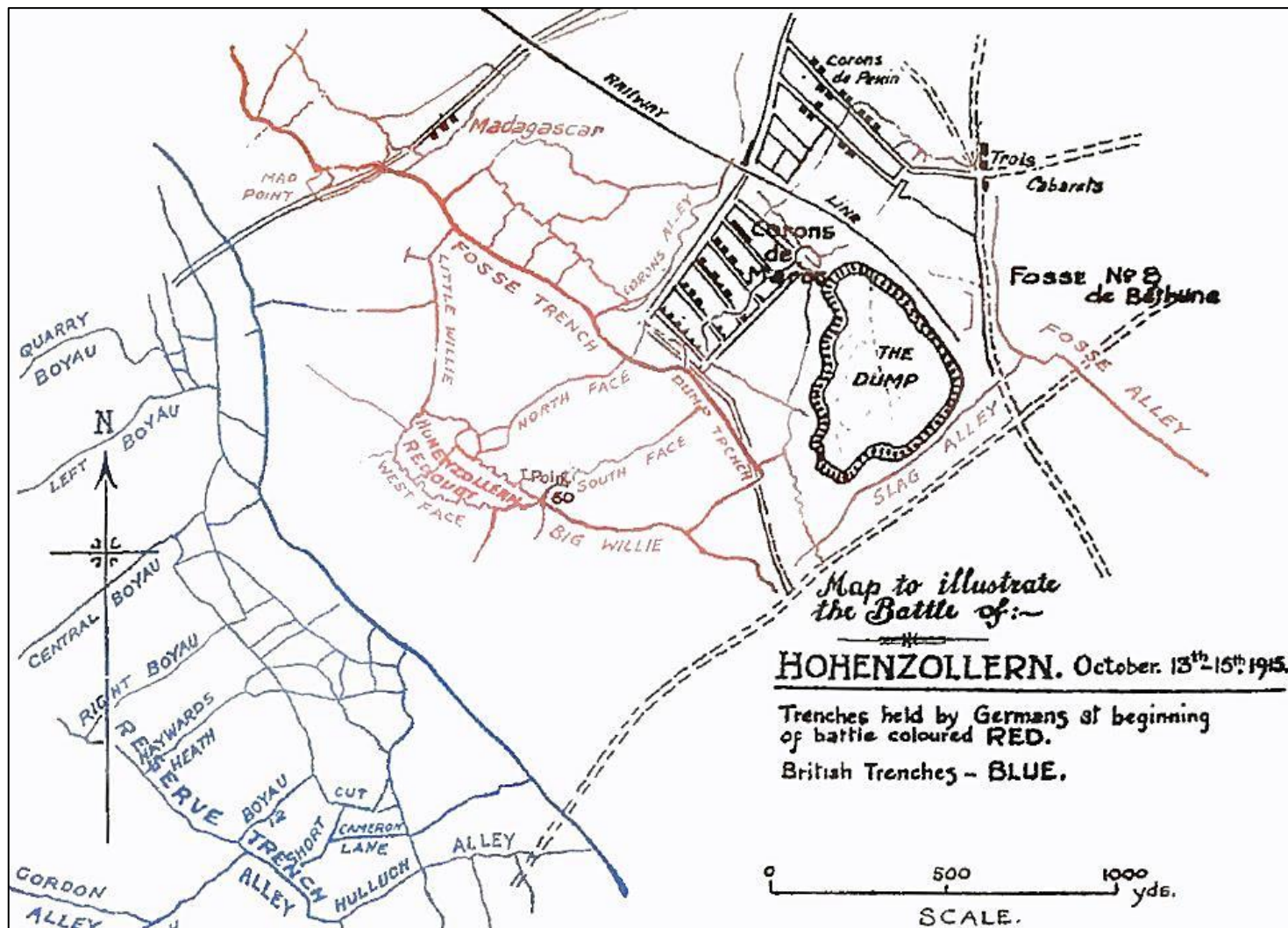
Hour, Date, Place.	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks										
5 am 2nd October.	The enemy bombarded the two Companies holding the WEST FACE of the HOHENKOLLERN REDOUBT with Bombs French Mortars and Aerial Torpedos. Bombardment was continued throughout the day.											
12 Midnight " "	No 1 Company supported the Suffolk Regiment in an attack on the NORTH WEST FACE of the REDOUBT. Attack failed. Captain Ogden (Durham L.I.) and 2 Lieut RAIKES were wounded. 2nd Lieut COLE rejoined Battalion on having completed a course in the use of the LEWIS Gun. Two LEWIS Guns were brought with him into the REDOUBT. Enemy continued bombardment throughout the night.											
7.30 am 3rd October.	Captain Freeman was sent to command a party of the Northumberland Fusiliers on the SOUTH WEST of the REDOUBT, the two Officers of this party having been wounded. Enemy bombing incessantly.											
7.45 am " "	The enemy delivered an unexpected attack on our left with Bombs and Machine Guns and eventually turned it. The Batta. fought well but were driven back. Enemy occupied WEST FACE.											
	<u>WEST FACE</u> of the HOHENKOLLERN REDOUBT. Major Hill & Captain Lloyd were killed, 2 Lieuts: Paton Norris and Aldersey wounded, 2 Lieut Coke and Brien missing. Casualties from 30th September to 3rd October both dates inclusive :-											
	<table><tr><td>Officers</td><td>5</td><td>7</td><td>2</td><td>14</td></tr><tr><td>Other Ranks</td><td>43</td><td>153</td><td>166</td><td>362</td></tr></table>	Officers	5	7	2	14	Other Ranks	43	153	166	362	
Officers	5	7	2	14								
Other Ranks	43	153	166	362								
5 PM 3rd October	Battalion was withdrawn to VERMELLES and slept the night in LANCASTER DUG OUTS											

War Diary entry for 2nd & 3rd October 1915, Cheshire Regiment, 28th Division

Aerial view of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.  
[Source:  
<https://derbyshireterritorials.wordpress.com/the-great-war-1914-1918/1915-2/loos/>]







Although this map illustrates the situation around the Hohenzollern Redoubt around ten days after William Healey was presumed to have died it gives a clearer depiction of the layout and arrangement of the trenches than Arthur Crookenden's sketch map.

Hohenzollern Redoubt was situated at the apex of a triangle formed by two major trenches, Big Willie and Little Willie, whilst Fosse Trench and Dump Trench formed the base of the triangle in front of the village and colliery.

[Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern\\_Redoubt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern_Redoubt)]

## "MISSING" CHESHIRE.

Mrs. Healey, of Mill-street, Neston, has received an intimation that her husband, Private William Healey, of the 2nd Cheshires, who are now in France, has been missing since the 3rd of last month. Private Healey, who is well liked among a wide circle of friends, joined the Cheshires since the outbreak of war, and went to France in June last. He apparently took part in the same engagement as Private Harry Jones, of Little Neston, of the same battalion, who is also missing.

Birkenhead Advertiser – Wednesday 24 November 1915



Great concern also is being felt regarding the fate of Private W. Healey, 25871, Cheshire Regiment. His wife, who is well known and resides in Mill street, has received an intimation that he is "missing." Greatly distressed and anxious to glean any information which may enlighten her as to his fate, she hopes this portrait and particulars concerning him may travel to the battlefields and perchance some chum or friend knowing him will relieve her anxiety as to details. Suspense is more harrowing than certainty. He may be a "prisoner of war," or have become detached from his regiment, as happens sometimes in big actions, but any news will be appreciated by his relatives. His last communication to his wife, couched in endearing terms, states that he was going nearer to the firing lines, and bore the date 30-9-1915. He is missing from the 2nd October.



*Cheshire Observer* - Saturday 20 November 1915

235728 E/128416 Healey William 2nd Bn 5-10-15 Shrewsbury = = = D's Lee =  $\frac{2}{17-3}$   
Chichester 4/16  
Regt. In  
Pte Dalton  
25871

WAR GRATUITY.  
14-20 2 7 19  
Transfer 5016/1  
Regd. Paper 21/2000 Bn  
Serial No. 4274

3 = "

19-8-19/3 Sid Maria 3 - -

a. J. W 50% rent  
16 JUN. 1919  
Rel's info of D. Balc. 13-3-16

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.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

Nothing is known of Martha Healey, William's eldest sister, but Fred Healey died in April / June 1921 aged 33. Fred married Violet Marshall at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in April / June 1914 and they had a son, Fred, in April / June 1916.



It is believed that Elizabeth Healey, William's mother, died in April / June 1924 aged 68 and that George, William's father, died in April / June 1929 aged 77.

May Healey, William's sister, remained unmarried and died in late 1966 aged 71.

Name.	Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
HEALEY	CHES. R.	PLC	25871
William			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	7/2/01/310	3/62	
BRITISH	15	5/2/5 B1	1104
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in	1 France		
Date of entry therein	24.6.15		
			K. 1320.

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

## To the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

**Stormed by the North Midland Division,  
October 13th, 1915.**

Oh proud Hohenzollern, named after a King,  
You stood in your sullen might,  
And a challenge to all British arms did fling,  
Caring little for pity and right.  
Machine gunned and wired, your strength was  
well known,  
You were manned by a terrible crew,  
But little you knew, oh mighty Redoubt,  
What the "Terrier" men could do.

And you won't forget that October day  
That sounded your funeral knell,  
'Twas heard in the roar of the British guns,  
And the scream of the British shells.  
They broke your defences and splintered the wire,  
With a fury no power could stop,  
And you read your doom in that line of steel,  
When the "Boys" went over "the top."

And long you'll remember that Staffordshire rush,  
And the Lincoln and Leicester attack,  
Though you tore up their ranks with a deadly fire,  
You failed to drive them back;  
Though the ground was covered with British dead,  
They charged through your trenches, and then  
Your last chance vanished when "over the top"  
Came the Notts. and Derby men.

Oh men from the Midlands, the people at home  
Are proud of your courage and skill,  
And in long years to come, the tale of your deeds  
Will re-echo o'er Derbyshire hills.  
In the Pottery towns and the valleys of Trent,  
And over the Lincolnshire Fen,  
They will tell the tale of the big Redoubt  
That was stormed by the "Terrier" men.

**Corporal Brand,**  
7th Notts. & Derby's.

Printed and Published by S. Brown, 54 Radford Rd., Nottm.  
Price 1d each.



Maria Healey is buried at Neston cemetery in the same grave as John and Mary Jane McLeavy.

Following the initial assault on the Hohenzollern redoubt in early October 1915, in which William Healey died, British units carried out a further concentrated attack on the Redoubt which lasted from 13 – 19 October 1915. The British 9<sup>th</sup> Division captured the Redoubt and then lost it to a German counter-attack. The final British assault on 13 October failed and resulted in 3,643 casualties, mostly in the first few minutes. The official history of the war suggested that *The fighting on the 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October had not improved the general situation in any way and had brought nothing but useless slaughter of infantry.* General Sir Douglas Haig thought it might be possible to launch another attack on 7 November 1915 but heavy rain and accurate German shelling during the second half of October finally persuaded him to abandon the attempt.

### [Sources:

Poem on postcard

<https://derbyshireterritorials.wordpress.com/the-great-war-1914-1918/1915-2/loos/>

Text

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern\\_Redoubt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern_Redoubt)]