## **40: Benjamin Hughes**

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]
Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: B. Hughes
Rank: Lance Corporal Shown on CWGC as Private
Battalion / Regiment: 44th Garrison Bn. Formerly (512124) Labour Corps, Royal Fusiliers
Service Number: C/111331 Date of Death: 18 November 1918 Age at Death: ?
Buried / Commemorated at: Saint Andre Communal Cemetery, Saint-Andre-lez-Lille, Departement du Nord, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France
Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Mrs. W. Hughes of Bridge St., Neston.

Benjamin Hughes was the son of collier Walter & Elizabeth Hughes of Parkgate and he was baptised at Neston 27 December 1889.

Collier Walter Hughes (his father was recorded as Benjamin) of Parkgate married Elizabeth Mealor (her father was William), also of Parkgate, on 3 August 1885 at Neston Parish Church. It appears that, shortly after their marriage, Walter and Elizabeth moved to Mold as Martha, their first child, was born there in April / June 1888. However, although Benjamin, their first son, was born in Parkgate the following year, and Catherine was baptised 8 November 1891 (she died and was buried, aged 2, on 31 December 1891) when Walter, a collier recorded as living in Parkgate, the family has not been found anywhere in the 1891 census. John Hughes was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 13 November 1892; Walter was still a collier living in Parkgate.

By the time of the 1901 census the family had moved from Parkgate to Neston although it appears that they had again lived in Mold for some time:

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1901 census (extract) – 19 G	adstone Road, N	eston	
Walter Hughes	42	coal hewer	born Mold
Elizabeth	40		born Parkgate
Martha	13		born Mold
Benjamin	11		born Parkgate
John	8		born Parkgate
Francis	4		born Mold
Wilfred	1		born Neston
Catherine Mealor	78	mother-in-law, widow	born Neston
		living on own means	

In the 1911 census the family was recorded as living on Bridge Street, Neston, and Benjamin was a butcher. Walter had now changed career; previously a collier he was now a builder's labourer at a soapworks, probably in Port Sunlight:

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of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who		For Is	nfante		State, f	for each h d on this numbe	Married Wo Schedule, r of :	man the	Per	nonal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Worker, er Working on Own Account.	Whather Working at Histor	(1) If born in the United King- dom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish.	State whether :	If any person included in this Schedule is :
<ul> <li>who</li> <li>(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or</li> <li>(2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Moaday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere.</li> <li>No one else must be included.</li> </ul>	State whother "Head," or "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant."	" one n et	×.	Write "Single," "Married," "Wildower," or "Widower," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Com- pleted years the present Marriage has lasted.	Childre pres (If no alive w	n born sli sent Marris o children 1 rrite " Non- Column 7).	orn to T		ld show the precise branch of Trade, Manufacture, &c. any Trade or Manufacture, the of work done, and the Article erial worked or dealt in should burted.	This question should gener- ally be answered by stating the business carried on by the employer. If this is clearly shown in Col. 10 the question need not be answered here. No entry nuclei for Donestic Ser- vents in private suppresent.	(that is employing persons other than domestic servana), or (2) "Workst" (that is working for an	Write the words "Ak Barne" opposite the same of each percea earrying on Traile or Industry at house.	<ol> <li>He born in any other part of the Brinkh Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colocy, etc., and of the Province or State.</li> <li>He born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country.</li> <li>He born at say write "At Soa." Your, the the new sector of the Soa."</li> </ol>	jott by parent- age." (2) "Naturalised Beitish sub- jott," giving year of natu- ralisation. Or (3) If of foreign nationality, state whether,"	Deaf." or "Dea and Dumb." (2) "Totally Blind, (3) "Lunatic," (4) "Imbecile," or "Feeble minded," state the infirmity opposite that per
(For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)		Ages of Males.	Ages of Females.	25. 2	one year write " under ste."	Children Born Alive.	still Living.	wise have Lited. (	(See Instructions of Schedule.)	1 to 8 and Examples on back	(Forernment, Municipal, etc.) etate what body. (See Instruction 9 and Exam- ples on back of Schedule.)	employer), or (3) "Own Account" (that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employer].	Industry at house.	Norz.—In the case of persons born elsewhere than in England or Wales, state whether "Resident" or "Visitor " in this Country.	"German," "Russian," etc.	son's name, and the age at which he or she becam afflicted.
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Martha Hughes, recorded as 13 in the 1901 census, may have died or married although no record has been found.

There is some evidence that Benjamin later was working at Neston Colliery as someone of that name was injured there in December 1914.

Benjamin (23, labourer of Chester Road, Neston) married Elizabeth Ann Rugman at Neston Parish Church on 18 January 1913. Elizabeth was 29, also living on Chester Road and her father, William, was a collier. In the 1911 census Elizabeth was shown as being

28, a laundry maid at Neston Laundry, born Neston, and William was a 'hooker-on at Wirral Colliery' and the family was living at 3, Gladstone Road.

Unfortunately, Benjamin's Service Record has not been found so we have no personal details or particulars of his activities in the army. However, the report in the *Chester Chronicle* notes that Benjamin was wounded at The Battle of Arras, a major British offensive lasting from 9 April to 16 May 1917 when troops from many parts of the British Empire attacked trenches held by the army of Imperial Germany to the east of the French city of Arras.

Benjamin's death on 18 November 1918 - a week after the signing of the Armistice (although, on many parts of the Western Front, fighting had continued) was attributed to influenza or pneumonia, illnesses which claimed many lives before the development of antibiotics and effective care:

> The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more people than the Great War, known today as World War I (WWI), at somewhere between 20 and 40 million people. It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic

## NESTON AND PARKGATE

SOLDIER'S DEATH .- It is with much regret that we record the death of Pte. Benjamin Hughes, which occurred in France last week from the effects of influenza. He was the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, Bridgestreet, and in his boyhood's days was a member of the parish church choir. He was among the first to offer his services to his country when War broke out, and during the time he was on active service took part in many severe engagements; and it is a matter for regret that he should have fallen a victim to influenza just when peace is dawning. Much sympathy is felt for his widow and parents in their bereavement.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 30 November 1918

in recorded world history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in four-years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351. Known as "Spanish Flu" or "La Grippe" the influenza of 1918-1919 was a global disaster.

Deep within the trenches these men lived through some of the most brutal conditions of life, which it seemed could not be any worse. Then, in pockets across the globe, something erupted that seemed as benign as the common cold. The influenza of that season, however, was far more than a cold. In the two years that this scourge ravaged the earth, a fifth of the world's population was infected. The flu was most deadly for people ages 20 to 40. This pattern of morbidity was unusual for influenza which is usually a killer of the elderly and young children. The influenza virus had a profound virulence, with a mortality rate at 2.5% compared to the previous influenza epidemics, which were less than 0.1%. The death rate for 15 to 34-year-olds of influenza and pneumonia were 20 times higher in 1918 than in previous years. One physician writes that patients with seemingly ordinary influenza would rapidly "develop the most viscous type of pneumonia that has ever been seen" and later when cyanosis appeared in the patients, "it is simply a struggle for air until they suffocate," (Grist, 1979). Another physician recalls that the influenza patients "died struggling to clear their airways of a blood-tinged froth that sometimes gushed from their nose and mouth," (Starr, 1976). The physicians of the time were helpless against this powerful agent of influenza. [Adapted from: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918 https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/]

It is most probable that Benjamin died at the N<sup>o.</sup>11 Casualty Clearing Station which was based at Saint-André-lez-Lille in the northern suburbs of Lille from 28 October after the liberation of the city on 17 October. Benjamin was buried close by at the Saint André Communal Cemetery; it was the cemetery used most commonly by the N<sup>o.</sup>11 Casualty **Clearing Station.** 

## NESTON.

SOLDIER'S DEATH FROM PNEUMONIA.— The death is announced of Pte. B. Hughes, which took place in France from pneumonia. Deceased was the second son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Hughes, of Bridge-street, Neston. Pte Hughes joined the Army and saw much fighting. He was wounded at the battle of Arras, and came to England. After a short time he again went to France. Much sympathy is extended to his widow.

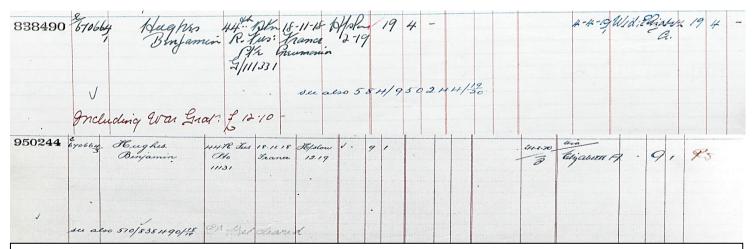
It is likely that Benjamin died very shortly before his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday.

No record of Elizabeth, Benjamin's widow, having remarried has been found.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 30 November 1918

It is believed that Walter Hughes, Benjamin's

father, died in early 1931 aged 71 although Elizabeth's date of death is uncertain. Little is known of Benjamin's siblings although Walter William Hughes died on 16 November 1933, aged 28, and is buried in the family grave in Neston churchyard.



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 representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. Two separate records exist for Benjamin Hughes; the first record shows that he had accrued a credit of £19 4s and that he had been awarded a War Gratuity of £12 10s. The second record shows a credit of 9s 1d and all the money, a total of £32 3s 1d, was paid to his widow, Elizabeth A.

The total payment is approximately equivalent to a labour value (ie wages) of about £4890 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.

In the 1939 Register Francis Hughes (born 20 June 1896), a younger brother of Benjamin, was living at 26 Talbot Gardens, Little Neston where he was recorded as a gardener in domestic service. Francis had married Grace Williams (born 19 February 1897) in Bangor in mid-1924 and it seems that they were living in the Bangor district in late 1927 when their daughter, Glenys (born 20 October 1927), was born. One line of the Register entry has been redacted (as of March 2018) but another child, Cyril Arthur (born 18 January 1933 in Neston) is recorded.

It is known that Glenys Hughes married Thomas Ivor Charles Martin at Neston Parish Church in early 1948 but it is not known when Francis or Grace Hughes died.