

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:

117	19 Gladstone Rd	Walter Hughes	Head	M	42	Coal hewers	Widower	Born in Mold
		Elizabeth	Wife	M	40			Born in Parkgate
		Martha	Daughter	S	13	at school		Born in Mold
		Benjamin	Son	S	11			Born in Parkgate
		John	Son	S	8			Born in Parkgate
		Francis	Son	S	4			Born in Mold
		Wilfred	Son	S	1			Born in Neston
118	21 Southdown Rd	Catherine Mealor	Mother-in-law	Widow	78	living on own means		Born in Neston

1901 census (extract) – 19 Gladstone Road, Neston

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 living on own means	born Neston

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:

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.													
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.													
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.													
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family.	AGE last Birthday and SEX.	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE.					PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.			BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—	Completed years the present marriage has lasted.	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Total Children Born Alive.	Children will Live.	Children were lost.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.			
1	Walter Hughes	Head	52	Married	26	10	7	5	Builder's Labourer	Soapmaker	Walter	Buckley	450
2	Elizabeth Hughes	Wife	51	Married	26	10	7	5	Butcher	Butcher	Parkgate	Birkenhead	
3	Benjamin Hughes	Son	21	Single					Butcher	Butcher	Parkgate	Birkenhead	
4	John Hughes	Son	18	Single					Builder's Labourer	Soapmaker	Parkgate	Birkenhead	
5	Francis Hughes	Son	15	Single					Gardener (domestic)		Buckley	Birkenhead	450
6	Wilfred Hughes	Son	11	School							Neston	Neston	
7	Ann Jane Hughes	Daughter	8	School							Neston	Neston	
8	Walter William Hughes	Son	6	School							Neston	Neston	
9	Elizabeth Hughes	Daughter	2								Birkenhead	Birkenhead Union	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Locality this—	Total	
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper age columns.	Males	Females
(2) I have entered the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	6	3
(3) After making the necessary inquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.	9	2

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 scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

Number of Rooms: *6*

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

Signature: *Walter Hughes*

Postal Address: *Bridge Street Neston Birkenhead*

1911 census (condensed) – Bridge Street, Neston

Walter Hughes	52	builder's labourer, soapmaker	born Buckley
Elizabeth	51		born Parkgate
Benjamin	21	butcher	born Parkgate
John	18	builder's labourer, soapmaker	born Parkgate
Francis	15	gardener (domestic)	born Buckley
Wilfred	11		born Neston
Ann Jane	8		born Neston
Walter William	6		born Neston
Elizabeth	2		born Birkenhead Union

Walter and Elizabeth had been married for 26 years and 7 of their 10 children had survived.

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 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^o.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^o.11 Casualty Clearing Station.

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, Bridge-street, 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

