

## 51: Thomas Allen Johnson

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Thomas Alan Johnson<sup>+</sup>

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: Depot Cheshire Regiment\*

Service Number: 64384

Date of Death: 18 October 1918

Age at Death: 39

Buried / Commemorated at: Neston Cemetery, Raby Road

Additional information given by CWGC: The husband of Lauretta M. Johnson of Liverpool Road, Neston

<sup>+</sup> Thomas' middle name is known to be Allen, not Alan or Allan

\* Although technically correct, Thomas was actually serving with the 9th Battalion Cheshire Regiment

Thomas Allen Johnson was the son of butcher Henry and Sarah Ann(e) Johnson of Parkgate. Thomas was born on 2 November 1878 and he was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 13 April 1879.

Henry Johnson (butcher, 23) married Sarah Ann Rees (18) at Neston Parish Church on 3 September 1877. Sarah gave her place of residence as Neston and her father was named as fisherman William Henry Rees.

In the 1881 census Thomas (2, born Parkgate) was the only child of Henry Johnson (26), butcher, born Parkgate and Sarah (21), butcher's wife, born Toxteth Park, Liverpool. The family was then living on Brook Street, Neston but by 1891 the family had moved to Tranmere (Thomas was educated at St Catherine's Church School, Lower Tranmere):

Henry Johnson	Head	M	26	Butcher	X	born Parkgate
Sarah A. J.	Wife	M	21			born Liverpool
Thomas	Son		2	Scholar		born Parkgate
Elizabeth	Daughter		7			born Tranmere

1891 census (extract) – 56 Old Church Road, Tranmere

Henry Johnson	37	butcher	born Parkgate
Sarah	35		born Liverpool
Thomas	12		born Parkgate
Elizabeth	7		born Tranmere

In the 1901 census Thomas Johnson is recorded as being 21, a servant in Hancock's butchery shop on The Cross, Neston. On the census return the head of the household is recorded as Harriet Hancock (24, assistant in butcher's shop) and Harriet's siblings, William (23), Charles (21) and Emily (20) are listed as assistants with three younger siblings together with Thomas and two other servants.



Hancock's Butchers, Neston Cross, in about 1914

In 1901 Thomas Johnson's parents, Henry (46, butcher [slaughterer], born Parkgate) and Sarah A (41, born Liverpool) were recorded as living at Holt Hill, Tranmere. Thomas's father, Henry Johnson, died in the last quarter of 1903 and, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1906, Sarah Anne Johnson married widower Henry Tunna at Holy Trinity Church in Birkenhead.

Thomas Allen Johnson married Lauretta Mary Jay at the Holy Trinity Church, Price Street, Birkenhead in October 1908 and by the time of the 1911 census Thomas Johnson was living with Lauretta, and 1-year old daughter Dorothy, in a house shared with his mother and her new husband Henry, and children from both their previous marriages:

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.	
(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included. (For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)	State whether "Head," or "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant."	For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.	Write "Single," "Married," "Widowed," or "Servant," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of—			Personal Occupation. The reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &c. If engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated. (See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	Industry or Service with which worker is connected. This question should generally 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 needed for Domestic Servants in private employment. If employed by a public body (Government, Municipal, etc.) state what body. (See Instructions 9 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account. Write opposite the name of each person engaged in any Trade or Industry. (1) "Employer" (that is employing persons other than domestic servants). (2) "Worker" (that is working for an employer), or (3) "Own Account" (that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employer).	Whether Working at Home. Write the words "At Home" opposite the name of each person carrying on Trade or Industry at home.	(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish. (2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, etc., and of the Province or State. (3) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country. (4) If born at sea, write "At Sea." NOTE.—In the case of persons born elsewhere than in England or Wales, state whether "Emigrant" or "Visitor" in this Country.	State whether— (1) "British subject by parentage." (2) "Naturalized British subject," giving year of naturalization. Or (3) If of foreign nationality, state whether "French," "German," "Russian," etc.	If any person included in this Schedule is— (1) "Totally Blind," or "Totally Deaf and Dumb," (2) "Totally Blind," or "Totally Deaf and Dumb," (3) "Lunatic," or (4) "Imbecile," or (5) "Feeble minded," state their infirmity opposite that person's name, and the age at which he or she became afflicted.	
				Completed years the present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year write "under one."	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Total Children Born Alive.								Children still Living.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
Henry Tunna	Head	62	Married	5	5	2	Butcher 540/547	Shropshire Union Worker			Bebington Cheshire			
Sarah Ann Tunna	Wife	50	Married	5	5	3								
Andrew Tunna	Son	19	Single				Railway servant 519	Great Western Worker			Lr. Tranmere Cheshire			
Joseph Tunna	Son	17	Single				Railway servant	Great Western Worker			Lr. Tranmere Cheshire			
Thomas Allen Johnson	Son	32	Married	2	2	1	Butcher 39/9	Woodside Langee Worker			Parkgate Cheshire			
Lauretta Johnson	Wife	28	Married	2	2	1					Getacare			
Dorothy Johnson	Daughter	1	Single								Birkenhead			
Joseph Johnson	Son	19	Single				Labourer 68/5	Cammell Laird Worker			Lr. Tranmere			
Elizabeth Hirst	Daughter	28	Married	10	10	4	Charwoman 10/20				Lr. Tranmere			
Allan Hirst	Grandson	10									Lr. Tranmere			

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—  
 (1) All the persons on this Schedule are entered in the proper columns.  
 (2) I have entered the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their ages 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: *W. H. M.*

Total.	
Males	Females
6	4
10	

(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.

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

Signature: *Henry Tunna*  
 Postal Address: *55 Oliver Street*

1911 census – 55, Oliver Street, Birkenhead

Henry Tunna	62	porter, Shropshire Union Canal	born Bebington
Sarah Ann Tunna	50		
Andrew Tunna	19	railway servant, Great Western Railway Co.	born Lr. Tranmere
Joseph Tunna	17	railway servant, Great Western Railway Co.	born Lr. Tranmere
Thomas Allen Johnson	32	married, butcher, Woodside Langee(?)	born Parkgate
Lauretta Johnson	28	married	born Getacare(?)*
Dorothy Johnson	1		born Birkenhead
Joseph Johnson	19	labourer at Cammell Laird	born Lr. Tranmere
Elizabeth Hirst	28	daughter, married, charwoman	born Lr. Tranmere
Allan Hirst	10	grandson	born Lr. Tranmere

\* Intended, probably, as Gateacre

Although, in the census return, it is recorded that she had been married for 5 years and had 3 children, 2 of whom had survived, these were from her marriage to Henry Johnson.

Thomas and Lauretta Johnson had been married for two years and one of their two children had died.



Elizabeth Hirst was a married daughter of Henry Tunna; although her husband, Thomas Hirst (a labourer in the 1901 census) was not present in the household, the couple had been married for 10 years but only one of their 5 children - Allan - had survived.

Thomas Johnson enlisted in Neston (some records say Chester) on 7 December 1915 when he was aged 37 years 1 month. His medical record notes that he was 5ft 3¾ins tall, weighed 152lb (10 stone 12lb / 69kg), had a 39-inch expanded chest, was of good physical development and had a scar on the front of his right shin.

On enlistment Thomas joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cheshire Regiment, Reserve Battalion which was formed in Chester in August 1914. A training unit, it remained in UK throughout the war, providing drafts for other battalions. The regimental depot remained at Chester whilst the battalion moved to war station in Birkenhead to play a role in the Mersey Defences. Thomas was mobilised on 16 July 1917, and he is known to have been at Bidston Camp in October 1917 as he is recorded as being sentenced to be confined to camp for 3 days for failing to appear on parade on two occasions. Unfortunately, he repeated this offence in February 1918 and was confined to barracks for 2 days.

Thomas embarked for France on 12 March 1918 and, the day after arriving in France, he was posted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment although, just 4 days later (18 March 1918) was posted to the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment at Rouen. The 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been formed at Chester on 13 September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Second New Army and they came under the orders of the 58<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division. They had been in France since July 1915 and, on 7 February 1918 they transferred to the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade, still in the 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division; this Division served on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, taking part in many of the significant actions.

Just seven weeks after landing in France, on 4 May 1918, Thomas was wounded in action by a gunshot wound to the head although the circumstances are unknown - his unit does not seem to have been involved in any major action on that date. Thomas was taken, on the same day, to N<sup>o</sup>. 10 Casualty Clearing Station which, at that time, seems to have been located at Arnèke, around 20km south of Dunkirk.

Two day later (6 May 1918) Thomas was transferred to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Stationary Hospital (the 'Australian Voluntary Hospital') at Wimereux, on the coast just north of Boulogne where he waited until he could be transferred back to England. Thomas was brought home



### NESTON BUTCHER WOUNDED.

Intimation is to hand that Private T. Johnson, eldest son of Mrs. Tunna, 62, Cleveland-street, Birkenhead, and husband of Mrs. Johnson, Liverpool-road, Neston, was wounded in the head on May 4th, in France and is now in hospital in Leicester. He was attached to the Cheshire Regiment, and before joining the Army was a butcher in the employ of Mr. Hancock, Neston. Mrs. Tunna's step-son, Private Andrew Tunna, is in hospital in Huddersfield, having lost his left leg.

Birkenhead News – Saturday 8 June 1918



on the hospital ship *St Denis* on 13 May 1918, a steamship (originally the *SS Munich*) which was built at the John Brown shipyards at Clydebank and launched in August 1908 for the Great Eastern Railway Company for use on their Harwich-Hook ferry service. In 1914 she was converted to a hospital ship and in 1915 the ship's name was changed to *St Denis*

(and she was used as a troop transport in 1939). In WW1 the *St Denis* was just one of the seventy-five hospital ships and ambulance transports which supported the British and Canadians in transporting sick and wounded soldiers from France to England.

On 14 May 1918 Thomas was admitted to the 5<sup>th</sup> Northern General Hospital in Leicester; this was located in the buildings which had previously been the Leicestershire Lunatic Asylum until overcrowding caused its closure in the late 1880s. The old asylum remained empty until 1914 when, on the outbreak of war, it became an army medical hospital with 111 Officer beds and 2487 Other Ranks beds. On 16 May Thomas's X-Ray report noted '*No gross fracture. Appearances that L<sup>t</sup>. lambdoid suture may have been sprung a little apart with several small fractures radiating from it*'. Otherwise, the flesh wound to his head had healed and he was discharged on 15 July 1918 having spent 62 days in hospital.

The report in the *Chester Chronicle* then notes that Thomas came home to Neston on leave but, clearly unwell, he was readmitted to hospital on 31 July. This time he

**NESTON.**  
WAR ITEMS.—The following local men are home on leave: L.-Cpl. J. Bell, Pte. C. Chrimes, and Pte. T. Johnson. The last-named has just come out of hospital.

*Chester Chronicle* - Saturday 20 July 1918

entered the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital on Dudley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, the second of two war casualty hospitals which had been created from the then-new Birmingham University buildings. At this time, as a patient, Thomas was attached to the Sutton Coldfield Command Depot; this was a technicality and was still part of Southern Command. Command Depots had been established in 1916 for the rehabilitative training of soldiers too fit for convalescent camp - four of these large establishments had been established at Blackpool, Epsom, Dartford and Eastbourne - but not yet fit enough to be returned to their unit. Whilst a patient Thomas was able to leave the hospital grounds - on 2 September 1918 he was confined to barracks (the hospital was considered as being a barracks) for 7 days for



The Southern General Hospital on Dudley Road in Edgbaston, Birmingham.

being found 'improperly dressed in Park Road' and 'not being in possession of Identity Card' on 31 August.

Admitted with a gastric ulcer, it may have seemed that Thomas would have been discharged after a short period of rest and controlled diet, but his condition deteriorated and, on 2 October 1918, he appears to have been transferred the short distance to the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital at the main university site in the Selly Oak suburb of Birmingham.

What happened next is best described in the brief medical report:

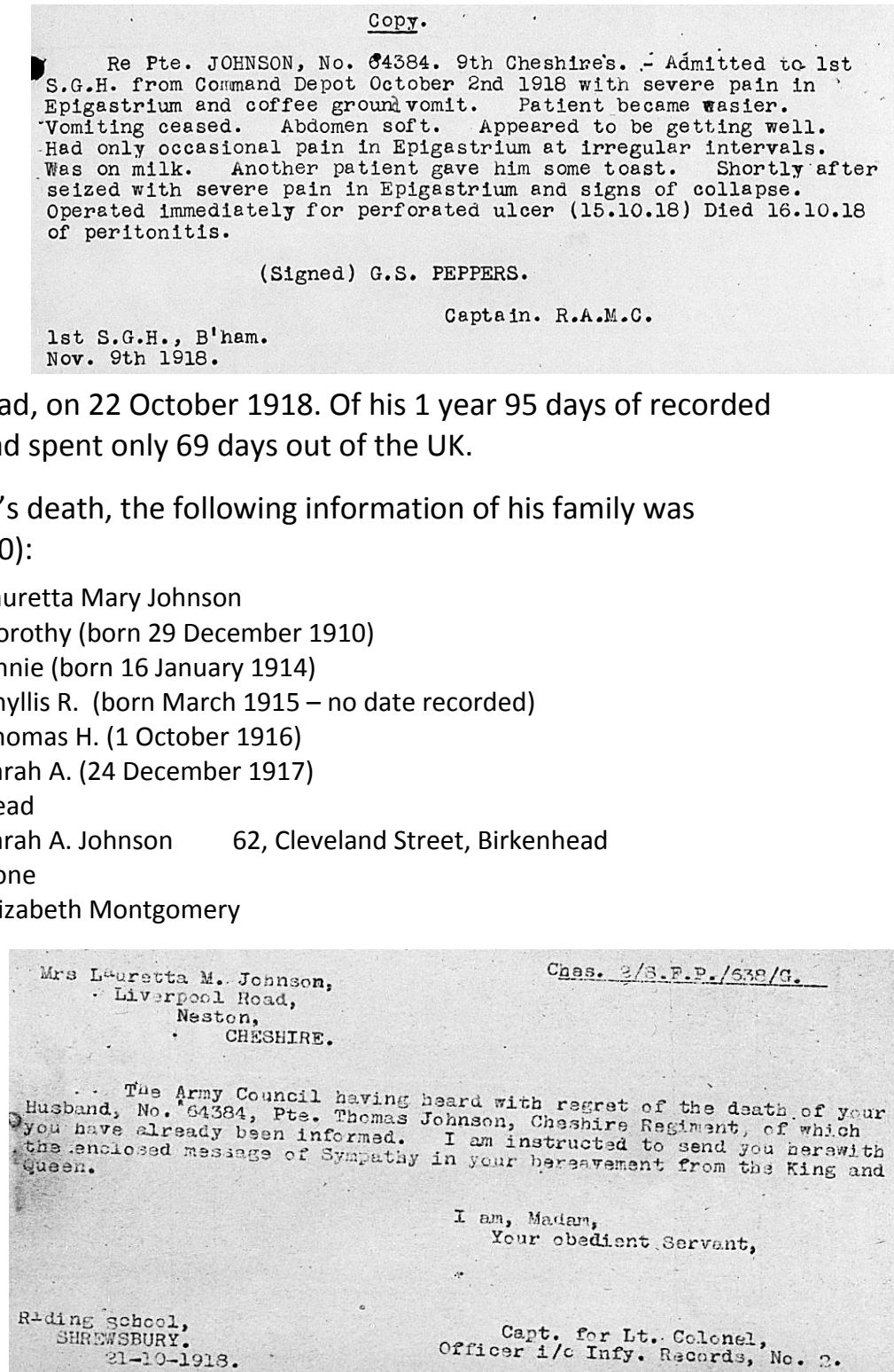
At the time of his death - recorded as being caused by a combination of a perforated gastric ulcer and general peritonitis - Thomas had been in the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital system for 63 days and he was buried, aged 39, at

Neston Cemetery, Raby Road, on 22 October 1918. Of his 1 year 95 days of recorded military service, Thomas had spent only 69 days out of the UK.

Following Thomas Johnson's death, the following information of his family was recorded (2 December 1920):

Wife:	Lauretta Mary Johnson
Children:	Dorothy (born 29 December 1910) Annie (born 16 January 1914) Phyllis R. (born March 1915 – no date recorded) Thomas H. (1 October 1916) Sarah A. (24 December 1917)
Father:	dead
Mother:	Sarah A. Johnson      62, Cleveland Street, Birkenhead
Brothers:	none
Sisters:	Elizabeth Montgomery

The family was granted a pension of 37s 11d per week from 28 April 1919.





## NESTON SOLDIER'S DEATH.

We regret to announce the death of Private Thomas Johnson, of the Cheshire Regiment, which occurred in hospital after a serious operation. Private Johnson was for a number of years in the employ of Messrs. Hancock & Co., the Cross, Neston, and the news of his sudden demise was received with great grief by his many friends and acquaintances. The body was conveyed to Neston for interment. The funeral, with military honours, taking place on Tuesday last at the Neston Cemetery, and was attended by a large number of sorrowful relatives and friends.

*Birkenhead Advertiser* - Wednesday 30 October 1918

*Birkenhead News* – Wednesday 15 May 1918

## Our Patriots.

## NESTON MAN IN FRANCE.

Plc. Thomas Johnson, of Liverpool-road, Neston, who was formerly in the employ of Mr. Hancock, butcher, Neston, joined up with the 3rd Cheshires ("C" Co.) last July and went out to France on March 6th. He was educated at St. Catherine's School, Trammere. His father was the late Mr. Hy. Johnston, and his mother, married a second time, is Mrs. Tunna, 62, Cleveland-street, Birkenhead.

One of Mr. Tanna's sons is at the time of writing in hospital at Huddersfield, Yorks, having lost a leg in action in France.

**SOLDIER'S DEATH.**—We regret to record the death of Pte. T. Johnston, of Liverpool-road, Neston. He joined the 9th Cheshires, and has seen service in France. He was a nephew of the late Mrs. Hancock, butcher, Neston. He leaves a widow and five children, to whom the greatest sympathy is extended.

*Chester Chronicle* - Saturday 26 October 1918

816263	Johnson Thomas	Sheshie Pde 64384	18-10-18 1 <sup>st</sup> Lt G. H. Bham	Sheshie 1-19	6	19	8	11-2-19	Wid - ex leg. family b	19	8
	A. F. W. 5070 SENT DATE 26-7-19.....		WAR CASH BOUNTY Effects 19 20 Transfer 144- 11-10-19 Regd Paper 21-2047 Serial No. 82277 ES	5				8/19/19	Wid + Ex Leg. Ramsdale M.	5	-

## 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.

Thomas Johnson had accrued a credit of £6 19s 8d and this was received by his Lauretta, as sole legatee.

Lauretta received also the War Gratuity of £5. The total payment, £11 19s 8d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £1820 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.

The 1939 Register (29 September) recorded that Thomas's widow, Laurretta (born 30 June 1882 and recorded as Mary L) and three of her children were at 9 Olive Road, Neston. The three children at this address were:

Phyllis R Galston, born 4 March 1915. Phyllis married James N Galston on Wirral

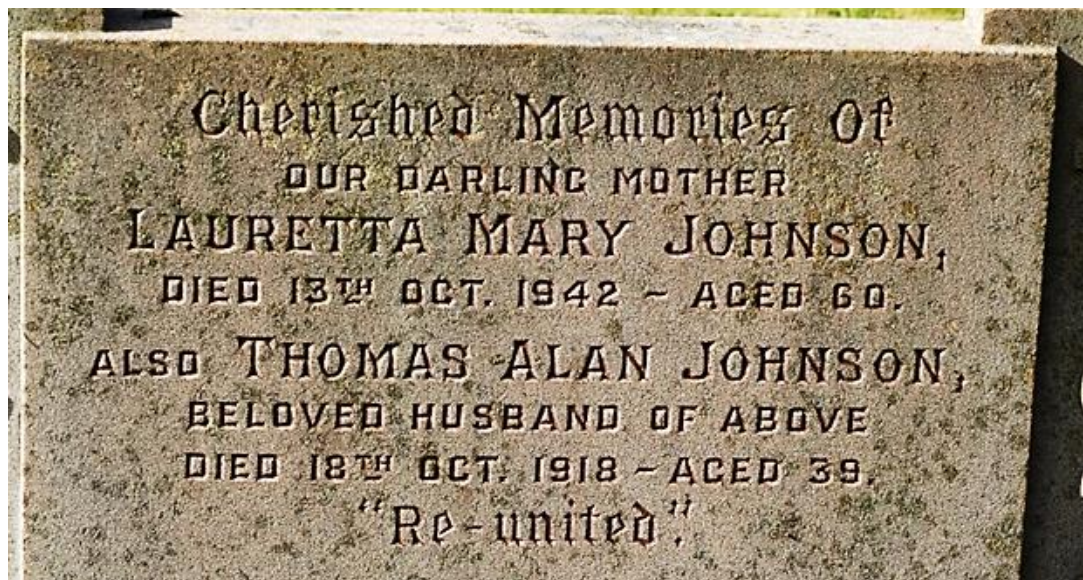


in July / September 1939 and it is known that they had a daughter, Norma, who was born in mid-1939. In the Register a redacted line follows the entry for Phyllis - presumably the entry for Norma. It is believed that James and Phyllis had two further daughters, Laretta M (born mid-1943) and Susan G (born mid-1949).

Henry T Johnson, born 1 October 1916 (when registered as Thomas H). Henry was a mill hand at a food manufacturer's. No clear record of the marriage or death of Henry has been found.

Sarah A, born 24 December 1917, a daily domestic. Sarah Ann married James Stevenson at Neston Parish Church in mid-1943. It is not known whether James and Sarah had children.

The headstone in Neston Cemetery records also that Laretta Mary Johnson, Thomas' wife died on 13 October 1942 aged 60.



Of Thomas's step-brothers, Joseph Tunna, died in Wirral in late 1957 aged 64; Andrew Tunna died in Wallasey in early 1963 aged 70.

Henry Tunna, Thomas's step-father, died in Birkenhead in mid-1917 aged 68.

Ann Tunna, Thomas's mother, died in Birkenhead in early 1930 aged 69.

And the flower of hopes, and the flowers of dreams,  
The noble, fruitful, beautiful schemes,  
The tree of life with its fruit and bud,  
Are trampled down in the mud and the blood.

The changing seasons will bring again  
The magic of Spring to our wood and plain;  
Though the Spring be so green as never was seen  
The crosses will still be black in the green.

The God of battles shall judge the foe  
Who trampled our country and laid her low.....  
God ! hold our hands on the reckoning day,  
Lest all we owe them we should repay.

Last year the fields were all glad and gay  
With silver daisies and silver may;  
There were kingcups gold by the river's edge  
And primrose stars under every hedge.

This year the fields are trampled and brown,  
The hedges are broken and beaten down,  
And where the primroses used to grow  
Are little black crosses set in a row.



## **"The Fields of Flanders"**

**Edith Nesbit**

**(1858 – 1924)**

