

53: William Taylor Kerns MM

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: W. T. Kerns
 Rank: Quarter Master Sergeant MM Shown in CWGC as being Company Sergeant Major
 Battalion / Regiment: 2nd Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers
 Service Number: 1975 Date of Death: 04 November 1916 Age at Death: 27
 Buried / Commemorated at: Vismes-au-Val Communal Cemetery, Departement de la Somme, France
 Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Edward and Mary Jane Kerns of Neston

William Taylor Kerns' father, Edward (often recorded as Edwin) Kerns, was the Secretary of the Neston Female Friendly Society between 1883 and 1908. Edward married Mary Jane Taylor at Our Lady & St Nicholas & St Anne ('The Sailors' Church'), the Anglican Parish Church of Liverpool, in early 1877 and their first child, Mary Jane (recorded as 'Little Pollie' on the family gravestone when she died, aged 6, on 22 March 1883) was born shortly afterwards in Liverpool.

In the 1881 census, recorded as Edwin (aged 26, born Frodsham), he and his wife Mary Jane (26, born Oldham) and their daughter (Nelly Gertrude, 1, born Liverpool) were living at the School House on Liverpool Road; Edwin gave his occupation as parish clerk. Edward / Edwin's father, James Kerns, had been born in Lime House in Middlesex and in 1861, aged 44, James was a police constable in Neston - Edwin was then 6 and he had a younger brother, Alfred, who was aged 4 and had been born in Tarporley. Alfred eventually followed his father into the police force and, in early March 1900, he was killed at Haslington, near Crewe (see the postscript at the end of this account).

William Taylor Kerns was baptised at Neston on 5 April 1889 and his father, recorded as Edward, was then an insurance agent. William's middle name (Taylor) was his mother's maiden name. Edward was also recorded as an insurance agent at the baptism of Edward Clarence Kerns in April 1892 (he died, aged 12, in early 1904).

In the 1891 census the family was recorded as living on Parkgate Road, Neston:

1891 census entry – Parkgate Road, Neston

Edward Kerns	36	insurance agent & banker	born Frodsham
Mary J.	36		born Oldham
Mary Taylor	77	mother in law, widow	born Oldham
Nelly G. Kerns	11		born Liverpool
Harry	9		born Neston
Rose M.	8		born Neston
Marjorie R.	6		born Neston
Dorothy M.	5		born Neston
Alf	3		born Neston
William T.	2		born Neston

Two further children had been born by the time of the 1901 census but the family was still on the town end of Parkgate Road:

14	Do	1	Nellie Kerns	Head	8	✓	clerk	Liverpool
			Harry	Brother	19	✓	clerk	Neston
			Rose	Sister	18	✓	school teacher	Neston
			Marjory	Sister	16	✓	mother's help	Neston
			Dorothy	Sister	15	✓	dressmaker's apprentice	Neston
			Alfred	Brother	14	✓	telegraph messenger	Neston
Total of Schedule of								
			William	Brother	12	✓		Neston
			Clarence	Brother	9	✓		Neston
			Muriel	Sister	7	✓		Neston

1901 census (extract) – Parkgate Road, Neston (close to The Cross)

Nellie Kerns	21	clerk	born Liverpool
Harry	19	clerk	born Neston
Rose	18	school teacher	born Neston
Marjory	16	mother's help	born Neston
Dorothy	15	dressmaker's apprentice	born Neston
Alfred	14	telegraph messenger	born Neston
William	12		born Neston
Clarence	9		born Neston
Muriel	7		born Neston

Neither parent (Edward and Mary Jane Kerns) was at home and neither can be found elsewhere in the census. Eldest daughter, Nellie (21), assumed the role as 'head' and William, 12, is listed as the 7th child. Of the nine children shown here, three (Harry, Dorothy and Clarence) had died before 1911.

The Kerns' were a well-known and influential family in Neston and they experienced many tragedies. This account has been expanded to consider members of the family in addition to William Taylor Kerns.

The baptismal and dates of death (as known) of the children of Edward and Mary Kerns are:

Mary Jane	- born mid-1877	born in Liverpool and died and buried in Neston (as <i>Little Pollie</i>) on 22 March 1883 aged 6
Nellie/Nelly Gertrude	- born late-1879	born in Liverpool and died on Wirral in mid-1956 aged 76
Harry	- 5 August 1881	died in Neston 21 April 1906 aged 24. He died of phthisis, pulmonary tuberculosis or a similar progressive wasting disease [see report, below]
Rose/Rosa Maud	- 2 February 1883	married John Davey of Heswall at Neston Parish Church in 1913 and died in the Shrewsbury district in late-1963 aged 80
Marjorie/Marjory Ruth	- 30 May 1884	died 6 January 1917 (aged about 32)
Dorothy May (Dollie)	- 19 February 1886	died 11 October 1903 aged 17 [see report, below]
Alf	- 2 September 1887	named after Edward's uncle, the police constable who was killed in 1900. Alf died, probably unmarried, in late 1968 aged 81
William Taylor	- 5 April 1889	kia in France 4 November 1916 – the subject of this account
Edward Clarence	- 8 April 1892	died 17 February 1904 and buried 20 February, aged 12 [17 Parkgate Road]
Muriel	- 16 March 1894	may have died, as Muriel Jones, in 1942, aged 48

CHANGE AT THE CHURCH SCHOOLS.—Miss R. M. Kerns has been appointed assistant mistress under Mrs. Young at the Heswall Church School's. The new assistant completed her apprenticeship at Neston National Infant School over a year ago, and during the interval has had charge of Standard I. at St. Peter's, Birkenhead, which position she is resigning in favour of the present appointment. She is succeeding Miss Ellis, who is taking an appointment near her own home at Birkenhead.

Rosa Maud Kerns (born 16 January 1883) became well-known as a local schoolteacher and, on 21 June 1913 she married electrician John Davey of The Mount, Heswall, at Neston Parish Church. John and Rosa were both aged 30 and Nellie Kerns was a witness. Rosa's residence was given as High Street, Neston; she was probably still living with her parents.

In the 1939 Register, living at 3 Sandymount Drive, Bebington, John (born 22 June 1882) was recorded as Chief Inspector Post Office Engineers Department and Rosa was described as 'formerly school teacher'. Also in the household were unmarried children Muriel (born 16 March 1915, shorthand typist, Corporation) and John E (born 5 February 1918, skilled workman Post Office Engineering Department, telecommunications instrument adjuster). During WW2 Muriel helped within the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) unit and, in late-1941, she married Henry Harris at St Andrew's Church, Bebington.

Dorothy Kerns died in October 1903 aged 17 and Harry died 2½ years later aged 24:

NESTON.

DEATH OF MISS DOROTHY KERNS.—Miss Dorothy ("Dollie") Kerns, daughter of Mr. Edward Kerns, the Neston registrar of births, deaths and marriages, died on Sunday morning, after an illness of several months' duration, which she bore with smiling resignation. She was only 17 years of age, and by her bright and winning manner had made herself a general favourite in the old town. The funeral took place on Wednesday, and the vicar and Mrs. Turner, who had always taken a warm interest in the deceased, kindly arranged a simple choral service which included several of her favourite hymns. The funeral took place from the residence adjoining the church gates, and the cortege was met at the entrance by the Vicar

(Rev. Canon Turner) and the surpliced choir of boys. The casquet, surmounted by lovely floral emblems, was borne by four young men, and immediately after came two sisters of the deceased, each carrying a miniature sheaf of beautiful white lilies. Six girl companions, all bearing wreaths and crosses of white flowers, came next, and after these followed the chief mourners with wreaths, and the general mourners consisting of a few intimate friends. The brief journey to the church entrance was made amid a gentle fall of rain, and as the procession passed up the nave the Rev. E. W. Bowell, who had also kindly volunteered his services at the organ, played Handel's hymn "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The remains were laid at the chancel entrance during the service, and the latter included her favourite hymns, "Jesu, lover of my soul," "Peace, perfect peace," and "On the resur-

Cheshire Observer – 17 October 1903 (extract)

DEATH OF MR. HARRY KERNS.—We regret to announce that the death took place at High-street, Neston, on Saturday night, of Mr. Harry Kerns, one of the assistant overseers of the parish and deputy registrar of births, deaths and marriages for the Wirral district. Deceased, who was in his 25th year, was the eldest son of Mr. E. Kerns, registrar, and resided with his parents at the address named. He was a native of the town, having been born at the Neston School-house in Liverpool-road, and the whole of his brief life was spent in the neighbourhood. He was appointed deputy registrar on attaining the age of 21, and his duties in that capacity brought him into contact with a considerable section of the Wirral community. About 18 months ago the Urban District Council appointed him assistant overseer of the Neston and Leighton portion of the district. He was a most conscientious and painstaking official, and his consideration for others, coupled with his quiet demeanour and unfailing courtesy, won him a host of friends. He had been in indifferent health for some little time, but his recovery was hopefully looked for until about two months ago, when there were serious developments, which caused much anxiety, and, despite every medical care and the most devoted nursing, he rapidly sank until on Saturday evening his promising and all too brief life closed. The cause of death was phthisis. His early death awakened a widespread feeling of

genuine sorrow, and his relatives have been inundated with the most kindly messages and expressions of sympathy. The interment took place at the parish church on Tuesday, and was conducted by the vicar (the Rev. Canon Turner), who had been unremitting in his attentions during the illness. The business places in the main thoroughfare were closed while the cortege slowly wended its way down the High-street, and the residents without exception displayed the customary symbols of mourning. He had been a member of the local Volunteer company, and six of the members, wearing the uniform of the 1st V.B.C.R., acted as bearers. The casquet, of old English oak with brass mountings, was surmounted with lovely floral tributes, and numbers of sympathising spectators thronged the precincts of the church and lined the path. The chief mourners were the father of the deceased and two brothers, A. Kerns and W. T. Kerns. Among others present were Messrs. J. Woodward, T. Cottrell and J. Johnson (District Council), Mr. C. E. Senior (surveyor), Mr. W. Tranter (collector), Messrs. T. Moynieux (people's warden), T. Davy (Rock Ferry), R. A. Webb (Liverpool-road), R. A. Webb (High-street), John Birch, G. H. Millman, J. Gilbert, E. Chrimes, W. Norman, H. Norman, H. P. Jones (Backwood), J. Carruthers, P. T. Tranter, C. Hough (Parkgate-road), G. Jones (High-street), J. Pyke, etc. The Volunteer bearers were Sergt.-Instructor Jolley, Sergeants H. B. Swift, T. Griffiths, E. Jellicoe, Lance-Corporal Prosser and Private Coy.

Cheshire Observer – 28 April 1906

Edward Kerns died on 21 November 1908 and he was buried on 24 November, aged 54. Until February 1883 he was, officially, recorded as being the parish clerk but from that date he was described as being an insurance agent. However, he held a number of important administrative positions within Neston.

DEATH OF MR. E. KERNS

LOSS TO NESTON.

We deeply regret to announce the terribly sudden death of Mr. Edward Kerns, of Neston, who passed away on Saturday at the early age of 54. Deceased, who was well-known throughout the Deeside, had not been in good health of late, and had been away from home recently in order to recuperate. He was at work as usual on Friday, but on Saturday he was seized with a paralytic stroke, to which he succumbed in two hours. Deceased was a valued correspondent to the "Courant" and "Observer" for Neston and district, and contributed, under the nom-de-plume of "Quill Pen," the popular "Deeside Gleanings." Deceased also contributed occasionally to "Chamber's Journal." He was assistant overseer for Neston, and registrar of births, deaths and marriages. He was manager of the National Telephone Company's exchange at Neston, secretary of the Neston Female Friendly Society, formerly clerk to the Neston Local Board, and clerk to the Parish Church. By everyone Mr. Kerns was highly esteemed, and he will be greatly missed. The greatest sympathy is felt for the widow and family, who loved him so well.

*The Chester Courant & Advertiser for
North Wales – 25 November 1908*



Edward Kerns, seated, when he was the Secretary of the Neston Female Friendly Society. For many years he was Neston's Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths

DEATH OF MR. E. KERNS.

LOSS TO NESTON.

We deeply regret to announce the terribly sudden death of Mr. Edward Kerns, of Neston, who passed away on Saturday at the early age of 54. Deceased, who was well-known throughout the Deeside, had not been in good health of late, but the end was quite unexpected, and the sad news was a great shock to his numerous friends. He had never recovered from the grief caused by the death of his eldest son two years ago. A short time ago Mr. Kerns had had a stroke, and for several weeks he sought complete rest in the neighbourhood of the Loggerheads. Last week he was as cheerful as usual, and on Friday night he discussed with his family his plans for his winter's literary work. He rose on Saturday morning apparently well, and enjoyed a short romp with two little children and his dog, but shortly afterwards was seized with a paralytic stroke, under which he succumbed two hours later. Mr. Kerns was born at Frodsham, but when he was very young his family removed to Neston, where his father was sergeant of police for many years. He was, therefore, all but a native of the village, to which he became deeply attached. He held many appointments of a public character, discharging his duties in all with efficiency. For many years there was no better known or more respected man in Neston. Of a large-hearted disposition, he was the guide, counsellor and friend of all who were in distress. He was often the first person to be approached by the poor in their troubles, and to all he gave a helping hand, even at great personal inconvenience and with the expenditure of much valuable time and money. Indeed he was blamed sometimes for the way he allowed his good nature to be imposed upon; but he never could find it in his heart to refuse to listen to even an undeserving suppliant. Deceased possessed rare literary gifts, and the buried romance and lore of old Neston frequently inspired his pen. He was for nearly thirty years the valued correspondent to the "Courant" and "Observer" for Neston and district, and contributed, under the nom-de-plume first of "Old Fogey" and afterwards "Quill Pen," the latter signature being attached to his popular "Deeside Gleanings." Deceased also contributed occasionally to "Chamber's Journal." He was assistant overseer for Neston, and registrar of births, marriages and deaths. He was manager of the National Telephone Company's exchange at Neston, secretary of the Neston Female Friendly Society, formerly clerk to the Neston Local Board, and clerk to the Parish Church, and for 25 years local agent for the Prudential Insurance Co., also formerly income-tax collector. By everyone Mr. Kerns was highly esteemed, and he will be greatly missed. The greatest sympathy is felt for the widow and family (two sons and four daughters), who loved him so well.

Cheshire Observer – 28 November 1908
(extract – this is the introduction to an expansive report in the newspaper)

William Taylor Kerns enlisted in the 4th Battalion Cheshire Regiment (a voluntary infantry battalion) on 20 July 1908 when his age was recorded correctly as 19 years 4 months. He gave his address as Liverpool Road, Neston and his occupation as a clerk with Alex Ross & Co. Liverpool (a company believed to be connected to the shipping industry). William was recorded as being 5ft 6ins tall with a 36-inch expanded chest and his Service Number was 497.

After serving for a total of 1 year 174 days in the Cheshire Regiment William was discharged on 10 January 1910 as he wished to re-enlist with the Lancashire Fusiliers. This was approved on 12 January and his medical report noted that he was 5ft 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ ins tall, had a 34 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch expanded chest, blue eyes, brown hair and a sallow complexion. William's age, interestingly, was incorrectly recorded as 18 years 11 months – two years younger than his real age. His father was recorded as Edwin Kerns of High Street, Neston. On enlistment William was sent to the military station at Bury where, presumably, he was attached to the 2nd Volunteer Battalion.

In the 1911 census William was recorded as being in the military barracks at South Tidworth, the base of Southern Command.

Return of all Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Trumpeters or Drummers, and Rank and File, who passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in these Barracks or Quarters, or arrived on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. [See Instructions 2 and 3 on page ii.]									
21	Kerns William			4					Cheshire Regt

1911 census [extract] for Assaye Military Barracks, South Tidworth, Hampshire



At the time of the 1911 census William Kern's mother and the rest of the family were living in a substantial house - it had nine rooms - on Neston High Street. William's brother, Alf, was recorded as a 'poor & rate collector, Neston Urban District Council' but he also enlisted (14 August 1915), as a Gunner in the 2nd Lancashire Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. He served 3 sessions in France and, although he was injured, survived the war and was discharged in June 1919. His Service Number was 308326 and he was then living on Cumbers Lane, Ness.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 145
(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 of present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year write "under one year."	Total Children Born Alive.	Children still Living.	Children who have Died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employer, Farmer, or Working on Own Account.				Whether Working at Home.
of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who	(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or	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," "Widower," or "Widow," opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.											
(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.)	Age of Male.	Age of Female.											
1 Mary Jane Kerns Head			36	Widow	34	10	6	6							
2 Nellie Gertrude Kerns Daughter			31	Single	-	-	-	-	Telephone Operator 558	National Telephone Co., Neston			Liverpool		
3 Rosa Maud Kerns Daughter			28	Single	-	-	-	-	School Teacher 14000	Church of England, Neston			Liverpool		
4 Marjory Ruth Kerns Daughter			26	Single	-	-	-	-	Telephone Operator 558	National Telephone Co., Neston			Liverpool		
5 Alf Kerns Son			25	Single	-	-	-	-	Poor & Rate Collector 408	Neston Urban District Council, Neston			Liverpool		
6 Muriel Kerns Daughter			17	Single	-	-	-	-	None				Liverpool		
7 Dorothy Evelyn Milman Visitor			9	-	-	-	-	-					Liverpool		
8 George Raymond Milman Visitor			4	-	-	-	-	-					Liverpool		

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.
(2) I have entered the name and initials in Column 2 and 3 separately, and have compared their sum 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. W.*

(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.

2 6 8 2

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

Signature: *Mary Jane Kerns*

Postal Address: *High Street, Neston*

1911 census (condensed) – High Street, Neston

Mary Jane Kerns	56	widow	born Oldham
Nellie Gertrude	31	telephone operator	born Liverpool
		[National Telephone Co.]	
Rosa Maud	28	school teacher [Church of England]	born Neston
Marjory Ruth	26	telephone operator	born Neston
		[National Telephone Co.]	
Alf	25	poor & rate collector	born Neston
		Neston Urban District Council	
Muriel	17	no occupation	born Neston

Mary Kerns is recorded as having been married for 34 years with six of her ten children surviving - the five living with her in Neston and William, 21, at the Assaye Military Barracks, South Tidworth, Hants.

It is quite possible that the untraced child of Edward and Mary who did not survive was born, and buried, in Liverpool before Edward and Mary moved to Neston.

Both Nellie and Marjory Kerns were working as telephone operators for The National Telephone Company in Neston. The NTC was a British telephone company which was formed in 1881 to bring together smaller local companies in the early years of the telephone. Under the Telephone Transfer Act 1911 it was taken over by the General Post Office (GPO) in 1912.

In Neston the NTC applied to bring telephone poles into the town and permission was granted in 1890 although no poles were erected until 1894. A small telephone exchange was established in a room at Youd's confectioner's next to the Brown Horse but in 1902 it moved to near the Methodist Church. A new, larger, telephone exchange was opened on Leighton Road in 1926 although in 1922 there were still only 154 telephone lines - in 1906 there had been just 64 subscribers.

Very little appears to have survived of the records of William's subsequent army career although it is known that he was promoted from Corporal to Acting Warrant Officer Class 2 and, on 11 November 1916, was mentioned in The *London Gazette* for having being awarded the Military Medal (he was then a Company Quarter Master Serjeant). William's War Office record notes that he became an Acting Company Sergeant Major and, in the 'Daily List' of 7 December 1916, he is shown as being 'Accidentally Killed'; unusually, local newspapers do not appear to have carried any report of his death and we do not know the circumstances.

Awarded "The Military Medal" FRANCE	
Surname	Kerns 68. 121. 57
Christian Name	W. T.
Rank	Boy Q M Sjt
Corps	2 Bn Lanc Fus
Regimental Number	1945
Date of Gazette	11 11 16
Registered Paper	
<small>68/Gen. No. 2730 (M.S. 3) Q127670 5000 4/10 11WV(F351/2) Q16/478 W3068-4083 20,000(6) 7/10</small>	
Award of the Military Medal, November 1916 - Campaign, Gallantry & Long Service Medals & Awards Roll	

It is known that in early August 1914 the 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers were stationed at Dover as part of the 12th Brigade of the 4th Division and, on 20 August they mobilised for war and landed at Boulogne. In 1914 the Division engaged in various actions on the Western Front including The Battle of Le Cateau, The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne and The Battle of Messines and they took part in the Christmas Truce of 1914. During 1915 they were engaged in The Second Battle of Ypres and, in November 1915 the 12th Brigade was transferred to the 36th Division.

During 1916 the Division, still on The Somme, was at The Battle of Albert and The Battle of Le Transloy (1 -18 October). However, it appears that William was 'accidentally killed' following this engagement, when he was engaged in grenade training although the announcement of his death in the *Chester Chronicle* was listed under 'Killed in Action'. The accident, near to Vismes au Val and away from the front line, killed 3 members of the Lancashire Fusiliers outright and a further two soldiers, injured in the incident, died later. [Source: <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/128083-grenade-training-accidents/>]

The grief of the Kerns family was increased when, on 6 January 1917, William's sister Miss Marjory Kerns, died in Neston aged 32.

Mary Jane Kerns, William Kerns' mother, died in July / September 1917, aged 63, just a few months after her daughter, Dorothy, and less than a year after William Taylor was killed in France. She was pre-deceased by her husband, Edward, and six of their children.

KERNS—On November 4th, killed in France, William Taylor Kerns, aged 27 years, Quarter-master 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, younger son of Mrs. and the late Edward Kerns, Neston.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 18 November 1916



Photo: <http://www.ww1cemeteries.com>

373464	8/29/565	Kerns William Taylor	2nd Batt Lancs Fus a/c S.M. 1975	4-11-16 France 11/16 11/17	27 - =	27 - 7	m.o. 2/17	21-2-17	Mrs. sole leg. Mary Jane	27 - 7	
				WAR GRATUITY 19.20 Transfer 38/11/14/19 Regd. Paid 2/2000/14 Serial No. 11925	19 10 =					10/10/19 Sis. & Adminstr of Mrs. State Nellie Gertrude	19 10 -
444 740 054 12 19								A. F. W. 5070 SENT DATE 20 JUN 1919			

740054	8/29/565	Kerns William Taylor	2nd Batt Lancs Fus a/c S.M. 1975	4-11-16 France 11/16 11/17	2 - -	2 - -	m.o. 12/18-12/18	5.6.19	Sis. & Adminstr of Mrs. State Nellie G.	2 - -	
								Sis. & Adminstr of Mrs. State Nellie G.			
201 573 464 16 19											

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. Unusually, there are two separate and different entries for William Taylor Kerns.

Entry 373464 – two credits, the first of £27 and the second of 7d are recorded and £27 0s 7d was paid to his mother, Mary Jane Kerns, as sole legatee. Mary died in mid-1917 and administration of the estate passed to Nellie Gertrude Kerns, William's unmarried sister and it was her who received the War Gratuity of £19 10s – an unusually high amount. This entry records that William was an Acting Company Sergeant Major.

Entry 740054 – two credits (£2 and £2 19s) were made in July 1919 to Nellie Gertrude. This entry record that William was 'killed accid.' and his rank is given as Company Sergeant Major.

This total payment of £51 9s 7d equates to a *labour value* (approximating to wages) of about £7825 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.

Name.		Corps.	Rank	Regtl. No.
KERNS		Lancs Fus	Cpl	1975
William T. MM		— " —	* A/WO II	11-1
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.	
VICTORY	H/1/101 B7	1698		
BRITISH	H/1/17	79	Killed 4-11-16	
14 STAR				
Class 2/2644				
Theatre of War first served in				
Date of entry therein 22-8-14				

British Army WWI Medal Rolls
Index Cards, 1914-1920

Nellie Gertrude Kerns (born 10 September 1879), William's sister, died unmarried in April / June 1956 aged 76. In the 1939 Register, living at 3 Cumbers Cottages, Ness (off Burton Road) she was described as 'retired through illness, Post Office telephonist). With her in the household were unmarried siblings Alf (born 16 August 1887, Post Office telephone linesman, unemployed) and Muriel (born 24 February 1874, Operator-in-charge, Post Office telephones, Neston). In mid-1940 Muriel married Edward Jones at Neston Parish Church.

DEATH OF MRS. KERNS.—It is with sincere regret we chronicle the death of another old and highly respected resident, viz., Mrs. Edward Kerns, who passed away on Friday at the age of 63. The deceased was until recently in charge of the Exchange Telephone Office, and had held this position for some years, but owing to ill-health was obliged to relinquish the duties. There is no doubt the great trouble the deceased had undergone of late accelerated her death. She had lost a son in the war, and the death of a promising daughter (an indefatigable Church worker) was another great sorrow. The Kerns family have occupied various public and unique positions in Neston. The late Mr. Edward Kerns's father was in the old days the "village constable," and in those times this exalted position carried with it great authority. The late Mr. E. Kerns held office as collector of rates, taxes, and was looked upon as "legal adviser" of the poor. He was ever ready to lend a helping hand to the poorer classes. In addition he was an extensive and voluble writer for a local newspaper. He was a writer of no mean order, and his "Tit-bits" were very entertaining. His stories in regard to the historical periods of the surrounding district were most interesting. His mantle fell on the members of the family, one daughter contributing largely to the press, and all the others have filled various important offices. Genuine sympathy is extended to the family in their bereavement. The funeral took place at the cemetery on Monday, the Rev. C. Brooke Gwynne, M.A., officiating. The mourners were Misses Nellie and Muriel Kerns (daughters), Mr. Davey (son-in-law), Mr. and Mrs. E. Jellicoe, Mr. G. Anyon; also Mr. E. Rooke, Mrs. Kendrick, Mrs. Blackwell, etc. The bearers were Messrs. E. Jones, W. Dodd, W. Naylor, and Caldicott. The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. H. Norman.

DEATH OF MISS MARJORY KERNS.—Widespread sorrow was felt throughout the whole neighbourhood, when it became known on Sunday morning that Miss Marjory Ruth Kerns, of High-st., had passed away the previous night. She was the fourth daughter of Mrs. and the late Mr. Edward Kerns, and possessed a very winsome personality, and a particularly sweet and unselfish disposition, which endeared her to everyone. Although very quiet and retiring by nature, she accomplished a great deal, and the influence of her life made her generally loved. With children she was a favourite, and in many capacities rendered much quiet and valuable help. As a telephonist, she secured the esteem of the Post Office officials and subscribers, and much regret is felt in these circles. The shock of her death has been greater, following so closely, as it does that of a brother, who was killed recently in France. Blands were closely drawn en route when the funeral took place on Wednesday, a service being held in the Parish Church, the Rev. C. Brooke Gwynne and the Rev. H. Harriess officiating. During the service, the hymn "Peace, perfect peace" was sung. Signaller Alf Kerns (brother) and Mr. John Davey (brother-in-law), were among the mourners, and many people were in church. The interment took place in the cemetery on the hill, and beautiful floral tokens

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 13 January 1917

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 29 September 1917

Postscript

Edward/Edwin Kerns' father was James Kerns who had been born in Limehouse, Middlesex, and was married to Jane who was born in Mouldsworth. In 1861 James was a police sergeant in Neston, in 1871 he was a police sergeant, aged 57, living on Park Road but by 1881, when he was 70 and living on Neston High Street, he had become an agent for the Prudential Insurance Company. Both he (77) and Jane (72) died within six weeks of each other [22 June and 31 July] 1889 and are buried at Neston Parish Church.

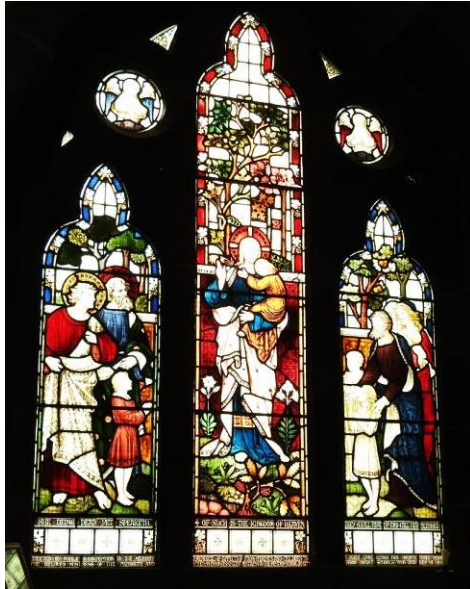
James and Jane are known to have had five children:

- Mary Ann born in Liverpool, her contribution to Neston is detailed below.
- James born in Bunbury he became a joiner (in 1881 he was living in Chester with his wife, Jane) but in 1901 and 1911 he was recorded as a newsagent / shopkeeper in Birkdale, Liverpool. James and Jane had no children but they adopted a daughter, Ruth.
- Harry born in Bunbury he was recorded as a gardener in 1871 but died, aged 22, on 6 October 1874 and is buried with his parents at the parish church.
- Edwin born in Frodsham, the father of William Taylor Kerns (and sometimes named as Edward), he is detailed in the account above.
- Alfred born in Tarporley he was two years younger than Edwin/Edward. His untimely death is recorded below.

Mary Ann(e) Kerns had been born in Liverpool and, unmarried, moved to Neston with her parents - in 1881 the family was living on Neston High Street. Mary Ann Kerns died, aged 43, on 15 September 1886. Mary achieved prominence in becoming the Head Mistress of the Parkgate and Neston Infant School and was commemorated by the installation of two lights in the Clayton & Bell window in the South Aisle of Neston Parish Church.

The inscription in the glass below the left and right lights, installed in 1888, reads:

Erected by public subscription to the memory of Mary Anne Kerns for twenty three years the beloved mistress of the Parkgate and Neston Infant Schools who died Sep. 15 1886



Below the central light the inscription reads:

Esther Johnson Assistant Mistress to the Neston School AD 1877

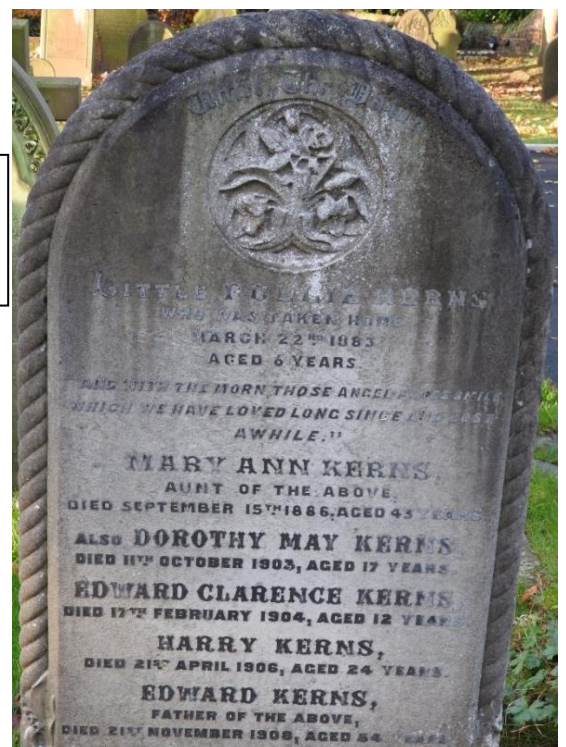
It is interesting to note that Rose/Rosa Maud Kerns, Mary Ann's niece, also became a schoolteacher in Neston.

Alfred Kerns, Edwin/Edward's younger brother, initially became a railway porter in Chester where, in 1881 aged 23, he was recorded as living at 19 Dee Lane with his wife Annie. Ten years later, however, he had followed his father into the police force and in 1891 he was recorded, aged 36, as a police constable living in Nantwich. In March 1900, in Haslington, a village near Crewe, Alfred Kerns (who was then 42) was assaulted by two men; shortly after the assault Alfred collapsed and died.

Although the headline in the Cheshire Observer states that an Alfred Walker was charged with the murder of Alfred Kerns, a charge of manslaughter was brought against Walker and John Boffey, a local butcher. The outcome was that the men were acquitted as there was insufficient evidence of homicide.



The Kerns' family graves at Neston Parish Church



FATALITY TO A CHESHIRE CONSTABLE.

CREWE WORKMAN CHARGED WITH MURDER.

A great sensation was caused at Crewe on Tuesday by the arrest of Alfred Walker, a striker in Crewe Railway Works, on the charge of killing and slaying Alfred Kerns, a Cheshire constable. Kerns was in charge of the Haslington police district. During the night of the 6th inst. he, while on duty, received injuries which produced unconsciousness, and death in a few hours. At the inquest Walker was called, and said he had been with the constable on the night of his death. They had both been in a public-house, and later he saw the constable on the Winterley-road. They shook hands, and while shaking hands both fell. The constable complained of his head. Afterwards he fell in a field unconscious, and died during the night. Dr. Vaughan, who examined the deceased, said he did not think his injuries were caused accidentally.

At Crewe, on Tuesday, Alfred Walker, aged 34, was charged with causing the death of Kerns. Colonel Hamersley, chief constable of Cheshire, was present. Mr. C. H. Pedley appeared for the defence.

Superintendent Meredith said that Kerns was on duty on the night of the 6th inst. He visited the Hawk Inn, Haslington, and found prisoner and a man named John Boffey drunk. Kerns ejected the prisoner from the Hawk. When outside prisoner used threats, and said he would kick the constable. The prisoner and Boffey and the constable walked off in the direction of Winterley. At Mr. Bebbington's gate they were seen standing in the road, the constable being between the two men. Two witnesses saw a scuffle between them, and afterwards heard a fall. The constable received injuries which produced death. On that evidence he asked for a remand.

Mr. Pedley applied for bail.

The Chief Constable objected, adding that there might be further developments, and he thought the granting of bail would defeat the ends of justice. He had communicated with the Public Prosecutor, and the Crown would likely take up the case.

The Bench remanded prisoner for a week in custody.

As stated in a previous issue, the deceased officer was a member of a well-known Nerton family.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 24 March 1900

endorsed), and 4 dismissed in February 1895. He regretted to report the death of No. 130 Constable Alfred Kerns, Nantwich Division, on 7th March, 1900, after a service in the Cheshire Constabulary of 13 years 112 days.

PENSION FOR CONSTABLE KERNS'S WIDOW.

The question of granting a pension or gratuity to the widow of Constable Kerns, who was killed at Haslington, near Crewe, was considered.—Col. Hamersley, in recommending the granting of a pension, said the Act specified that he should have a pension unless through some fault of his own he met his death. At the time he received the injuries which led to his death he was actually performing his duties. He did not think the man was drunk. He certainly did not think that although he had unfortunately misbehaved himself earlier in the day, there was no remark of any sort against Kerns, who was always well-behaved, and he had had 14 years' service. He suggested that a pension be given instead of a gratuity to his widow.

The Chairman: Then I understand you would give a pension to the widow?

Col. Hamersley: Yes, £15.

On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Dr. Hodgson, it was decided to grant the pension.

Chester Courant & Advertiser for North Wales - 2 May 1900

A CHESHIRE MYSTERY.

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST CREWEMEN. ALLEGED MANSLAUGHTER OF A CONSTABLE.

[BY OUR OWN REPORTER.]

[BY TRAIN AND TELEGRAPH].

Croze, Tuesday.

At Croze Police Court to-day, John Boffey, butcher, Haslington, and Alfred Walker, striker in Croze Railway Works, also residing at Haslington, were charged on remand with feloniously killing and slaying Alfred Kerns, a constable in charge of the Haslington district. The deceased man is a member of a Neston family. The unfortunate occurrence has created quite a sensation in the district, and the Court was crowded with interested spectators. The magistrates on the Bench were Messrs. E. R. Bullyer, W. McNeill, J. Thomas, R. Pedley, and J. Edwards.—Mr. E. S. Giles (Chester) prosecuted on behalf of the Public Prosecutor, Mr. C. H. Pedley (Croze) defended, and Mr. E. J. Williams (Nantwich) held a watching brief on behalf of Mr. Mars, landlord of the Hawk Inn, Haslington.

THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION.

Mr. Giles, in opening the case for the prosecution, said the prisoners were charged with the manslaughter of Alfred Kerns, constable in the Cheshire Constabulary. The alleged offence took place at Haslington on March 6th. He should call a number of witnesses, and they would have the full circumstances, showing the movements of deceased from about five o'clock in the evening until the time the alleged occurrence took place. The constable had been indisposed through having had an attack of influenza, and he had been attended by a doctor, who had certified him to be all right and fit for work. Deceased had accordingly returned to his work, and on the day in question he had to go round and serve some notices in connection with the Board of Agriculture. He had to walk round practically the whole of his beat, which was a considerable one to deliver these notices. About 5 o'clock he went in the Hawk Inn, Haslington, and he (Mr. Giles), did not think it was any part of the prosecution to hide actually what took place there. There was no doubt that the constable was served with some intoxicant in the Inn, and that he remained there talking to persons whom he knew, both the prisoners being men whom he knew.—Deceased stayed in the Inn past the time when in the ordinary case of events he would have gone home to rest a bit. He should have gone home and have been on duty again from 5 o'clock to 11 o'clock. There was a friendly conversation between the men, and it would be proved that both prisoners in the course of the evening became hopelessly intoxicated. The constable was not asked by the landlord to remove them from the premises, but after seeing the behaviour of the men, Kerns endeavoured to persuade them to go home. He got Walker out of the house by holding him by the collar of his coat, and Boffey followed him. The constable and the two prisoners went in the direction of Winterley, and witnesses would tell the court that a conversation took place, obviously with reference to the violent behaviour on the part of Walker. The next thing, a witness would tell them, was a scuffle in the road, and the words were heard, "I have got one of you and I shall soon get the other." A scuffle was heard and seen, and Walker and the constable and Boffey were spoken to by two witnesses as being seen scuffling across the road, and a witness spoke to a fall immediately after that by the constable at the time when the three men were together. This witness saw deceased fall backwards on the road, and his hat came off. Another witness would tell the court how Kerns behaved after that; how he was taken home by a Mr. Bebbington; and how during the time he was being taken home he fell twice, and how the second time proved to be the last fall, because he never recovered consciousness. The constable remained unconscious from nine o'clock, or half-past, until some time after three o'clock, when he died. A doctor would state that the man's skull was fractured in two places, and that in his opinion one fracture might have been caused by a fall, and the other by a blow from some blunt instrument. Hemorrhage set in, clots of blood formed, and paralysis supervening, death resulted. The prosecution said that between the hours of six and eleven deceased was in the execution of his duty; that he

endeavoured to get these men home; that the men resented it; some strong language was used, and a scuffle ensued which resulted in the constable's death. Kerns had been in the force 14 years, there had been absolutely no complaints against him, and his loss was very much deplored by the force.

IMPORTANT EVIDENCE.

Robert Cooper, labourer, Haslington, deposed to being in the Hawk Inn on the evening in question and seeing the three men there. There was some disturbance between Boffey and the landlord regarding some change, and Boffey was searched by the constable at his own request. Walker was drunk, and witness was almost certain Boffey had had quite sufficient. The constable said to Walker "You have had quite sufficient to drink," and he took him out. Boffey followed them, and returned with Walker about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes afterwards. Boffey sat by witness and said to him "There has been a bother outside with Walker and the constable. The bobby has got the worst of it. Walker gave him beans, and he has left him bleeding like a pig." Witness said "Why did not you check it? You will get yourself into some trouble." Boffey said "Let 'em fight; I have nothing at all to do with it. The bobby insulted me when I got outside." During this conversation Walker was present in the room, but he did not hear it.

Cross-examined: The constable was not drunk, and was quite capable of doing his duties. Witness had had quite enough experience to know when a man was drunk or sober, having been drunk himself many a score of times—(laughter)—and in his opinion the constable was sober.

Mr. Pedley: Did you say to a man whom you went out to see in the course of the evening, "There has been a row in the Hawk about a sovereign, and the policeman is drunk?"—I might have said there had been a row about a sovereign, but not that the policeman was drunk.—Proceeding, witness said he was not drunk that night. He had not been told by a sergeant, who had been to see him regarding his evidence, that he must not say Kerns was drunk, or his widow would lose her pension. Neither had he given that as a reason to any person for not saying that Kerns was drunk.—Re-examined: Mr. Pedley's clerk had called upon him, but he did not tell him all he knew, because he objected to do so.

Robert Leach, carter, Haslington, deposed to being in the bar parlour of the Hawk on the evening in question. Walker came in about the same time as deceased. Walker was sober enough. Witness saw Kerns take hold of Walker by the skin of the neck and take him out of the house in a friendly way. Walker muttered something, but witness could not catch the words. When Walker returned to the house about 15 minutes later witness heard him say "The — must not think he can do as he has a mind with me." Witness noticed that the back of Walker's coat was covered with dust as though he might have fallen in the road.

Mr. Pedley: You saw the police constable that night. Did you think he was perfectly sober?—No.

What was his condition?—I think he was drunk; I am certain.

Re-examined: Two sergeants came to see him a bit above a week ago about his evidence, and he told them that Kerns was drunk. He did not, however, say he was certain of it. He signed a statement which he made to the police.

Samuel Woodworth, furniture polisher, deposed to being outside the Hawk Inn on the night in question, and to seeing Walker and Kerns come out. Walker was the worse for drink, but he could not say how Kerns was. The constable advised Walker to go home, and he replied he would not. The constable repeated his advice, and Walker said he would not go home until he had had another glass of brandy. Afterwards he said he would go home if Kerns would fetch Boffey out. The constable did so, and the three walked in the direction of Winterley.

William Taylor, bricksetter, Haslington, stated he saw three men come out of the Hawk, and heard Kerns say to Walker that if he would not go home he would be "a policeman for him." Walker and Kerns were drunk, but Boffey was not.

(Proceeding.)

Chester Courant & Advertiser for North Wales —
28 March 1900