

57: Thomas Lewis

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Thomas Lewis

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 11th Bn. Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 49872

Date of Death: 23 March 1918

Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Arras Memorial, Arras, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Thomas Lewis was the third son, fourth child, of general labourer James and Mary Ellen Lewis of Neston and the cousin of Thomas Lewis [58: Thomas Lewis] and William Lewis [59: William Lewis] who also died in WW1.

James, Thomas' father, was the son of labourer Thomas and Martha Lewis of Bridge Street. Martha, a now widowed fish dealer (Thomas died, aged 49, in early 1875), and James were living on Pykes Weint in 1881.

The relationships within the Lewis family are shown on the simplified family tree at the end of entry **59: William Lewis**.

James Lewis married Mary Ellen Rutter at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in April / June 1885; Mary was the step-daughter of labourer William and Mary Meadows and at the time of the 1891 census, and before Thomas was born, James and his family were living on Liverpool Road, Neston:

James Lefie.	Head.	W.	28	26	Shaver	*	1894 - 1895
Mary C. Do.	Wife	W.	1	26			
Elizabeth Do.	Daughter			4			
Charles Do.	Son		3				
James Do.	Do.		1				
W. H. Do.	Do.	W.	1				

1891 census – Liverpool Road

James Lewis	28	labourer	born Neston
Mary E.	26		born Neston
Elizabeth	5		born Neston
Charles	3		born Neston
James	1		born Neston

The ages recorded in the 1891 census appear to have been recorded incorrectly; James would have been about 34 and Mary would have been about 31.

By the time of the 1901 census the family, now enlarged, had moved to Bridge Street and the details known of the children born to that date are:

Martha Elizabeth - baptised 12 March 1886

Charles - baptised 9 December 1887

believed to have been buried, aged 11, at Neston on 7 March 1899 when the address was recorded as Poulton-cum-Spital

James	-	born 8 December 1889 and baptised 17 January 1890
Thomas	-	baptised 8 November 1896
Joseph Samuel	-	baptised 16 December 1898 (father James was a labourer)
Margaret Ellen	-	born 12 March 1901 and baptised 29 March 1901 Margaret has not been located in the 1911 census

Administrative County <i>Wexford</i>			The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the																	
Civil Parish			Ecclesiastical Parish			County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District			Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District			Rural District			Parliamentary Borough or Division			Town		
<i>St. Mary's Parish of Wexford</i>			<i>St. Mary's Parish of Wexford</i>			<i>County Borough of Wexford</i>			<i>Ward of Municipal Borough of Wexford</i>			<i>of Wexford</i>			<i>of Wexford</i>			<i>of Wexford</i>		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16					
No. of House	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES				Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition of Marriage	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working of House	WHERE BORN							
		In Inhabited	In Uninhabited	In Uninhabited	In Uninhabited								Male	Female						
63	<i>Bridge St.</i>	1				<i>James Lewis</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>General labourer</i>	<i>Worker</i>		<i>Wexford</i>	<i>Wexford</i>						
						<i>Mary Ellen do</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>40</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						
						<i>Elizabeth Lewis</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>15</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						
						<i>Jayus do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>11</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						
						<i>Thomas do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>4</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						
						<i>Joseph do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>2</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						
						<i>Maggie do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>1</i>				<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>						

1901 census (extract) – Bridge Street, Neston

James Lewis	43	general labourer	born Neston
Mary Ellen	40		born Neston
Elizabeth	15		born Neston
James	11		born Neston
Thomas	4		born Neston
Joseph	2		born Neston
Maggie	infant		born Neston

Mary Ellen Lewis was buried at Neston, aged 44, on 30 July 1904 so that, by the time of the 1911 census when the address was Pykes Weint, James was a widower:

										page on back of Schedule A.		head employee		other		affected	
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.		
1	James Lewis	head	56	Widower	25	9	5	4	Labourer (Farm) 140		Widow		Child: Neston				
2	Elizabeth Lewis	daughter		24	Single								Child: Neston				
3	James Lewis	son	21	21	Single				Labourer (Farm) 140		Widow		Child: Neston				
4	Thomas Lewis	son	14	14									Child: Neston				
5	Joseph Lewis	son	12	12									Child: Neston				

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

Total.	
Male.	Female.
4	1

Initials of Enumerator: *PLH*

(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 (Kitchens, Parlor, or Apartment). Count the Kitchens as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor verandah, office, shop.

5 3 4th and 2 down

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

Signature: *James Lewis*
John Orin
 Postal Address: *Edinburgh, Glasgow, Neston*

1911 census (condensed) - Pykes Weint, Neston

James Lewis	56	widower, labourer (farm)	born Neston
Elizabeth	24		born Neston
James	21	labourer (farm)	born Neston
Thomas	14		born Neston
Joseph	12		born Neston

James Lewis also recorded that he had been married for 25 years and that five of his nine children had survived.

Thomas Lewis joined the 7th Battalion Cheshire Regiment in Birkenhead on 30 March 1916. Recorded as living at 3, Liverpool Road and being aged 19 years 124 days, he was also described as being single, 5ft 7ins tall, of good physical development, weighed 126lb (9 stone / 57kg) and with a 36-inch expanded chest.

His occupation was horseman, or teamsman. His next of kin was given as his sister, Elizabeth (also of 3, Liverpool Road) - she was unable to sign her name and simply made her mark. Thomas's original Service Number was 4568. Very shortly after he joined the army he complained of suffering from bronchial catarrh but was instructed 'to proceed to his allocated destination and to attend hospital there for treatment'.

Thomas was transferred to the 3rd/7th Battalion Cheshire Regiment on 13 April 1916 and he remained in Britain until 11 October 1916, a total of 196 days.

On 11 October Thomas embarked at Southampton, part of the British Expeditionary

Force, landing in Rouen the following day and probably then moving to Base Depot 9 at Étaples. On 31 October 1916 he was re-posted (under the 'Army Council Instruction 1499' of 1916), this time to the 9th Battalion Cheshire Regiment when he was issued with Service Number 49872. From 1916 onwards it became common for an infantry man to be transferred to a different regiment or corps when he arrived in France, this requiring the issue of a new number.

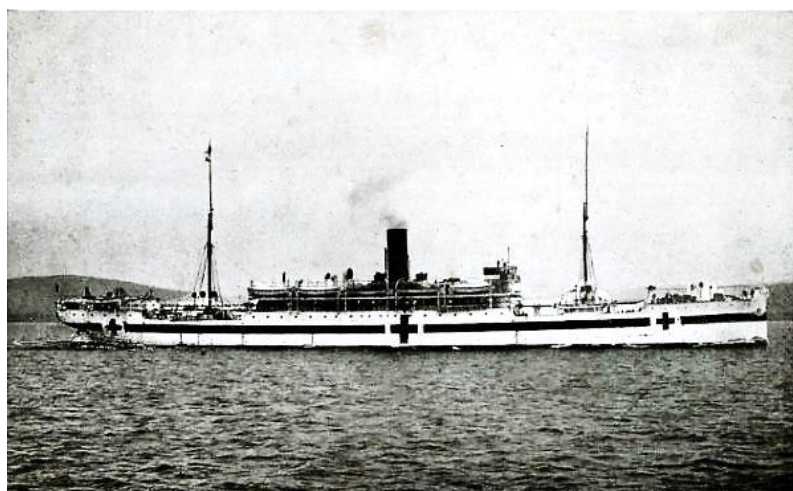
Thomas had not been in France long before he suffered a gunshot wound to his hand (15 November 1916) and he was moved the same day to a Casualty Clearing Station before being moved, the following day, to No. 9 Ambulance Station at Rouen for treatment to a finger on his right hand. Clearly, this injury was more severe than might have first appeared as Thomas was then taken back to England (21 November 1916) on the Hospital Ship *Formosa*. He had been in France for just 40 days.

The French liner *Formosa* was commissioned as a Hospital Ship on 23 June 1915 with accommodation for 417 patients. She served until 7 July 1919, after which she was returned to Société Général de Transports Maritimes and resumed her commercial career. [<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Ships/HMHSFormosa.html>] Back in Britain Thomas was admitted to the Southern General Hospital, Stourbridge Section where his injuries

MORNING SICK REPORT MEDICAL INSPECTION REPORT										Army Form B 256.
Unit Squadron, battery, or company.				Station and date <i>Chester Mar 30 1916</i>						
No.	Rank and Name (Christian name in full; Surname first; M under name if married.)	Completed Years of Service.	Religion.	If for duty.	Whether a defaulter.	Lines or barracks.	Room.	Disease.	Diagnosis, Medical officer's remarks and signature.	
<i>home</i>	<i>Recruit</i> <i>Lewis</i> <i>T</i>							<i>Bronchial Catarrh</i>	<i>To proceed to his destination at Hospital there for treatment</i> <i>H. D. D. D.</i> <i>Medical Officer</i> <i>President</i> <i>Board</i> <i>of</i> <i>the</i> <i>Ship</i> <i>Formosa</i> <i>at</i> <i>Southampton</i> <i>21st</i> <i>Nov</i> <i>1916</i> <i>N.C.O.</i>	

11, D. & L., London, E.C.
P 1931 W. 1530/6 272 1,000,000 3/15 W 15.
Form
B. 256
31-

† State nature of duty for which warned. In the case of men for medical inspection, the reason, such as "Soldiers for trial by Court-Martial" or "Joining the station," &c., should be stated against their names.
* Strike out whichever is not applicable.



H.M. HOSPITAL SHIP "FORMOSA"

(Publication Officially sanctioned by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty)

were treated before he was sent to the Military Convalescent Hospital at Woodcote Park, Epsom. Here, he was diagnosed also as suffering from slight bronchitis, a condition he had received some treatment for very early in his army career. In total he stayed in hospital for 15 days until 5 December 1916. The 1st Southern General Hospital in Birmingham was just one of many large military hospitals that were developed to treat the flood of casualties returning from the fighting fronts and the training centres in the United Kingdom. The main site was the then newly-built University of Birmingham and the Wordsley Infirmary, with 510 beds, was taken over as the Stourbridge annexe in the summer of 1915.

Having been discharged from hospital Thomas remained in Britain although his whereabouts and activities are unknown other than, on 8 February 1917, he was sent to a Command Depot and on 28 April 1917 was re-posted to the 3rd Battalion Cheshire Regiment. However, it is recorded that Thomas was readmitted to hospital on 8 May 1917, this time suffering with scabies, a contagious skin infection caused by a skin-burrowing mite which causes intense itching. This time, Thomas was admitted to the Red Cross Military Hospital in Birkenhead, located then at 28 Palm Grove, where he stayed for 49 days being discharged as fit for duty on 26 June 1917.

On 3 August 1917 Thomas, having spent 254 days in Britain, again embarked for France as part of the British Expeditionary Force; initially, in Rouen, he was attached to the 16th Battalion Cheshire Regiment but, proceeding into the field, was re-posted to the 13th Battalion Cheshire Regiment on 14 August. Although no details are known, Thomas was admitted to a Field Hospital on 21 August with a diagnosis of P.U.O. - Pyrexia of Unknown Origin, a term usually applied to Trench Fever. No details of Thomas's subsequent activity are known other than he was, once again, re-posted - on 6 February 1918 he joined the 11th Battalion Cheshire Regiment - and was killed in the field on 22/23 March 1918.

It is almost certain that Thomas was killed in The Battle of St Quentin (21 - 23 March 1918):

St. Quentin is the name given to the first battles of the German offensive to Picardy, when the Allied line was pushed back to Villers Bretonneux and strained to breaking point. The country over which the fighting took place had been the scene of the Somme battles of 1916, and was a waste of wire, trenches and shell holes. The troops had not recovered from the exhaustion of the offensives of 1917 at Arras, at Messines, at Ypres, and at Cambrai, in none of which had it been found possible to 'break through' the German line, and throw off the fetters of trench warfare. Whether the troops were ready for open warfare, or sufficiently well trained for it, is another question.

Reserves had not been adequate to fill the ranks, and divisions had been reduced in strength by one battalion in four, and the three remaining had not been fully reinforced. In addition to this, the Fifth Army, at any rate, was holding a very extended front. Considerable skill and forethought was necessary to make the best defensive dispositions having regard to all these factors, exhaustion, deficiency of men, and wide frontages. The problem was sufficiently well

solved on certain portions of the front, but not on others. Rear lines had been partially dug, but in single lines, not in 'systems' with front and supporting trenches, and not garrisoned, so that retiring troops as often as not overlooked them, instead of holding them. The attack was not unexpected. Staff rides and tactical exercises without troops, had been held to rehearse possible counter-attacks.

Two battalions, the 10th and 11th, represented The Regiment in the first onslaught, both in the 25th Division.....When the storm broke and the British front line was driven in, the 10th Battalion, under Colonel W.T. Williams, was in reserve.....The 11th Battalion (75th Brigade) under Major E.R.S. Prior, DSO, MC, moved from Bihucourt about 9am on the 21st to Favreuil, and on to a point east of Beugnatre. About 5.30am on the 22nd it was ordered to occupy a position near Chaufours Wood, and the road running south from Morchies, which it did, after making a short attack with the assistance of some tanks. This sounds all very normal, but the fact is that confusion reigned. The Battalion 'came under the orders' of no less than five Brigade Commanders in this 24 hours. Heavy casualties were caused by enemy shelling. When the troops retired from Vaulx on the left, 'D' Company remained in the Morchies trenches till they were withdrawn at 7.30pm. This order failed to reach two of the companies and they were never seen again.

[Abridged from: *The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War, 1914-1918* : Vol. 1
A. Crookenden, Colonel of the Regiment W.H. Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. (1938)]

<p>Neston Men Fall in the Fight.</p> <p>News has been received by Miss Lewis, Liverpool-road, Neston, of the death in action of her brother, Pte. Thomas Lewis, which occurred on March 23rd. This young soldier was one of those who volunteered to serve his country in 1915, and after the necessary training proceeded to the front, where he took part in several engagements and was wounded. Upon his recovery he rejoined his regiment at the front and was killed in the recent fighting. His letters home revealed an affectionate disposition, and he will be greatly missed by his many friends. Suitable reference was made to the sad event by the Vicar in the course of his sermon at the Parish Church last Sunday morning, and the Dead March was played at the close of the service.</p>	<p>Birkenhead News – Wednesday 1 May 1918 (extract)</p> <p>Transcription:</p> <p>Neston Men Fall in the Fight</p> <p>News has been received by Miss Lewis, Liverpool-road, Neston, of the death in action of her brother, Pte. Thomas Lewis, which occurred on March 23rd. This young soldier was one of those who volunteered to serve his country in 1915, and after the necessary training proceeded to the front, where he took part in several engagements and was wounded. Upon his recovery he rejoined his regiment at the front and was killed in the recent fighting. His letters home revealed an affectionate disposition, and he will be greatly missed by his many friends. Suitable reference was made to the sad event by the Vicar in the course of his sermon at the Parish Church last Sunday morning, and the Dead March was played at the close of the service.</p>
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Although the 'official' date of death of Thomas Lewis was given as 23 March, his Service Record notes it as 22/23rd – it is most probable that he was one of those who 'were never seen again'. Certainly, the fact that he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial indicates that his body was never recovered.

The War Diary of the 11th Battalion Cheshire Regiment gives some detail of the situation around the time that Thomas died and it is very probable that he was one of the 80 OR (Other Ranks) casualties estimated at 1.45pm on 23 March 1918:

3.30 pm	The enemy broke through the Corps line in C. 28 & 29, to the North of
5.0 pm	MARICOURT WOOD and at about 5.0 pm. a counter attack with 24 tanks was launched. 'A' & 'C' Coys followed the tanks for about 300 yards but finding no infantry moving forward on their flanks retired to their original position.
5.30 pm	The enemy broke through the Corps line on the flank of the 51 st Division and entered the sunken road at about I.12.b.7.1. Batt. H.Q. together with the Batt. H.Q. of the 7 th Gordon Highlanders and 11 th Essex withdrew under heavy machine gun fire to the H.Q. in I.17.a.5.8.
7.30 pm	After dusk 'D' Coy. who were still holding on in front of MORCHIES were withdrawn to a position about I.17.b. 'B' Coy. also withdrew slightly to conform with 'D' Coy. and the 11 th Lanc. Fusiliers on the right.
23/3/18 1.45 am	Bde Major of the 74 th visited Batt. H.Q. and gave orders for 'A' & 'C' Coys. to be relieved by 2 Coys. of 3 rd Worcestershire Regt. who were holding a line I.17.a.5.8 to BEETROOT FACTORY I.17.d.5.7. 'A' & 'C' Coys. were relieved by 'A' & 'B' Coys. XI QUEENS 41 st Division.
	Estimated casualties up to this time 80 OR.
8 am	At about 8 am. the enemy renewed his attack from CHAUFOURS WOOD to the S.E. also between BOIS DE VAULX and MARICOURT WOOD. All attacks during the morning were held North of the BAUPAUME CAMBRAI road, but on the South of this road the 51 st & 19 th Divisions were forced to withdraw which left the flanks of this Battalion exposed and a defensive flank was formed along the BAUPAUME CAMBRAI road facing S.E.

War Diary Piece 11th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, afternoon of 22 March – early 23 March 1918

Transcription (commencing shortly before the War Diary extract reproduced above).

(mid-morning) 'D' Coy. was placed at disposal of O.C. 11th Essex Regt. To counterattack and retake the Corps. line if required.

The Battalion had then come under the orders of the 74th I.B.

12.30pm Battn. HQ moved back to the old Bde. HQ at I.17.a.5.8.

3.30pm Battn. HQ was again ordered to move to I.12.a.9.7. By this time 'D' Coy. had taken up a position in advance of the sunken road in rear of Corps. line with a (?) in MORCHIES.

3.30pm The enemy broke through the Corps. line in C.28 & 29 to the North of MARICOURT WOOD and at 5.0pm about 5.0pm a counterattack with 24 tanks was launched. 'A' & 'C' Coys. followed the tanks for about 300 yards but finding no infantry moving forward on their flanks retired to their original position.

5.30pm The enemy broke through the Corps. line on the flank of the 51st Division and entered the sunken road at about I.12.b.7.1. Batt. HQ together with the Batt. HQ of the 7th Gordon Highlanders and 11th Essex withdrew under heavy machine gun fire to the HQ in I.17.a.5.8.

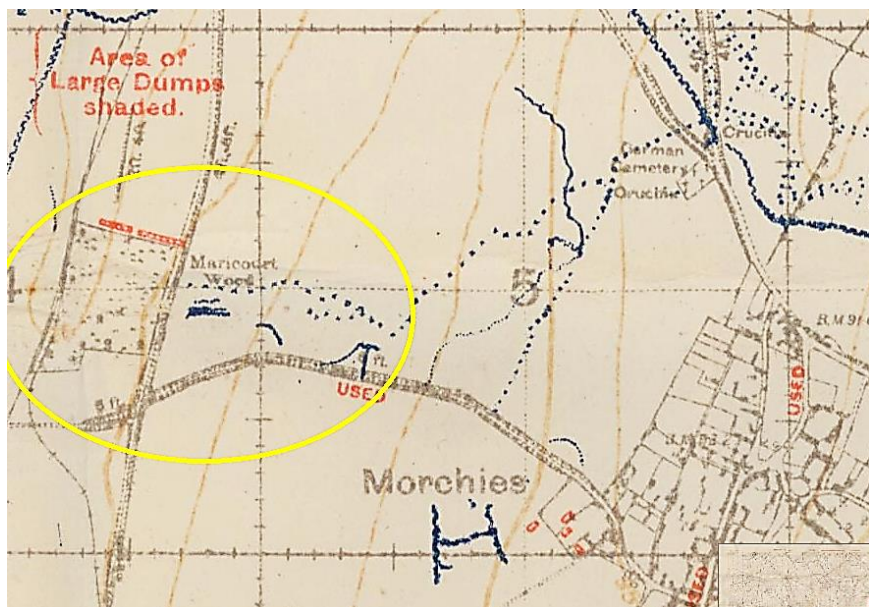
7.30pm After dusk 'D' Coy. who were still holding on in front of MORCHIES were withdrawn to a position about I.17.b. 'B' Coy. also withdrew slightly to conform with 'D' Coy. and the 11th Lancs. Fusiliers on the right.

Bd. Major of the 74th visited Batt. HQ and gave orders for 'A' & 'C' Coys. relieved 2 Coys. of 3rd

23/3/18 Worcestershire Regt. Who were holding a line I.17.a.5.8. to BEETROOT FACTORY I.17.d.5.7. 'A' & 1.45am 'C' Coys. were relieved by 'A' & 'B' Coys. XI QUEENS 41st Division.

Estimated casualties up to this time 80 OR.

8.0am At about 8.0am the enemy renewed his attack from CHAUFOURS WOOD to the SE also between BOIS DE VAULX and MARICOURT WOOD. All attacks during the morning were held North of the BAUPAUME CAMBRAI road, but on the South of this road the 51st and 19th Divisions were forced to withdraw which left the flanks of this Battalion exposed and a defensive flank was formed along the BAUPAUME CAMBRAI road facing SE.



The area of Morchies and Maricourt Wood (encircled in yellow), Pas de Calais. Morchies is a village 8 kilometres north-east of Bapaume.

Thomas Lewis had, until his death, served for 234 days in France during his second period of service in that country. In total, his military record extended to 1 year 359 days during which he had served with at least seven battalions of the Cheshire Regiment.

It was Thomas's elder sister, Elizabeth, who received notification of his death; an army document dated 30 April 1920 recorded that Thomas's father, James, was deceased (the date of his death is unknown) and that the unmarried siblings were living on Liverpool Road. It is interesting to note that the ages of Elizabeth (Margaret Elizabeth / Lizzie) and James are shown incorrectly - Elizabeth would have been about 33 and James would have been about 30. It is also interesting to note that Elizabeth did not sign the form but made her mark.

It seems that Margaret (but recorded as *Martha*) Elizabeth married William Henry McCumiskey at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in mid-1922 and that she died in early 1951 aged 65. William McCumiskey, a labourer, had been born in Neston on 7 January 1886, the illegitimate son of Mary Ann McCumiskey.

James Lewis (aged 26, farm labourer of Liverpool Road) married Eleanor Over (19 [born 7 March 1897] of Liverpool Road) at Neston Parish Church on 6 May 1916 and in the 1939 Register they were living at 8 Meadow Lane, Birkenhead where James was recorded as a road labourer. It is believed that James and Eleanor had no children. James may have died in mid-1970 aged 77; it is not known when Eleanor died.

Joined at *B-head* on *30* day of *March* 191*1*

Joined on Enlistment ... Corps. ... Regt. No. *4548*

Transferred to ... *7th Cheshire Regiment*

Became non-effective by ... *Death killed in Action France* on *28* day of *March* 191*8*

(Signature) *[Signature]* (Rank) *[Rank]*

W. 11330/4055 600m. 10/15. C. P., Ltd. Forms B. 178 30 P.T.O.

Regiment *THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT* deceased } Army Form W. 5080. To be filled in by Officer in Charge of Records.

STATEMENT of the Names and Addresses of all the Relatives of the above-named deceased Soldier in each of the degrees specified below that are now living.

NOTE.—Against those degrees of relationship in which there is no relative now living the word "none" is to be inserted. If the answers are not filled in, much correspondence and delay may be occasioned by the neglect.

Degree of relationship	NAME IN FULL of every relative now living in each degree required for (see note above).	ADDRESS IN FULL of each surviving relative opposite his or her name.
Widow of the Soldier ...	<i>Not married</i>	
Children of the Soldier and dates of their births...		
Father of the Soldier ...	<i>Deceased</i>	
Mother of the Soldier ...	<i>Deceased</i>	
Brothers of the Soldier	Full Blood ... <i>James Lewis 36 Liverpool Rd Neston</i>	<i>Do</i>
	<i>Joseph Lewis 22</i>	<i>Do</i>
Sisters of the Soldier	Half blood ... <i>None</i>	
	Full blood ... <i>Lizzie Lewis 24 Liverpool Rd Neston</i>	<i>Do</i>
	<i>Allegre Lewis 20</i>	<i>Do</i>
	<i>None</i>	

