

69: (Charles William) Reginald Pritchard

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Charles William Reginald Pritchard

Rank: Sapper

Battalion / Regiment: 1/1st Cheshire Field Coy. Royal Engineers

Service Number: 1288

Date of Death: 24 July 1916

Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Thiepval Memorial, Thiepval, Departement de la Somme, Picardie, France

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Charles William Reginald Pritchard, known generally as Reginald or 'Reg', was the youngest son of builder Thomas and Elizabeth Pritchard of Little Neston and the cousin of William George Pritchard [see entry [70: William Pritchard](#)] who also died in the war. He was born in early 1896.

Thomas Pritchard, a son of Little Neston stone mason Thomas and Ellen Pritchard, married Elizabeth Williams of Mold at St Mary's Church, Mold, in late 1877. In 1881 Thomas jnr and Elizabeth were living in Little Neston, with daughter Florence:

Thomas Pritchard	Head	Mar	28	Stone Mason	Little Neston Cheshire
Elizabeth do	Wife	Mar	26		Mold Flintshire
Florence do	Daughter	Unm	1		Little Neston Cheshire

1881 census (extract) – Little Neston

Thomas Pritchard	28	stonemason	born Little Neston
Elizabeth	26		born Mold
Florence	1		born Little Neston

In 1891 the family, now expanded, was still in Little Neston:

Thomas Pritchard	Head	Mar	38	Foreman Stone Mason	do do
Elizabeth do	Wife	Mar	36		do do
Florence do	Daughter	Unm	11	Schooler	Cheshire & Flintshire
Thomas W. do	Son	Unm	9		do do
Amy Elizabeth do	Daughter	Unm	7		do do
Herbert do	Son	Unm	4		do do
Ethel May do	Daughter	Unm	10 months		do do
Thomas W. do	Son	Mar	21		do do

1891 census (extract) – Little Neston

Thomas Pritchard	38	foreman stone mason	born Little Neston
Elizabeth	36		born Flintshire
Florence	11		born Little Neston
Thomas W.	9		born Little Neston
Amy Elizabeth	7		born Little Neston
Herbert	4		born Little Neston
Ethel May	10 months		born Little Neston

Amy Elizabeth Pritchard died, aged 10, and was buried at Neston on 24 July 1894. Another daughter, Rhoda, was born in mid-1893 but died, aged 6, and was buried on 25 April 1899.

In 1901 the family was still in Little Neston although their daughter, Florence (21), was recorded as a housemaid to a doctor in Princes Road, Liverpool:

Administrative County			Civil Parish			Ecclesiastical Parish			County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District			Ward of Municipal Borough or Urban District			Rural District			Parliamentary Borough or Division			Town or Village or Hamlet			Page 23
Cheshire			Little Neston			St. Helen			Municipal Borough of Neston			Little Neston			Wirral			Wirral						
Household No.	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. of NAME of HOUSE	No. of Inhabitants	Male	Female	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Age last Birthday	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lame (4) Imbecile, feeble-minded												
121	Little Neston	1			Thomas Pritchard	Head	48	Foreman, Building Trade	Master		Neston													
					Elizabeth	Wife	46				Mold													
					Thomas W.	Son	19	Joiner's apprentice	Worker		Neston													
					Herbert	Son	14				Neston													
					Ethel M.	Daughter	10				Neston													
					Charles W.	Son	5				Neston													
					Anne Patten	Servant	26	School mistress	Worker		Connahs Quay													

1901 census (extract) - Little Neston

Thomas Pritchard	48	foreman, building trade	born Neston
Elizabeth	46		born Mold
Thomas W.	19	joiner's apprentice	born Neston
Herbert	14		born Neston
Ethel M.	10		born Neston
Charles W. R.	5		born Neston
Anne Patten	26	school mistress	born Connahs Quay

In 1911 the family was living on Lees Lane, Little Neston:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	Thomas Pritchard	Head	58	married	33	4	5	2	Builder	Y31	employer	Little Neston, Ches.				
2	Elizabeth Pritchard	Wife	56	married	33	7	5	2	Assisting in the business	Y31		Little Neston, Ches.	456			
3	Wilfred Pritchard	Son	29	single					Joiner, assisting	Y31	worker	Little Neston, Ches.				
4	Herbert Pritchard	Son	24	single					Plasterer	Y36	worker	Little Neston, Ches.				
5	May Pritchard	Daughter	20	single								Little Neston, Ches.				
6	Reginald Pritchard	Son	15	single								Little Neston, Ches.				
(To be filled up by the Enumerator)																
(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)																
I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.																
Signature: <i>Thomas Pritchard</i> Postal Address: <i>Lees Lane, Little Neston, Ches.</i>																

1911 census (condensed) – 'Bergholt', Lees Lane, Little Neston

Thomas Pritchard	58	builder	born Little Neston
Elizabeth	56	'assisting in the business'	born Mold
Wilfred	29	joiner, assisting	born Little Neston
Herbert	24	plasterer	born Little Neston
May	20	no occupation	born Little Neston
Reginald	15		born Little Neston

Thomas and Elizabeth had been married for 33 years and five of their seven children had survived.

Florence Pritchard married nurseryman Alfred Hughes of Warwick in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1907 and, in the 1911 census, they were living at 15B Myland

Road, Colchester, Essex, with their son Reginald Thomas Alfred (3) and daughter Florence Sylvia (4½ months).

Charles William Reginald Pritchard - Reg - was born in the first quarter of 1896 although no record of his baptism has been found at Neston.

Elizabeth Pritchard died, aged 58, and was buried in Neston 26 April 1913.

Reg was, according to the *Birkenhead News*, ‘..an employee of Mr Fleming’ before he joined the army. Whilst the Pritchards - and there were several branches of the family - were important builders in Neston and Little Neston, Thomas Pritchard appears to have worked on a smaller scale and may have employed only members of his immediate family. Although Reg may have worked briefly for his father he may have seen a greater opportunity of working for a larger building organisation and he appears to have gained employment with one of the two building concerns both operated by the Fleming family:

William Fleming & Co., builders and contractors, Liverpool Road

Albert Fleming, builder and contractor, ‘Fairholme’, Leighton Road

The Flemings – Neston builders

William and Albert, both recorded as joiners in the 1891 census, were sons of coal dealer John Fleming. William and Albert initially worked in partnership but William died in 1900, aged 39. In February 1893 William had suffered a serious injury near Leighton Hall when the pony trap in which he was travelling overturned and ‘Mr. Fleming was also thrown violently to the ground and got entangled under the trap. The trap only being thrown on its side, the pony dashed on down the road, dragging Mr. Fleming a distance of thirty or forty yards with it’. (*Chester Observer* – 11 February 1893). It is possible that this incident contributed to his early death. However, in the 1901 census William’s widow, Mary E. Fleming (40), is recorded as ‘builder’ – it appears that she had taken control of her husband’s side of the business [which was based at their home, ‘The Retreat’, on Liverpool Road]. In the same census William’s brother, Albert (27), was recorded as a ‘builder’s manager’; unmarried, he was living with his mother and younger sister Emily on Neston High Street. Ten years later, and now newly-married to Florence, Albert is recorded as ‘builder (partnership)’ living at Raby Villa, Raby Park but the partnership with his late brother’s side of the business was dissolved in 1912 and the two building firms then operated independently.

Reg Pritchard enlisted in Birkenhead on 22 November 1915 when he gave his address as ‘Bergholt’, Little Neston. His Service Record shows that he was aged exactly 19, was 5ft 7½ins tall, had a 36-inch expanded chest, had good vision and was of ‘good physical development’. His occupation was recorded as a joiner.

Reg enlisted as a Sapper in the Cheshire Field Company, initially joining the 4/1st Cheshire Field Company RE, but on 1 April 1916 being posted to the 1/1st Cheshire Field Company. After serving for 133 days in England Reg appears to have embarked for France on 3 April 1916, joining his unit on 8 April.

By 23 May 1916 Reg was in the N^o. 8 Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps which was part of the 8th Brigade, 3rd Division.

The Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit - not a vehicle - and each Division had three Field Ambulances each with a theoretical capacity of 150 casualties.

Reg had not been injured but was suffering from pyrexia (fever) but by 26 May the condition had become more serious, developing into influenza, so he was transferred to N^o. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital. This hospital, with a staff of around 42, had been established in Outreau, a southern suburb of Boulogne, in September 1915 where it had taken over the site of N^o. 2 British Stationary Hospital.

Having made a recovery, Reg rejoined his unit on 13 July but, just 11 days later (24 July) was killed in action. He had then served for 112 days in France - although 51 of these days had been spent in hospital.

The 438th (1/1st Cheshire) Field Company, The Royal Engineers, joined the 3rd Division on 22 December 1914 and took part in The Winter Operations of 1914-15, The First Attack on Bellewaarde and The Actions at Hooze. In 1916 they took part in The Actions of the Bluff and St Eloi Craters then moved to the Somme for The Battle of Albert and The Battle of Bazentin helping to capture Longueval. Then followed The Battle of Delville Wood (15 July - 3 September 1916) during which, it is presumed, Reg Pritchard was killed, although no details of his involvement are known and the War Diary gives no mention of any casualties on this day (see extract, below).

Delville Wood (Bois d'Elville), was a thick tangle of trees, with dense hazel thickets, intersected by grassy rides, to the east of Longueval. The woods were, however, after just a few days of fierce fighting reduced to a shell-holed area of blasted tree trunks which afforded little shelter.

General Douglas Haig, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Force, intended to capture the German second position between Delville Wood and Bazentin le Petit and, although the attack achieved this objective, it was a costly success. British attacks and German counter-attacks on the wood continued for the next seven

weeks but, when captured, the village and wood formed a salient, which could be fired on by German artillery from three sides. The ground rose from Bernafay and Trônes woods to the middle of the village and neither the village or the wood could be held without the other.



Communication trench Delville Wood - July 1916
(Imperial War Museum Q4417)

After The Battle of Bazentin Ridge, the British tried to advance on both flanks to straighten the salient at Delville Wood and create good jumping off positions for a general attack. The Germans tried to eliminate the salient and to retain the ground, which shielded German positions from view and overlooked British positions.

For the rest of July and August, both sides fought for control of the wood and village but struggled to maintain the tempo of operations. Ammunition shortages, high casualties and wet weather, which reduced visibility, made the movement of troops and supplies much more difficult. Both sides were reduced to piecemeal attacks and piecemeal defence on narrow fronts, except for a small number of bigger and wider-front attacks, until early September. Most attacks were defeated by defensive fire power and the inclement weather, which frequently turned the battlefield into a slough of mud. [Adapted from Wikipedia]

DELVILLE WOOD. 15th July to 3rd September.

Map p. 96

In this period, the 5th Division was attacking the German line between Delville Wood and High Wood in order to capture Longueval.

Attacks were made on the 20th and 23rd July. On the 27th the main attack was made by the Norfolk and Bedfordshire Regiments. This attack was carried out in the form of a series of methodical advances from point to point, under cover of artillery barrages. It was preceded by a two-hours' bombardment.

While the main attack was going on, the 1st Battalion carried out a separate operation on a German strong point about the existence of which some doubt reigned. We were really attacking a map reference. The attack was made in three parties, under 2nd/Lieuts. Prout, Duckworth and Barthelemy. There was some misunderstanding about the timing of the covering barrages, in spite of which Prout's and Duckworth's parties made gallant attempts to reach their objectives. They were met by cross fire from machine guns at High Wood and Longueval which our artillery had not reached. Nearly all the men were killed, and both officers. None were ever seen again. A party sent in support was forced to retire. Colonel M. F. Clarke was wounded. Although the Battalion objective was not reached, an advanced post, protecting the left flank, was established.

Heavy fighting continued all day, and, by evening, all communications were broken by the intensity of the hostile fire.

The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War Col. Arthur Crookenden
WH Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. 1938 Page 76 (part)

of 132, Hill-street, Liverpool.
PRITCHARD—July 24. killed in action, Sapper G.
W. R. (Reg.) Pritchard, youngest and dearly-loved
son of Thomas Pritchard, late of Neston. (Deeply
mourned.)—15b, Myland-road, Colchester. 24.

Liverpool Echo - Wednesday 09 August 1916

This notification was placed by Reg's sister, Florence Hughes who had married nurseryman Alfred Hughes in 1907 and was now living in Colchester.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Sheet N^o 6

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks: references: Appendi
			CHESHIRE FIELD CO. R. E.	
	23/7/16		The 8 th Brigade did not require any section, so the company was ordered to parade to carry on with the repair to the CARNOT to MONTAUDAN Road. As the company was about to move off, orders were received from C.R.E. to recall all working parties. Orders to work on trench from North end of TRONES Wood which had been started and which ran in a N.W. direction. The company paraded for this work at 8 pm and were met on site by 200 men of 2 nd SUFFOLKS, and worked until 2.15 am. Casualties: Lieut CHALHONER wounded, 1 O.R. Killed and 8 O.R. wounded, two of whom returned to duty.	
	24/7/16		Received orders to report to 8 th Brigade, and received orders from them to make three strong points after 1 st Infantry had assaulted and taken a trench near WATERLOT FARM, on the morning of 25/7/16. These orders were cancelled at 5.15 pm. Received orders from C.R.E. to clear LONGUEVAL ALLEY. Company marched out at 8 p.m. for this work. There was a big bombardment soon after the Company had started out, and it was found that all troops in trenches on the way up to LONGUEVAL ALLEY were standing to, and later there was an alarm of a gas attack. Every effort was made to get to the work, but the company eventually had to return, and arrived back at billets at 2.15 am. Casualties: 1 O.R. wounded (self-inflicted)	
	25/7/16		At 2.30 am orders were received that the Division was to be relieved by the II Division. This unit was relieved by the 226 th Field Co. R.E., and marched out of CARNOT at 2 pm, and proceeded to HAPPY VALLEY, where the transport from back billets joined the unit. The company bivouaced for the night in HAPPY VALLEY.	
	26/7/16		The company paraded in the morning for section drill. Orders were received from the 8 th Brigade that the company was to march to MAULTE, leaving HAPPY VALLEY at 4.45 pm. The company marched to MAULTE and went into billets there. Lieuts THOMPSON, GOURLEY and COTTLE joined the unit from England, and a draft of 15 O.R. also joined from the Base.	

Cheshire Field Company Royal Engineers, War Diary (23 – 26 July 1916)

The entry for 24 July, the day on which Reg Pritchard was killed in action, does not record any deaths:

Transcription of entry for 24 July

24/7/16 Received orders to report to 8th Brigade, and received orders from them to make three strong points after 1st Infantry had assaulted and taken a trench near WATERLOT FARM, on the morning of 25/7/16.

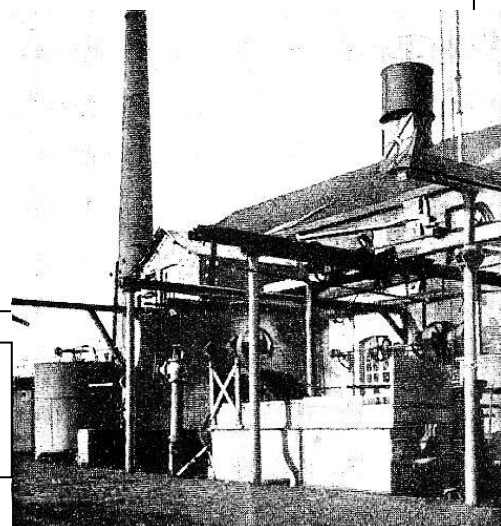
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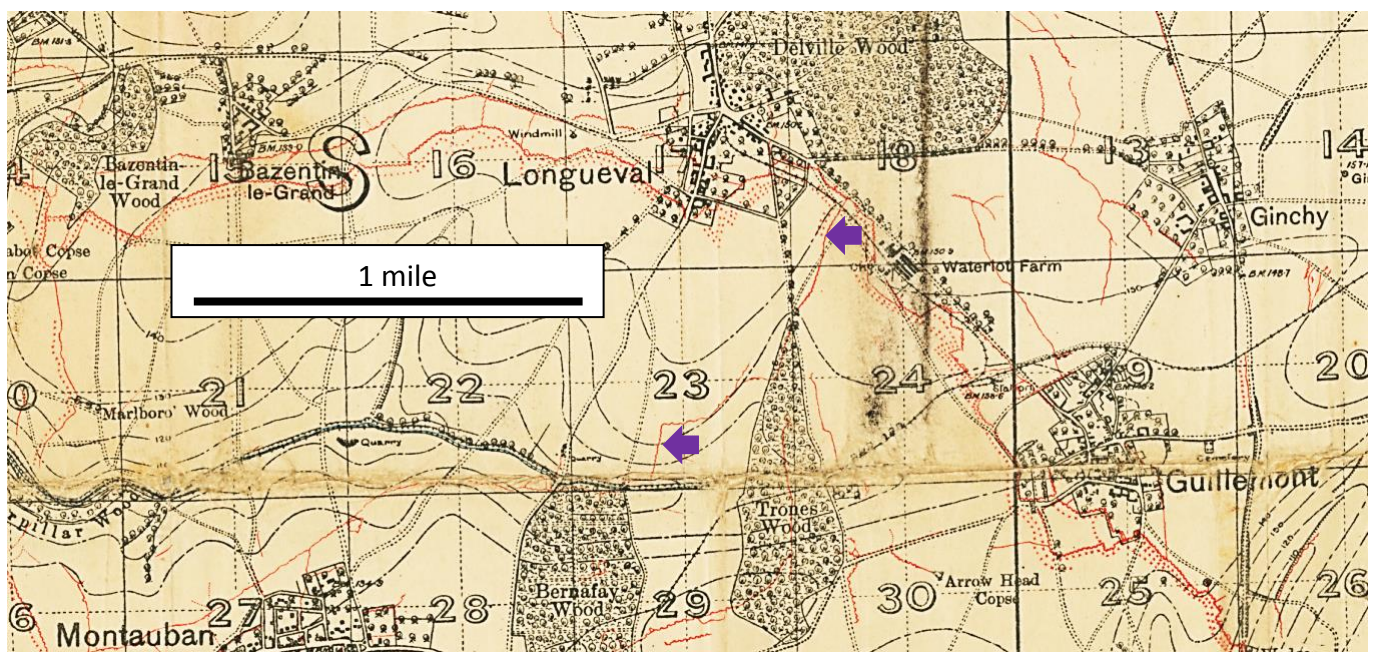
Casualties 1. O.R. wounded (self-inflicted).

Note: C.R.E. = Corps. of the Royal Engineers OR = Other Ranks

The Diary does not name the soldier who sustained the self-inflicted wound or give details of how it was sustained.

Waterlot Farm – it was actually a sugar factory/refinery and a site of much military action in 1916 - in 1915.
[<http://www.delvillewood.com/bataille2.htm>]





Extract of military map of the area between Montauban, Longueval, Delville Wood, Trones Wood and Guillemont. Waterlot Farm is on the road between Guillemont and Longueval. This map, of 21 July 1916 – three days before Reg Pritchard died – shows (in red) the German trenches and defences – Allied forces had not yet advanced (from the west) into this area although it had, sometime earlier, been taken and then lost as the Germans readvanced westwards.

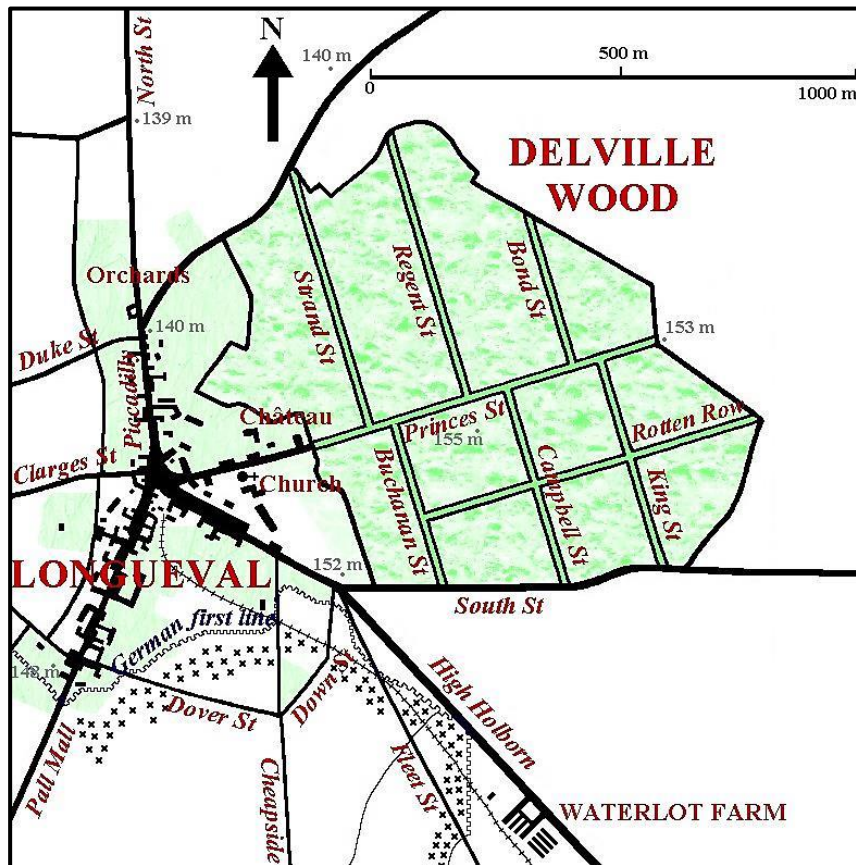
On 24 July British forces had retaken much of the area as far east as Longueval and the War Diary for 24 July notes that the troops were ordered to clear the long trench known as Longueval Alley. Although this is not named on this map (but see the map extract below) it is indicated as the German trench extending south-westwards from the road between Longueval and Waterlot Farm and the north end of Bernafay Wood in the south. Its position has been denoted by the purple arrows.



Part of the same area shown on the previous map. This extract shows, for 3 September, 1916, that Allied forces had taken (blue trenches) the area as far east as the western side of Ginchy and Guillemont. On this map the trenches, including Longueval Alley, are named.

[Source of maps:

<http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/index.cfm#zoom=13&lat=50.0443&lon=2.7931&layers=101465176&b=1>
[http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A69463\]](http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A69463)



Longueval and Delville Wood in July 1916

As with many of village in the area, Longueval had been turned into a fortress, equipped with re-enforced cellars, underground tunnels, and machine gun nests, manned by German soldiers who had been told not to yield a metre of ground. On 14 July 1916, the 2nd Battalion of the 16th (Bavarian) Infantry Regiment was in line in Longueval.

[Source: *The Battle of Delville Wood*
<http://www.delvillewood.com/bataille2.htm>]

It is probable that Reg Pritchard died in the area immediately west of Waterlot Farm, possibly near to Longueval Alley trench.

Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, his body was never recovered or identified, or his grave was unknown.

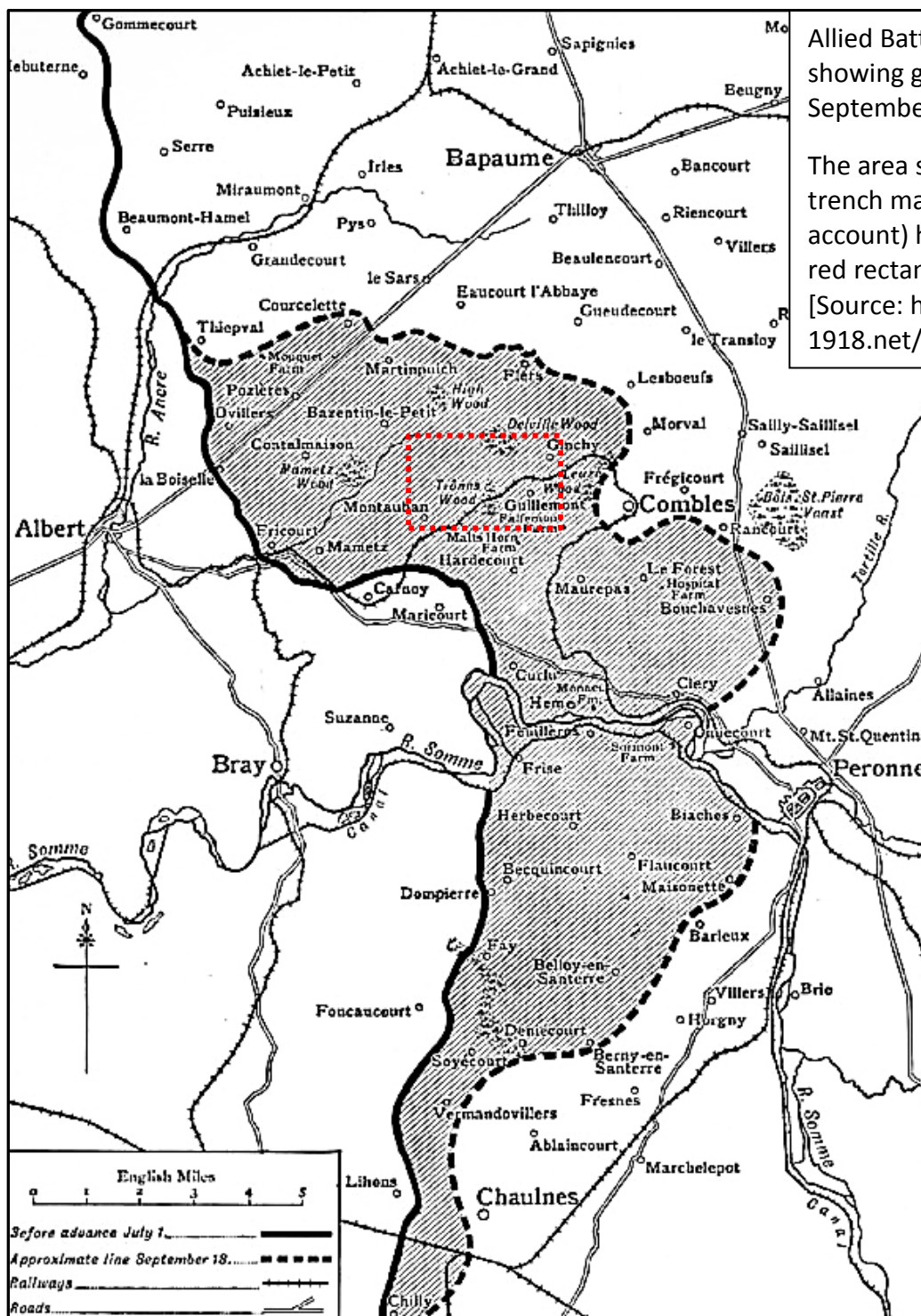
*Somme 1916: A
 Battlefield Companion*
 Gerald Gliddon 1987
 The History Press

In 1916 Longueval was also gateway to DELVILLE WOOD, where so much fighting was to take place in July and August. In other words, any attack had to deal with capturing Longueval first, prior to taking on the adjacent Wood. The German trench line skirted the south of Longueval and then turned south-eastwards past WATERLOT FARM in the direction of GUILLEMONT. As usual, the Germans had the advantage, as their positions could not be precisely located; in addition, they had a good view over the ground that any attacker would have to traverse. An important feature to the British was Longueval Alley, which was to the south of the village; the quarry there was often used as a battalion headquarters.



The site of Guillemont village during the war.

[Source: <http://www.ww1battlefields.co.uk/somme/guillemont.html>]



Allied Battlefield on the Somme:
showing gains from July 1st to
September 18th 1916.

The area shown on the 21 July 1916
trench map (see earlier in this
account) has been enclosed by the
red rectangle.

[Source: <http://www.1914-1918.net/maps.htm>]

ROLL OF HONOUR.

LOSSES IN THE RANKS.

LIST OF 4,988 NAMES.

All privates unless otherwise shown :—
KILLED.

R.R.—Allen, 79558 Spr. W. H. ; Boote, 92867 Spr. H. ; Carter,
84404 L.-Cpl. H. W. A. ; Douglas, 3996 Act. L.-Cpl. S. ; Higgs,
8924 Act. Sec. Cpl. J. E. ; Hutchinson, 25318 Spr. H. J. ;
Kimbrell, 86012 Spr. W. C. ; Lambert, 46007 Spr. S. ; Lovell,
82873 L.-Cpl. W. ; McDonald, 19976 Act. Sec. Cpl. G. ; McMillin,
154724 Pnr. W. ; Potter, 154970 Pnr. A. T. ; Pritchard, 1288
Spr. C. W. B. ; Seager, 15004 Act. Cpl. E. R. ; Shields, 151630
P. ; South, 128711 Pnr. R. ; 1500 D. ; Bennett

It is with regret that we also record the death in action of Private Reginald Pritchard, youngest son of Mr. Thomas Pritchard, who until recently resided in Little Neston. Private Pritchard was an employee of Mr. Fleming, but enlisted in the Cheshire Engineers over a year ago, and had not been at the front very long. He was very cheerful and absolutely fearless, and was highly esteemed by all who knew him. Much sympathy has been extended to all his relatives.

Birkenhead News – Saturday 12 August 1916

The Times – Wednesday 23 August 1916

