

74: John Richardson

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: John Richardson

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 5th Bn. Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)

Service Number: 115240

Date of Death: 14 April 1918

Age at Death: 20

Buried / Commemorated at: Ploegsteert Memorial, Comines-Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Thomas and Mary Richardson of Bowling Green Cottages, Leighton, Neston

John Richardson (known also as 'Jack' or Thomas John Richardson) was the eldest child of traction engine driver Henry George Thomas Richardson and Mary Jane of Leighton and he was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 14 November 1897.

Henry George Thomas Richardson, 23, married Mary Jane Hamilton, also 23, at Neston Parish Church on 14 October 1896. Thomas Richardson was a widower, born in Surrey, although nothing is known of his first wife, and it was recorded that he was an engine driver living at Leighton. Mary Jane was a daughter of agricultural labourer William and Elizabeth Hamilton of Thornton Hough.

In 1901 the family was living at Leighton although, as their second child was born at Acton Heath (just outside Nantwich) they may have lived there briefly:

Thomas Richardson	Head	M	27	✓	Traction Engine Driver	Do	Surrey
Mary Do	Wife	M	27	✓			Surrey
John Do	Son		3	✓			Neston Cheshire
George Do	Son		8 mo	✓			Do
							Acton Heath, Cheshire

1901 census (extract) - Leighton, Neston

Thomas Richardson	27	traction engine driver	born Surrey
Mary	27		born Neston
John	3		born Neston
George	8 months		born Acton Heath, Cheshire

By the time of the 1911 census the family had expanded significantly and was now living at Bowling Green Cottages. This was very close to the Farmer's Arms Public House; this was located close to the junction of the present-day A540 (Chester High Road) and Boathouse Lane, on the northern side of the road and near the point where the A540 crosses the railway line.

The census recorded that Thomas - the name he seemed to use - was born at Horsell, a village about mile northwest of Woking in Surrey.

Horsell Common achieved some notoriety in H. G. Wells' classic science fiction novel *The War of the Worlds* as being the landing point of the Martians.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.															Number of Schedule <u>15</u> (To be filled up by the Enumerator after selection.)	
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		
of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who		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.	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 the 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, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.	(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish. (2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, etc., and of the Province or State. (3) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country. (4) If born at sea, write "At Sea." Note.—In the case of persons born elsewhere than in England or Wales, state whether "English" or "Welsh" in this Country.		State whether— (1) "British subject by parentage." (2) "Naturalized British subject," giving year of naturalization. (3) "Locust," or "Fugitive," state the Infirmary opposite that person's name, and the age at which he or she became infirm.
1. Henry George Thomas Richardson	head	37	Married	14						Traction engine driver	Threshing, Machine	Worker		Lancashire, Chorley	190	
2. Mary Jane Richardson	wife	37	Married	14	7	7	0							Cheshire, Neston		
3. John Richardson	son	13								School				Cheshire, Neston		
4. George Richardson	son	10								School				Cheshire, Neston		
5. Elizabeth Alice Richardson	daughter	8								School				Cheshire, Neston		
6. James Andrew Richardson	son	6								School				Cheshire, Neston		
7. William Charles Richardson	son	3												Cheshire, Neston		
8. Florence Violet Richardson	daughter	2												Cheshire, Neston		
9. Thomas Richardson	son	3 months												Cheshire, Neston		

(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 male and female in Column 3 and 4 separately, and have entered their own with the total number of persons.
(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on this Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: SES

(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, Parlours, or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count cellars, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.

5

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

Signature: Henry George Thomas Richardson

Postal Address: Bowling, Green, Chorley, Neston

Total.

Males	Females	Total
6	3	9

1911 census (condensed) – Bowling Green Cottages, Leighton, Neston

Henry George Thomas Richardson	37	traction engine driver (threshing machine)	born Horsell, Surrey
Mary Jane	37		born Neston
John	13		born Neston
George	10		born Aston
Elizabeth Alice	8		born Neston
James Andrew	6		born Neston
William Charles	3		born Neston
Florence Violet	2		born Neston
Thomas	3 months		born Neston

Henry and Mary had been married for 14 years and all 7 children had survived.

Confusingly, George Richardson's birthplace was recorded as Aston, near Northwich, rather than Acton - it is known that his birth was registered at Northwich.

John Richardson enlisted in Birkenhead (probably in May 1917) and, before being transferred to the Machine Gun Corps., was with the Hereford Regiment (Service No. 238660). Although the Birkenhead News reported that, prior to his enlistment, John was employed by 'Mr Booth of Greasby as engine driver' it is not certain whether he was in employment with William Herbert Booth (corn dealer), John Harold Booth (also a corn dealer) or farmer Thomas Alfred Booth.

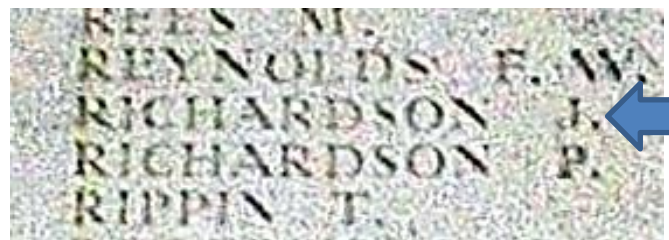
The 5th Machine Gun Company joined the 2nd Division on 1 January 1916 and moved into N^o. 2 Battalion MGC on 4 March 1918.

The newspaper report of John Richardson's death notes that he had served previously in Italy although it is unstated when this was – it may have been when he served with the Hereford Regiment (the 1st Battalion saw some brief service in Italy).

Whilst it is unclear where he died John is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial around 7½ miles south of Ieper (Ypres) in Belgium. The memorial commemorates more than 11,000 servicemen of the UK and South African forces who died in this sector during WW1 and have no known grave; although the report of John's death states that *'He has been reverently buried by men of the Division, and a cross marks his grave'* it appears that this site was later lost and his body not recovered or reburied later.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission notes that:

Most of those commemorated by the memorial did not die in major offensives, such as those which took place around Ypres to the north, or Loos to the south. Most were killed in the course of the day-to-day trench warfare which characterised this part of the line, or in small scale set engagements, usually carried out in support of the major attacks taking place elsewhere.



The inscription to John Richardson on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainaut, Belgium

A GUN CREW KILLED AND WOUNDED.

Mr. and Mrs. T. Richardson, Bowling Green, Neston, have received the intimation that their eldest son, Pte. John Richardson, was killed in action on April 13th. Though the official news was only received by his parents last Friday, the sad information had already been conveyed to them by the following letter from his captain, who said: "The enemy had made repeated attacks in massed formation against our positions and the guns of this company were largely instrumental in driving off the enemy with great loss. During the battle a shell fell on the gun served by your son, and all the team were either killed or wounded. It was not until yesterday that it was confirmed that your son was killed as he had previously been reported missing, although believed killed. He has been reverently buried by men of the Division, and a cross marks his grave." Deceased, who had been in the Army just over 11 months, had served with the Machine Gun Corps in Italy and France, and previous to joining up was employed by Mr. Booth, of Greasby

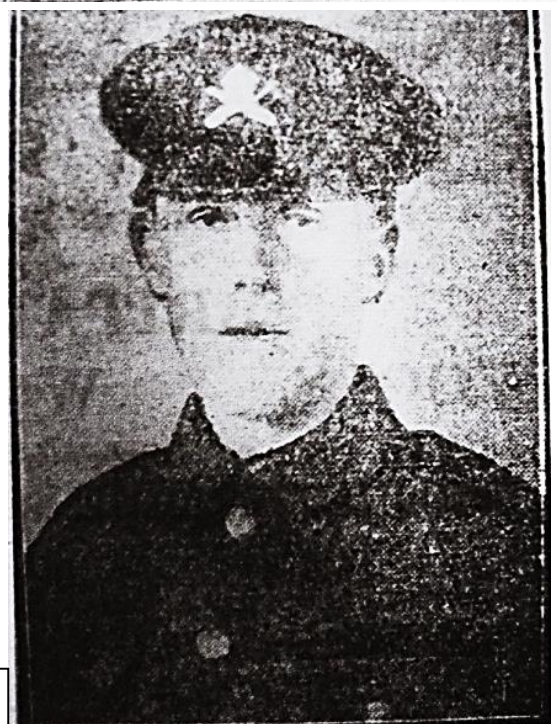
as engine driver. He was held in high esteem by all who knew him, and many messages of sympathy have been received by his parents.

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
RICHARDSON	M.C.C.	Pte	115240
John.			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	M.C.C./101B	685594	
BRITISH			
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

K. 1380

Birkenhead News – Saturday 25 May 1918



Pte. JOHN RICHARDSON.

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES 21 MARCH - 17 JULY 1918

German troop strengths in the west had increased by 30% between November 1917 and 21 March 1918, primarily due to transfer of troops from the east following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. British strengths had decreased by 25% since "Third Ypres" (Passchendaele) 1917 as they were content to wait upon the arrival of the fresh American troops.



John Richardson is believed in the area indicated by the red star, south of Ypres, on 14 April 1918

[Source: A Military Atlas of the First World War Arthur Banks Leo Cooper (an imprint of Pen & Sword Books) 2001]

Elizabeth Alice was born on 25 November 1902 in Neston; it is understood that she did not marry and that she died in the Neston area in late 1985. In the 1939 Register she was a hospital kitchen superintendent at the Cleaver Sanitorium, Oldfield Road, Heswall.

James Andrew Richardson married Emma Booth at Neston Parish Church in late 1929 and it appears that he died in the Wrexham area in March 1984. He may have been a fireman.

William Charles Richardson (born 21 June 1907) married Alice Matthews at Neston Parish Church in late 1929. In the 1939 Register William, a traction engine driver's assistant, was living at 6 Woodward's Cottages, Bridge Street, Neston. Alice does not appear in the record, although the second line of the entry has been redacted (as of March 2018). A son, William Alan (born 15 June 1930) is recorded in the Register and a further line has been redacted. It is believed that William and Alice had three further children: Keith (born mid-1935), George Allan (born late 1937) and Jean Alice (born late 1941). It is not certain when William and Alice died.

Florence Violet Richardson was born 2 May 1909 and she married Alfred Briscoe (born 2 May 1898) at Neston Parish Church in April / June 1938 and died in the Neston area in early 1996. In the 1939 Register they were living at 'Omega', Burton Road, and Alfred was recorded as a journeyman plumber. It is believed that they had a daughter, Olive, who was born in mid-1941 (and registered in East Wirral) but who died shortly afterwards in 1941 (the death was registered in West Wirral).

Thomas Richardson may have married Catherine Ellen Roberts at St Bartholomew Church, Thurstaston, in late 1932. He died at Bridgenorth Road, Heswall, although the date is unknown.