

77: Jonathan Robinson MM

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: John Robinson MM

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 1st/4th Bn. Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 200676

Date of Death: 3 August 1918

Age at Death: ?

Buried / Commemorated at: Hollybrook Memorial, Shirley, Southampton, Hampshire

Additional information given by CWGC: None

Named as Jonathan Robinson by the newspapers, he is commemorated as John Robinson by the CWGC. He was baptised in Neston, as Jonathan, on 19 June 1891, and was one of the last children of Parkgate fisherman Thomas and Annie Robinson. Although Thomas Robinson commonly gave his place of birth as being Parkgate or Neston, it is more probable that he was born in Manchester, the place of birth which was recorded on the census returns of 1871 and 1881 (when he was living in Neston).

Thomas Robinson married Annie Mellor on 10th March 1873 at Neston Parish Church. She was born in Neston on 15th February 1852, the daughter of fisherman, Lemuel Mellor.

In 1901 four of Thomas and Annie's children were living at home:

Thomas Robinson	Head	M	47	fisherman	born	Parkgate Ches.
Annie Robinson	Wife	M	47			Do
Joseph Do	Son	M	21	fisherman	born	Do
Frank Do	Son	M	14		born	Do
John Robinson	Son	M	11		born	Do
Annie Do	Daughter	F	8		born	Do

1901 census (extract) – Parkgate

Thomas Robinson	47	fisherman	born Parkgate
Annie	47		born Parkgate
Joseph	21		born Parkgate
Frank	14		born Parkgate
John	11		born Parkgate
Annie	8		born Parkgate

Two other children are unrecorded in the household:

- Thomas (recorded as 13 in 1891) had married Alice Murray at Our Lady & St Nicholas & St Anne, the Liverpool Parish Church, in early 1901 and, a fisherman, he was living at Swift's Cottages, Parkgate. Although, in most census returns, Thomas gave his place of birth as being Parkgate/Neston, it is most probable that he was born in Liverpool.
- Betty, 8 in the 1891 census, was working as a servant at Mostyn House School in 1901 when her age was recorded as 16. Baptised as Elizabeth at

Neston on 21 December 1883, she was single in 1902 when she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, Edith. In the returns of 1901 and 1911 Betty was recorded as *Bessie*.

The 1911 census shows that Jonathan, then 20, was a fisherman 'assisting in the family business'. Jonathan's father, Thomas, drowned whilst out fishing but his body was not recovered until May the following year when his body washed up on the shore at Parkgate. (he was buried at Neston on 7 May 1904, aged 52) and it appears that the family fishing business was being run by Jonathan's older brother, Joseph (baptised at Neston on 20 February 1880), with their mother - recorded as Mrs. A Robinson - and brother Frank (baptised, as Francis, at Neston on 12 June 1887), also 'assisting':

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Marriage	Profession	Value of Property	Value of Personal Effects	Place of Birth
1	Mrs A Robinson	Widow	59	Widow	Assisting in the business	0 4	0	Liverpool 1853
2	Joseph Robinson	Son	28	Single	Fisherman	0 4	0	Neston
3	Frank Robinson	Son	22	Single	Fisherman assisting in business	0 4	0	Parkgate
4	Jonathan Robinson	Son	20	Single	Fisherman	0 4	0	Parkgate
5	Annie Robinson	Daughter	18	Single	General servant	0	0	Parkgate
6	Edith Robinson	Granddaughter	8		School			Parkgate

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

3	3	6	1
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(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in possession, or in charge, of the dwelling)

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

Signature: Annie Robinson
 Place Address: Meador's Weint, Parkgate

1911 census (condensed) – Meador's Weint, Parkgate (off the central section of The Parade)

Mrs A. Robinson	59	widow, assisting in the business	born Liverpool
Joseph	28	fisherman	born Neston
Frank	22	fisherman, assisting in business	born Parkgate
Jonathan	20	fisherman, assisting in business	born Parkgate
Annie	18	general servant	born Parkgate
Edith Robinson	8	granddaughter	born Parkgate

Annie Robinson had given birth to 11 children of whom 6 had survived.

Edith Robinson was the illegitimate daughter of Jonathan's sister, Betty. Edith was baptised at Neston on 13 April 1902 when Betty was recorded as 'single woman'. In 1911, when she was recorded as Bessie, 26, she was - as she had been in 1901 - working as a domestic housemaid at Mostyn House School in Parkgate.

It is probable that Annie (baptised at Neston on 1 December 1893) was the last child of Thomas and Annie Robinson. Although it is recorded that five of their children had died, only two of these are known:

Sarah Ann	baptised 7 May 1886	buried 19 October 1886 aged 6 months
Lemuel	baptised 16 July 1889	buried 18 July 1889 aged 6 days

Although Jonathan Robinson's Service Record has not been found the *Birkenhead News* records that he enlisted in the Cheshire Regiment on the second day of the war, 5 August 1914. Although changed later to 200676 his Service Number was 2539.

The 1/4th Battalion was formed in August 1914 in Birkenhead and was a part of the Cheshire Brigade, Welsh Division. Immediately on mobilisation it moved to Shrewsbury and Church Stretton but by the end of August 1914 had moved to Northampton. In December 1914 it moved again, to Cambridge, and by March 1915 was at Bedford. On 13 May 1915 the formation became the 159th Brigade, 53rd (Welsh) Division and in July 1915 the troops sailed from Devonport, going via Alexandria to Gallipoli where they landed on 9 August 1915.

In December 1915 the troops were withdrawn from Gallipoli and moved to Egypt, then moving to France on 31 May 1918. On 1 July 1918 they became attached to the 102nd Brigade in the 34th Division and their first major conflict, The Second Battle of the Marne, began about two weeks later. The troops of the 34th Division had no prior experience of the form of the war being fought in France and had no real understanding of the use of gas shells being used against them. Additionally, very few of the troops had been home on leave in over 18 months of conflict.

At The Second Battle of the Marne (15 Jul 1918 - 6 Aug 1918) - the last major German offensive of the war - the Division's main objective was to gain the dominant ridge which ran between the rivers Aisne and Ourcq. Orders were given to begin the assault on 24 July but the history of the 34th Division notes that:

In the most favourable circumstances, this would have been difficult for any troops. But, for a newly constituted Division, composed of troops which had not yet been in action in France and which had just completed a trying move by rail, bus and march route, it was a severe test. The country was entirely new. There was time for reconnaissance. There were no organized trench systems on either side. The enemy's positions were never more than approximately known till they had been captured. To all these difficulties, were added those inseparable from acting for the first time with foreign troops.

[Quoted in: "The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War, 1914-1918" A. Crookenden]

Nevertheless, on 23 July the 34th Division advanced towards Launoy with two French divisions, the plan being that the 7th Battalion would take Reugny Wood with the 4th Battalion then moving through to take Hartennes, an action described by Crookenden:

On the night of the 27th/28th both Battalions were relieved by the French. On the next night, the Division concentrated in the Bailleterie Wood, prior to launching an attack on Beugneux and Grand Rozoy. The Brigade (102nd) was in Reserve.

As soon as the main attack was held up, which became evident about 10-50 in the forenoon, the Brigade was ordered to outflank Beugneux by the west, and then to push on to the original objective.

Preparations took till 2-30 p.m., when the attack began. The 4th Battalion moved to fill a gap caused by French withdrawals on the left. Shelling was heavy and snipers in Grand Rozoy were very troublesome.

A German counter-attack delayed the advance, and the troops were halted and reorganized in the G.M.P. line (Government Militaire de Paris—outer Paris defences).

The French took Grand Rozoy on the 30th.

On the 1st August, the advance was resumed. The 4th Battalion and 1st Herefords had the task of following the attack, and holding a spur south east of Bucy Le Gras, to cover the advance of the 12th French Division.

The 4th Battalion, carrying out their tasks in a way that earned the warmest praise of the French Generals, reached a line just south of the Beugneux-Courdoux Road. But they suffered a very great loss. Their gallant commanding officer, Colonel G. H. Swindells, was killed. He had commanded the 4th Battalion since October, 1914, when he was transferred from the 7th Battalion. With the exception of a short break recovering from wounds received at Suvla, Swindells had been at duty the whole war. In peace, he had been one of the keenest and most studious officers in the Cheshire Brigade. In war, he earned the devotion and affection of all who served under him.

A further advance of some 4,000 yards was necessary to command the valleys on either side of the hill 192, whence the Germans could get observation into Severnay.

However, the Germans had had enough, and began to withdraw on the 2nd August.

A feature of the operations was the splendid work done by signallers and runners. The French were most appreciative of the work of the Division and bestowed decorations promptly and handsomely on our troops.

The advance was planned to begin twenty minutes after a rocket signal, but the message reached the signal station late, and even then, when the rockets did go up, they were not visible to the troops. However, orders were received in sufficient time by telephone and wireless.

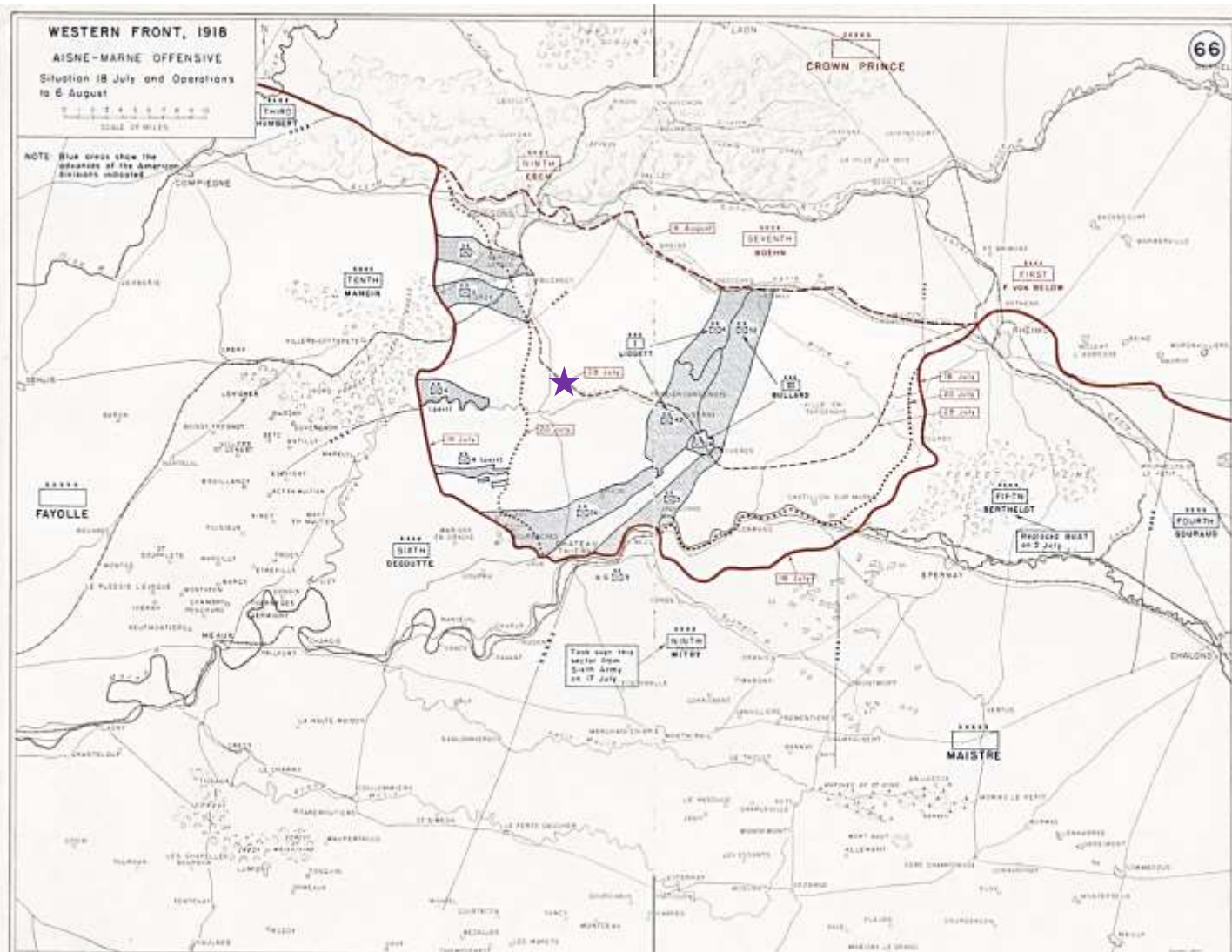
Owing to the standing corn, the advance of the 7th Battalion was difficult to control, and Lewis guns had to be fired from the hip. After gaining some 1,200 yards under heavy machine gun fire, they were held up, owing to the failure of the French to capture Tigny. The companies instinctively moved into dead ground and here dug in, suffering severe casualties from shell, gas and machine guns.

During the night, the line was advanced and our two Battalions were in touch with each other and with the French.

On this day the 4th Battalion lost 4 officers and 276 others and the 7th Battalion 180 of all ranks, including Captain Thomas Furnell, who died of wounds. He had been with the Battalion since mobilization, and had gained his rank by keenness and hard work. Both Battalions were heavily shelled on the 24th by our own guns.

On the 25th, the enemy was kept alive by very active patrolling, and by continual pushing forward of small parties from trench to trench and by the construction of forward strong points.

["The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War, 1914-1918" A. Crookenden, Colonel of the Regiment WH Evans, Sons & Co. Ltd. 1938 p150 - 153]



The Second Battle of the Marne

This map shows the area of conflict, between Paris (off the map to the west) and Rheims (right centre on the map) where Jonathan Robinson was injured. Although the map shows the involvement of American troops (and the blue-shaded areas are those captured by the Americans), it also shows the movement of the front line north-eastwards and, indicated by the purple symbol, the location where Jonathan Robinson would have received his injuries. [\[http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/marne2.htm\]](http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/marne2.htm)

It was during this action that Jonathan Robinson was injured and taken to Le Havre to board the Hospital Ship *Warilda* which was taking wounded troops back to Southampton. On 3 August, in the early hours of the morning, the ship was torpedoed with the loss of many of the injured troops, including Jonathan.



Birkenhead News – Saturday 31 August 1918



It is not known where or when Jonathan Robinson was awarded the Military Medal.

The Hollybrook Memorial, Southampton, commemorates almost 1,900 servicemen and women of the Commonwealth land and air forces whose graves are not known, many of whom were lost in transports or other vessels torpedoed or mined in home waters.



PARKGATE MAN LOST

On Hospital Shp.

Parkgate is mourning the loss of one of its sons to-day, viz., Pte. Jonathan Robinson. Until the fateful 4th of August, 1914, he quietly and steadily followed his peaceful occupation as a fisherman. But at the first shock of conflict all his patriotic instincts were aroused, and he enlisted in the Cheshires on the second day of the war. In the following year he was sent to the Dardanelles, where he played his part heroically, afterwards proceeding to Palestine. From there he was sent to France, and took part in some of the recent fighting. He was wounded, and was being brought to this country on the hospital ship "Warilda," which met with such a cruel fate in the Channel last week. Unfortunately Pte. Robinson was one of those lost, and the greatest sympathy is felt for his widowed mother and other relatives.

Birkenhead News – Saturday 17 August 1918

896642	Robinson John	W. Blakeley Rie 20646	Officer except Deserter convoys 6-19 5-8-16	- - -	8.11.18 -
	A. F. W. S. O. Lee 9. 5. 19		WAR GRATUITY. 14/00 Transfer H/13 Regd. Paper Serial No.	22 - -	3/10/19, Friend Side Leg. 22 Mrs. Mary Franklin Corkhill

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In June 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.

No credit payment was made on John Robinson's account but a War Gratuity of £22 was made as a sole legacy to a friend identified as Mrs Mary Franklin Corkhill; her identity is unknown. This is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £3400 in 2016.

In this record, although the *Warilda* is specified, the date of death is noted incorrectly as 5 August; the ship was sunk on 3 August.

The Hospital Ship *Warilda*

Built in 1911 in Glasgow for the Adelaide Steamship Company as His Majesty's Australian Transport *Warilda* this 7713 ton vessel was designed for the East-West Australian coastal service. Following the start of the First World War, she was requisitioned by the Commonwealth and converted in August 1915 into a troopship. In July 1916 she was converted into a defensively-armed hospital ship and camouflage paint was added in 1917 after Germany stated all vessels operating in the English Channel would be attacked. Despite two potential disasters in early 1918, from late 1916 to August 1918 she made over 180 trips from Le Havre to Southampton, carrying approximately 80,000 patients.

On 3 August 1918 *Warilda* was transporting wounded soldiers from Le Havre to Southampton when, despite being marked clearly with the Red Cross, she was torpedoed by the German submarine UC-49. The night was very dark, the sea was smooth and visibility was about half a mile when, at 1.35am, a torpedo took out *Warilda's* starboard propeller. The port engine could not be shut down as the engine room had been flooded and the steering gear blown away, so the ship continued moving in a circle at about 15 knots. Life boats could not be lowered until the engine ran out of steam.

HMS P39, one of the escort vessels, attempted to tow the *Warilda*, but had to cut the line when it became clear the vessel was going to sink. She finally sank by the stern at 4.10am. That night, the *Warilda* had 801 people on board. Sadly 123 lost their lives, including all the engine room staff, all the occupants of "1" ward (the lowest ward containing 101 "walking" patients), and 19 people from capsized lifeboats.

[Source: Wikipedia and <http://www.awm.gov.au/>]



The *Warilda* in 'dazzle' camouflage



<https://anzac-22nd-battalion.com/hospital-ships/>

LOST HOSPITAL SHIP.

—

THE OLD GERMAN LIE REPEATED BY WAY OF EXCUSE.

—

AMSTERDAM, Wednesday
(Received To-day).

With reference to the British Admiralty report on the sinking of the ambulance vessel *Warilda*, the "Essen Allgemeine Zeitung" says:—This vessel served, as so many others of its kind have done, for transporting troops or ammunition, otherwise our U boats would not have attacked it.—Press Association.

Liverpool Echo - Friday 9 August 1918

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regt. No.
22 ROBINSON John.	* Ches. R. do	Pte.	2539. 200676.
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	* J/2/101. B.26	8677	
BRITISH	do	do.	
15 STAR	J/2/585	1687.	
SWB list T.9/119			
Theatre of War discovered in	(2B)		
Date of entry therein	8. 8. 15.		

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

As noted previously, Thomas Robinson married Alice Murray in Liverpool in early 1901 and, a fisherman, he was living at Swift's Cottages, Parkgate in both 1901 and 1911 (when there were four children). Thomas seems to have died in early 1935 aged 57.

Joseph Robinson (born 7 January 1880) *may* have married Mary Tudor in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1920 but Mary may have died, aged 36, in early 1936. Certainly, at the time of the 1939 Register (29 September) Joseph had been widowed; recorded as an inshore fisherman he was living at 6 Meador's Weint, The Parade, Parkgate, with his widowed mother Annie (born 15 February 1852, incapacitated) and his unmarried brother Frank (born 6 May 1888, general labourer).

Joseph died on Wirral, aged 86, in early 1966. Frank Robinson died on Wirral, aged 76, in mid-1965. Annie Robinson died on Wirral, aged 92, in mid-1944.