

80: George Rowlands

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: George Rowlands

Rank: Sergeant

Battalion / Regiment: 9th Bn. The King's (Liverpool Regiment)

Service Number: 330608 Date of Death: 15 July 1918 Age at Death: 23

Buried / Commemorated at: St Mary & St Helen Churchyard, Neston

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of George and Josephine Rowlands of 46, Summer St., Stormy, Skelmersdale, Lancs. Born at Neston

George Rowlands was the son of Neston collier George (born 8 December 1863) and Josephine Rowlands and George jnr was baptised in Neston 13 January 1895 when their address was given as Little Neston.

George Rowlands married Josephine McNally at St Peter's Church, Liverpool, in late 1887 and, in 1891, they were living at 23 Coburg Street in Birkenhead with their daughters Elizabeth Georgina (2) and Florence (1 month). George, at that time, was recorded as being a brewer's drayman.

By 1901 the family had moved to Neston and George was now employed as a coalminer:

George Rowlands	Head	36	✓	Rowlands		Ches. Seacombe
Josephine	Wife	34	✓	Rowlands		Ireland
Elizabeth G.	Daughter	12	✓	Rowlands		Birkenhead
Florence	Daughter	10	✓	Rowlands		Birkenhead
George	Son	6	✓	Rowlands		Little Neston
Albert E.	Son	1	✓	Rowlands		Little Neston

1901 census (extract) – No. 1 Colliery Company Cottages

George Rowlands	36	coalminer, under	born Seacombe
Josephine	34		born Ireland
Elizabeth G.	12		born Birkenhead
Florence	10		born Birkenhead
George	6		born Little Neston
Albert E.	1		born Little Neston

'Colliery Company Cottages' refers to the houses in New Street, off Marshlands Road (then known as Colliery Lane or Wood Lane, its previous name).

Albert Edward Rowlands was baptised at Neston on 12 November 1899; George snr was recorded as a collier and their address was given as Colliery.

By the time of the 1911 census the family had moved to Neston High Street and George jnr, 16, was a hairdresser living with his parents:

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule 129
(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 Person aged ten years and upwards.				BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY of every person.
			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.)	Children born alive to previous Marriage. (If no children born alive to previous Marriage, write "None" in Column 7.)	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.			
1 George Rowlands	Head	46	Married	23	4	1	Colliery Labourer	Underground	Worker	Seacombe, Cheshire	174			
2 Josephine Rowlands	Wife	44	Married	23	4	1				Dublin, Ireland	601			
3 Elizabeth Rowlands	Daughter	22	Single							Birkenhead, Cheshire	171			
4 Florence M. Rowlands	Daughter	20	Single							Birkenhead, Cheshire	1			
5 George Rowlands, Junr.	Son	16	Single				Hairdresser	90b	Master	Neston, Cheshire				
6 Albert E. Rowlands	Son	11	Single				School	39D	0	Neston, Cheshire				

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—		Total	
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.	(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	Males	Females
(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.		3	3
Totals of Enumerator		6	0

(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.

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

Signature *George Rowlands*
Postal Address *High Street, Neston, Cheshire*

1911 census (condensed) – High Street, Neston

George Rowlands	46	colliery labourer, underground	born Seacombe
Josephine	44		born Dublin
Elizabeth G.	22		born Birkenhead
Florence M.	20		born Birkenhead
George	16	hairdresser	born Neston
Albert E.	11		born Neston

George and Josephine had been married for 23 years and four of their five children had survived.

It is understood that George Rowlands enlisted in The King's (Liverpool Regiment) on 9 September 1914 with the Service Number 2604 but was reassigned with the Service Number 330608 in early 1917. He was aged 19 years 8 months when he enlisted.

George Rowlands embarked for France on 12 March 1915 and he then served with the 1/9th Battalion. The 9th Battalion (then undivided) was formed in August 1914 in Everton Road, Liverpool, and was part of the South Lancashire Brigade, West Lancashire Division. On mobilisation, on 4 August, the Battalion had entrained at Lime Street Station and moved to Dunfermline, Scotland, for training as part of the Firth of Forth defences.

In October 1914 - George Rowlands had joined by this date - the Battalion moved to Tunbridge Wells, Kent, where it remained in training for about five months. As the 9th was a Territorial formation, service overseas was not compulsory and so the troops were asked to take the Imperial Service Obligation which permitted overseas posting. These volunteers, comprising the majority, were re-designated as the 1/9th Battalion (Overseas Service Battalion) with those who did not wish to sign being allocated to the 2/9th Battalion (Second Line) which, at least in the short-term, would be based in Britain. In fact the 2/9th Battalion travelled to France in February 1917 and, a year later (February 1918) was absorbed into the 1/9th Battalion.

The 1/9th Battalion arrived in Le Havre on 13 March 1915 and transferred to the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division and first saw significant action at The Battle of Aubers Ridge on 9 May 1915 where they lost around 100 men, a small number compared to other formations who were in action on that day. The following actions are well-described in Ken Lees' excellent website, based on his research of the 9th Battalion:

Later in the year the largest British effort of the war so far was launched. The 1/9th Battalion and the London Scottish, made up 'Green's Force' which was tasked with attacking in the region of Lone Tree on the opening day of the Battle of Loos, 25 September 1915. Losses were very heavy and when they were withdrawn from the front line in the early hours of 28 September, they left 11 officers and 223 other ranks killed, wounded or missing. But the battle continued and there was not much time to rest and recuperate. On 7 October, the depleted battalion was back in the front line just a day before a large German counter-attack fell upon their position. Losses were again heavy, with 3 officers and 98 other ranks killed, wounded or missing. Then on 13 October, the 1st Division attacked again at Hulluch. The attack was a failure and the 9th King's, held in reserve, suffered from heavy retaliatory shelling by the enemy. Fortunately, on this occasion, the casualties were few and the following day the battalion was withdrawn. Their part in the Battle of Loos was over.

In January 1916 the Battalion left the 1st Division and joined the re-amalgamated West Lancashire Division of the Territorial Force to which they had belonged prior to the war. The Division was now known as the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, Territorial Force, and the 1/9th Battalion joined the other 1st line Territorial battalions from their regiment - 1/5th, 1/6th (Liverpool Rifles), 1/7th, 1/7th (Liverpool Irish) and the 1/10th (Liverpool Scottish).

February 1916 saw the Battalion in the Wailly Sector, south of Arras. They spent the next few months here, alternating their time in the front line with time spent in reserve and at rest. The spring and early summer saw the British Army on the Western Front preparing for the Battle of the Somme which would be launched on 1 July. The 1/9th King's Liverpool Regt. was not directly involved in the opening stages of the battle, but took part in a series of successful trench raids at the end of June, designed in part to maintain pressure on the Germans all along the line to prevent them reinforcing the Somme front.

By the end of July, the Battalion were moving towards the Somme, in preparation for their part in the battle, a battle that would be the last for so many. On 5 August, they were in the front line near to the German-held village of Guillemont. The fighting that followed is often referred to as some of the hardest of the whole battle - for both sides. In less than 24 hours the Battalion suffered over 100 casualties, a terrible toll when they weren't even attacking. They attacked the village on 12 August and made no ground at a cost of over 200 men. They were not to be spared the full horrors of the Somme. But the battle went on and a month later, they found themselves in the line once more, a short distance away near to the village of Longueval. On 25 September 1916, a year to the day since their attack on the first day of the Battle of Loos, the Battalion went forward into the attack once more, this time from the village of Flers, towards Gueudecourt. The 9th King's achieved all of their objectives that day, but again, they paid a heavy price.

In October, the Battalion left the Battle of the Somme and travelled north to Ypres where they would carry out duties in and out of the line through the winter of 1916 and on through the spring and summer of 1917. In July 1917 the British Army once again went onto the offensive in the Third Battle of Ypres which became known as 'Passchendaele'. They attacked near to the village of Wieltje on the opening day of the battle, 31 July 1917, in conditions which soon appeared almost impossible. Survival against the elements was a difficult task in itself without

the ever present danger of the German shelling and machine guns. The objective allotted to the Battalion consisted of a section of the enemy second line called the "Stutzpunkt" Line. In spite of the conditions and the determined resistance of the German defenders, the attack of the opening day of the battle was relatively successful but as always, many men of the Battalion paid for this success with their lives before being relieved from the front line on the night of 2/3 August.

Their efforts in the opening days of one of the world's epic battles was recognised with numerous awards to officers and men for gallantry and the following message from the Brigade Commander:

To Officer Commanding, 9th King's Liverpool Regt.

Will you please congratulate all ranks of your Battalion on the great gallantry they displayed during the recent operations? They not only captured all their objectives, but also helped other troops to capture theirs. The magnificent way in which they captured the position and held it against all counter attacks makes me very proud to have such a Battalion in my Brigade.

L. BOYD MOSS, Brigadier General, 165th Brigade. 4 August, 1917.

After a period of rest and recovery the Battalion once more moved up into the front lines for the next attack which was to take place on 20 September. This became known as the Battle of the Menin Road and the 9th King's found themselves in the same part of the line that they had left six weeks earlier.

Once again, after very heavy fighting, some of it at the point of their bayonets, all objectives were seized and the task of consolidation began under heavy shellfire. The Battalion remained in the line until 22 September when they were relieved.

The Battalion, after two major attacks, had been decimated and needed time to rebuild and absorb whatever reinforcements were available. They were moved to a quiet sector of the line, not far from Cambrai which was to be the scene of the next major effort by the British to defeat the Germans. The 9th King's weren't to play a significant role in this battle, as they

simply weren't strong enough after their efforts at Ypres.

The opening phase of the Cambrai battle was a success as the British deployed tanks en masse for the first time, but the success was short-lived. The Germans regained all of the ground at a huge cost to the British. A German counter-attack on 30 November fell upon the weakly held line in front of Lempire and the weakened 9th King's struggled desperately to keep the attackers at bay. They were finally relieved on 5 December.

As a consequence of the reduction of the number of infantry battalions in the organisation of the British division from twelve to nine, the 1/9th, being the junior battalion in the 165th Brigade, was split up. Some considered themselves fortunate when they discovered they were to be sent to the 2/9th Battalion. The remainder were split up into drafts for the 1st, 4th, and 12th King's. When the 1/9th and 2/9th were re-amalgamated they were once again known as the 9th Battalion – this was 1 February 1918.

[From <http://www.9thkings.co.uk/> with minor amendment]



George Rowlands died of influenza on 15 July 1918 and it is clear that, as he was buried at Neston Parish Church, he was brought back from France to aid his recovery. The records, in fact, show that he was discharged from the army on 23 March 1918 and George therefore died less than four months later. It is not known whether he died in Neston or in hospital elsewhere in Britain and no further details of his death are known.

George's older sister, Florence Mary, had married John W Cartmel of Neston at Our Lady & St. Nicholas & St. Anne, the Liverpool Parish Church, in early 1912 and they had four children. John fought as a Private with the Royal Army Service Corps in WW1, was injured during a gas attack and was returned to Britain and discharged from the RASC on 5 June 1918. Never fully recovering, John died on aged 29 on 20 September 1920 and was buried at Neston Cemetery [see [121: John W. Cartmel](#)]. The address of Florence was recorded later as 8, Raby Road, probably the home of John Cartmel's grandmother, Sarah, as she had died, aged 70, in October 1912. Florence died on 26 September 1929 aged 39 and she is buried in Neston Cemetery.

At some date following the 1911 census George Rowlands snr and Josephine moved from Neston to Skelmersdale, presumably for George to work on the Lancashire Coalfield.

NESTON EX-SOLDIER SUCCUMBS TO INFLUENZA.

The news of the death of Sergt. George Rowlands, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Rowlands, has been received with deep regret in the Neston district, to which he belonged. He was formerly a chorister at the parish church, and a member of the Neston Boys' Brigade, earning the esteem of all with whom he came into contact. A few years ago the family removed to Skelmersdale, and he enlisted early in the war.

MILITARY FUNERAL.—On Friday last there was laid to rest one who had done his duty for his country. Mr. G. Rowlands joined the King's Liverpools in 1914. He was drafted to France, where he soon attained the rank of sergeant. Whilst in France he was badly wounded, afterwards returning to England to receive his discharge from the Army. A short time ago he was seized with influenza, from which he died.—The funeral service, which took place at the Neston Parish Church, was conducted by the Rev. C. Brook Gwynne. A party of deceased's comrades from his old regiment acted as bearers and firing party. At the close of the service three volleys were fired over the grave, and the "Last post" sounded.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 27 July 1918



George Rowland's CWGC headstone in Neston Parish Churchyard

