

94: Walter Bridson

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Walter Bridson
 Rank: Lance Corporal
 Battalion / Regiment: 4th Regiment South African Infantry
 Service Number: 5397 Date of Death: 17 July 1916 Age at Death: 32
 Buried / Commemorated at: Thiepval Memorial, Thiepval, Departement de la Somme, Picardie, France
 Additional information given by CWGC: The son of the late Robert and Mary Anne Bridson

Walter was the 12th and last child of Robert and Mary Ann(e) Bridson of Neston.

Robert Bridson - the family originated in the Isle of Man - married Mary Anne Scott of Neston at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1866. Mary was a daughter of farmer George and Susan (sometimes Susannah) Scott - they farmed at Ness Colliery Farm near The Harp and had come to Neston from Northumberland.

At the time of the 1871 census, some 13 years before Walter was born in late 1884, Robert was away from Neston but Mary and her three children were living at Ness Colliery Farm with her parents:

Ness Colliery Farm 1	George Scott	Head	Man	65	Farmer, employing 6 labourers	Northumberland, Coupland
	Susan	Wife	Woman	64	(Widow)	do Cornhill
	Elizabeth	Granddaughter	Woman	18		Chesham, Neston
	Mary Ann Bridson	Daughter	Woman	26	Mechanics Wife	do Neston
	George W. Bridson	Grandson	Boy	4		do do
	Susan Bridson	Granddaughter	Girl	3		do do
	Sarah Bridson	do	do	1		do do

1871 census (extract) – Ness Colliery Farm

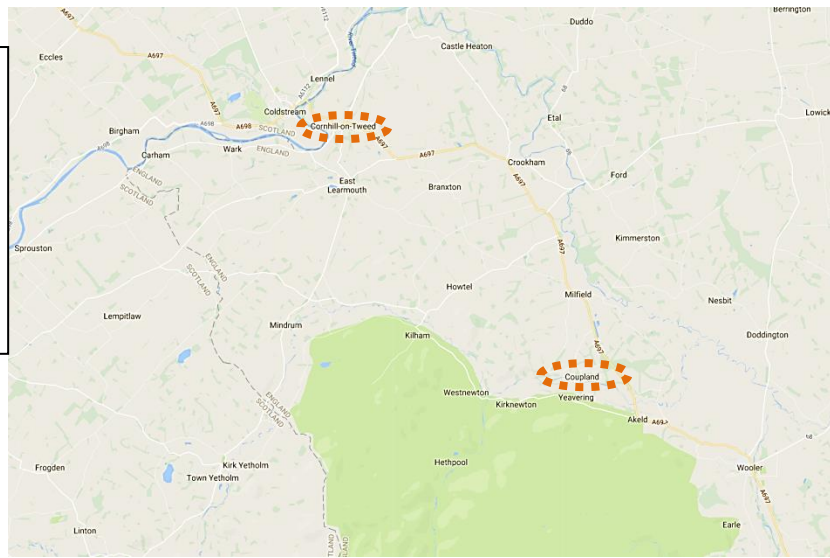
George Scott	65	farmer, employing 6 labourers, 111 acres	born Northumberland, Coupland
Susan	64		born Northumberland, Cornhill
Elizabeth	18	granddaughter	born Neston
Mary Ann Bridson	26	mechanic's wife	born Neston
George W. Bridson	4	grandson	born Neston
Susan Bridson	3	granddaughter	born Neston
Sarah Bridson	1	granddaughter	born Neston

Elizabeth Scott, 18, was a daughter of Andrew and Elizabeth Scott. Andrew, a son of George (and hence a brother of Robert Bridson), was a farm labourer and lived at the property adjoining Ness Colliery Farm.

Robert Bridson has not been located in the 1871 census.

The locations of the villages of Cornhill-on-Tweed and Coupland, Northumberland, close to the England/Scotland border. The two villages, which are around 9 miles apart (by road) have been encircled.

[Google Maps]



At the time of the 1881 census the family was living on Leighton Road:

Robert Bridson	43	Mar	43	Miller	Castletown Isle of Man
Mary	20	Mar	36	Scholar	Neston Cheshire
George	20	Jun	14		20
Susan	20	Mar	13	20	20
Sarah	20	Mar	11	20	20
Esther	20	20	9	20	20
Isabella	20	20	8	20	20
Oliver	20	20	4	20	20
Elizabeth	20	20	2		20
Frances	20	20	2 mo		20
Susan Scott	73	Mar	73	Annuitant	Parahill Northumberland

1881 census (extract) – Leighton Road, Neston

Robert Bridson	43	miller	born Castletown, I.O.M.
Mary	36		born Neston
George	14		born Neston
Susan	13		born Neston
Sarah	11		born Neston
Esther	9		born Neston
Isabella	8		born Neston
Oliver	4		born Neston
Elizabeth	2		born Neston
Frances	2 months		born Neston
Susan Scott	73	mother-in-law, annuitant, widow	born Cornhill, Northumberland

Robert and Mary Bridson had a daughter, Elizabeth, who was born in early 1875 and who died, aged 19 months, on 1 August 1876 and was buried at Neston on 3 August. Another daughter, Annie, was born in early 1883 but died, aged 3, on 3 May 1886 and was buried 4 May. A son, James, was born in late 1884 but died, aged 10 months, on 31 July 1885 and buried 1 August. Frances Bridson died, aged 5, on 10 May 1886 and was buried 11 May. So, of their youngest four children only Walter lived into adulthood.

Mary Anne Bridson died, aged 45, on 20 December 1890 and was buried in Neston on 23 December.

By the time of the 1891 census the family had moved to Church Street (Church Lane?):

No.	Church St	1	Robert Bridson	Head	53	Widow	Robert Bridson	1846	Isle of Man
			Susan	Daughter	23		Tailor's apprentice		Neston
			Esther	Daughter	19				Neston
			Isabella	Daughter	18				Neston
			Oliver	Son	14				Neston
			Elizabeth	Daughter	12				Neston
			Walter	Son	6				Neston
			Susan Scott	Mother-in-law	84				Scotland
			John Caldwell	Head			Subsidiary		Widow
			Elizabeth	Wife					Middleton

1891 census (extract) – Church Street, Neston

Robert Bridson	53	widower, timber merchant	born Isle of Man
Susan	23	tailor's apprentice?	born Neston
Esther	19		born Neston
Isabella	18		born Neston
Oliver	14		born Neston
Elizabeth	12		born Neston
Walter	6		born Neston
Susan Scott	84	mother-in-law, widow	born Scotland [§]

[§] Susan Scott died, aged 86, and was buried at Neston 20 September 1892. Despite the census showing that she was born in Scotland she was, in fact, born at Cornhill, Northumberland.

George Weir Bridson, Walter's eldest brother, has not been found in the 1891 UK census - it is believed that he had left for the Transvaal (South African Republic) to work as an engineer in the goldfields. The Witwatersrand Gold Rush commenced in February 1886 after sedimentary deposits containing extensive deposits of gold were discovered a short distance to the west of present-day Johannesburg, then a dusty mining settlement named Ferreira's Camp. So many prospectors and mining engineers flocked to the Transvaal that President Paul Kruger, concerned that the new immigrants would soon overwhelm the Boers, imposed a series of stringent constraints and taxes on mining. These measures agitated the new mining communities and an uprising, supported by the British (and intended to trigger a widespread revolution with the intention of overthrowing the Transvaal government and turning the region into a British colony), took place over the New Year weekend of 1895-96. This insurrection, the Jameson Raid, was ill-conceived and had little immediate support although it is considered to be an inciting factor in the Second Matabele War (1896 - 1897) and Second Boer War (11 October 1899 - 31 May 1902).



George Weir Bridson in South Africa [Source: G. Bridson, Neston]

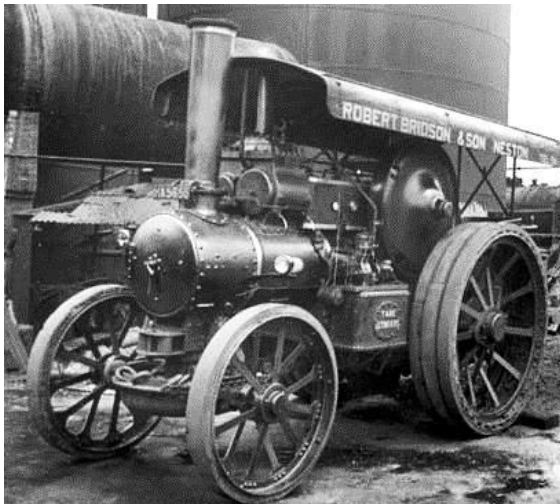
By 1899 George Weir Bridson was back in Britain; late in that year he married Esther Elizabeth Hulme of Gayton at Holy Trinity Church, Chester, and in 1901, when recorded as a traction engine driver and proprietor (aged 34), he was living with Esther and their first child, Isabella, on Church Street (presumably Church Lane), Neston.

In 1901 Robert Bridson and Walter were living on Chester Road, Neston:

Robert Bridson	Head	63	Agricultural Engineer	Employer	Isle of Man
Ann Bridson	Wife	61			Saltney Flint
Walter Bridson	Son	16	Joiner's apprentice	Worker	Neston Ches

1901 census (extract) – Chester Road, Neston

Robert Bridson	63	agricultural engineer	born Isle of Man
Ann	61		born Saltney, Flint.
Walter	16	joiner's apprentice	born Neston



The Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales – 1 September 1897

Robert Bridson, Walter's widowed father, had

married widow Ann Siddall (or *Liddall*) of Chester at St Thomas' Church, Liverpool, in April/June 1898 and he died, aged 73, on 23 October 1911. Ann died in Runcorn, aged 83, in 1922.

Susan Bridson married marine fitter Randolph Mackenzie Millar at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1900; in 1911 the family was living in Tranmere and Susan died in early December 1916.

TRACTION ENGINE PROPRIETOR SUMMONED.— Robert Bridson, traction engine proprietor, Neston, was summoned for using a traction engine and three carriages on the highway with no person in charge besides the three persons required by the Act to be in charge of the locomotive, on 3rd August last. Constable Bostock, who proved the charge, stated that the carriages consisted of a cultivator, a set of harrows, and a water tub. There was another charge in connection with another traction engine, which followed immediately after the first engine and implements, but was not attached to them. The evidence shewed the two engines and implements made up a ploughing set, and after Mr. Churton had addressed the Bench, urging that agriculturists at the present time should not be put to needless expense, the Bench inflicted a nominal penalty of one shilling in each case.

In 1901 Sarah (recorded as Sara, 32) was a housemaid in Rock Lane West, Birkenhead. Sarah remained unmarried and she died on 2 February 1933 and is buried with her grandparents, George and Susannah Scott, in Neston Parish Churchyard.

In 1901 Isabella was a boarder, aged 28, in the home of butcher James and Mary Ann Maltby in Mansfield where she was recorded as a bookkeeper at a butcher's. In the 1911 census she was described as a

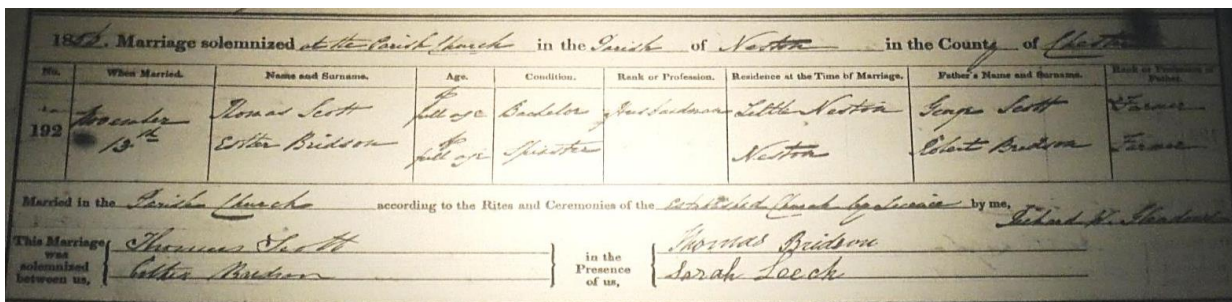
visitor (but was probably a lodger) at a house in Norwich Avenue, Bournemouth; the only person in the house she was recorded again as being a butcher's bookkeeper. Isabella died, unmarried, on 1 August 1922.



Walter's father, Robert Bridson, had a varied career – in 1871 he was recorded as a mechanic, in 1881 he was a miller on Leighton Road, in 1891 a timber

merchant, in 1901 an agricultural engineer and in 1911 he was a traction engine owner (retired). In fact the Neston firm of Robert Bridson & Sons was started by Robert in about 1870 (although this title wasn't adopted until 1898) when he began to hire and maintain threshing machines, quickly expanding to supply steam traction engines which could be used for haulage or as a stationary machine to power agricultural equipment.

Robert Bridson, a son of farmer Robert and Sarah Bridson, was born in the parish of Malew, near Castletown, in the south of the Isle of Man in November 1837. Although the early connection to Neston is unknown, Robert jnr's sister, Esther, married Thomas Scott at Neston Parish Church on 13 November 1856:



Both Esther and Thomas would then have been about 27 and Thomas, a son of farmer George Scott, was described as a *husbandman*, a tenant farmer. George Scott had come from Northumberland in 1837 to farm at Denhall, and Thomas took over what was then called Sutton's Farm in Little Neston in 1876. However, in 1856, it is probable that George Scott was the tenant of Colliery Farm in Little Neston and Thomas was working with him.

It was Mary Anne Scott, Thomas Scott's sister, who married Robert Bridson in 1866; Mary was then 21 and Robert was 28. As noted earlier, Robert varied his occupation although - and with an entrepreneurial flair - this always had an engineering connection.

Indeed, in early 1889 Robert Bridson planned to expand his business by opening a bone mill in Bridge Street, an enterprise that was rejected by the Neston & Parkgate Local Board as it was considered that this would pose '*...a nuisance...from carrying the bones through the street in an offensive condition*' and '*...that it would not be advisable to sanction such works near the dwelling houses*'. Opinion, however, was divided and '*Several members were of opinion that the works would have proved a boon to the local farmers, and that a nuisance was not likely to arise..*'. (*Cheshire Observer*, 12 January and 9 February 1889)

Bone mills, once a common element of the landscape, rendered bones (collected mainly from slaughterhouses and tanneries) down into agricultural fertiliser and produced by-products such as axle grease, glue and gelatine. In the process the bones, having been boiled to remove the fat and make them brittle, were crushed by rollers; although many such mills were water-powered Bridson would have used his steam engines for power. Indeed, in order to sway the decision, Robert Bridson erected a '*steam digester and bone mill...by way of experiment, and has invited members of the*

Board to attend. Several of the members who witnessed the operations expressed themselves as satisfied that no nuisance would arise..'. (Cheshire Observer, 9 March 1889). Nevertheless, because of the proximity to housing, Bridson was never given the authority to pursue this business and he then concentrated on the maintenance and leasing of a variety of steam traction engines.

At around the time of the 1911 census the company, now operating around ten traction engines, was being run by George Weir Bridson. In 1911 George, 44, now with a family of five, was a 'haulage contractor' living at 'Park Vale' on Hinderton Road. George died, aged 64, in mid-1931 (his address was still Park Vale) by which time the business was being operated by his eldest son, Thomas (aged 9 in 1911). Thomas expanded the business to include road laying but when he died, aged 64, in late 1967, the company was sold.

It is understood that Walter Bridson left for South Africa, to the area of Johannesburg, in about August 1902 and in 1906 a W Bridson was recorded as a Trooper with the Umvoti Mounted Rifles in Natal.

The Umvoti Mounted Rifles (named after the Umvoti River) was formed in 1864 as an armoured reserve regiment of the South African Army. It was re-formed in 1893 at Greytown, Natal, by the redesignation of the left Wing of the Natal Carbineers and served in the Second Boer War (1899 - 1902).

W. Bridson is recorded as a recipient of the Natal 1906 Medal which indicates that he was active in the Zulu uprising in Natal in 1906, the

result of a series of culminating factors and misfortunes; an economic slump following the end of the Boer War, simmering discontent at the influx of White and Indian immigration causing demographic changes in the landscape, a devastating outbreaks of rinderpest among cattle and a rise in a quasi-religious separatist movement with a rallying call of, 'Africa for the Africans'.

The agricultural mainstay of the economy of Natal had been adversely affected by the depletion of the Black workforce to the more lucrative work in the mines of the Witwatersrand. The imposition of Hut Tax was a further burden and then the introduction of a Poll Tax on each male over 18 years in Natal and Zululand by the cash-strapped government was to be the final straw turning discontent into open rebellion.

The enforced collection of this tax was deeply resented by many Blacks, it raised tensions considerably within Natal and resulted in a series of incidents and finally the murder of a farmer and the deaths of two Natal policemen in January 1906. This caused the Governor Sir Henry McCullum to declare Martial Law on the 9 February and the militia were called out.

The Battle of Mome Gorge was the last major action fought and the rebellion petered out over the next few weeks. In terms of casualties between 3-4,000 Zulus were killed, 7,000 were imprisoned and 4,000 were flogged. In contrast, 25 Colonial soldiers died during the insurrection. King Dinizulu was sentence to four years' imprisonment for treason. The cost to Natal was almost 900,000 pounds and a hardening of attitudes towards the indigenous population. This in turn contributed towards the Union of South Africa in 1910 and its racially segregated policies.

[Adapted from: <http://www.angloboerwar.com/medals-and-awards/non-boer-war/1728-natal-rebellioon-1906-medal>]

W Bridson is recorded also as a member of the Barberton Town Guard, a group of volunteers who served in gold-rush town of Barberton, 20 miles east of Johannesburg in the Mpumalanga province.

As the Service Record for Walter Bridson has not been found no details of his service with the 4th Regiment South African Infantry are known although it is known that he was a member of 'D' Coy.

South Africa raised a Brigade of four infantry battalions for the Western Front, in addition to 5 batteries of Heavy Artillery, a Field Ambulance, a Royal Engineers Signal Company and a General Hospital. The 4th Regiment was the South African Scottish, raised from the Transvaal Scottish and the Cape Town Highlanders, and they wore the Atholl Murray tartan. The forces recruited in South Africa embarked at Cape Town between 28 August and 17 October 1915, and all units were in England by November. The infantry moved to camp at Bordon, Hampshire, and the Brigade sailed through the Mediterranean and landed at Alexandria 10 and 13 January 1916 and moved to Mex Camp. The 2nd Regiment, and then the remainder, were then moved to join the Western Frontier Force.

From Alexandria the Brigade sailed to France between 13 and 15 April 1916 and landed at Marseilles. By 23 April, the leading units had detrained and were arriving at Steenwerck in Flanders. The entire Brigade came under the orders of the 9th (Scottish) Division, in which it replaced the 28th Brigade.

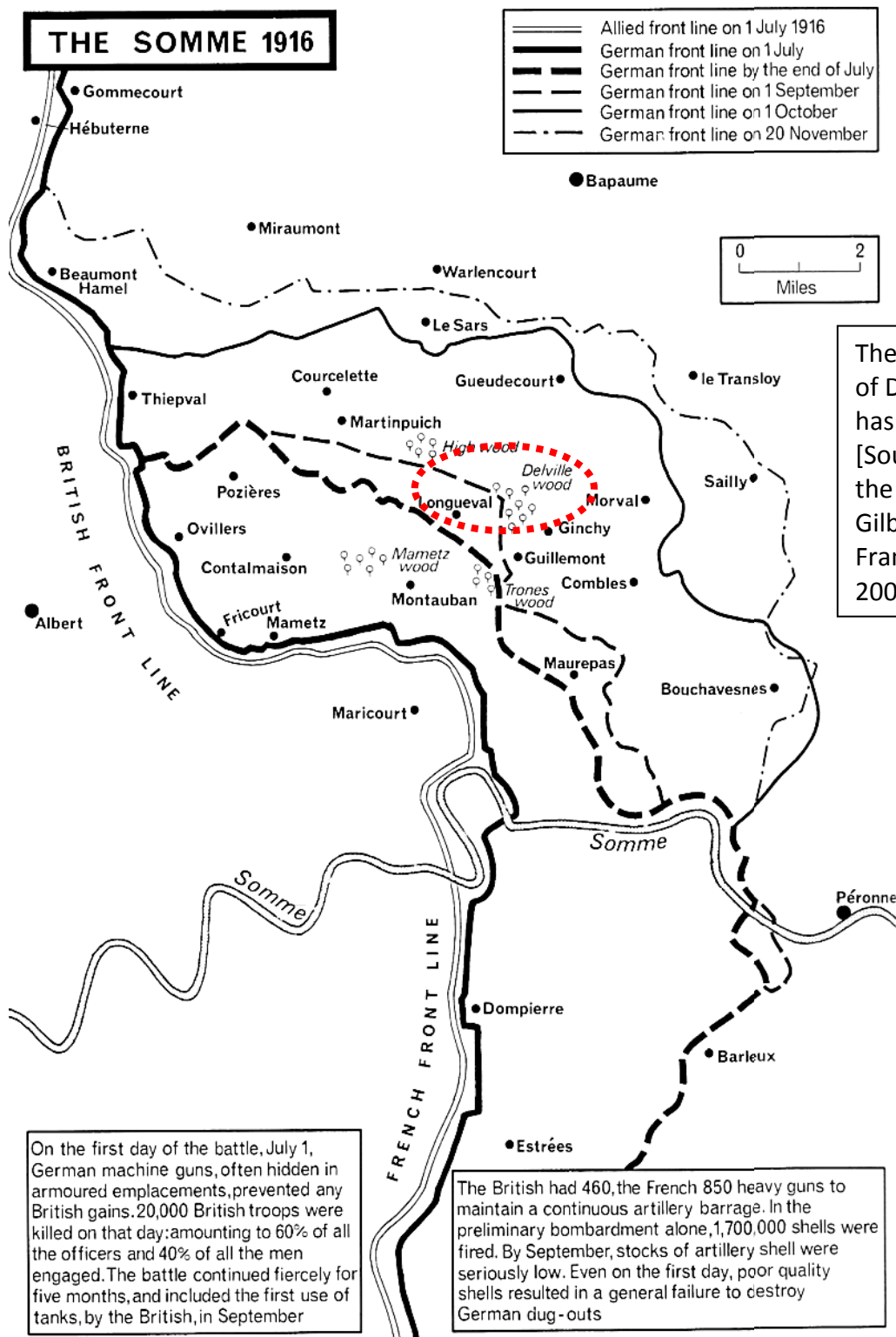
On 2 July 1916 the troops moved up from Grovetown to Billon Valley, relieving the 27th Brigade which had been ordered up to the battle and they then moved up to relieve the 89th Brigade of the 30th Division in the Glatz sector of the front line near Montauban. Here they came under heavy shellfire and the 4th Battalion was involved in fighting for Trones Wood.

The entire Brigade came under withering attack at Longueval (Delville Wood), the conflict in which Walter Bridson was killed, on the afternoon of 14 July and fighting in and around the area of woodland and scrub was severe as the troops were under constant fire from the German Second Position.

Both the wood and the South African battalions were almost completely destroyed.



Devastated woodland at Delville Wood, July 1916
<http://www.advanceplacementhistory.com/>



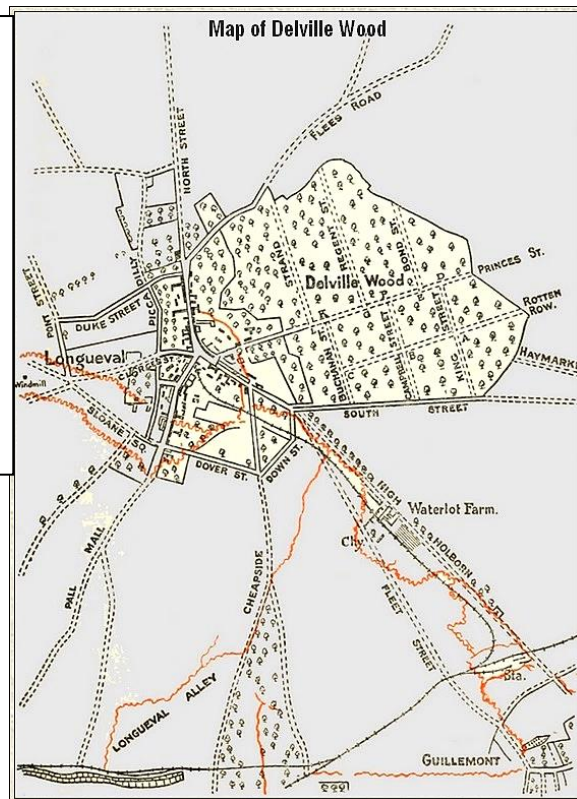
The Official History of the Great War 1914-1918 records the courage of the South Africans holding the wood:

The South Africans had covered themselves with glory at Delville Wood, which is now laid out as a memorial to their dead. In spite of terrible losses, they had steadfastly endured the ordeal of the German bombardment, which seldom slackened and never ceased, and had faced with great courage and resolution repeated counter-attacks delivered by fresh [German] troops. Since their first advance into the wood on the morning of 15th July they had defied all attempts to drive them completely from it. [Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1916, Volume II p. 108]

Map of Delville Wood and surrounding area, July 1916.

The position of Buchanan Street in Delville Wood, mentioned in the War Diary, is shown on the map as leading northwards to the centre of the wood from South Street which forms the southern boundary.

[Source: A History of the Great War : The British Campaign in France & Flanders Vol. 3; 1916 Arthur Conan Doyle, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1918 Reproduced at <http://freeread.com.au/@rglibrary/ArthurConanDoyle/History/H243-TheGreatWar.html>]



Detail of the action on 16 -18 July 1916 was recorded in the War Diary where it was noted that the 4th South African Infantry lost most of their men at this time:

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
LONGUEVAL & DELVILLE WOOD	16/7/16		<p>4th S African Infantry</p> <p>through LONGUEVAL, into DELVILLE WOOD. B Coy at front occupied line from CAMERON REDOUBT to CEMETERY afterwards withdrawing to Cameron Redoubt after heavy losses from Maxim fire & occupied trench with Camerons in front of redoubt maintaining positions till about midnight when ordered by Col Dawson to return to trench by sunken road. C Coy occupied ground (on entering wood) to right rear of B Coy about a 100 yds west of BUCHANA north of Col TANNERS Hdqrs. Later in day two platoons moved to left to occupy a trench nearer the German redoubt & west of Cameron redoubt. At dark C Coy were ordered to withdraw to same trench as B Coy, but ½ Coy of C which had moved to left did not return to trench by sunken road till next morning.</p> <p>Lt Brown killed - Lt Watkins wounded - Lt Young wounded.</p>	

TRANSCRIPT [the sections in *italics* are from the preceding and succeeding pages of the Diary]

LONGUEVAL & DELVILLE WOOD

16/7/16 *A & D Coys still holding on in same place, heavily shelled all day, counterattacked at dusk & at night improving trenches as much as possible.*

B & C Coys moved during morning through LONGUEVAL, into DELVILLE WOOD. B Coy at front occupied line from CAMERON REDOUBT to CEMETERY afterwards withdrawing to Cameron Redoubt after heavy losses from maxim fire & occupied trench with Camerons in front of redoubt maintaining positions till about midnight when ordered by Col. Dawson to return to trench by sunken road. C Coy occupied ground (on entering wood) to right rear of B Coy about a 100 yds north of Col. TANNERS Hdqrs. Later in day two platoons moved to left to occupy a trench nearer the German redoubt & west of Cameron Redoubt. At dark C Coy were ordered to withdraw to same trench as B Coy, but ½ Coy of C which had moved to left did not return to trench by sunken road till next morning.

Lt Brown killed - Lt Watkins wounded - Lt Young wounded

July 1916

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
T DELVILLE WOOD	17/7/16		A & D boys maintained the same positions as on the 16th. The Germans heavily counterattacked at dawn, getting in some cases up to parapet, but were driven off. Heavily shelled all day & counterattacked at dusk. B & C remained all day and night in sunken trenches, very heavily shelled & had a good many casualties. Capt MARSHALL wounded. Lt GRIERSON gassed	
LONGUEVAL	18/7/16		A & D boys very heavily shelled all day & by this time almost all killed & wounded. A Coy attacked about 5 pm. & the remains of A & D coys withdrawn to centre of wood & joined Col Thackeray's party. At 7 AM fifty men of 'C' Coy sent forward to reinforce 2nd Regt under Major Burgess in wood. In afternoon remainder of C & all B Coy moved forward to trenches on S-west	

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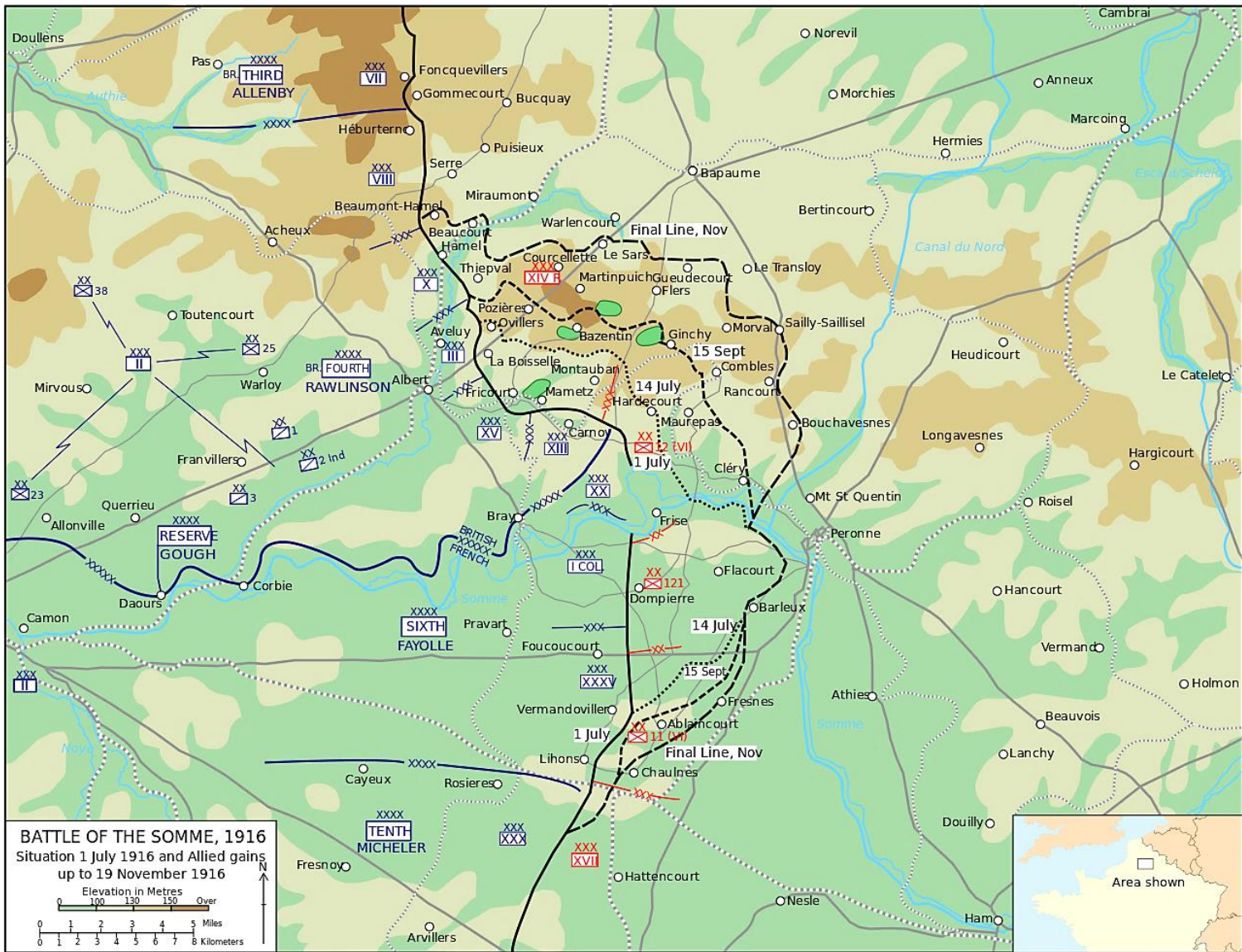
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Representation of the hand-to-hand combat in Delville Wood.
http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Battle_of_Delville_Wood



SAVAGE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING WITH BOMB AND BAYONET IN DELVILLE WOOD.

In Delville Wood, called "the Devil's Wood," the South Africans in particular had some savage fighting. "The ghastliness of the place has left its mark upon the minds of many men who are not troubled much by the sights of battle," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs. "Those slashed trees, naked trenches and smoking shell-holes build up a nightmare that men will dream again."



The map illustrates the area gained as the Allied positions moved eastwards from early July to mid-November 1916. North of the River Somme the areas of elevated ground saw intense fighting with the wooded areas (shown in darker green) having strategic importance. Delville Wood is west of Ginchy (Longueval, not depicted on this map, lies on the eastern boundary of the wood), High Wood is to the north-west of Delville Wood with Bazentin-le-Petit Wood south of Bazentin and Mametz Wood in the south.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Delville_Wood#/media/File:Map_of_the_Battle_of_the_Somme,_1916.svg]

Delville Wood, sometimes known as Devil's Wood, was the site of some of the most intense fighting during The Battle of The Somme. The majority of the wood was eventually taken by South African soldiers on 15 July 1916, and they held on grimly during numerous German counterattacks for six days, until they were relieved. Haig in his diary recorded on 15 July 1916 *Enemy counterattacked wood in force from north and northeast at 2.45 p.m. and was repulsed*. Indeed, the area of Longueval and Delville Wood was seen as being a prime objective during the 1916 conflict on the Somme:

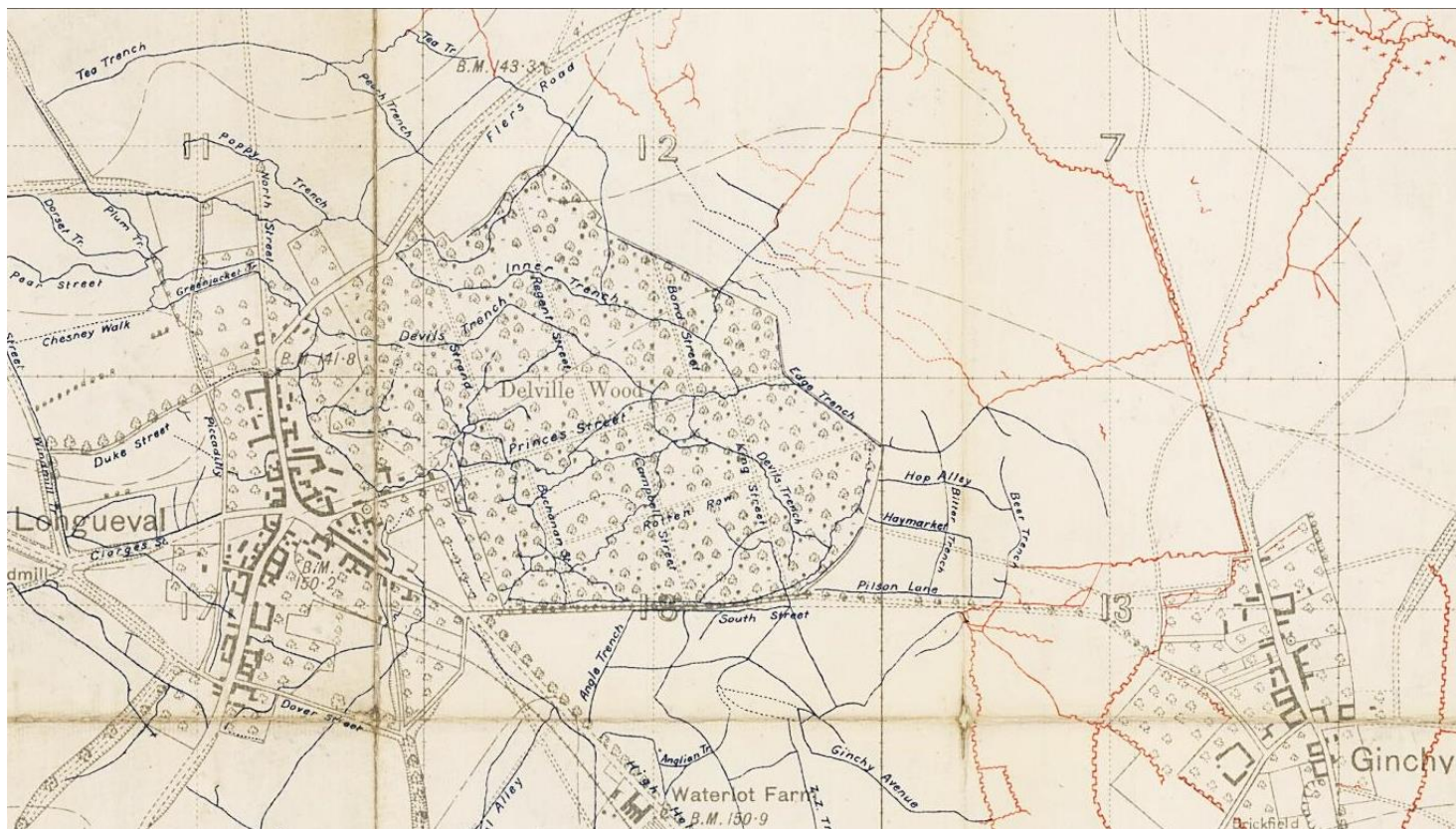
General Sir Henry Rawlinson, commander of the Fourth Army ordered Congreve¹ to use XIII Corps to capture Longueval, while the XV Corps (Lieutenant-General Horne) was to cover the left flank. Rawlinson wanted to advance across no man's land at night for a dawn attack after a hurricane bombardment to gain surprise. Haig opposed the plan because of doubts about inexperienced New Army divisions assembling on the battlefield at night but eventually deferred to Rawlinson and the corps commanders, after modifications to their plan. An advance to Longueval could not begin until Trônes Wood was in British possession as it dominated the approach from the south. The capture of Longueval would then require the occupation of Delville Wood on the north-eastern edge of the town. If Delville Wood was not captured German artillery observers could overlook the village and German infantry would have an ideal jumping-off point for attacks on Longueval.

A British advance would deepen the salient already formed to the north-east of Montauban but also assist British attacks to the south on Ginchy and Guillemont and on High Wood to the north-west. The 9th (Scottish) Division was to attack Longueval and the 18th (Eastern) Division on the right was to occupy Trônes Wood. Furse, ordered that the Longueval attack be led by the 26th Brigade. The 8th (Service) Battalion, Black Watch and the 10th (Service) Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders would lead, with the 9th (Service) Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders in support and the 5th (Service) Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in reserve. The 27th Brigade would follow on, to mop up any bypassed German troops and reinforce the leading battalions, once they had entered the village. When Longueval had been secured, the 27th Brigade was to pass through the 26th Brigade to take Delville Wood. The 1st South African Brigade was to be kept in reserve. [Wikipedia]

Walter Norris Congreve, as commander of the XIII Corps, led the battles for Longueval and Delville Wood between 14 July and 3 September 1916. The rapid advance of his Corps in the southern sector of the Somme offensive had brought about a situation where the allied front was set at a right angle - the left sector facing north and the right, facing east from Delville Wood. This meant that an advance on a wide front would result in the attacking forces diverging from one-another as they advanced. In order to "straighten the line," General Sir Douglas Haig had decided to exploit the advances which had been made by Congreve in the south by taking and holding the town of Longueval and Delville Wood. Being on fairly high ground and providing good spotting opportunities for artillery fire, an occupied Longueval would protect the right flank and allow the Allies to advance in the north and align their left with that of Congreve's XIII Corps on the right. XIII Corps succeeded in securing Delville Wood.

[Adapted from Wikipedia]

¹ The 'Congreve' referred to here was Lieutenant-General Walter Norris Congreve VC of Burton Hall, the father of Major William La Touche Congreve who died in this same conflict during the attack on Longueval on 20 July 1916.

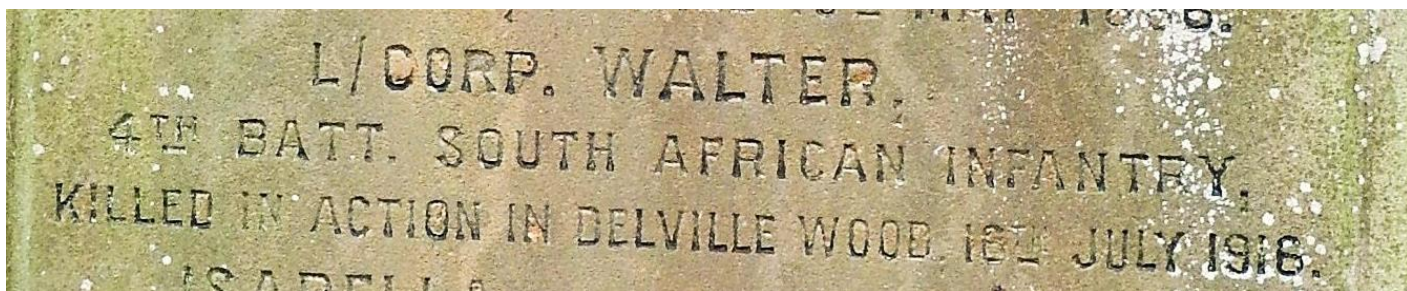


1 mile
 Trench map (Allied positions in blue, German in red) between Longueval and Ginchy on 3 September 1916, seven weeks after Walter Bridson had been killed in the assault on Delville Wood.



The inscription on the Thiepvall Memorial

The Bridson family headstone at Neston Parish Church is inscribed 'L. Corp. Walter 4th Batt. South African Infantry, killed in action in Delville Wood 16th July 1916': [Note the discrepancy between the CWGC record / Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects and the headstone inscription - there is a one-day difference in the quoted date of death].



Inscription on Bridson gravestone, Neston Parish Church, commemorating Walter's death.

The full inscription on the Bridson gravestone, Neston Parish Church

In Loving Memory of
ROBERT BRIDSON
Died 23rd Oct. 1911 Aged 73 Years
Also MARY ANNE, Wife of the Above,
Died 20th Dec. 1890 Aged 45 Years
And their Children
ELIZABETH, Died 1st Aug. 1876
James, Died 31 July 1885
Annie, Died 3rd May 1886
Frances, Died 10th May 1886

[Inscription to Walter Bridson]

ESTHER TURTON,
Wife of William Laverock Turton,
And Daughter of the Above,
Died August 1st 1934
IRENE CHILDS,
Née Bridson,
Died 4th February 1876,
Daughter of G.W. & E.E. Bridson



The “Roll of Honour of the South African Infantry Brigade: Operations on the Somme in July 1916” [<http://www.delvillewood.com/>] notes that Walter was ‘Missing in action on the 17th July 1916 (Delville Wood). Age 32.’ As there was some uncertainty about his date of death the Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects (of which there are two entries) notes ‘17-7-16 on or since death presumed’. Walter’s body was never recovered or, if it was buried, was not identified.

At the time of the 1901 census both Esther (28) and Elizabeth (21) Bridson were recorded as cashiers boarding at the home of Richard Lee-Roberts, a stone quarry master, on St Peter’s Road, Bournemouth.

Esther Bridson married William Laverock Turton in July / September 1907 in Christchurch, Hampshire. William was the son of Raby farmer John and Mary Turton and in 1911 they were living at ‘Gwenville’, Hinderton Road, where her sister Elizabeth was a visitor. Esther died on 1 August 1934.

It is believed that Oliver Bridson moved to the Johannesburg area in June 1900 (this was the time of the Second Boer War) and served with Lord Kitchener’s bodyguard, possibly within the police force. By mid-1901, however, he was serving under General

John George Dartnell at Vryheid in Natal where Dartnell was commanding a column of the Light Horse Regiment (LHR). Oliver was recorded as a Trooper with the Service Number 25200). On 25 March 1901 Oliver Bridson wrote to Robert, his father, to say 'I have been in good health all the time, but we are terribly short of rations...We are chasing the enemy all the time'. (*Cheshire Observer*, 4 May 1901)

Following the end of the Second Boer War in May 1902 it appears that Oliver remained in the Transvaal.

Elizabeth Bridson remained unmarried and she died on 15 February 1940 and is buried with her sister, Sara (Sarah), and her grandparents, George and Susannah Scott, at Neston Parish Church.

Scott and Bridson grave at Neston Parish Church

*In Memory of
JOHN SCOTT*

*Son of George & Susannah Scott,
Of Ness Colliery,*

Died 14th Sept. 1842, Aged 18 Months

*Also GEORGE SCOTT, Father of the Above,
Died 29th Nov. 1871, Aged 66 Years*

*Also of SUSANNAH SCOTT,
Wife of the above Named George Scott,
Died 17th Sept. 1882, Aged 88 Years*

*Also SARA BRIDSON, Daughter of Robert &
Mary Anne Bridson, and Grand-Daughter
of the Above*

*George & Susannah Scott,
Who Died 2nd February 1933*

*Also ELIZABETH BRIDSON, Daughter of
Robert & Mary Anne Bridson,
Who Died 15th February 1940*



