

99: Donald McAckran Bell

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

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Donald McAckran Bell
 Rank: Private
 Battalion / Regiment: 8th Bn. Cheshire Regiment
 Service Number: 11717 Date of Death: 19 September 1917 Age at Death: ?
 Buried / Commemorated at: Basra Memorial, Al Basrah, Basra, Iraq
 Additional information given by CWGC: None

Donald McAckran Bell was the tenth child, of twelve, of farm worker Samuel and Margaret Bell and he was born in South Knapdale, Argyllshire. He was a younger brother of Hugh and Thomas Bell who were also killed in WW1 [see entries, [100: Hugh Bell](#) and [101: Thomas Bell](#)].

In 1901, having recently left western Scotland, the family was involved in agriculture in western Kent, on the Medway:

Samuel Bell	Head	M	43	Ploughman on farm	Worker	Ireland Co. Antrim	Ballymena
Margaret B.	Wife	M	40	Dairymaid		Scotland Renfrew	Kilmacolm
Elizabeth Bell	Daughter	F	16	Domestic Servant	Worker	Scotland Argyllshire	Knapdale
Robert B.	Son	M	14	Ordinary Farm Labourer		Do	Do
Alice B.	Daughter	F	12			Do	Do
Hugh B.	Son	M	10			Do	Do
Thomas B.	Son	M	7			Do	Do
Donald B.	Son	M	5			Do	Do
David B.	Son	M	2			Do	Do

1901 census – Frog's Bridge Cottages, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent

Samuel Bell	43	ploughman on farm	born Ballymena, Co. Antrim
Margaret	40	dairymaid	born Kilmacolm, Renfrew, Scotland
Elizabeth	16	domestic servant	born Knapdale, Argyllshire
Robert	14	ordinary farm labourer	born Knapdale
Alice	12		born Knapdale
Hugh	10		born Knapdale
Thomas	7		born Knapdale
Donald	5		born Knapdale
David	2		born Knapdale

Although the family had lived in Argyllshire for many years they had, for reasons unknown, moved to Kent in about 1900 and it was here that their last child, Margaret Campbell Bell, was born in the 2nd quarter of 1902.

However, by the time of the 1911 census the family had moved again and were now living in the village of Lacey Green, midway between Princes Risborough and High Wycombe:

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

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.

Number of Schedules 137
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

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.	
			Single, Married, Widowed, or Divorced.	Children born alive to present Marriage.	Children born alive to previous Marriage.	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 Samuel Bell	Head	53	Married	32	78	72	2	Stockman on farm		Worker	At Home	Co. Antrim, Ballymena	625	
2 Margaret Bell	Wife	49	Married	32	12	10	2			Worker	At Home	Renfrewshire, Kilmacolm	525	
3 Thomas Bell	Son	17	Single					Farm Labourer		Worker	At Home	Argyllshire, Knapdale	525	
4 Donald Mc. Bell	Son	15	Single					Farm Labourer			At Home	Argyllshire, Knapdale	525	
5 David Bell	Son	12									At Home	Argyllshire, Knapdale	525	
6 Margaret Bell	Daughter	9								school	At Home	Kent, Hadlow	525	

(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 certify that—		Total.	
(1) All the persons on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex columns.	(2) I have counted the males in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	Males	Females
(3) After making the necessary corrections I have compared all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.		4	2

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchen, Parlor, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

4 Rooms

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

Signature Samuel Bell
Postal Address Lucy Green, Princes Risborough, Bucks

1911 census (condensed) – Lac[e]y Green, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

Samuel Bell	53	stockman on farm	born Ballymena, Co. Antrim
Margaret	49		born Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire
Thomas	17	farm labourer	born Argyllshire, Knapdale
Donald Mc.	15	farm labourer	born Knapdale
David	12		born Knapdale
Margaret	9		born Kent, Hadlow

Samuel and Margaret had been married for 32 years and ten of their twelve children had survived.

The *Birkenhead News* and *Birkenhead Advertiser* of 29 August 1914 reported that Donald Bell was from Puddington and had enlisted for the Expeditionary Force; it is further believed that he enlisted in Birkenhead. Clearly, both Donald and brother Thomas enlisted for the 8th Battalion Cheshire Regiment at the same time and same place - their Service Numbers are consecutive.

It is not known what connection Donald Bell had with Burton or Puddington although it is known that the brothers came to the area for agricultural work. However, in 1911, a Thomas Bell was living in Puddington; single, aged 50, he was a farm labourer and had been born in Burton. In earlier years the name Bell was recorded several times in Puddington, Burton and Ness and it is possible that Donald Bell had ancestors who originated from this area, although no ancestral connection has been found.

The 8th (Service) Battalion Cheshire Regiment was formed at Chester on 12 August 1914 as part of Kitchener's New Army and it came under the orders of the 40th Brigade, 13th (Western) Division. In the same regiment, the military experiences of Donald and Thomas would have been very similar.

In June 1915 the troops embarked for Egypt and then moved to Gallipoli. In January 1916 they were evacuated from the disastrous Gallipoli campaign to Egypt and the following month sailed to Mesopotamia (now Iraq) where the battalion remained. They were in action in The Battle of Kut al Amara, the capture of the Hai Salient, the capture of Dahra Bend and the passage of the Diyala in the pursuit of the enemy towards Baghdad. Units of the Division were the first troops to enter Baghdad, when it fell on 11 March 1917.

The Division then joined "Marshall's Column" and pushed north across Iraq, fighting at Delli 'Abbas, Duqma, Nahr Kalis, crossing the 'Adhaim on 18 April and fighting at Shatt al 'Adhaim. Later in the year they were in action in The Second and Third Actions of Jabal Hamrin.



Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, 1915
[\[http://www.historytoday.com/roger-hudson/anzac-cove-gallipoli-1915\]](http://www.historytoday.com/roger-hudson/anzac-cove-gallipoli-1915)

The War Office Daily List of 28 December 1917 noted that Donald Bell was *Previously reported missing, now reported prisoner of war in Turkish hands* - this was three months after the date on which, later, he was determined to have died. Commemorated on the Basra Memorial, Iraq, it appears that his body was not found or, if a POW, his body was not returned.

Interestingly, the Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects records that Donald died of dysentery in Turkey; whilst he probably contracted that disease whilst serving in Gallipoli he is commemorated in Iraq. There is, therefore, some conflict about where Donald died particularly as he died some 20 months after his Regiment was evacuated from Gallipoli. There is some possibility that he did die whilst a prisoner in Turkey, that his body was not returned to the British - and his grave may not have been recorded or known - and he was

subsequently commemorated in Iraq (although he may never have visited the country) after his unit moved there in January 1916, some 20 months before Donald's recorded date of death.

The Regimental War Diaries are unavailable.

Neither Donald nor Hugh Bell are commemorated on the war memorials in Knapdale, Argyllshire, or other memorials in that vicinity.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
BELL.	Ches. R.	Pte.	11717.
Donald. M.			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	J/2/101 B5.	1332.	
BRITISH	-do-	-do-	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

The Basra Memorial commemorates more than 40,500 members of the Commonwealth forces who died in the operations in Mesopotamia from the Autumn of 1914 to the end of August 1921 and whose graves are not known.

638284	2/26/1917	Bell Donald McAchrans	8th Btn Cheshire Pte 11717	19.9.17 Turkey Argentin	H'burg 1/13 3/18	4 =	13 4	190 8/18	8-8-18	For Samuel	13 4 =		
							13 10			10/11/19 For Samuel	13 10 =	PD	
			<div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> WA GR. A. GRATUITY. Effects 19 19 20 Transfer £20 6 Regd. Paper 2/6035 40 Serial No. 23574 27 </div>										
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> A. F. W. DOTO SENT DATE ... 24 4. 19 </div>										

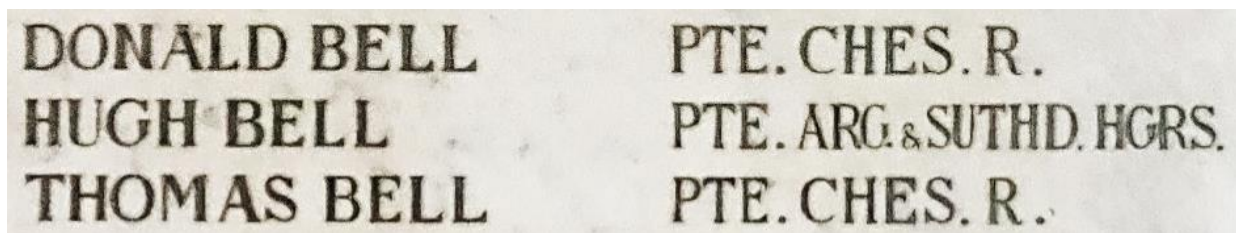
Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 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. In July 1919 Donald's father Samuel received a payment of outstanding wages of £13 4s from the army and, in November, a War Gratuity of £13 10s. This, a total value of £26 14s, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £4150 in 2016.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

The three sons of Samuel and Margaret Bell all died within 9 months of each other:

- Thomas died Thursday 1 February 1917
- Donald died Wednesday 19 September 1917
- Hugh died Friday 12 October 1917



Detail of Memorial Plaque, recording the three Bell brothers, in Burton Parish Church