

## 173: Frank Steele

This entry is supplemental to HomeTown Heroes; this man was not known to be a casualty of WW1 until after the main work was published in October 2018

**Basic Information [Frank Steele is not, at the time of writing (December 2020) commemorated by the CWGC or, as far as is known, on any War Memorial]**

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Frank Steele

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment

Service Number: 2014

Date of Death: 25 June 1919

Age at Death: 24

Buried / Commemorated at: Presumed buried in the Prescott, Lancashire, district

Frank [Francis] was born in around May 1895 in Sutton, a township in the parish of Prescott, in St Helens, Lancashire.

Frank's parents, coal miner George and Hannah (née Pepper) Steele, both originated from the Burslem area of North Staffordshire; they had married at Madeley Parish Church (between Crewe and Newcastle-under-Lyme) on 30 May 1882. Both their families lived in the small mining village of Leycett ('the clearing in the woods') which had been built in the late eighteen sixties to accommodate the miners and their families.

1882. Marriage solemnized at <u>the Parish Church</u> in the Parish of <u>Madeley</u> , in the County of <u>Stafford</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
7	May 30 <sup>th</sup> 1882	George Steele	24	Bachelor	Miner	Leycett	James Steele	Miner
		Hannah Pepper	20	Spinster	—	Leycett	Joseph Pepper	Miner

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by James Leigh or after Banns by me, The Rev. D. D. D. D.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Steele in the Presence of us, James Leigh Martha Roberts & her man

Following their marriage George and Hannah continued to live in Leycett and at least three children were born there. However, shortly after the birth of daughter Sarah in early 1888 the family moved to the St Helens district where George was employed on the South Lancashire Coalfield; it was quite usual at that time for miners to move around the country to find better-paid work or to look for better working and living conditions. Certainly, by the time of the 1891 census, they were living at 21 Cecil Street in the Sutton district to the south-east of the town and daughter Ellen had been born there:

27 Cecil St	1	George Steele	Head	Yr	33	Coal Miner	x	Staffordshire Burslem
		Hannah Do	Wife	Yr	27			Do Do
		Eliza Do	Daughter		6	Scholar		Do Leycett
		Harry Do	Daughter		4	Scholar		Do Do
		Sarah Do	Daughter		8			Do Do
		Ellen Do	Daughter		1			Lancashire Sutton
		James Bent	Boarder	Yr	60	Public House Labourer	x	Do Thetford

This area has since been redeveloped and there is little evidence of the former housing. This was some four years before Frank was born and there were already four children in the household.

By the time of the 1901 census the family had moved the very short distance west and were now living at 64 Waterdale Crescent in Sutton. Again, the housing here has since been redeveloped:

George Steele	Head	M	43	1	Coal Miner	Worker	Staffordshire
Hannah Do	Wife	M	38	1			Do
Sarah Do	Daughter		13	1			Do
Elizabeth Do	Do		9	1	School		Do
George Do	Son		8	1	Do		Do
Frank Do	Son		5	1	Do		Do
Elizah Pepper	Boarder	S	25	1	Coal Miner	Worker	h.K.

Neither Eliza, who would have been 16, nor Mary (about 14) were at home and they have not been found in the 1901 census. Ellen Steele had died, aged 10, July / September 1899 and three other children – including Frank – had been born.

By 1911 Hannah, George's wife, had died in July / September 1905 aged 43 and George and the three youngest children were still living at 64 Waterdale Crescent:

1	George Steele	Head	53	-	Widower	29	10	6	4	Coal miner	159	Worker	at Home	England
2	Elizabeth Steele	Daughter	-	19	Single							at Home	at Home	
3	George Steele	Son	18	1	Single							Worker	at Home	
4	Frank Steele	-	16	1	Single							Worker	at Home	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that —  
 (1) All the names on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.  
 (2) I have entered the date and time in Columns 5 and 6 separately, and have entered their sum 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: *M. H. 2*

(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, Transient, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

4

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

Signature: *George Steele*

Postal Address: *64 Waterdale Crescent Sutton St Helens Lanc*

The census return has not been completed accurately and omits the occupations of the children. It does, however, indicate that of the ten children born in the marriage that six had survived – these are shown (together with Ellen, who died in 1899) in the 1891 and 1901 census returns.

Eliza had married colliery labourer Jonathan Gilchrist in early 1903 and in 1911 they were living at Anders Row in Burtonwood, a short distance to the south-east of Sutton. Jonathan had, like Eliza's parents, been born in N. Staffordshire (Silverdale, west of Newcastle-under-Lyme). They had two children, Harold (7) and Hannah Jane (5) and three other children had died.

In 1911 Mary, 23 and unmarried, was at the home of her aunt, Sarah Hollins (née Pepper) at 26 Marsland Street, Sutton, St Helens; no occupation was recorded for Mary and a note in the 'Infirmity' column of the census return records that she had been an 'imbecile' since she was one-year old. Sarah, also recorded as being 23 and unmarried, was a servant in the home of retired provision merchant John Aloysius Collins and his wife Ellen at 8 Kiln Lane, St Helens.

George Steele (born 1 February 1893) appears to have married a Sarah Steele (born 3 February 1901) in the Prescott district in April / June 1919 and in 1939 they were living on Neils Row, Neils Road, Whiston (south-west of St Helens). George was a hewer at a colliery with their daughter Elsie (single, born 26 April 1922) who was a screen hand at a colliery (she was one of many employees who sorted the mined coal) and two other lines of the Register are redacted.

33	1	Steele George	-	M	1 Feb 93	17	Colliery Hewer Heavy Work
	2	Steele Sarah	-	F	3 Feb 01	17	Widow's Daughter in Dist
	3	Steele Elsie	-	F	26 Apr 22	5	Colliery Screen Hand Heavy

This record is officially closed.

This record is officially closed.



Frank Steele, the subject of this account, had married Florence Elizabeth Smith, a daughter of stonemason William Smith of Little Neston at Eccleston Parish Church, St Helens, on 3 April 1916.

In 1911, when Florence (16, domestic servant) was living with her family at The Weint, Little Neston, her brother Miles Smith (17) was a *colliery labourer, above ground*. At that same time Frank Steele, 16 (and probably working at a colliery in the St Helens district) was living with his widowed father and his two younger siblings in Sutton, but he could have come to work at the Neston colliery shortly afterwards. Certainly, it is clear that Florence had an illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth Smith, who was born in Ness on 30 December 1913 (and the birth was registered on Wirral) and she appears on Frank's Army Service Record as a daughter. There is no record of Elizabeth being baptised in Neston.

Frank enlisted as an army reservist in the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Lancashire (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers) Regiment in St Helens on 8 August 1914 (just 4 days after Britain entered the war) when he was aged 19¼; his daughter, Elizabeth would then have been aged 7 months. From Frank's Service Record we know that he was 5ft 5⅛ins tall, weighed 126lb [57.1kg], had a 32-inch chest (36-inch when expanded), a fair complexion, dark brown hair and that he had a small mole on his right arm near the shoulder.

When Frank enlisted the battalion was stationed at Warrington but they then moved to Crosby near Liverpool.

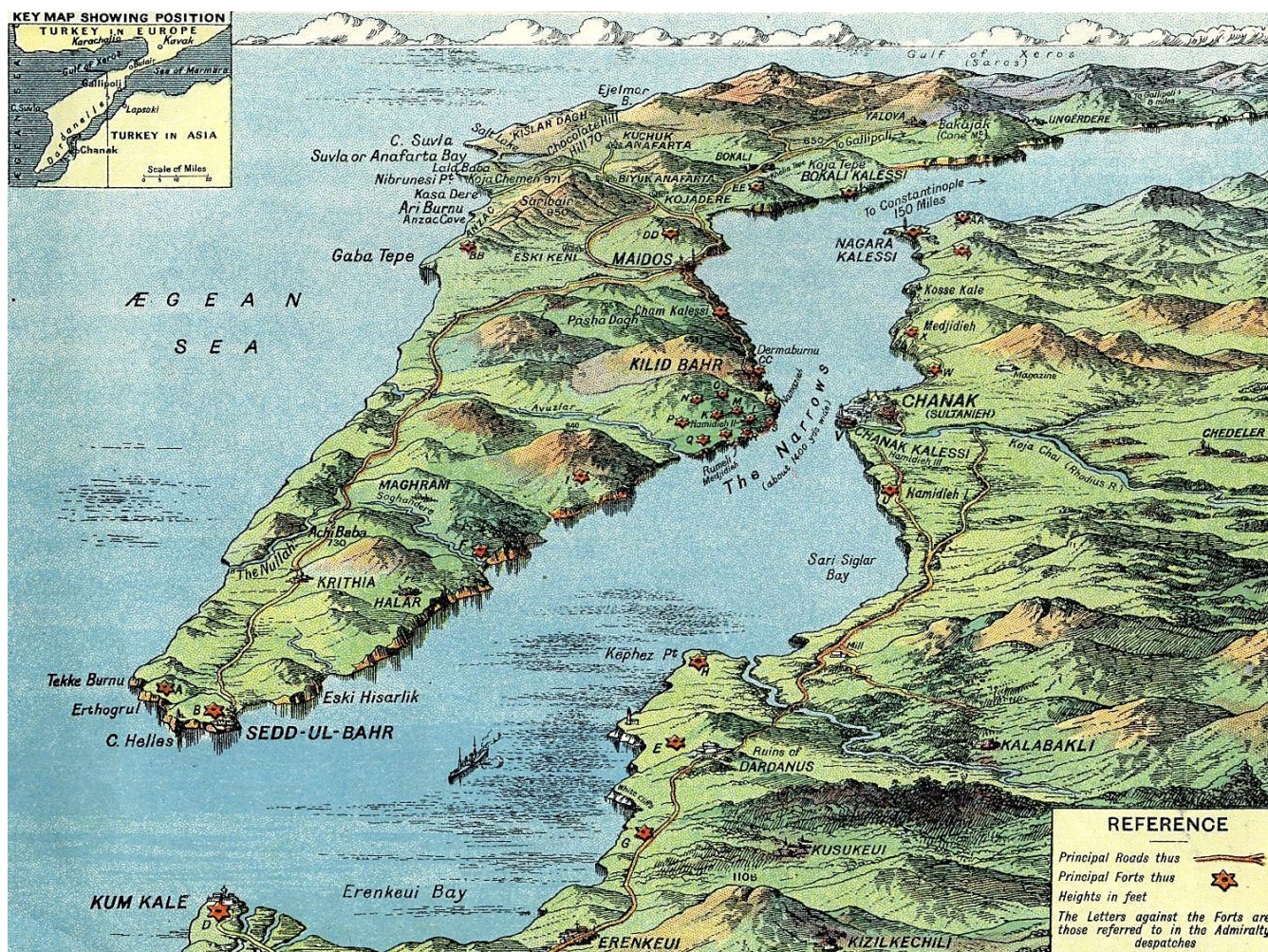
The 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion was a depot and training battalion stationed in Lancashire throughout the war and, on 28 August 1915, after just over a year in Britain, Frank was posted to the 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion which had been formed in Warrington in August 1914 within Kitchener's First New Army in the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 13<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force which had been sent to Gallipoli on 16 June 1915 in the conflict against the Ottoman Empire.

The advance forces of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had travelled, via Malta, Egypt and Mudros (now Moudros) on the Greek island of Lemnos to land at Cape Helles on the southern tip of the peninsula between the 6 and 16 July as the relief force for the 29<sup>th</sup> Division. By the end of July 1915 they had returned to Mudros but the entire Division returned to Gallipoli, landing at Anzac Cove, on 3 – 5 August. They had fought in the Battle of Sari Bair, the 'August Offensive', from 6 – 21 August, the final attempt made by the British troops that month to seize control of the high and rugged ridge which dominated the central section of the peninsula. This was an ill-conceived conflict fought by ill-prepared men with failing communications in an environment which favoured strongly the opposing forces. During August 1915 the battalion's War Diary records that they had, from an initial strength on 1 August of around 700, approximately 500 who were killed, wounded and missing.

There is no record of when Frank Steele set sail for Gallipoli but the voyage would have taken around three weeks and it is probable that he didn't land until late September 1915. Following the disaster of Sari Bair the remnants of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment had combined with men from the North Lancashire Regiment and they were relieved, on about 4 September, by the Scottish Horse, a Yeomanry regiment. The combined force moved to Ghazi Baba on the north shore of Suvla Bay and, from 4 -21



September, were engaged mainly on digging and road construction. Two new drafts of men arrived, the first of 60 and the second of 91. On 29 September another draft of 49 men and one officer arrived from England – it is quite probable that Frank Steele was amongst this cohort.



The Gallipoli Peninsula And "The Narrows" produced by The London Geographical Institute, published by George Philip & Son Ltd and reproduced in 1915 by The Daily Mail in the booklet *War Panorama : 20 Birds-Eye Views & Maps Of The World Wide War*  
 This copy reproduced from <https://mapco.net/gallipmail/dailymail.htm>

Cape Helles, where several landings took place, is on the extreme southerly tip of the Gallipoli peninsula. Anzac Cove, where there were many more landings, is much further north on the west coast and just south of Suvla Bay.

*Once the battles of 21 August had finished, the front lines at Suvla and Anzac remained static for the remainder of the campaign. Localised fighting continued but no more major advances were attempted. Many soldiers suffered or perished due to the hostile conditions they endured as a result of their poor preparation and training. Disease transmitted by mosquitoes and the lack of fresh water and shelter hampered the efforts of the division as the men were too weak to fight to their best ability. The insufficient knowledge had an impact of their advancement as their enemy were more familiar to the terrain and could ambush the division successfully. A combination of factors caused their success to be mixed. [Wikipedia]*



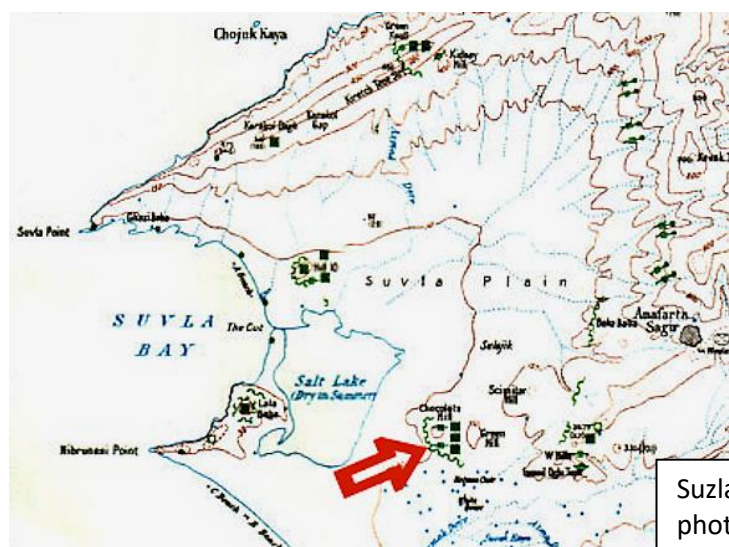
It seems from his Service Record that, at some time not long after his arrival in Gallipoli, Frank was invalided with enteric fever, a disabling systemic disease characterized by fever and abdominal pain caused by Salmonella bacteria. It appears that complications which arose later from this caused Frank's discharge from the army.

On 29 September the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved from position on the north side of Suvla Bay to lines on Chocolate Hill and in front of Scimitar Hill. All remained quiet for around two weeks, with both sides sniping at each other and patrols being sent out at night. The unit was further strengthened on 7 October by the arrival of another 150 men and 3 officers.

Frank's Service Record notes that, on 28 October 1915, he was injured and the War Diary notes that this was a day when the unit was attacked. Extracts from the Diary, with transcriptions, are reproduced below:

<p>O.F. 14<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Oct 14<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup></p> <p>Oct 24<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Oct 25<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Oct 26<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>6 The King's Own Royal Lancaster Regt took over the (hostage ?) of one company of ours in the firing line leaving us with 2 Companies in the firing line and two in support. Trench improvements and shelters proceeded with. Weather from 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> fine.</p> <p>Patrolling by night, building of new trenches &amp; improvement of existing, others proceeded with. Training of Btn Bombers, machine gunners, wire workers &amp; snipers carried on by classes. Casualties during this period - 1 killed, 3 wounded. From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> Enemy Artillery increasingly active - 1 Officer 40 others (all wounded &amp; sick from hospital) now rejoined fit from MEUDROS. Weather from 14<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> unsettled, cold &amp; fine intervals also some rain.</p> <p>All quiet.</p> <p>Enemy shelled our section of the line in the evening. No casualties.</p>
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Oct 25 <sup>th</sup>	All quiet.
Oct 26 <sup>th</sup>	Enemy shelled our section of the line in the evening. No casualties.



Suzla Bay, Gallipoli, with Chocolate Hill arrowed on the map. The photo shows British troops in a trench at the top of the hill.

<http://roadstothegreatwar-ww1.blogspot.com/2020/07/what-happened-at-chocolate-hill-at.html>



Oct 28 <sup>th</sup>	At 7.30 in the morning, the enemy artillery Guns started shelling the support & fire trenches on our front. This firing culminated in a short but violent bombardment with shrapnel shell at 11.45am. The bombardment ceased at midday. Casualties 3 killed 14 wounded. 118 shells were counted on one section of our support line which is at that point only 30 yards in length. During the past week the enemy have been searching the dead ground behind our line with heavy artillery fire. No damage done & no casualties sustained. Weather today fine and warm.
Oct 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct 30 <sup>th</sup>	All quiet. Lieut. B. Bayspoole, 10 <sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Regt (attached) slightly wounded. On the night of the 29-30 <sup>th</sup> Oct a patrol of the 62 <sup>nd</sup> Lancashire Regt reported a large body of the enemy massing in the low ground in front of CHOCOLATE HILL. Necessary precautions taken but the movement did not materialise.
Oct 31 <sup>st</sup>	All quiet. Casualty 1 wounded.



"Chocolate Hill" at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, in 1915

Named after its colour, the hill, on the east bank of the Salt Lake by Sulva Bay, had been used by Ottoman troops as an observation site but was captured by British troops on 7 August 1915.

[Source: <https://www.army.mod.uk/firstworldwarresources/archives/553/chocolate-hill-at-suvla-bay-gallipoli-1915#>]

On 21 August 1915 *Chocolate Hill* would be one of the launching spots for the greatest Allied attack of the entire Gallipoli Campaign. The local objective was to capture Scimitar Hill, key high ground about a mile to the east. It was an assault likened by British writers to the Charge of the Light Brigade.... Not only was it assembled in full view of the enemy, thus cancelling any element of surprise, it was mounted against what were now superior numbers of defenders occupying all those other priority objectives of the first days that the attackers had failed to capture. After the failed attack of 21 August, the forces at Suvla found themselves just as paralyzed as those at Cape Helles and Anzac. There was no salvaging the Dardanelles Expedition. It had failed in every way. [Source: *Roads to the Great War*]

Frank's injury on 28 October was probably a result of the shrapnel shell attack; he suffered an eye wound and it was recorded also that he had back pains.

Throughout November 1915 the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained in their position on the north shore of Suvla Bay. During the first half of the month periods of relative quiet were interspersed by sporadic heavy artillery fire but then the weather began to pose a significant problem:

*11 - 15 November – weather changeable – gales and storms at intervals.*

*17 November – strong SE gale, some rain.*

*26/27 November – violent thunderstorm accompanied by very heavy rain commenced at about 6pm. By 11.0pm trenches were knee-deep in water. Drainage at once proceeded with and trenches practically free of water by morning.*

*On the 27<sup>th</sup> the rain ceased and the temperature dropped below freezing point. As the men were drenched this caused great distress in all ranks. The situation, however, was taken in hand by the Officers and a serious state of affairs prevented by the immediate construction of braziers from old biscuit tins and fires and hot meals were soon got going. No deaths from exposure occurred in this Battalion. The temperature remained below freezing point until the 30<sup>th</sup>. The cheerfulness of all ranks during this extremely trying period was notable and prevented the morale of the Battalion suffering in any way. [War Diary extract]*

Through November and until mid-December 1915 there was no significant advance by troops on either side and periods of quiet continued to be broken by artillery fire. It had been decided, after a long period of conflict that had failed to meet its objectives, that the troops would be withdrawn from Gallipoli and the War Diary entry for 17 December recorded that:

*During the period Dec 1<sup>st</sup> to Dec 18<sup>th</sup> the preliminaries of the evacuation of SUVLA BAY and ANZAC were carried out. This consisted of the evacuation of Surplus Ammunition, kits, water carts, stores etc etc. Patrolling during the period was vigorous and constant and in the latter part of it one or two large bodies of the enemy were encountered, evidently a covering party to a digging party. The wire on our front was considerably strengthened and mines laid but not made active until the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. On the night of the 18 – 19<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1915 the 1<sup>st</sup> party.....left under Capt. Gound and embarked on the SS Princess ENA, proceeded to LEMNOS, transferred to HMS SWIFTSURE and disembarked on the 19<sup>th</sup> December and proceeded to 13<sup>th</sup> Division Camp. PORTIANIS area LEMNOS.*

The Battalion was divided into four parties with, on 19 December, one party of 205 men proceeding to Lala Baba, a 160-foot hill between the southern side of Suvla Bay and the Salt Lake. This had been taken by the 9<sup>th</sup> West Yorks and the 6<sup>th</sup> Yorkshire Regiment on the early morning of 7 August and this group of men was to man the last line of defence whilst the other men were evacuated. During the evening and into the night another three parties embarked onto three ships (SS Osmania, HMS Rowan and HMT Princess Irene) and the first party then joined the Princess Irene before all three set sail for Imbros, the large Turkish island lying just west of Gallipoli. In total, 450 officers and men of the battalion were evacuated.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion arrived at Imbros in the early hours of 20 December and remained in bivouacs until, at 2.0pm, they boarded the SS Huntsgreen. This was a troop carrier which, having been captured by the British from the Germans at Port Said in 1914, operated continuously throughout the war carrying troops between Gallipoli and Alexandria in Egypt. At dawn on 21 December the Huntsgreen set sail for Lemnos where the troops were landed the following day and made their way to an army camp at Portianis where they remained



until the 31<sup>st</sup>. The War Diary notes that *The evacuation of the Btn. from the GALLIPOLI PENINSULA was completed without a hitch or a casualty of any description.*

Officially, Frank's service in Gallipoli ended, after 123 days, on 28 December 1915 and at some time shortly afterwards he returned to

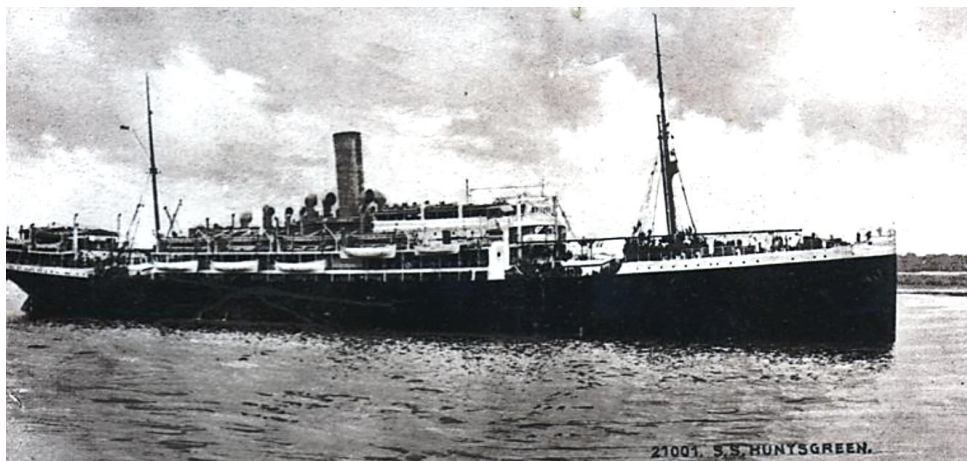
Britain where he remained until 21 June 1916. It was during this time, on 3 April 1916, that Frank married Florence Elizabeth Smith in St Helens; other units of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion were engaged, in January and February of that year, in Egypt and as part of the Palestine Campaign in Mesopotamia. However, on 29 February 1916 Frank had been posted back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion which, at that time, appears to have been based in Crosby between Formby and Liverpool. It is quite likely that this posting was to allow Frank to recuperate from the effects of the enteric fever, and shrapnel injury, that he suffered in Gallipoli.

Whilst with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Frank forfeited 17 days' pay for absence (between 23 April and 9 May 1916 and a further 8 days' pay for absence between 24 – 31 May. On 1 June 1916 his Commanding Officer granted him 14 days' full pay for 14 days of absence.

Having had 176 days away from the war Frank was, on 22 June 1916 (and presumably now considered to have recovered) again posted – this time to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers) Regiment which formed part of the Expeditionary Force in France. Frank sailed to France, landing at Rouen, to join his new fighting unit. This return proved to be unsuccessful as, after just 27 days he was returned to Britain on 18 July 1916.

At the time, in late June, when Frank joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, they were at Molliens-au-Bois, to

the north-east of Amiens, and in training for the major offensive which lay ahead. On 26 June, in continuous rain and poor ground conditions, the battalion marched to Hénencourt Wood, west of Albert, which was around 11km to the west of the German's front line. This was an arduous move, troops and vehicles becoming stuck in the mud on the poor roads and severe difficulties encountered in getting much of the equipment and provisions from into the wooded areas where the camps were located. Whilst, during the move to Hénencourt, the troops were not subject to enemy action, the Commanding Officer writing the War Diary was severely critical of the planning for the 15km march:



SS Huntsgreen

[Source: <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Ships/HMTroopshipHuntsgreen.html>]





*The possibility of such eventualities occurring owing to bad weather hadn't been provided for or apparently even contemplated by the Staff and very little effort was made by the Staff to cope with the situation.*

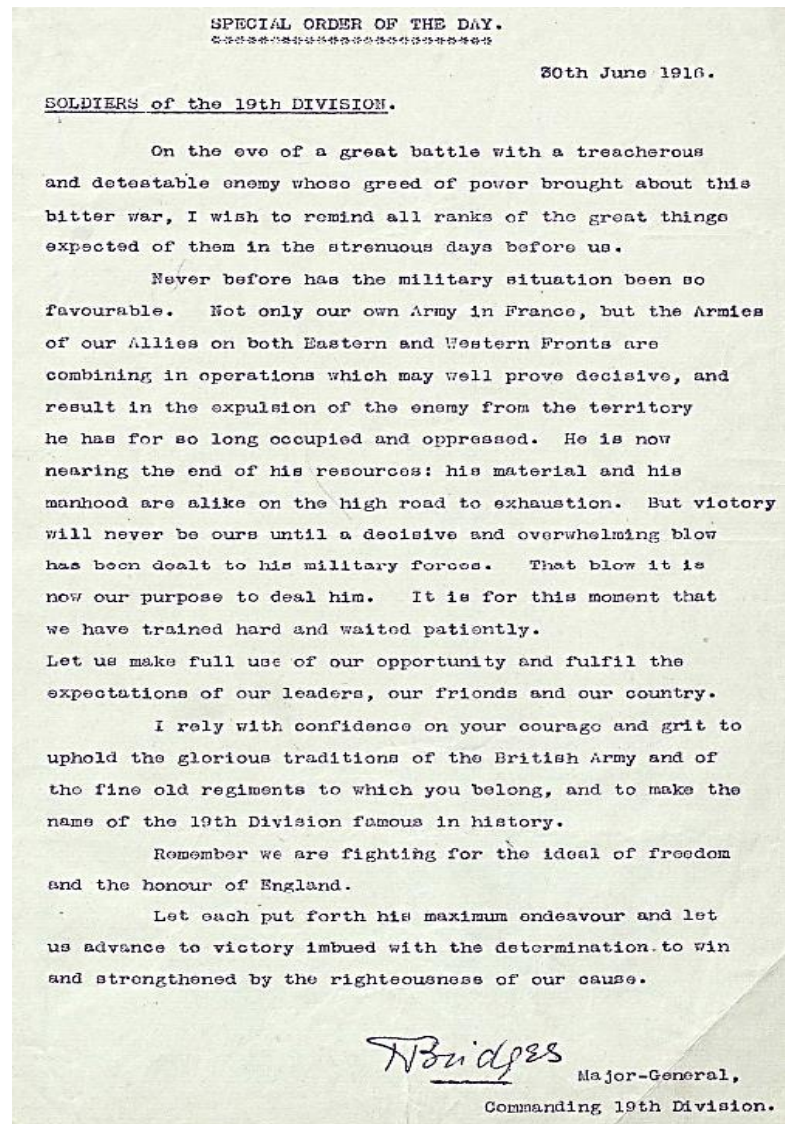
Whilst there had been much planning and exercising for the projected Allied move against the entrenched enemy positions the high-ranking officers were much aware of the scale of the operations and how it was imperative to maintain, from the top, the morale of demoralised men who had already faced energy-sapping conflict under adverse conditions. Being within the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division the 7<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion South Lancashire Regiment received a letter from their Commanding Officer Major-General Tom Bridges. This communication, which would have been read to the troops before they went into battle, is reproduced here.

British High Command undoubtedly understood that the forthcoming battle would be bitter and costly but it is probable that they underestimated significantly the scale of the losses. In the event the opening day of the First Battle of The Somme, 1 July 1916 (also known as the Somme Offensive), was the bloodiest in military history with British forces suffering more than 57 000 casualties, including more than 19 240 soldiers who died.

With no record of whether or not Frank Steele was with his battalion's front line colleagues at this time we have to assume that he was actively involved and so it is worth looking at the War Diary entries up until mid-July 1916.

On 28 June, three days before the Somme Offensive, the morning was spent in issuing rations, tools, bombs and other equipment to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion and operational orders were issued at 1.0pm to prepare to move to the intermediate line behind the front line. At 1.30pm these orders were rescinded and the troops were ordered to stand fast for 48 hours. The commanding officer wrote that *This postponement did not have any mischievous influence as far as the Battalion was concerned. It enabled both officers and men to get better rested and gave opportunity for the final management of various small details.*

On Thursday 29 June the War Diary recorded that the Commanding Officer and Adjutant rode up to the intermediate line to reconnoitre the country with the Quartermaster and Transport Officer also arriving to examine the traffic routes.





On Friday 30 June, at 11.0am, the operation order for the move to the intermediate line on was issued and instructions were read to the troops on display. The men subsequently moved, with no difficulties reported, to this intermediate line and the War Diary notes that it was a *Very fine night with promise of a fine day succeeding*. For the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion the month of June had been quiet with no casualties and only a slight wound to an officer reported. This calm was not to last; the following day, Saturday 1 July, the troops went into battle although, for the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the day proved to be an anti-climax. The events of that day can be seen through the eyes of the War Diary:

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.			WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Erase heading not required.)	Army Form
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	
Trenches. Intermediate Line. N. W. of ALBERT. Square W. 21. D. Sheet 1/20,000 57 <sup>2</sup> . S. E.	1-7-16	1 A.M.	<p>By 1 A.M. on the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July the Battalion had taken up its position in a line of Trenches part of which it had dug in the month of May, running N. W. of ALBERT. The trenches consisted of two lines. The front line provided with dugouts, the rear line, first stepped and traversed, but with no accommodative power in the nature of dugouts or shelter. For this reason, companies were distributed in depth, so that the relative discomfort of passing the night in the rear line was shared equally by all. The disposition of the Battalion both in this line, known as the Intermediate Line, and in the Trenches - the TARA-OSNA line - to which it was to move on the signal of Zero hour had been previously arranged. A Coy on the right with B Coy next to it; then Bombers and Headquarters; then C Coy next to D Coy on the left flank. On the right of the Battalion was the 7<sup>th</sup> East Lancashire Regt and on the left the 7 Kings Own Royal Lancashire Regt. Brigade Headquarters was situated almost in the extreme left of the Brigade line. The postage given to each Battalion was small and men had to sleep in the communication trenches connecting the two lines.</p> <p>As soon as the Battalion was settled Unit commanders were summoned to Battalion Headquarters, the Brigade Order for the first move to come that morning was</p> <p>1875 Wt. W 593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. &amp; A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.</p>	
		4 A.M.	<p>read to them and all final instructions were given. Wagon carts and cookers were being brought up to the line under Brigade arrangements and consequently the time of their arrival was uncertain but in anticipation of their appearance it was arranged to give the men hot cocoa and milk at 5 A.M. and to have breakfast at 6.30 A.M. This arrangement was carried out. At 4 A.M. the water carts, Lewis gun limbered wagons and mess cart were sent back to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Line transport which was Brigaded in bivouac on No 2 Emergency Road about W. 25. A. The cookers remained in the vicinity of the Intermediate Line during the day.</p>	
		6.21 A.M.	<p>At 6.21 A.M. the first shell from a British field gun straked across the German lines. It was the single prelude note of the immediate opening chorus of the massed guns which lay embedded on every side. The theme swelled from crescendo to crescendo, and the Battalion moved to its second position through a ventral storm of sound.</p> <p>The Brigade operation order of the previous night had implied by inference that at 7.30 A.M. would be Zero hour and at that hour drew near preparations were made to move. No definite intimation of the hour, however, was received, and it was discovered only by despatching an orderly to the Battalion on our right who had obtained its information by sending an enquiry to Brigade Headquarters.</p>	

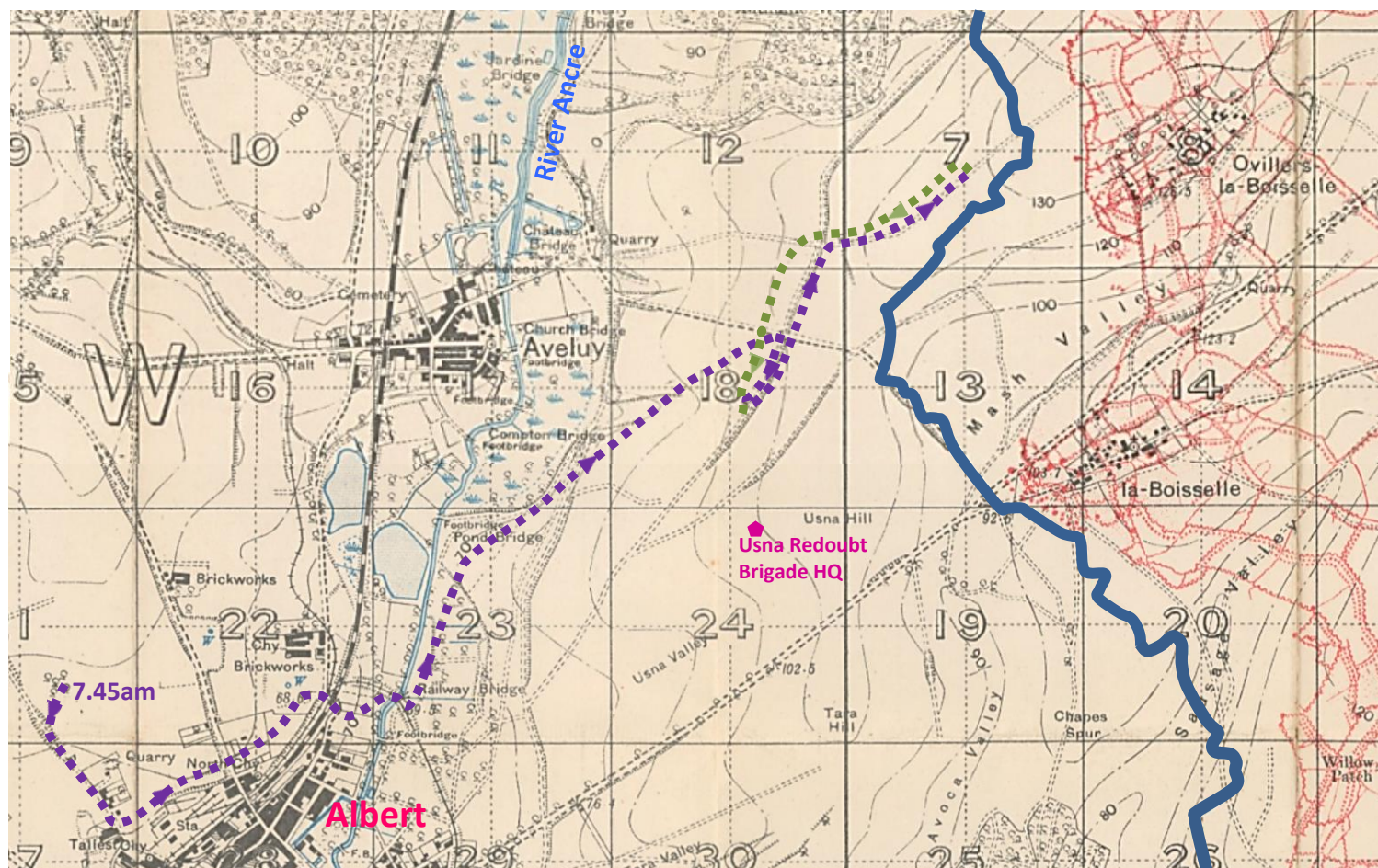


	7.45 A.M.	At 7.45 A.M. the leading platoon of A Coy began to move, behind in rear of the 7 <sup>th</sup> Local North Lancashire Regt. The route followed was a track, leading from south of the Intermediate Line to TALLEY Chimney thence north west of the Station to North Chimney thence north east parallel with the railway line crossing it at MARION Bridge at W.D. D. 6.5 thence south east crossing the R. ANCRE at W.D. C. 2.4 thence north east along the river valley as far as POND Bridge striking from there up a reentrant towards OVILLERS Post. The whole route was across the open sand the movement was carried out by platoons keeping 100 yards distance between each other. The heat was already intense and the burden of the kit, particularly of the trench boards for bridging trenches, carried by the men made itself apparent even before the TARA-UNA line was reached. Beyond these two factors no difficulty was met with in this march, and there was practically no hostile shelling in rear of the British front line. In the TARA-UNA line the left of the Battalion rested on the
TARA-UNA line.	9.15 A.M.	Three Trees at W.D. D. 1.9. The distribution was in depth. Brigade Headquarters was situated in the UNA REDOBT. The Battalion was in position by 9.15 A.M. From that hour until 2.30 in the afternoon the Battalion lay still and rested. One battery continued firing with a varying intensity, and answering shells could be seen bursting over the British front line. No accurate information of the progress of the opening assault could be obtained; no orders, no intimation of the probable task of the Battalion, were received. The Battalion lay still and waited. The day threw into vivid relief the antagonistic contrast between man and nature. Due west, the valley of the Ancre lay hot and perfect in the sun, its cotton hedges stained scarlet with masted poppies swaying to the breeze. Northwards, could be seen the town of AUTHVILLE wood gilded to the distant view. South west, appeared the roofs of ALBERT and above them the gleaming figure of the Virgin Mother brooding over the town and twisted life below. Overhead, the lark ascended to the sky with its morning song. But through the quietness of the day came the constant restraining rush of shells and on many a bank in the trenches which scarred and seared hillside and valley lay men waiting to kill and to be killed.
	2.30 pm	At 2.30 pm. the Brigadier with his Brigade Major came down the trenches and told us to be ready for work at 3 o'clock. The Commanding Officer went with them to Brigade Headquarters to receive orders and preliminary warning was sent to Companies to be ready to move at 3 pm. and that the probable direction was OVILLERS LA BOULLE.
	3.5 pm	The Commanding Officer returned and gave Company Commanders verbally as much information as he had obtained. OVILLERS was proving an obstacle and the 56 <sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde was ordered to attack just north of it and then bomb towards it from the right. Definite objectives were given - the 7 <sup>th</sup> Local North Lancashire Regt was to attack and this Battalion to be in support to it. The move while the British front line was to be made by trenches - through OVILLERS POST - RIBBLE STREET - RENDHAM STREET and BARROW STREET.
	3.20 pm	Companies moved off in the following order. D.C.B.A. the Bombers being in the rear of B Company. The Colonel Adjutant went at the head of the leading company. The move was exceedingly slow. There were no guides at OVILLERS POST, although there had been promised, and there was a tremendous congestion in RIBBLE STREET, the trench being used for IN and OUT purposes by fighting troops, stretcher parties, wounded men, orderlies, casualty parties. The heat was intense and the smell almost suffocating. The Germans were using 'tear' shells and gas goggles had to be in readiness.
	4.20 pm	At the junction of RIBBLE STREET and TOWN O' GAUNT STREET aстал order came from the Brigadier, passed up from the rear, to halt and stand fast. This was confirmed by a message received from the O.C. 7 <sup>th</sup> Local North Lancashire Regiment.









### The route taken by the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment on 1 July 1916

On 1 July 1916, the opening day of The Battle of The Somme, the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved from their holding position west of the River Ancre towards the north-east where their role was to support other troops who were to attack the German positions on the north side of Ovillers-la-Boisselle (broken purple line). The move towards the British front line was mainly through existing trenches and, generally, uneventful with little enemy fire although the hot sun was debilitating for soldiers carrying heavy equipment. Having reached a position just behind the lines the battalion awaited their final orders. That evening countermanding orders were received instructing the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion to return south (broken green line) to where they had been previously that day at 3.20pm. They reached this position at 8.15pm and with *no achieved object and the men and officers who had been fresh were rendered almost out of count for immediate fighting purposes by fatigue*. On the following morning they were moved even further from the front line, to the railway cutting south-west of Albert, where they were able to rest, wash and get a cooked meal.

[Base trench map : Published: 1916 with trenches corrected to 28 April 1916    Original scale 1 : 20 000  
From <https://maps.nls.uk/> ]

↑ German front line  
British front line  
trenches (in red)

The following day, 2 July 1916, was also a quiet one for the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion with them remaining based south of Albert and well away from the front line conflict. Here, some of the artillery men were sent to detonate unexploded shells which had landed on Albert and they did not return to the ranks until 7 July. The rest of the battalion was informed that they would, once again, move east towards the front line the next day. Fortunately, the Commanding Officer provided a summary of the events for the period from 3 – 9 July and this is reproduced on the following page.

Whilst the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment avoided any active part, La Boisselle was attacked by the 34<sup>th</sup> Division on 1 July. Artillery bombardment had not damaged the Germans' deep dug-outs – and they had been forewarned of the attack - and neither La Boisselle nor Ovillers was taken until 4 July when the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion was in a support role.



References: Trench Map 57 D.F. 1-20, 200  
and Map of LA BOISELLE 1-5, 200.

3rd July 10 A.M. Battalion in TARA W USNA, line placed at disposal of G.O.C. 57th Inf Brigade.

Appendix IX  
10-15 A.M. O.C. reported to G.O.C. 57th Brigade, and received verbal orders to send the whole Battn, but subsequently two Companies to take over portion of old British line held by Royal Warwickshire Regt. Sent A and D Companies via St Andrews Avenue. Every sixth man carried a box of bombs. Congestion in St Andrews Avenue was very bad, and the trench was fairly heavily shelled. On arrival at KEATS REDAN the congestion was awful and movement in any direction was practically impossible. I got down ahead of the Companies, saw Colonel de Wiart - ascertained the situation and returned to 57th Brigade Headquarters to report. Received verbal orders to take remaining two Companies to O.B.L., moving by platoons at 10 minutes interval via St Andrews Avenue. Congestion again was intense. I arrived ahead of the Companies and went to Headquarters 8th Gloucesters, as I had received an order en route, to place two Companies at disposal of O.C. 8th Gloucesters. On arrival found O.C. 8th Gloucesters had arranged to move A and D Companies up to LA BOISELLE preparatory to attacking and taking the part of the village east of a line X1401575 to X14053.

Appendix XI.  
A Company were given the line X14039 to X14079 as their objective, and "D" Company X14079 to X14096. These two Companies were assembled in the open about the junction of the Albert-Baume road and the crater about 8.0 P.M.

Their attack began at 9.30 P.M. "A" Company after some bombing gained their objective, but were driven back. After another flight they retook and held points 39 and 79 establishing good blocks. At point 39 the enemy had made a bonfire with a shade on their side. This showed up our men clearly and enabled the enemy to see while they remained in the shadow. The Battn Bombers did most of this fighting. Meanwhile "D" Company moving on the right advanced 100 yards without much difficulty. They then encountered a strong point on which they could make no impression. It was held by enemy bombers, snipers, and two machine guns. Bombs having run out, and having sustained a good many casualties, the O.C. Company gave the order to return to the support line. Apparently he lost his way for the Company got to Northumberland Avenue at about 3 A.M. on the 8th.

Append. XII.  
During the evening the other two Companies occupied the O.B.L. from Keats Redan to a point where the right of the 13th Division were. The night was fairly quiet, and a great many wounded - mainly Tyneside Scottish were collected and brought in by our men. Many of these wounded were in a pitiful condition, having been out four days - several of them drank their own urine.

Append. XIII.  
At 5.30 A.M. 4th July I received orders to meet the Brigade Major 57th Brigade at Headquarters 8th Gloucesters. I met him there at about 6 A.M., and received verbal orders to take and consolidate the line.

Append. XIV.  
I returned to my Battn Headquarters - issued verbal orders to O.C. B and C Companies at about 7.15 A.M., and immediately went up to point 39 to reconnoitre the ground and issue orders to O.C. A Company. Having done this I returned to Battn Headquarters 10th R. Warwicks about X14028, where I had arranged to meet Company Commanders, and give them final instructions. The head of the two Companies arrived at this point at 9 A.M., and I at once

-3-

Append. XXII.  
From 2 P.M. onwards the enemy shelled our line very heavily. From 6 to 8 P.M. it was especially violent. During the night of the 8/9th the N.Staffs (57th Brigade) relieved 13th R. Fus. From early morning on the 9th until we were relieved by the 10th R.Fus., shelling was practically continuous and very violent at intervals causing many casualties.

Append. XXIII.  
At 8.45 P.M., at the request of O.C. 8th N. Staffs I sent half of "A" Company up to support them, as they reported enemy attacking on two sides. I also sent up 800 bombs, and sent back to the dump for others to replace them. The two platoons of "A" Company were sent to N. Staffs front line, where they did some bombing and round and until the relief by 10th Royal Fus. The O.C. 10th R. Fus., arrived punctually at my Headquarters at 10.15 P.M., as arranged. The greater part of the Battn did not arrive until nearly midnight, however.

Append. XXV.  
Enemy shelling again heavy from 10.30 P.M., until completion of relief. Cookers were waiting on the Albert Baume road, and men were given soup and tea. They then marched to bivouac near MILENCOURT, and that evening to bivouac at HENECOURT.

NOTES.  
(1) Insufficient time was invariably given in which to supply guides. Messengers in trenches take a long time to deliver. All the men appear to be very tired. I would suggest that the Brigade keep sufficient lightly equipped guides at Brigade Headquarters to meet all contingencies. These men could go up to positions with units with only a rifle and bandolier, and having made themselves thoroughly conversant with the way could return to Brigade Headquarters and report. Company guides should not be used except between Battalion Headquarters and their Companies.

(2) Information as to units on the flanks or in front was not given.

(3) Artillery communication was indifferent.

(4) The policing of trenches was not done at all and therefore the congestion was intense, and nearly impossible to cope with. This caused delay to everyone and much unnecessary fatigue.

(5) The routes up to units were not clearly marked. Stretcher bearers - carrying parties - guides, all got lost. When crossing over a system of trenches a double row of pickets and wire between which troops are to move is necessary, and also bridges over all trenches for up and down traffic.

(6) It apparently appeared to me that too many men were used in the attacks at LA BOISELLE. I noticed this with my own battalion, and recommended the O.C. 1st N and D not to have so many men up in front in the initial stages. He did not agree, however, and used even more men than I had done. The result was congestion and confusion and no chance of getting messages or anything passed along. It was also impossible to get up to the front to ascertain what the situation was.

(7) At first men were slow in consolidating and did not put themselves under the nearest N.C.O. or officer after being scattered. This was especially noticeable on the right of LA BOISELLE, when there were a few King's Own, about half Company N. Lanc Regt., and parts of two Companies 7th South Lancashire Regt. Officers made little or no effort to re-form their men.

(8) Rifle grenades were sent up without the necessary cartridges for firing them.

(9) Lewis Gun Drums were not sent back to refill after firing. Consequently at one time there was a shortage.

(10) Carrying parties who bring up rations, &c., should assist in taking back wounded.

(11) Communication with the 57th Brigade was practically nil except by runner, and an artillery wire which was rarely in working order.

(12) I was placed in command of LA BOISELLE with 8th Gloucesters

-2-

sent them to attack in order that they should keep level with the 56th Brigade, which I was informed would attack on my right at 8.30 A.M. It subsequently transpired that this attack was delayed for one hour.

C. Company attacked in the centre towards the line X14097 - 79 through the houses. Their attack was carried out by the Company bombers under 2nd Lieut., V.E.C. Sturman, the remainder of the Company feeding them with bombs and supplying replacements to casualties. The enemy made a very stout resistance in the houses which were fortified, and in numerous shell craters and small transverse trenches (which are not shown on the map).

Append. XIV.  
A house at X.14.C.52.5 proved a particularly formidable obstacle and nearly two hours were occupied in outflanking and capturing it. This turned out to be the Battalion Commander's house, and was in very strong state of defence. Meanwhile "B" Company had attacked on the right towards the line X.14.C.96 - 97, and had made good progress using bombers and Lewis Guns. Two Officers of this Company, 2nd Lt., O.C. Harvey and 2nd Lt., W.H. Miller were killed early in the attack.

A Company had been held up by our own barrage at point 79. I was not informed of this until I sent a message to the O.C. Company telling him to push on from point 79 towards X.14.C.96 in order to assist "C" Company in the centre. On the right a few 7th King's Own and about a Company of 7th L.N. Lancashire Regt had got drawn across to their left and assisted in turning the right flank of the village. Consolidation then began, and wire was put up. I sent up a Company of the 10th Royal Warwickshire to assist in this work and to clear the route. "D" Company 7th L.N. Lancashire Regt arrived during the afternoon. I kept them in reserve. During the afternoon the enemy bombarded LA BOISELLE heavily. The night was fairly quiet and consolidation went on well.

Append. XV.  
On the 5th instant the 1st Sherwood Foresters arrived in LA BOISELLE. I relieved the 10th Royal Warwickshire who were in support, and put the Sherwood Foresters in their place. This was done quickly and without hitch, as the trench was properly policed and traffic controlled. The Sherwood Foresters were ordered to take over certain parts of the line and attack at 2 P.M., in conjunction with the 56th Brigade. They failed to advance beyond the line held by us the previous day and suffered a good many casualties. There was a considerable amount of shelling all day and night and a lot of casualties. On the morning of the 6th the 7th S. Lanc Regt and 1st N & D.R. were relieved by the 9th L.N. Lancashire Regt and the 13th Cheshire Regt. Relief was completed without hitch by 5 A.M., and the Battalion marched in single file up the Baume Albert Road to the USNA W TARA line without sustaining any casualties. This was due to the fact, I think, that the enemy were shelling the valley heavily with lacrimatory shells and there was a good deal of smoke and mist which prevented good observation from OVIERS, LA BOISELLE.

Append. XVI.  
Night of 7th. Moved to billets at Albert. Night of 7th. Moved up again to relieve King's Own. Left TARA - USNA line 11 P.M., but owing to bad guides did not reach our destination until 4.45 A.M.

Append. XVII.  
Everyone very beat owing to fearful heavy going, both in and out of trenches. King's Own were along a road under a bank from X.14.D.15 to X.14.D.89. They had dug down about a foot, no traverses or wire. 13th R.F. were holding trench from X.14.D.89 to X.14.B.52. The 56th Brigade were in line along the road to our right. R.I.R. to our left front. Surflarks on the left. The men although very tired dug at once. They got down 5 feet then cut saps forward 10 feet at 12 feet intervals and made T. heads to join up as a fire trench.

Append. XVIII.  
Wire was put out along the whole front. A store of enemy sandbags came in very useful. During the morning the 13th R. Fus., vacated trench X.14.D.89 - X.14.B.52. I moved "D" Company, who were in trench X.14.D.38 - 57, up to hold this trench, and join up with the R. Fus at the tramway head.

-4-

10th R. Warwicks, two T.M.B., 1 section 57., M.G. Company, 1 platoon bombers 5th S.W.B., under my command. Sometimes orders were sent to these units direct, without my being informed, and at other times to me as 7th S. Lancs Regt. This caused a certain amount of confusion.

(13) There was an advance report centre at KEATS REDAN. The Officer there could have been of great assistance had he had any knowledge of what was going on, or if he had had any authority. He had neither.

(14) Frequently carrying parties were reputed to have brought up say 50 tins of water. On being counted the number that arrived invariably turned out to be anything from 5 to 15 less.

(15) I have no suggestions to offer as to how to overcome hostile Machine Guns. So far as my experience goes they had no flanks to get round, i.e., as soon as one tried to get round the flank of one gun one came under close fire of another.

An advance under close fire of a Stokes Mortar appears to me the most feasible, but this takes some time to arrange in village fighting, and it is very difficult to ascertain where one's own men have got to. We had many casualties from our own Stokes Mortar bombs. Stokes Mortar Officers should accompany O.C. Companies or O.C. Battalion.

(16) A certain amount of confusion was caused by people using maps of various scales, and not sticking to the 1/80000 as ordered.

(17) Carrying parties and men ordered to go back for anything purpose should have either a written order, or some distinctive mark.

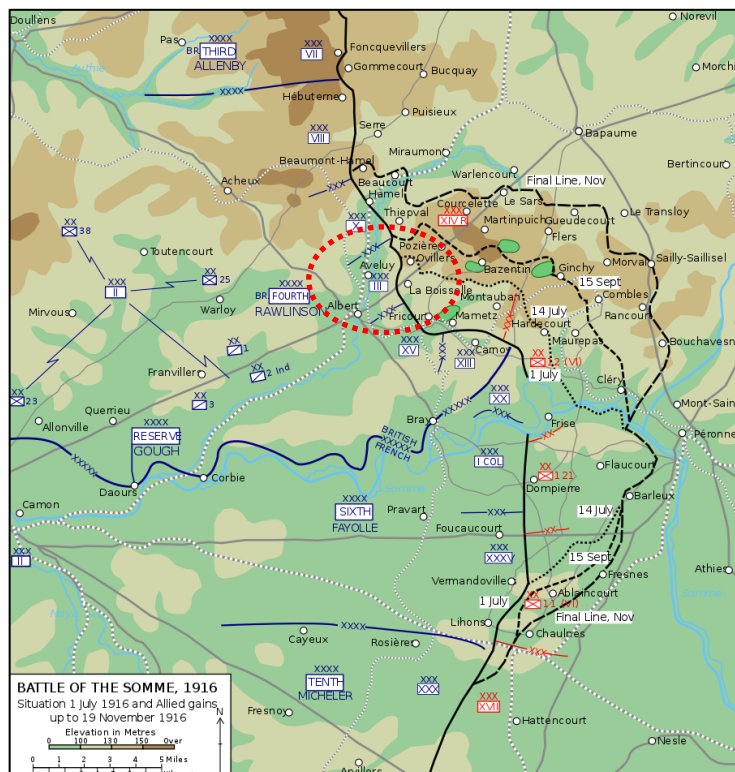
(18) Officers and all my men who did any bombing are unanimous in stating that they could overthrow the enemy by about 5 yards. This has given them great confidence.

(19) Pigeons should always be available at Battalion Headquarters.

(20) Three Lamps (signalling) were broken by direct hits at my Headquarters N.E. of LA BOISELLE.

Commending 7th (S) Battalion South Lancashire Regt.

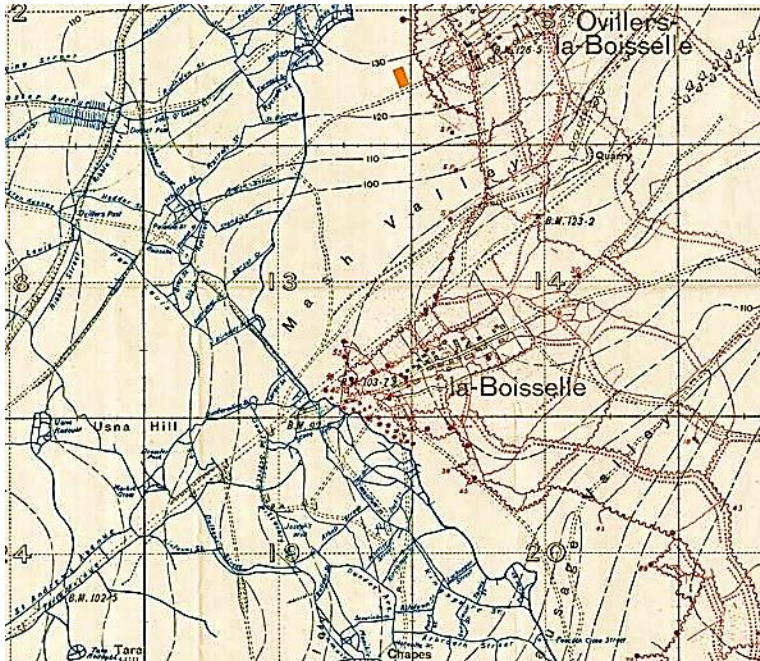




This map, of the broader area over which the 1916 Battle of The Somme was fought, shows how the front line was moved eastwards over time. The area east of Albert, represented on the trench maps, is encircled in red.

Source : adapted from

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Somme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Somme)



This map of part of the area shown on the previous trench map is later in date and shows the complex of Allied trenches which, particularly in the vicinity of La-Boisselle, were in close proximity to German positions.

British objectives, Somme, 1 July 1916

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Albert\\_\(1916\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Albert_(1916))

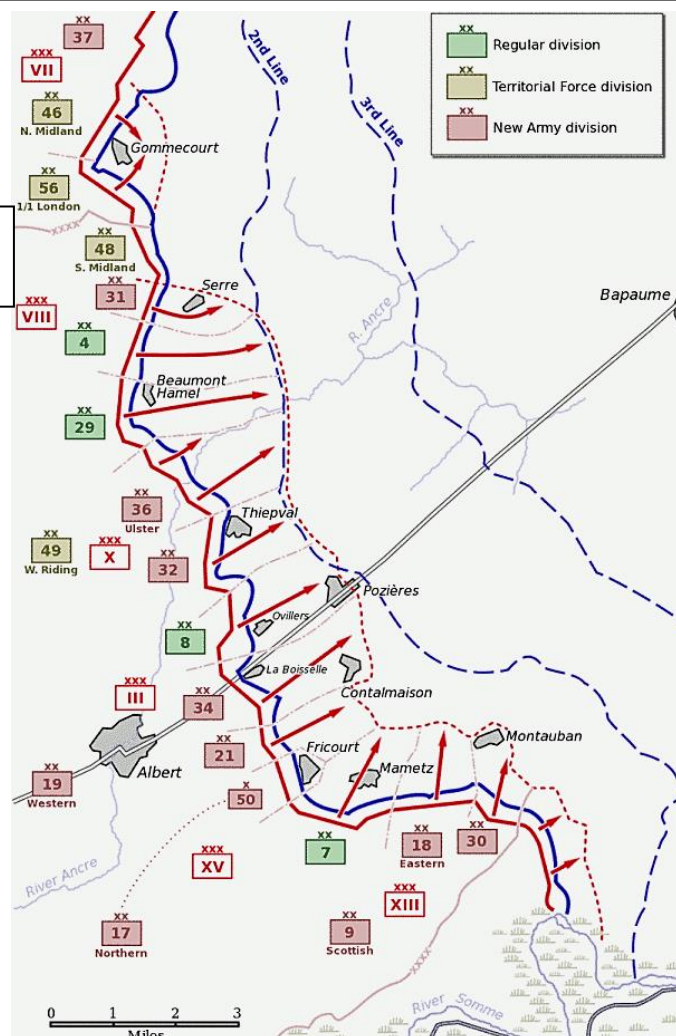
*Special Order of the Day*  
 By  
 Brig. Gen. C. C. Onslow Commandg 57<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde. 6-7-16.

The Brigadier wishes to congratulate all ranks on their magnificent performance in capturing the village of LA BOISSELLE and maintaining their hold on the ground won.

This was a soldiers' battle, when the determination and grit of the individual comes so prominently to the fore. These qualities were shown to such an extent that the name of the Brigade will remain famous.

He takes this opportunity of expressing the gratitude and thanks of all ranks to Lt. Col. C. R. F. Winser and the Officers, N. C. Os, and men of the 7<sup>th</sup> B South Lancashire Regiment, who came to support the Brigade at a critical time, and who not only helped to maintain the ground already gained but added largely to it by an attack carried out with the greatest determination and maintained that also.

(Sgd.) R. A. Bullock Major  
 2<sup>d</sup> Lt Major  
 57<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bde.



A letter of congratulations from Brigadier General Cranley Charlton Onslow [1869 – 1940], the Commanding Officer of the 57<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, to the 7<sup>th</sup> B South Lancashire Regiment on their support in the capture of La Boisselle



Following their front line action the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion was withdrawn to Hénencourt Wood, west of Albert and distant from the area of conflict where, from the 10–19 July 1916

...the Battalion rested in bivouacs....tents were provided to accommodate all the Officers and a number of tarpaulins and shelters for the men. There was very little rain during the period, although the weather was dull and often cold. Everyone enjoyed an excellent rest. Training was carried out in the physical exercises, bayonet fighting and bomb throwing and Lewis Gun instruction....A draft of 78 men was received – all the men being drawn from other units, chiefly West Yorks and York & Lancaster Battalions. A draft of 98 men and NCOs had been waiting for this Battalion at the Base Depot since the last week in June. This draft, however, was sent to the 17<sup>th</sup> Manchester Regt. The oddity of these arrangements was pointed out to Brigade Headquarters for representation to be made on the subject. On the 15<sup>th</sup> the Brigade was inspected and congratulated by the Corps Commander, General Sir William Pulteney and on the 17<sup>th</sup> by the Divisional Commander.

It was probably that Frank Steele left his service in France at the time that the new men joined; certainly, his record shows that he formally left their ranks on 18 July (after just 27 days) and he probably boarded a ship for Britain on the following day. It does appear that Fran's medical condition had deteriorated; his Service Record records that he was diagnosed with otorrhoea (a significant discharge from the ear) on 16 July and that on 17 July he was at Rouen awaiting a return to England.

Frank remained with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, stationed in Britain, on his return although it is unclear where he was based – possibly near Warrington. It is also quite likely that, after his return, he had more medical attention although no detail of this is given in his Service Record. However, it was noted that he forfeited 7 days' pay for absence, from 2–8 September 1916 and that he was immediately posted back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion which was then still at Crosby, near Liverpool. This posting was Frank's last as, on 27 October he was discharged from the army as being medically unfit. On, or shortly before, 9 September Frank had been seen by an aural surgeon who noted, through the Medical Board report of 13 October, that Frank's condition was

*Chr. otitis. media suppur., bilateral, very profuse discharge. Prognosis not good. Unfit for service. Result of active service. Exposure. Permanent. Prevents ¼.*

Cause of Discharge <i>Medically unfit.</i>		<i>Chr. otitis media.</i>	
Report of Medical Board (dated 13. 10. 16. )			
<i>Originated W.C. 1915. Wandsworth.</i>			
<i>States that he had no trouble in his ears until he went to Gallipoli. Went out Aug. 1915. &amp; was invalided with enteric fever. Aural surgeon reports 9.9.16. Otitis med. suppur. bilateral. Very profuse discharge. Prognosis not good. Unfit for service. Result of active service. Exposure. Permanent. Prevents ¼.</i>			
<hr/>			
<i>A. F. B. 103. Wounded in action. Gallipoli. 28.10.15.</i>			
<i>Injury to eye &amp; pains in back.</i>			
<i>Invalided to England. 19.12.15.</i>			
<i>Dr. D. Otorrhoea. 16.4.16.</i>			
<i>England. Rouen. 14.4.16.</i>			
<i>Engr. of Med. Rec.</i>			

The Medical Board report within the Pension section of Frank Steel's Service Record which reports his condition, its origin and reason for discharge from the army on 27 October 1916.



Chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM) is defined as *a chronic inflammation of the middle ear and mastoid cavity, which presents with recurrent ear discharges (otorrhoea) through a tympanic perforation..... If left untreated, infection in CSOM may spread extracranially (causing facial paralysis or mastoiditis) or intracranially (causing meningitis or a cerebral abscess), although this is rare.*

[NICE website : <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/otitis-media-chronic-suppurative/>]

Frank's condition was, clearly severe - *prognosis not good* - and it appears that both ears were affected. In 1916 there was little that could be done, other than cleaning the ear canal, for this condition; modern treatments now include the use of antibiotics (not discovered by Fleming until 1928 and not widely available until more than a decade later) and steroids (unavailable before 1935).

For his disability, and in recognition that it was a result of his army service in Gallipoli in 1915, Frank was granted an army pension in order to support his family. The initial award appears to have been 6s 3d per week, plus 1s 6d for Frank's daughter, Elizabeth, although the amount seems to have been raised to 8s 3d plus 1s 6d to be applicable from 4 April 1917. This, a total of 9s 9d per week is equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wage) of about £136 per week in 2021.

The pension was, in part, related to the degree of disability that Frank had suffered and, although this initially considered as being  $\frac{1}{4}$  (ie 25%) it was later decreased to 20% and then increased to 40%. Consequently, the pension seems to have been lowered to 5s 6d plus 1s 0d but, after the birth of a second daughter (Hannah) on 1 July 1917, it was increased slightly.

When Frank was discharged from the army on 27 October 1917 the family seems to have lived in the St Helens district and Frank subsequently found work as a 'day wage man' at a colliery. 'Day wage man', or dataller, was a general term for men employed above or below ground on short contract and paid by the day. Such men were, generally, not colliers but were employed in constructional and repair work, timbering, roofing, laying roadways, clearing away debris and for any other tasks around the site.

It was just 20 months after Frank left the army that he died on 25 June 1919, at his then home at 11 Silkstone Street, St Helens and, seemingly, was buried in the same district. The Death Certificate is unequivocal about the cause of death – otitis media in conjunction with mastoiditis, a serious bacterial infection affecting the mastoid bone behind the ear. Frank's death was, therefore, a direct consequence of the ear infection that developed whilst he was on active service in Gallipoli in October 1915 – his Service Record noted at the time that .....he had no trouble in his ears until he went to Gallipoli – and was the reason for his army discharge on 27 October 1916. Frank was just 24 when he died.

Registration District PRESCOT.									
1919. DEATHS in the Sub-District of ST. HELENS in the Counties of ST. HELENS C.B., &c.									
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
206	Twenty fifth June 1919 11 Silkstone Street St Helens U.D.	Francis Steele	Male	24 years	Day wage man in Coal mine An Army Pensioner	① Otitis Media ② Mastoiditis Certified by Wick S. Wilson M.B.	Elizabeth Sutton Sister Present at the death 124 Albion Street St Helens	Twenty fifth June 1919	E. Chorley Registrar



Just a month later Florence, Frank's widow, gave birth to their third child – Florence was born on 12 July 1919, probably in the Prescott district.



Silkstone Street in St Helens is located close to Prescott Road on the south-west outskirts of the town. The part of the street which contained N<sup>o</sup>. 11 has been redeveloped but part of the typically-terraced street still exists not far away.  
Source : Google StreetView

But where did Frank and Florence live during their six-year relationship?

It has been mentioned earlier that

Florence's illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth, had been born on Wirral on 30 December 1913 and Frank's Service Record records her as his daughter. Certainly, at the time of the 1911 census, Florence Elizabeth Smith (16) was living with her family at The Weint in Little Neston, at the western end of Lees Lane near The Green. Frank Green, also 16, was living with his widowed father and siblings at 64 Waterdale Crescent in the township of Sutton to the south-east of St Helens.

Frank Steele, the subject of this account, had married Florence Elizabeth Smith, a daughter of stonemason William Smith of Little Neston at Eccleston Parish Church, St Helens, on 3 April 1916.

In 1911, when Florence (16, domestic servant) was living with her family at The Weint, Little Neston, her brother Miles Smith (17) was a *colliery labourer, above ground*. At that same time Frank Steele, 16 (and probably working at a colliery in the St Helens district) was living with his widowed father and his two younger siblings in Sutton, but he could have come to work at the Neston colliery shortly afterwards. Certainly, it is clear that Florence had an illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth Smith, who was born in Ness on 30 December 1913 (and the birth was registered on Wirral) and Elizabeth appears on Frank's Army Service Record as a daughter. When Elizabeth was born Florence would have been just 18yrs 4mths.

There is no record of Elizabeth being baptised in Neston or in Lancashire.

However, when Frank, a collier, attested in Warrington for the South Lancashire Regiment on 8 August 1914 no address was recorded but his next-of-kin was given as his father, George Steele of 124 Albion Street St Helens. This terraced house still exists:

Whilst there is no evidence of where Frank was living at this time it appears probable that he was at this address and that Florence Smith was still in Little Neston.



Source : Google StreetView



The next we hear of Frank and Florence is at their marriage on 3 April 1916:

11. Particulars as to Marriage	(a) Christian and Surname of Woman to whom married, and whether spinster or widow, (b) place and date of marriage, (c) name of officiating Minister or Registrar, and (d) names of two witnesses				† Date of being placed on Married Roll	Initials of Officer
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)		
	Florence Smith Spinster.	April 3, 1916 Parish Church Eccleston. St Helens.	J.W. Glendenning	William Wilson John Ellen Bradshaw		Jam ary

The entry for the marriage of Frank and Florence in Frank's Service Record. "Parish Church, Eccleston" probably refers to Christ Church on Church Lane in the suburb of Eccleston, just west of St Helens, rather than to the Parish Church which is closer to the centre of the town. The marriage certificate has not been seen and records for this church are unavailable; a J W Glendenning, who officiated at the ceremony was associated with a church at Sutton, to the south-east of the town, in the 1950s. Florence, who was born on 31 August 1895, was just over 20½.

Without seeing the marriage certificate in the Parish Register the residency of Florence at that time cannot be determined – and Frank, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, was probably stationed at Crosby. It does seem, however, that Florence and daughter Elizabeth returned to Neston sometime after her marriage as Frank's Service Record notes that his address on the date of his army discharge (27 October 1916) was New Houses:

This was a short terrace of houses which had been built for colliers by 1851 (and, possibly, as early as

Address on Discharge:  
New Houses  
Ness, Neston, Cheshire

1828) on New Houses Lane in Ness. This is the track / footpath leading south-westwards from Well Lane, Ness, towards old coal mining area flanking the estuary and the terrace was located on the south side of the track, just west of the railway bridge, where a barn now occupies the site.

Although there is nothing to confirm the suggestion, it is possible that following his army discharge, and with debilitating medical conditions, Frank found it impossible to find work at the Neston colliery and so moved with his family back to his home area of Prescott. It is possible that he had contacts, and family, in the mining industry here and so might have found employment easier. Certainly, at the time of his death in 1919, he was working in coal mining. At some time Frank's Army Pension record was amended to show his address as 11 Silkstone Street, St Helens.

It is probable that when Hannah Steele, the second child, was born on 1 July 1917 that they were in south Lancashire as she was registered in the Warrington district. Confusingly, however, another entry in the Pension record (undated) states *Latest address – 7 Hindleys Row, Burtonwood, nr. Earlstown*. This was a row of 17 cottages, also known as *Irish Row* and since demolished, which lay close to Broad Lane and Penny Lane in the Collins Green area just north of Burtonwood. In 1907 it was said that this was ...*a coal-mining district, and at Collins Green shafts of coal-mines are prominent features in the landscape*. Perhaps, for a short time, Frank became a collier in this district although, as noted previously, his death took place at 11 Silkstone Street, St Helens, some 6km to the west-north-west of Collins Green.



Page 77

Marriages solemnized at Newton in the Parish Church  
St. Andrew in the County of Cheshire

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	How Known.	Name and Residence.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Residence.
138	<u>Church</u> <u>1920</u>	<u>James Edward Jones</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>Bachelor</u>	<u>Miner</u>	<u>New House</u> <u>Nes</u>	<u>Peter Jones</u> <u>Nes</u>
		<u>Flourence Steel</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>Widow</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>New House</u> <u>Nes</u>	<u>William Smith</u> <u>Staines</u>

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by — or after banns by me,  
James Edward Jones in the Presence of us, James Edward Ashington 7.1.20. Nes  
Flourence Steel — Elizabeth Mary Lovatt (Curate)





Of Frank's siblings:

**Eliza** had married colliery labourer Jonathan Gilchrist in early 1903 and in 1911 they were living at Anders Row in Burtonwood, a short distance to the south-east of Sutton. They have not been found in the 1939 Register and nothing further is known.

**Mary** was 23 in 1911 and recorded as 'imbecile' on the census return. She has not been located in the 1939 Register and nothing further is known of her.

**Sarah** was 23 and unmarried in 1911 and nothing further is known of her.

**Elizabeth** (Lizzie) was 19, single, and living at home in 1911. It is possible that she married a James Sutton in Prescot in early 1912 although they have not been found in the 1939 Register and nothing further is known.

**George** (born 1 February 1893) appears to have married a Sarah Steele (born 3 February 1901) in the Prescot district in April / June 1919 and in 1939 they were living on Neils Row, Neils Road, Whiston (south-west of St Helens). George was a hewer at a colliery with their daughter Elsie (single, born 26 April 1922) who was a screen hand at a colliery and two other lines of the Register are redacted although no other children have been identified (see page 1810).

George died, aged 62, in early 1954 in the Prescot district and Sarah died, also in the Prescot district, in mid-1956 when she was aged 55.

Elsie Steel married Joseph F Fay in the Newton district of Lancashire in late 1948.

Frank and Florence Steele had three daughters:

**Elizabeth** was born, before Frank and Florence married, in Ness on 30 December 1913 and it is known that she married painter Frank Lawton at Neston Parish Church on 23 May 1931. However, whilst they have not been found anywhere in the 1939 Register, it recorded that five children with the surname Lawton and with the mother's maiden name being Steele were born on Wirral after this date – Elizabeth (July / September 1936) ; Roy (April / June 1939) ; Barbara (early 1941) ; Joan (April / June 1942) ; Kathleen (late 1943). It is possible that Elizabeth died in the Birkenhead district in late 1893.

**Hannah** was born, probably in Prescot, on 1 July 1917 and at the time of the 1939 Register she was living with her mother, Florence, and step-father James Edward Jones at 26 Mayfield Gardens in Neston (off Liverpool Road) where she was recorded as a domestic servant. These bungalows had been built by Neston and Parkgate Housing Association. She married, aged 27, miner Wallace M Jackson of Derby at Neston Parish Church on 20 October 1944 when her address was still recorded as being Mayfield Gardens. Whilst a Victor W Jackson, mother's maiden name Steele, was born in the Warrington district in late 1943, nothing further is known.

**Florence** was born on 12 July 1919 just 17 days after Frank's death. In 1939, a domestic servant, she was living at home with her mother, step-father and sister Hannah. Florence appears to have married Benjamin Bennett in the Holyhead district in April / June 1942 – she would have been nearly 23 – and it seems that they had at least two daughters born in the Holywell district; Joan (registered early 1943) and Dorothy (registered early 1948). Nothing further is known of Florence or Benjamin.

It has been noted earlier that Florence, Frank Steele's widow, married collier James Edward Jones of New Houses at Neston Parish Church on 5 April 1920.



In the 1939 Register they are recorded at 26 Mayfield Gardens, Neston:

26	do	48	1	Jones, James E	M	30 May 94	17	General farm labourer: New
			2	Jones, Florence E	F	31 Aug 95	17	Unpaid domestic duties
			3	Steele, Hannah	F	1 July 17	5	Domestic servant
			4	BENNETT, Florence	F	12 July 19	6	Domestic servant
			5	GOVER, Freda	F	11 Nov 22	5	Domestic servant

This record is officially closed.

This record is officially closed.

This record is officially closed.

NR30 RBB	2	3	JACKSON	5	6	7	8	9	10
26 Mayfield Gardens	48	9	Steele John						School age

This record is officially closed.

With the closing of the colliery in 1927 James (born 30 May 1894) would have had to find new work and here he is now recorded as a general farm labourer. Florence's unmarried daughters are with them as is Freda Jones (born 11 November 1922), the first child of James and Florence. The redacted lines probably indicate a further three children although their identity is unknown. The 'John Steele' (under school age' is also unidentified although it seems probable that he would have been related to Frank Steele. The final redacted line, where the birthdate is revealed as 4 July 1928, is probably not a child of James and Florence. Freda Jones married George E Gover on Wirral in mid-1943 and it is believed that they had a son. Nothing is known of the other children of James and Florence.

It seems that James Edward Jones died, aged 66, in late 1960 and Florence died, aged 90, in late 1982.

#### Footnote 1

The elder brother of James Jones, Florence's second husband was William Jones (born in early 1891). Whilst few details of his army service are known William died in WW1 and he is commemorated on the stone tablet in Neston Parish Church. William's account is given in Volume 5 of this work [see entry [49: William Jones](#)].

#### Footnote 2

Frank Steele is, at the date of writing this account (December 2020) not recognised as a war casualty by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. As the records indicate that his death in 1919 was a direct consequence of medical problems contracted during his active service, representation will be made to the CWGC to rectify this omission.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
STEELE	25. Lan. B.	Pte.	2014.
Frank			
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	J/1/103-B.	75	Dise: 392 XVI. 27/10/16
BRITISH	do	do	
15 STAR	3/1/103	16	
Theatre of War first served in 2 B / Balpham.			
Date of entry therein 17. 9. 15.			

NRB List J/1/18

K. 1350.

British Army WWI Medal Rolls  
Index Cards, 1914-1920