

Garston Gas Works Stories

Alexander McDonnell was a Lance Corporal in the 1st/5th Kings Liverpool Regiment. He was born in Everton and worked as a railway clerk before the war. He enlisted on the 4th September 1914 as a private and was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal in February 1915. He was killed less than three months later on the 17th May 1915 at Richebourg L'Avoue and is remembered with honour on the Le Touret Memorial.

Allan Prophet was a stoker 1st class in the Royal Navy. He was born in Liverpool and on joining the navy was assigned to the Victory II between 23rd January and 15th June 1915 before joining HMS Black Prince. She was stationed in the Mediterranean when the First World War began and participated in the pursuit of the German battlecruiser SMS Goeben and light cruiser SMS Breslau. She was later transferred to the Grand Fleet and was sunk at the Battle of Jutland on 1st June 1916. All 857 hands on board were lost, including Allan.

James Hitchmough was a Lance Corporal in the 1st Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Before the war he worked as an apprentice bricklayer and on 19th September 1909 he married Christina Miller Barr at St Michael's Church, Garston, Liverpool. By this time James was a platelayer on the railway. Having enlisted at the beginning of the war he was soon in France, but was reported missing presumed dead on 12th November 1914. He is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium.

Richard Ireland was a private in the 12th King's Liverpool Regiment. Born in Liverpool he married Harriett Rigby at St Peter's Church, Woolton on 5th October 1907. Two years later they had a daughter, Eva and Richard was employed as a labourer at the Garston Gas Company. In early February 1918 the battalion were moved into the line near Dickebusch, south of Ypres, Belgium. He was killed in action during enemy shelling on 4th February 1918 and was buried at Hooge Crater Cemetery.

Samuel Corfe was a private in the 24th Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He married Annie Birkinhead on 25th December 1909 at St Michael's Church, Garston. Samuel was a labourer at Garston Gas Works. They had three children, Thomas born 1910, Hilda born 1912 and Reginald born 1914. On 19th April 1915 Samuel enlisted in the army in Birkenhead and on 12th December 1916 he sailed from Southampton to Alexandria and was transferred to the 24th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers. His early career shows him with the rank of Lance Corporal and him being reprimanded on a couple of occasions for neglect of duty whilst in charge of a barrack room. Subsequently his rank was reduced to private. Having been hospitalised on several occasions with illness in April 1918 he was awarded the military medal for bravery in the field. On 7th September 1918 Samuel was wounded when he received a gunshot wound with the bullet entering his mouth and into his neck. He died of his wounds on 11th September.

Thomas Thompson was a driver with D Battery 276th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. Born in Everton, before the war he worked as a solicitor's clerk. At the outbreak of World War One Thomas enlisted and joined the Royal Field Artillery. His unit, D Battery, 276th Brigade, landed in France with the 55th Division in September 1915 and later relieved 42nd (East Lancashire) Division on the frontline at Givenchy and Festubert. He was killed as his unit advanced into Belgium on 21st October, 1918. He is buried in Esplechin, the town where he died. The story of Thomas must also be told alongside that of his friend, Alfred Welsby. Three years younger, Alfred lived in Toxteth and – while it's unlikely he knew Thomas before enlisting – the two men were given consecutive military service numbers, after both joining the Royal Field Artillery. After the war, Alfred married Thomas's older sister, Catherine. They had a son, who they called Thomas. Alfred went on to work at Caryl Street gas works and died in Liverpool in 1959.

