

JOHN IBBITSON JONES



4th February 1918

1881-1918 Age 36

Lance Bombardier, 223rd Siege Battery, 4th Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery.

John Ibbitson Jones was the eighth of eleven surviving children fathered by John Edward Jones of Pudsey. John senior went into business with two of his brothers as a worsted manufacturer in Pudsey, although for a while he lived in Nelson, Lancashire. He had six children by his first wife Ann, and following her death in 1878 he married Anne Jane Jowett of Esholt in 1879. She was the mother of John junior and four more children. John was a pupil at Bradford Grammar School from 1895, when he was fourteen, until 1898. He left when he was sixteen, part way through his third year. He had shown ability at Maths, French and Art. His father had retired from the family business by 1891, but with five older brothers there was no place for John in the family firm—among his older brothers one became a grocer, another a vicar, a third a draughtsman and another was a traveller for a firm importing bananas. In May 1898 John became a clerk with the London City and Midland Bank on Kirkgate, Bradford. He continued to travel to work from the family home in Pudsey until in 1908 he married Constance May Smith a blacksmith's daughter, and they lived at 22 Victoria Avenue in Shipley. In the same year his father died. Over the next six years John and Constance had three daughters named Constance Marjorie, Muriel Gwendolin and Kathleen.

John passed the age of thirty-three a week after the world war began. As a family man he showed no inclination to volunteer or later to attest for service. The war caught up with him when he was conscripted on 1st August 1917 and was posted to the Royal Garrison Artillery. In the same month his youngest brother Norman lost an arm serving with the Royal Field Artillery.



John served with the 223rd Siege Battery which operated six 6-inch howitzers, part of 4th Brigade R.G.A. At the start of February 1918 the battery was divided into two sections located near Vaulx-Vraucourt, south-east of Arras in France. It was tasked with harassing German positions with shellfire. Although John was reported to have been 'killed in action' on 4th February, it seems his death actually occurred two days earlier. The brigade war diary records that on the night of 2nd February 223rd Siege Battery was heavily shelled by German 150mm (5.9-inch) guns. Three Other Ranks were killed and three more were wounded. By contrast, no casualties were recorded for the 4th. In the nearby Red Cross Corner Cemetery, Beugny, three men from 223rd Siege Battery are buried in a row, among them John Jones and for all the date of death was 4th February. However, these must be the three gunners who were recorded as killed on 2nd February.

For Constance Jones the news of her husband's death came only four months after their daughter Muriel died. She chose the inscription for John's gravestone 'By deeds we live, not years.'



Acknowledgements:

John Jones' photo is from the School memorial book courtesy of the O.B.A. and B.G.S. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. There is a short biography at http://www.saltairevillage.info/WW1_biography_J_001.html, although it wrongly identifies John Edward Jones as a joiner in 1861 (as does the family tree at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/13936339/person/29329207773/facts>). For the partnership between the Jones brothers, see *London Gazette* 21st October 1864. John's years at B.G.S. are recorded in the B.G.S. Annual Reports for 1896-1898. The Midland Bank Roll of Honour gives details of his service with the London City and Midland Bank, and the date of his conscription, <https://search.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/record?id=GBM/MIDLAND/1807>. Muriel Gwendolin (sic) Jones's gravestone records also the deaths of Constance May and John Ibbitson Jones, <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/tree/53135118/person/13460097280/media/39beae30-a0e5-4164-8f16-64e678b9151c>. The *ShIPLEY Times and Express* records on 9th December 1914 that John donated the sum of 10 shillings to a fund for Belgian refugees, and on 1st March 1918 announced his death. For 223rd Siege Battery R.G.A. see <http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/topic/26031-223rd-siege-bty-rga/>. The battery's war diary has not been traced, however the 4th Brigade R.G.A.'s diary was downloaded from T.N.A. For the three dead of 2nd/4th February, I used the C.W.G.C. website for a cemetery search. The photo of John's grave is from <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/8102498/person/360123408351/facts>. He is remembered on the war memorial of St. Peter's Church, Saltaire and Saltaire Congregational Church (information from P. D. Lodge's survey of Bradford War Memorials).

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