

Pioneer William Lansert Jones[©]
Regimental number: 206643
"H" Special Company, Royal Engineers

born: unknown - died: 2 August 1917

Pioneer William Lansert Jones¹ died of wounds to his chest at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 2 August 1917. His sister, Miss Cadwaladr, who was living at Sleaford, Long Lane, in Wellington, Shropshire, was notified of his death.²

William had enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in Wrexham, Denbighshire,³ in August 1916.⁴ He probably first enlisted in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers (Regimental number: 44211) but transferred, at some point, to a Special Company of the Royal Engineers.

Special Companies did not exist prior to the Great War. They were formed to develop Britain's response to the first use of chemical weapons by the Germans. Despite its being specifically banned by The Hague Convention of 1907, the Germans deployed chlorine gas in April 1915. In early May, the British army began developing measures to retaliate by forming Special Companies of technically trained men. The first four Special Companies were established in July 1915 and the British first used gas in an attack at Loos in September 1915. Despite limited success with the gas attack, the British decided that it warranted further development, and volunteers from units already in France were added to the original four Companies. Later, conscripts from England also joined the Companies.⁵

William served in "H" Special Company, part of the 2nd Battalion Special Brigade, which was a cylinder gas company, although like many other of these units it also learned the skills of the Livens Projector,⁶ a mortar-like weapon that could throw large drums filled with flammable or toxic chemicals.⁷

William was buried in Adinkerke Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: Row A, Grave 3).⁸ Adinkerke Military Cemetery is near Veurne, Belgium, just across the border from Dunkirk, France. Commonwealth troops held the Front from the Belgian coast inland for about 70 kilometres from June to November 1917. No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station was at Adinkerke for a short time in June. There are 168 Commonwealth graves from the Great War in the cemetery.⁹

William was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁰

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¹ It is assumed that his given names were William Lansert, based on information from multiple military records. No information was found about his family.

² "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 June 2017), entry for Jones, W. L.

³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 June 2017), entry for William L. Jones

⁴ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 June 2017), entry for Lansert W. Jones

⁵ "The Special Companies RE,; *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.1914-1918.net/specialcoyre.htm>: accessed 7 June 2017)

⁶ "'H" Special Company, Royal Engineers," *Great War Forum* (<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?/topic/336-h-special-company-royal-engineers/>

⁷ "Livens Projector," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livens_Projector: accessed 26 June 2017)

⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 7 June 2017), entry for Jones, W. L., Service No: 206643

⁹ "Adinkerke Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 7 April 2017)

¹⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 June 2017), entry for William L. Jones