

**Private Elias Lea<sup>©</sup>**  
**Regimental Number: 260299<sup>1</sup>**  
**13th King's (Liverpool) Regiment**

**born: 1888 – died: 18 April 1918**

Elias Lea was born in the second quarter of 1888 in Wigan, Lancashire,<sup>2</sup> to James Lea and Jane Anglesey. James and Jane had been married on 24 February 1883 in Wigan when James was 26 and his occupation was carter.<sup>3</sup> James and Jane had four children while living in Wigan: John, who was born in 1884; Elias; Alice, who was born in 1890; and Annie, who was born in 1893. By 1901, James was a carter for a brewery and John was a carter for a building contractor.<sup>4</sup>

The 1911 Census shows that Elias's father had died and Elias was working as a hotel domestic. His sisters were still living at home and both were spinners in a cotton factory.<sup>5</sup> His brother John had married Mary Hamilton in 1907. John and Mary had had four births, but only one child, Annie, was still living. Times must have been particularly hard, as Mary continued to work in a cotton mill as a hand drawer.<sup>6</sup>

Regrettably, only about 30% of UK service records still exist due to a fire resulting from a 1940 air raid on the Army Records Office in Walworth, London,<sup>7</sup> and it appears that Elias's and his brother John's records (Regimental Number 16960) were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of their military experience were not obtainable.

Because Elias received a war gratuity of £17, 10s,<sup>8</sup> it is estimated that he enlisted in August 1914.<sup>9</sup> John's war gratuity of £15, 10s<sup>10</sup> suggests he enlisted several months later, in December 1914. The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WWI for a period of at least six months or for home service for any length of time if the man had served overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Elias enlisted in Wigan with the 13th King's (Liverpool) Regiment during a vigorous recruiting campaign involving pre-war personalities such as Lord Kitchener and Lord Derby. They were convinced that the war would not be quickly resolved and appealed for an initial 100,000 volunteers from the city of Liverpool.<sup>12</sup>

The 13th Battalion was transferred to France on 27 September 1915, landing at Le Havre and fighting in the area of Nieppe. In 1916 they took part in the Actions of the Bluff and St. Eloi Craters then moved to the Somme for the Battle of Albert, the Battle of Bazentin (where they helped to capture Longueval), the Battle of Delville Wood and the Battle of the Ancre. In 1917 they were at Aaras, then moved north to Flanders and finally south to the Battle of Cambrai. They fought at the Battle of the Lys in April 1918,<sup>13</sup> where sadly Elias was fatally wounded.

No specific information was found about the situation Elias faced on 18 April 1918 when he received gunshot wounds to his arm and head. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but succumbed to his wounds that day. He was buried the next day at Pernes British Cemetery in Plot I, Row C, Grave 30, with the Reverend G. C. d'Easum presiding as chaplain.<sup>14</sup> Pernes British Cemetery was not opened until April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations pulled back to Pernes, driven back by the German advance in Flanders. There are 1,098 First World War burials in Pernes.<sup>15</sup>

Elias's belongings, war gratuity and medals were provided to his mother as his sole legatee.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that Elias posthumously received both the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Sadly, both brothers were killed just weeks apart, with John dying on 28 March. The Wigan and Leigh Archives described the unfortunate circumstances by referring to an article in the local Wigan paper dated 24 August 1918:

#### Two Wigan Brothers die of Wounds

Pte. John Lea and Pte. Elias Lea. The above two brothers, both of whom were well known Wigan hawkers prior to joining the Forces have both within three weeks died of wounds. Private John Lea, the elder, who was 33 years old and married, and leaves three children, resided at 8, Woodward, off Scholes. He enlisted in 1914 and was formerly in the employ of Mr. W. Taylor, Market Hall. He died on 28th March in France. Private Elias Lea, the younger, who was 30 years old and single, died on 8th [*sic*] April in France; he enlisted on 6th August 1914, previous to which he was in the employ of Mr. Alf Peacock, Market Hall.<sup>17</sup>

John had been with the 7th Battalion, Border Regiment. His wife Mary fairly quickly remarried George Quinn in Wigan in the last quarter of 1918<sup>18</sup>, and John's war gratuity and medals were provided to his widow Mary Quinn.<sup>19</sup> The inscription on John's grave at Doullens Communal Cemetery, Extension No. 1, Somme, France, reads:

ONE YEAR HAS PASSED  
OUR HEARTS STILL SORE  
AS TIME GOES ON  
I MISS YOU MORE RIP<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Originally Private Lea's regimental number was 200387 as a private with the Manchester Regiment, as shown on the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station document. However, when he enlisted for World War I service, his service number was 260299. "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 17 November 2017), entry for Elias Lea

<sup>2</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for Eli[u?]S Lea, Registration district: Wigan, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 44

<sup>3</sup> "Wigan, England, Church of England Marriages, 1754–1926," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for James Lea, Marriage Place: Wigan, St. Thomas

<sup>4</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for James Lea, Registration district: Wigan, Sub-registration district: Wigan, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 22, Household schedule number: 106, Piece: 3555, Folio: 13, Page: 17

<sup>5</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 October 2012), entry for Elias Lea, Registration district: Wigan, Registration district number: 458, Sub-registration district: Wigan, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 19, Piece: 22991

<sup>6</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for John Lea, Registration district: Wigan, Registration district number: 458, Sub-registration district: Wigan, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 22974

<sup>7</sup> "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>: accessed 30 May 2017)

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<sup>8</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Elias Lea

<sup>9</sup> "Gratuity Calculator," *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 6 October 2017)

<sup>10</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 October 2017), entry for John Lea

<sup>11</sup> "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/>: accessed 6 October 2017)

<sup>12</sup> "King's Regiment (Liverpool)," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s\\_Regiment\\_\(Liverpool\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_Regiment_(Liverpool))): accessed 13 October 2017)

<sup>13</sup> "13th Battalion, Kings Regiment (Liverpool) during the Great War," *The Wartime Memories Project* (<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=6416>: accessed 17 November 2017)

<sup>14</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for Lea, E.

<sup>15</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Lea, E., Service No: 260299

<sup>16</sup> See Endnote 8

<sup>17</sup> "Elias Lea," *Wigan Council, Wigan and Leigh Archives Online* (<https://archives.wigan.gov.uk/entity/63738-elias-lea>: accessed 13 October 2017)

<sup>18</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 26 January 2018), entry for Mary Lea, Volume Number: 8c; Page Number 147

<sup>19</sup> See Endnote 10

<sup>20</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 13 October 2017), entry for Lea, John Service No: 46394