

Gunner Richard Lewis[©]
Regimental number: 181388
15th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

born: 1893–died: 9 May 1918

Gunner Richard Lewis was the son of David and Elizabeth Lewis, of Rhywlwyfen, Machynlleth, Montgomeryshire, Wales.¹ He was born in 1893² in Tygwyn, Uwchyarreg, Machynlleth,³ the third of their four sons:

- David Edward (born in 1888)⁴
- John (born in 1890)⁵
- Richard and
- Edward (born in 1899).⁶

They also had two daughters:

- Ellen (born on 1 August 1895)⁷ and
- Elizabeth (Lizzie) Jane (born in 1897).⁸

David and Elizabeth married in 1888 in Machynlleth,⁹ where both were born. David was considerably older than Elizabeth—he was born in about 1840¹⁰ and his wife on 31 May 1863.¹¹ Sadly David died sometime in the early 1900s.¹²

Richard's father was a farmer on the outskirts of Machynlleth,¹³ in the township of Isygarreg.¹⁴ After his death, the family appears to have moved into town and were living at 56 Plascottag, Maingwen Street. Richard had continued in his father's footsteps and was a farm labourer,¹⁵ working specifically as a shepherd.¹⁶ His siblings John and Elizabeth were also living at home, but it is not certain where the remaining children were living. Sometime between 1911 and 1916, Richard (and possibly the family) had moved about 90 miles further south to Aberafan, Merthyr Vale, in South Wales.¹⁷

About the time the census was taken in the spring of 1911, Richard, who was then 18, enlisted in the 7th Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.¹⁸ When he enlisted as a private (regimental number: 685) in March 1911, he was 5' 10" tall and in good health. He enlisted for four years, during which time World War I was declared. However, he remained at home until July 1915, when he left Devonport to sail to Egypt, arriving in Alexandria on 1 Aug 1915, where he joined the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

In spite of having been reprimanded a couple of times in his military career, Richard rose quickly through the ranks. He became a lance corporal in February 1915, a corporal in June 1915 and a sergeant in July 1915. In December 1915, Richard was hospitalized in Cairo and then, in January 1916, he was invalided back to England on the transport ship *Glengorm Castle*.

His first term of service came to an end, but Richard re-enlisted to serve in the Great War. He enlisted in Welshpool, Montgomeryshire,¹⁹ in about August 1916²⁰ and survived for four years with the 15th Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery before he died in 1918.

The Royal Garrison Artillery was one element of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, which "... developed from fortress-based artillery located on British coasts. From 1914 when the army possessed very little heavy artillery it grew into a very large component of the British forces. It was

armed with heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power.”²¹ “Siege Batteries RGA were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory, plunging fire . . . As British artillery tactics developed, the Siege Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, store, roads and railways behind enemy lines.”²²

Richard was already dead when he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 9 May 1918. He was killed by shrapnel wounds to his head and was buried in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave No. 22) the following day, with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.²³

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918, when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁴ Richard was one of 115 soldiers to die at the station that month. He was admitted the same day that the chaplain J. K. Tibbits arrived at the station from the 10th Stationary Hospital.²⁵

A letter to notify the family of his death was sent to his mother at 33 Pant Close, Aberfan Merthyn Vale. She received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death²⁶ and had the following inscription placed on his gravestone:

SON OF DAVID
AND ELIZABETH LEWIS
RHIWLWYFEN, MACHYNLLETH²⁷

Richard was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁸ It is not known to whom the medals were sent but, sadly, they were returned to the army.

Richard’s mother received a pension after her son’s death—it was set at 20/- a week for life. In 1939, Richard’s mother, a pensioner, was living with her daughter Ellen at Llwyncelyn in Machynlleth.²⁹ Ellen had married John R. Evans, a railway signalman, in 1925.³⁰

© 2019 BIFHSGO

¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Lewis, Richard, Service No: 181388

² “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 22 March 2019) entry for Lewis, Richard, Registration district: Machynlleth, Volume 011B, Page 130

³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Lewis, Richard

⁴ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Lewis, David Edward, Registration district: Machynlleth, Volume 011B, Page 148

⁵ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Lewis, John, Registration district: Machynlleth, Volume 011B, Page 145

⁶ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Lewis, Edward, Registration district: Machynlleth, Volume 011B, Page 134

⁷ “1939 Register,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Elizabeth Lewis, Ref: RG101/7662E/004/17, Letter code: ZTGO

-
- ⁸ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Lewis, Elizabeth Jane, Registration district: Machynlleth, Volume 011B, Page 152
- ⁹ “England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for David Lewis, District: Machynlleth, County: Montgomeryshire, Volume: 11B, Page: 217
- ¹⁰ “1901 Wales Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis, Registration district: Machynlleth, Sub-registration district: Machynlleth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Household schedule number: 23, Piece: 5187, Folio: 21, Page: 5
- ¹¹ “1939 Register,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Elizabeth Lewis
- ¹² “1901 Wales Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis; “1911 Wales Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis, Registration district: Machynlleth, Registration district number: 615, Sub-registration district: Machynlleth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 02, Household schedule number: 200, Piece: 33704
- ¹³ “1901 Wales Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis
- ¹⁴ “Isygarreg History,” *Forebears* (<https://forebears.io/wales/montgomeryshire/machynlleth/isygarreg>: accessed 22 March 2019)
- ¹⁵ “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2019), entry for Richard Lewis, Registration district: Machynlleth, Registration district number: 615, Sub-registration district: Machynlleth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 02, Household schedule number: 900, Piece: 33704
- ¹⁶ “British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2019), entry for Richard Lewis
- ¹⁷ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Lewis, R.
- ¹⁸ “British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2019), entry for Richard Lewis. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about Richard’s military service comes from this source. [Do you want to switch this to no. 16?](#)
- ¹⁹ “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis
- ²⁰ Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.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 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis
- ²¹ “The Long, Long Trail: The British Artillery of 1914–1918,” <http://www.1914-1918.net/cra.htm>: accessed 2 December 2014
- ²² “The Long, Long Trail: The Siege Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery,” <http://www.1914-1918.net/siege-battery-index.htm>: accessed 2 December 2014
- ²³ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Lewis, R.
- ²⁴ “Pernes British Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ²⁵ “War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31,” *Library and Archives Canada* http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?module=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=miikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2005082&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=&Operator_2=AND&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10: accessed 28 March 2018)
- ²⁶ “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers’ Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis
- ²⁷ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Lewis, Richard
- ²⁸ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Richard Lewis

²⁹ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 March 2019), entry for Elizabeth Lewis

³⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2019), entry for Ellen Lewis, Registration district: Machynlleth, Inferred county: Montgomeryshire, Volume: 11b, Page: 270