

## MOSS John William



Private J.W. Moss – Initially, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Btn Cheshire Regiment, (11614) later transferred to South Wales Borderers Depot (30801)

Private Moss, who was known as William, died at home aged 31 on 27th February 1919 from the effects of being gassed. He is buried in Willaston Churchyard and has a Commonwealth War Graves headstone. The motif is the South Wales Borderers cap badge, showing the Sphinx. It does not necessarily indicate that he served in Egypt although the regiment did see action near the Suez Canal and in the Sinai desert as well as the Balkans.

William Moss was the second son of Mary Moss of Bank House, Burton and the late John H. Moss. The 1911 Census records William as single and living at 4 Weatherstone Cottages with his parents. Father was a coachman. William is listed as a labourer at a dye works.



### TWO WILLASTON SOLDIERS.

Pte. W. Moss, second son of Mr. and Mrs. John Moss, and Pte. H. Jones, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Jones, are both of Weatherstone Cottages, and have joined the 8th Battalion Cheshire Regiment.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime ...  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

*Wilfred Owen, Dulce et Decorum est, 1917*

There are two local dyeworks where John William Moss might have been a labourer. Both were originally German-owned, as at that time Germany dominated the synthetic dyestuffs market. At Bromborough, a chemical factory was taken over by Brotherton's of Leeds. Such were the colours made that it became known as "Port Rainbow". Of more interest to the government of the day was the Ellesmere Port factory of Hoechst, where synthetic indigo was manufactured, as this was needed for dyeing uniforms. At the outbreak of war, the premises were requisitioned, and the German manager and technical staff were interned in their houses on the site. Unskilled workers were recruited locally, and so could well have included Moss. All instructions for operating the plant were destroyed by the German staff, and it was not until 1916 that the factory was taken over by a British manufacturer, Ivan Levinstein. After later mergers, this company became part of ICI, and the works continued to produce indigo until 1999. Ironically, by that time, following the break-up of ICI, it was again in the German ownership of BASF.