



William P Mills and Laurence B Mills

33 Statham Street

When war broke out William (22) was living at home, working as a Printer's Clerk, while Laurence (21) was Assistant Manager at the Exchange Hotel in Liverpool. They both volunteered for military service in Spring 1915. Laurence was posted to the King's Own Liverpool Regiment and embarked for France in November 1915, while William served with the Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby) Regiment and was posted to France on 6 March 1916.

The fortunes of the two brothers were very different. On 12 July 1916 while taking messages between English and French Officers **Laurence** received a gunshot wound at the back of the left ear - the bullet passed through his jaw from left to right. He walked to the dressing station, spending nine days in field hospitals before being transferred back to England where he was hospitalised for four months. He was unable to eat an ordinary diet as he could barely separate his teeth. Although unable to wear his false teeth due to the changed shape of his mouth and an eye injury, no operation was recommended and on 2 March 1917 he was discharged with a war pension as permanently unfit. Later he had further teeth extracted to allow for new dentures to be fitted. By this time he was working at the Swan Hotel in Stafford. He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* medal for his bravery - a French military decoration awarded to French and allied soldiers in

recognition of their service.

By July 1916 **William** had been promoted to Sergeant and on 30 July 1916 (18 days after his brother) he too was wounded in action. Unlike Laurence he recovered from his injuries and in September 1917 he was commissioned as Second Lieutenant. In May 1918 he was transferred to the RAF and began his training as a pilot. By 1918 the average training time for a pilot was 11 months which included 50 hours of solo flying. William gained his pilot's wings in January 1919 – not soon enough for him to take an active role in the war as a pilot.



Cap badge of the Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby).
©IWM (INS 5795)

Both brothers married and had families. Laurence married Ada Mooney in the summer of 1915 shortly after enlisting and had a son, Patrick, born in 1923. William married Doris Wells in 1923 - at the time he was living in Birmingham and working as a Commercial Traveller. Their daughter Mary was born in 1925. Laurence died in 1936 (aged 42) in Stockport while William died (aged 57) in Birmingham in 1949.



William P Mills and Laurence B Mills

piecing together the evidence

Laurence's service and medical records survive enabling us to gain a detailed picture of his military career and his injury. This extract from his medical record relates what happened after he was shot in the jaw (GSW = gun shot wound)

States that on July 12th 1916 when in Trones wood he received a G.S.W. at the back of the L. ear. He walked to dressing station Maricourt. Then 13th Stationary Hospital Boulogne (9 days). King George's Hospital London (3 months) New Maldon Hospital (1 month). For the past 4 months he has been on orderly duty at Seaford Depot & at Pembroke Dock. but he is unable to eat ordinary diet so he can barely separate his teeth half an inch & it is impossible for a special diet to be provided for him. G.S.W.

12. (a) Give your opinion as to the causation of the disability.

©The National Archives

CONGRATULATIONS: Pte. L. B. Mills, King's Liverpool Regiment, of 33, Statham Street, has received the French decoration of the Croix de la Guerre (War Cross), for courageous work in carrying messages and despatches between English and French officers, in the course of which he was seriously wounded. Sergt. H. Wren, Military Mounted Police, of 28, Quarn



The extract (above) from St Anne's parish magazine (October 1916) gave us more information about Laurence Mills. The *Croix de Guerre* was a French award similar to "mentioned in despatches". The article also mentioned that a feature on Laurence appeared in the Derby Daily Express for 11 September 1916. There we found the information that Laurence worked in the hotel trade in France and that his knowledge of the French language led to him being assigned the task of taking messages between French and English troops. We also found this very grainy photograph.