

# John 'Jack' Horace PESTELL

As war broke out in 1914, it was not until conscription in 1916 that Jack, as he was known, enlisted and joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, his occupation given as 'milkman'.



After a period of training, Jack went out to France on 10.6.17 and as a member of the Garrison Artillery may well have operated an artillery gun similar to the one shown here.

<https://www.historyhit.com/>

The Spring Offensive began on 27.5.18 with the Third Battle of the Aisne and it was on 28.5.18 Jack suffered a gunshot wound (GSW) to this right arm. It is said however this may have happened while operating an artillery gun.

The following day he was transferred to 83 General Hospital in Bolougne where his right arm was amputated. With so many injured men fighting for their lives a severe injury may have been treated with amputation as a way of preserving life and preventing infection.

Jack was returned back to England on 9.6.18. It is not known where he was treated but on 6.3.19 he was given an Honourable Discharge.

## Gunshot Wounds and Amputation

As the number of injured servicemen increased, first in their hundreds and then thousands more specialist units began to be set up to treat the different types of illnesses and wounds, and this would have been a deciding factor on where they were sent.

Gunshot wounds were one of the most common type of injury sustained and with new weapons such as the machine gun developed, this caused unprecedented damage to soldier's bodies. This presented new challenges and as doctors sought to save lives new types of surgical techniques, treatments and medical technologies were developed.



Wounds to limbs were often so severe, as traumatic as it was, amputation saved the lives of many men as it would prevented infection and gangrene. With around 41,000 men returning from the war missing one of more limbs.

*A soldier learning how to write with his artificial arm.*

[www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)

New developments were made in artificial limb production. The fitting of an artificial limb was a lengthy procedure and one that would involve waiting for the stump to heal properly before it could be fitted properly. So many men remained in hospital for many months.

A letter from the Ministry of Pensions states that Jack's disablement was 70% and that he was awarded a pension of:

- 27s 6d (£1.37½p) for 13 weeks from 7.3.19 and then
- 19s 3d (96½p) for life, with an additional allowance of
- 15s 10d (78p) from 24.3.19 for 3 children and then
- 11s 1d (55½p) from 11.6.19.

A further accompanying letter states:

*“the pension at the higher rate as notified on the form of Life Certificate has been granted for the period stated in order to give you time to get accustomed to the use of your artificial limb and to look about for suitable work before your permanent pension at the lower rate takes effect.”*

**Jack's family were not aware he had an artificial limb and it seems he never wore it.**

Reference No. MRD 15720  
Any further correspondence on this subject should be addressed to—  
THE CONTROLLER,  
and the above Number quoted.

MINISTRY OF PENSIONS,  
BURTON COURT,  
KING'S ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W. 3.  
31 MAR 1919

Sir,

I am directed by the Minister of Pensions to inform you that you have been awarded pension at the rates and for the periods shewn on the accompanying form of Life Certificate.

Payment of the pension will be made weekly in advance through the Post Office. To enable arrangements to be made accordingly, you should fill in the particulars required on the Life Certificate, get the Certificate at the foot of page 2 signed as directed, and at once forward it to the Superintendent, Pension Issue Office, Baker Street, London, W. 1, from whom you will receive full particulars as to payment.

The pension at the higher rate as notified on the form of Life Certificate has been granted for the period stated in order to give you time to get accustomed to the use of your artificial limb and to look about for suitable work before your permanent pension at the lower rate takes effect.

I am,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,  
*William Sanger*  
Controller,  
Soldiers' Awards Branch.

Mr. J.H. Paskell  
Late of RCA

Form No. 101 A.  
8069 9554/1146 5m (2) 6/18 J.P. Gp. 158  
8939 17141/1826 10m (2) 7/18



The pension decreased to less than half within three months of returning home to Irstead when Jack, disabled, had to look after his wife and young family. In addition to his small pension, he managed to earn a meagre living cattle droving, which was supplemented by selling rabbit skins from the back of his tricycle (*see photo*). In 1919, their fourth child, Elsie, was born.

Like so many other men who survived the horrors of war, Jack accepted his lot, and got on with his life, bringing up his family as best he could.



Photo above: Jack on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. From left to right: Betty (Sidney's wife), Sidney, Elsie, John, Billy (Elsie's husband), Gladys, Mabel.



Photo right: Jack on his allotment in King Street, Neatishead.