

Private Jesse Stanley Jack COLLETT

Service number 5676458

Somerset Light Infantry

4th Battalion

Killed in action on 29 June 1944, aged 27

Jack was raised in Wells, and before the war worked as a bus conductor for Bristol Tramways. He served with the 4th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, which landed in Normandy two weeks after D-Day. On 29 June 1944, the battalion fought its first action and Jesse was killed near Baron-sur-Odon, aged 27.



Detail of the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company's war memorial
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Jesse, known as Jack, was born in Axbridge on 13 December 1916 to Charles William Collett and Jessie Catherine née Brown. His father was a carpenter and his mother came from Wells. He had two brothers, Clifford and Francis, and a sister, Gertrude, and they lived in Moor Lane, Axbridge.

Jack's mother died in 1922, and the family moved to Wells, perhaps to be closer to his mother's family. He went to St Cuthbert's Sunday School, and in 1934 was a butcher's apprentice. Jack's father died in the first half of 1939, and in September 1939, Jack and his sister were living with their mother's sister, Matilda Brown, at 6, South Street. Jack was then working as a bus conductor for the Bristol Tramways Company.

Jack enlisted into the army early in the war, and in 1944, he was serving with the 4th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. The 4th was part of the 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division, and spent from 1939 until June 1944 training for the invasion of Europe, particularly in Kent.

Prior to D-Day the Battalion was at Dymchurch on Romney Marsh. On 15 June, they moved to the marshalling area at Firle Park in Sussex, and on the 18th, at 11.30, they embarked at Newhaven. The battalion arrived off the Normandy beaches on the evening of 19 June, two weeks after D-Day, and started to land on the beach at Arromance.

On 25 June, the battalion moved to the front line, and on the 29th took part in its first operation of the war. This was a brigade-sized advance to sweep the woods and orchards around Tourville-sur-Odon,

before crossing the river Odon north of Baron-sur-Odon and clearing the south bank.¹ It was during this first operation that Jack died.

He is buried in France in the St. Manvieu War Cemetery, Cheux, in grave X. G. 3. Jack is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall, Wells Cemetery and on the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company's war memorial, which is on the outside of Enterprise House, Easton Road, Bristol.

¹ See History of the 4th Bn. The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) in the Campaign in North-West Europe June, 1944 - May, 1945 (Uckfield, 2009).