



## John Leonard Abear

William Abear and Mary Avery married in St Stephen's Church Twickenham in May 1884. Their first child, John Leonard, was born in 1885, another son, George Frederick followed in 1888 and a daughter Alice Mary in 1890 – all were born in Isleworth. In 1891, the family are living at Lawn Terrace in Fulham and father William is a carman (a driver of horse drawn vehicles).

By 1901 Florence and William (Junior) have arrived (both born in Fulham), and the youngest boys Charles Albert (born in 1896) and Ernest (born in 1898) are recorded as being born in Isleworth. They all live at 12 Retreat Place in Brentford. John and George are working as 'skin factory' boys for Bands Tannery – a process to make parchment. Ten years later, John is still at the tannery but George is working as a market gardener. Alice is recorded as married but still at home, Florence is a domestic servant, William is a baker's van boy, Charles is a grocer's shop boy and the youngest, Ernest, is still at school. It was a very industrious family.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1911 John, now 25, married Ellen Annie Luker at St Paul's Church in Brentford. Later the following year Ellen gave birth to a baby boy, Leonard John Francis. (Leonard lived a long life and died in 2000 in Somerset aged 87). In 1914 a second son, Francis William, was born to the couple but he sadly died a few months later. Francis's baptismal record indicates that this family were now possibly living at Whitestile Road in Brentford.

John enlisted in Kingsway Middx (F/129), but we do not know when. He joined the 17th Battalion Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own). The core of this battalion were a group of professional footballers, so it became known as the 'Footballer's Battalion'. John fought at the vicious Battle of Arleux on 28-29<sup>th</sup> April 1917. This battle was part of the larger Battle of Arras. British and Canadian troops launched an attack along an 8 mile front and the enemy delivered determined counter-attacks for two solid days. There was even hand to hand fighting at times. The losses were great and sadly included John, who lost his life 'killed in action' on 28<sup>th</sup>. He is buried at Lievin Communal Cemetery Extension in France (Plot III Row H Grave2). His grave inscription is:-

## *"Till We Three Meet"*

John's brother Charles had already lost his life at the Battle of Le Transloy in 1916. Their mother Mary Ann died just weeks after John in June 1917. Later that year, John's father William married Alice Amelia Barker on Boxing Day 1917 and died himself in 1920. Brother George survived the war. John is remembered on the Brentford Memorial and his brother Charles is remembered on the Isleworth Memorial.

