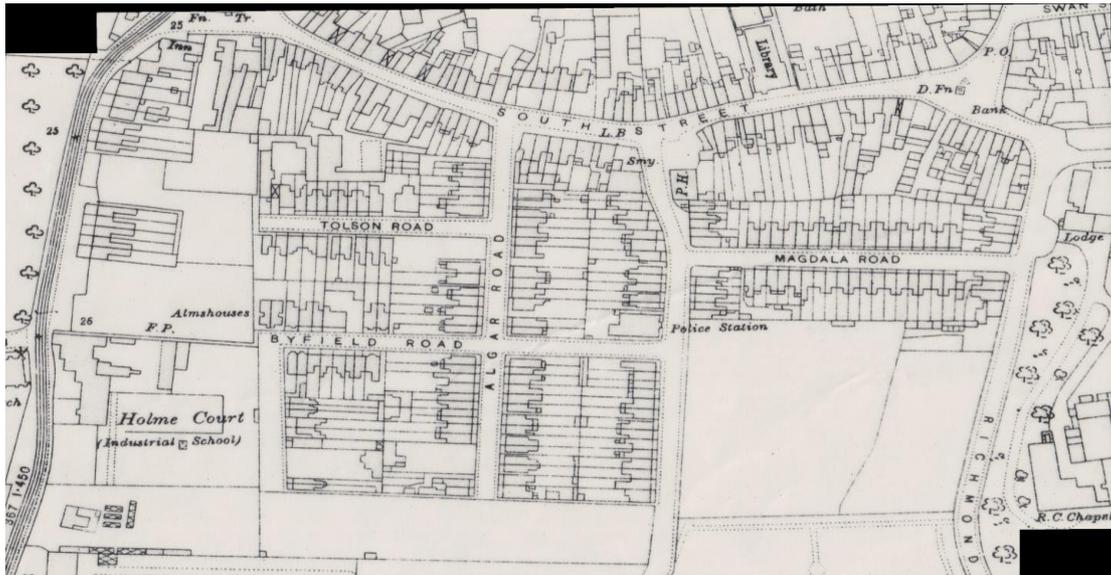


## Robert William Bracken (recorded on the Isleworth War Memorial as J Bracken)



He was born in Isleworth on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1891 and was one of eleven children born to Joseph Bracken, a miller's labourer from Ireland and his wife Mary, nee Cribbett, from Sutton, Surrey (his parents married in 1883 in Brentford). Robert's siblings were: Joseph born in 1884, a market gardener and living with his wife Maud nee Varney in 1911, in 4, Gordon House Square and in 1 Castle Place in 1939; John Lawrence 1888-1893; Catherine born in 1885; Elizabeth Winifred 1890-1890; Mary Helena born in 1894; Walter Samuel born in 1896. Walter enlisted into the Duke of Cambridge's Own Middlesex Regiment where he served with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion (G/5314). He saw active service in France and Flanders and was killed in action on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1916; Thomas William 1898-1898; Richard France, 1899; Clara, 1901-1901, Alice 1903. In 1891, the family lived at 8 Swan Street, Isleworth. The diocese of Westminster Catholic Census records them living at 7 Gordon House Square in 1893; in 1901, they were at 12 Gordon House Square, Isleworth and by 1911 at 33, Magdala Road, Isleworth



*Magdala Road and surrounding areas. Ordnance Survey map C 1915*

On leaving school, Robert became a labourer. Like most young men, he would have sought diversion from his dull and physically-demanding work whenever he could. In March 1914, the Middlesex Chronicle reports that he and a friend appeared in court, accused of "rowdism" and molesting young women in Richmond on a Saturday night. Soon after this event, he married Lily Elizabeth Penman. They had two children, Florence born in 1914 and Robert born in 1916.

Robert joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in July 1915. The National Registration Act was about to be passed, allowing men to be conscripted into the forces. Although Robert was married with children, he was only 24 and would have almost certainly have been called up by April 1916. He may have already have been keen to join up or he may have decided that if he was to be conscripted, he wanted to decide which unit he joined. He got into trouble fairly soon, being sentenced to 21 days detention at Crystal Palace in January 1916. His service record doesn't record his offence. In May 1916, he was transferred to 2<sup>nd</sup> Anson Battalion at Blandford. Anson Battalions were used to draw surplus men from the naval volunteers to support land-based fighting units. By the end of August 1916, Robert was in France. He received a chest wound in May 1917 and was sent home to England, but was taken back on the strength in July and sent to Anson Battalion, British Expeditionary Force, in September. On 6<sup>th</sup> November 1917, he was posted Missing. In April 1918, his wife Lily was notified that he was "Missing believed Killed" and in June 1918, he was declared as "Killed in action" and his name is recorded on the Tyne Cot Memorial. Lily died in 1924. It is not known who took on the care of the children (Florence aged 10 and Robert aged 8) but they remained around the Brentford area. Robert married Norah Madderson in 1937 and in 1939, was living in Hammersmith, while Florence married George Pegg in Richmond in 1935.