

## Norman Charles Bradnock



Norman Charles was born in the March Quarter of 1895 in Shepherd's Bush. His parents, Richard Willan and Ida Selina Thick, had married at St Peter's Parish Church in Hammersmith on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1892. Richard Willan was 32, a manufacturer born in Birmingham; his father had died by then, and Ida was 24, born in Brentford, and her father John, a wheelwright.

By 1901, Norman was 6, his older sister Ida Isabel, born in Tulse Hill, was 10, and John Willan, his brother, also born in Shepherd's Bush, was 1. The family was living at 55, Boston Road, Brentford, Old Brentford. Richard was a timber merchant and they had a live in servant, Lucy, from Bedfont. By 1911, they had moved to 42 St John's Road in Isleworth, Norman, aged 16, was now a boy clerk working at a meteorological office, Richard a traveller, specialising in school apparatus. Ida stated that they had been married for 20 years, had three children, all of whom were alive. Ida Isabel was 19 and a student, and John Willan was at school, aged 10. Before he started work, Norman was a student at Isleworth County School.



Norman's army records have not survived but we know that he had enlisted with the London Regiment 1st/13th Kensington Battalion (Princess Louise) in Kensington, as Private Bradnock, Regimental Number 2466, stating his residence in Isleworth and that by 11<sup>th</sup> February 1915, he was in France. His Battalion had formed in August 1914 at Iverna Gardens in Kensington, under the command of the 4th London Brigade, 2nd London Division. Army Order 408 of 1914 defined the title of this unit as the 13th (County of London) Princess Louise's Kensington Battalion of the London Regiment. On mobilisation it moved to Abbots Langley and by 4<sup>th</sup> November 1914, it had left the Division and landed at Le Havre. On 13<sup>th</sup>

November it came under the command of the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the 8<sup>th</sup> Division.

When Norman landed in France, he would probably have been involved in the trench warfare preparation before and after the Battle of Neuve Chapelle (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 1915). We learn from a surviving diary from Corporal William Dickson, one of his fellow servicemen in the Princess Louise Battalion, that conditions were very hard. "12<sup>th</sup> March 1915 - Had a pretty quiet night, but the Germans are shelling us, very hot this morning. One shell has just killed 12 of our chaps, awful sights arms and legs all over the place. Our artillery started and partly stopped the Germans. Very Hard Day." The next stage of the campaign was the build up to the Battle of Aubers on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915 with the attack on Aubers Ridge at Festubert, the day that Norman lost his life. Altogether 194 of Norman's regiment lost their lives on this one day, all of whom are commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial in Belgium. Norman was awarded three medals: the 15 Star, The Victory and the British War Medal; his father, Richard, was his beneficiary. After 1915, Norman's parents moved to Purley in Surrey, Richard Willan died in 1924 and Ida Selina in 1954. In 1939, she was living at 4a Haydn Avenue, Coulsdon and Purley, with her son, John Bradnock, a Foreman Cutter Water Gardener, born 15<sup>th</sup> December 1899. John Willan died in 1977 in Tiverton in Devon. Ida Isabel, Norman's sister, had married Bernard E Thomson in 1914 and by 1939, they were living in Taunton, Bernard was a hotel manager and Ida died in Chichester in 1969. Norman is also commemorated on the memorial in his old school, now Isleworth and Syon School.