

## John McAuliffe



John McAuliffe was born in about 1877 in the village of Kanturk, County Cork and he died in at the Battle of Thiepval Ridge on September 26<sup>th</sup> 1916. He was 39 years old and left a wife and two little girls.



We know that 1 million Irish people left their country after the potato crop failures of the 1840s. However emigration continued until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was heaviest from Ireland's most rural southern and western counties such as Cork, where John was born. Isleworth was still fairly rural in those days, so maybe John had come over to find work in the flagging market gardens or maybe in the building trade as factories and offices were rapidly appearing in the area. We can only guess at why John came to live in Isleworth but John found Margaret (born in Hounslow), they married in Ireland in 1908 and they made their home at No 4 Town Wharf Isleworth. Their daughter Margarete was born later that year and a second daughter, Kathleen was born in 1911. John found work as a waterside labourer. The family lived in one room!



There are no service records for John but we know he joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Fusiliers. This regiment formed at Hounslow on 6 September 1914 and came under command of 54th Brigade, 18th (E.) Division. After training in Colchester and on Salisbury Plain, the battalion were mobilised for war.

Thiepval had been the first-day objective when the Battle of the Somme began on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1916 and two months later it was still in German control. However, this situation was to change on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

The 54<sup>th</sup> Brigade, of which John's Battalion was a part, played a huge role in this successful, but costly, attack. At 12.35pm, together with 12<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment, one company of 11<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers advanced towards the Germans, whilst another 'mopped-up' the bunkers and cellars. This was exceedingly dangerous work and many soldiers were killed. At 3.20pm a pigeon message was sent to Brigade HQ that both forward battalions were 'practically expended'. Among those 'killed in action' on this day was John McAuliffe.

A widowed lady, Mrs McAuliffe (57), lived at 1 Poplar Cottage, Town Wharf and may well have been John's mother, to whom he left £2.6s.10d. It is some small consolation that family were close by to help Margaret and the girls in their sorrow. John is also remembered on St Bridgets and All Souls Church memorials in Isleworth.

