

## George May

It is recorded that George died from his wounds on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1916.

He had only been in France for 4 months – almost the exact duration of the Battle of the Somme. It is not possible to ascertain when and in which Somme Battle George might have sustained his wounds. His regimental records show that his battalion were certainly fighting at the Battle of the Ancre which began on 13<sup>th</sup> November. It was a complex battle. The first objective was to capture the front line of the enemy trench complex. The general assault was launched amidst a tremendous artillery bombardment in darkness and thick fog. During that first assault, significant casualties were sustained in no-man's land (an estimate of 50% of



casualties occurring there). Enemy fire was so effective that all company commanding officers within the early advancing platoons were killed before reaching the first objective. There were some successes. George's 63<sup>rd</sup> Division were further south and forcefully pushed on to the outskirts of Beaucourt which they then captured on the 14<sup>th</sup>. However, by 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. the objectives had not been achieved, the conditions were 'appalling' and the battle was called off. **George May had been in the thick of one of the bloodiest battles in human history.**

Before his death, George, born in 1879, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, lived in 50 Algar Road, and previously 1, Blossom Cottages, Algar Road Isleworth with his parents, William and Mary, nee Sykes, and his two brothers William and Alfred and his sister Minnie. Before the war, he worked as a painter and decorator. He enlisted to serve with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Fusiliers which were a 'wartime only' extra reserve battalion. In July 1916 the battalion mobilized for war and landed at Havre as part of the 190<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Royal Naval Division. (Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, realised that there were too many sailors and not enough ships on which to serve, so the surplus sailors were given rifles and turned into a land-based fighting division –the 63<sup>rd</sup>.)



After George was injured, he would probably have been taken from the regimental aid post by stretcher bearers to a Casualty Clearing Station - no easy task in thick mud and often under fire. The CCS was part of the casualty evacuation chain, further back from the front line. George would have been assessed depending on the severity of his wound. Minor wounds were treated and the men sent back to the front line.

George must have been severely wounded and, it is likely, he might have been transferred to one of the many WW1 hospitals on the southern outskirts of Rouen. The majority of the dead were taken to the city cemetery of St. Sever, but in September 1916 it was found necessary to begin an extension. This is where a son of Isleworth, George May, lies. See below centre for a photo of George with his father William May (seated) and his brother, passed on by his family. George was also remembered at All Saints Church, Church Street, Isleworth.

**Somme - The whole history of the world cannot contain a more ghastly word.** (*Friedrich Steinbrecher Wikipedia*)

