

## Leslie Joseph Seers



Leslie Joseph was born in Teddington on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1891 and baptized as Leslie Joseph Henry Seers on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1892 at St Peter and St Paul in Teddington. He was the only child of Joseph Seers, a labourer born in 1863 at the Royal Marine Chatham Barracks, and his wife Mary Jane, nee Harrell, whom he had married in 1891, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, in the Brentford area. Mary was born in Westbury in Wiltshire on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1867 and in 1891 was employed as a cook at the Deaytons in Clifden Gardens, Twickenham. Joseph died in 1893 at the age of 24. Three years later Mary remarried. Her second husband was Peter Seagrave Kempshall, a bricklayer, and they married at St John's Church in Isleworth on February 29<sup>th</sup> 1896.

Leslie remained an only child and adopted his stepfather's surname of Kempshall. In 1901, the family were living at 1, Ladysmith Cottages, St John's Road and in 1911 were at 118 St Johns Road. *Please see left for a 2018 photo of their family home.* The family may have supplemented their income by taking in foster children. In 1901, 4-year-old Winifred Meede is there as a visitor. She is still there in 1911, as a boarder, along with 3-year-old Arthur Hawking.



Leslie joined the Middlesex Regiment, as a rubber mixer, enlisting in Mill Hill, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1915, using his middle name of Joseph. He was 5'10", with a fully expanded girth of 36 1/2" and a weight of 155 lbs. He served at home with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, then was posted on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1916 with them, and with the 17<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1916. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1917, for official purposes, he was presumed killed on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1916, during the capture of Delville Wood, at the Battle of the Somme. Leslie's division's war diary for that day reads: "At 12pm the enemy counterattacked but we beat him off.....held our line and consolidated." And on the 29<sup>th</sup> July: "Terrific artillery fire continued all day. ... Our casualties during our stay in the wood were: 35 men killed and 192 wounded. All ranks behaved with great gallantry. The devotion to duty was magnificent. The Division has been thanked by GHQ for capturing the wood."

In 1920, Leslie's body was reburied in Delville Wood Cemetery, Longueval, France. He was awarded the British War and Victory medals and his mother, Mary, was his nominated next of kin. His only possession to be returned to her was his disc.

In 1939, Mary Jane was still living in her family home 118, St John's Road as a widow. Her second husband, Peter, had died in 1935; in 1951, according to the Electoral Roll, she was living in this house with Arthur Hawkins- Kempshall, possibly the same person boarding with her in 1911?. Mary Jane died in 1952. Leslie Joseph is honoured at St John's Church, St John's Road in Isleworth, *Please see right for a photo of the Church, which would have been very well known to Leslie Joseph, a few doors from his house.*

