



George Henry Smith (L/12106) was born in Poplar on 18th Oct. 1885 to parents William and Sarah Deborah (nee Jones). He was baptised in the local church of St Saviours on June 9th the following year. George's father's occupation was recorded as a painter. The next record found relating to George was an admissions record for the Ricardo Street School. George was admitted into the school in August 1890 but 'removed' in December. The family can't be found in the 1891 Census, but 10 years later in 1901, they can be located in 107 Gill Street Poplar - it is also their family home in 1911. Father William is still in the business of painting and decorating and George Henry (15) is now working as an Iron Worker. George's elder sister Ellen (28) is still at home, as are his other brothers and sisters, William (13), Jessie (9), Sarah (7), and Frederick (5). The family do have a young couple boarding with them possibly helping with finances.

As with many families, the 1911 Census records that Sarah had given birth to 13 children, but only 6 had survived. Sadly, in April, a little time after the census was taken, George's mother died. She was 58. The Census of that year also records that George, now 25, is already in the Army and working as a 'soldier cook' with the Royal Fusiliers. The L prefix in front of George's regimental number, was first introduced for regular enlistments at Hounslow in October 1902 and it appears, therefore, that George joined up in about 1906.



When George was 27, he married Alice Spackman. Their summer wedding took place at St Peter's Church, Tower Hamlets on the 3rd August 1913. George Henry junior was born on 29th June the following year. This little family was now living at 78 Morant Street, Tower Hamlets. George was no longer working as an army cook, but as a labourer. He would have less than a year left of his life and would never see his son grow up.

It is not clear when George signed up to rejoin 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers, as there are no surviving army records for him. As an ex-soldier, he may have been called up as soon as war broke out. The 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers (17th Brigade / 6th Division) landed at Saint-Nazaire in September 1914 in readiness for service on the Western Front. George's regiment took part in the Battle of The Aisne and later fought at Armentieres, as well as Aubers Ridge and Festubert. There were many violent clashes with the enemy, culminating in the particularly violent Battle of Bellewaarde, that took place on June 16th 1915. George is recorded as having died on 15th June. In the midst of the most appalling mayhem there is every possibility that George was killed 'around the time' of this particular battle. The Register of Army Effects records that George was 'killed at Ypres'. He was 29. George is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial Panel 6 & 8 and at all Souls Church, Haliburton Road, Isleworth. His widow, Alice can be found in the 1919 Electoral Registers living at 3 Gordon Square House, Isleworth.

