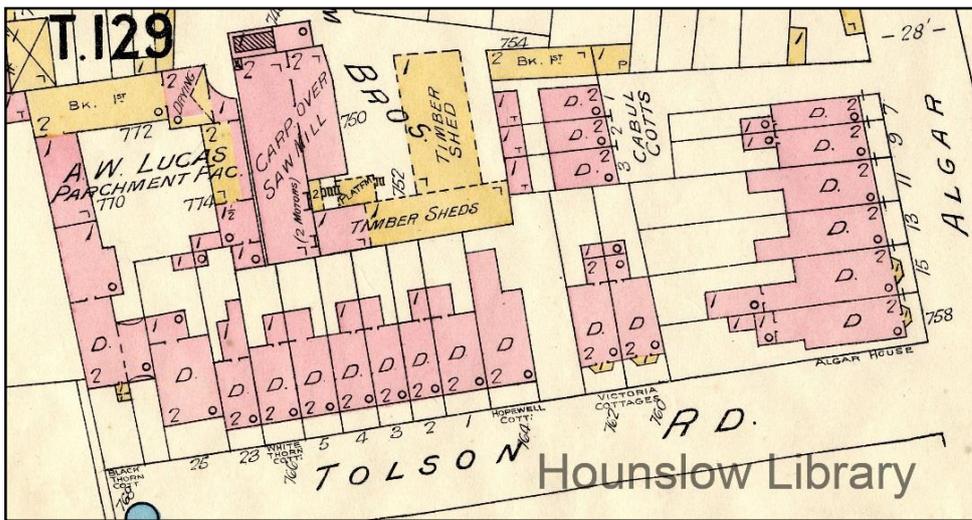


## Private Charles Spires

Although his name appears as G Spires on the Isleworth War Memorial and G Spiers on the St Bridget's Church wall memorial, our research finds Charles Spires as the most likely. The family lived at 5 Swan Street, Isleworth, in 1911. Charles's birth was registered between April and June 1896 in Fulham, though his age on some other records suggests he may have been a year older. His father, also Charles, was a bricklayer's labourer, and his mother Caroline (born Amelia Caroline Johnson) gave her occupation as charwoman in 1911. They had married in Chelsea in 1892, and had five daughters, and three sons who were too young to serve in World War 1.



In 1911 Charles junior was employed at a 'skin factory'. This was the A W Lucas parchment factory, between Tolson Road and South Street (shown here on the 1907 Goad plan). The owner, Arthur William Lucas, of Beech Lodge, Woodlands, Isleworth, is named in the Surrey Recruitment Register when Charles enlisted at Kingston in April 1912 in the East Surrey Regiment. He gave his age as 17 years and 1 month, but may only have been 16.

By the time war broke out, Charles had transferred to the Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment). With his battalion, he embarked at Southampton on 13 August 1914, and landed at Le Havre on 14 August. They soon saw action at the Battle of Mons, Belgium, on 24 Aug, and other battles during retreat back towards Paris. In October they were in northern France between Arras and Lille, and involved in the Battle of La Bassée. The battalion's war diary reports: "20 Oct - heavy attack made on trenches occupied by battalion. 21 Oct - further heavy attacks and considerable casualties.... large number of men reported missing." Charles was presumed killed. It is likely he died on 21 Oct; there was no action on 24 Oct, but 148 men from his battalion were recorded on CWGC for that date. The majority have no known grave, but Charles Spires was later interred in Cabaret-Rouge Cemetery, Souchez, Pas-de-Calais. His age is given here as 18.

Although his parents were still alive, he had named his elder sister Mary as his sole legatee. She married James Drage in 1918. It has been difficult to trace other members of the family with certainty, and they sometimes used the spelling Spiers. Two of his brothers may have died as children in 1914 and 1918. There are possible electoral register entries for the parents living in Twickenham 1919 to 1922, and Caroline may have died in 1922. Charles senior may have lived at 38 Woodstock Avenue, Isleworth, 1927-1930, and died in 1931.

