

George Spittle



Private George Spittle died as a **Prisoner of War** on the 9th May 1917 from wounds inflicted on the 3rd May during one of the most terrible battles of WW1 - The Third Battle of the Scarpe (Arras). George's Battalion attacked at 3.45am. The darkness immediately caused confusion with the first wave of soldiers veering off course straight into a German occupied trench. The German artillery fired almost non-stop for 15 hours. **Even seasoned soldiers had never experienced such an intensity of gun fire.** At some point during the battle on 3rd George was severely wounded. Such was the mayhem that soldiers that were struck down could not be brought in. It is possible that George laid out in open terrain for hours, possibly being 'hit' a number of times. This battle was 'frightening: nightmarish, terrifying and bloody'. It had gained nothing and was called off the following day. The British Army suffered a loss of almost 6,000 men on 3/4th May 1917. George was listed as 'missing'.

The remains of George's burnt service records are faded and difficult to read. However, the letters POW are clear. It appears that this young soldier was captured by the Germans from the field of battle. As the word 'Laz' also appears on his records, George was probably taken to a Lazarett or Feldlazarette (German terminology) – and possibly the German field hospital at St Clotilde in Douai which was behind the front line. Unfortunately the facilities at field hospitals were quite basic and sadly George died of his wounds six days later. George's service record shows that this young man had already experienced the loss of his mother when he was 8 and his father when he was 16.

George's father, also called George, was a 'dealer in horses'. In the 1881 Census, George senior is listed as a widower, living with his mother in law. He had married Elizabeth Herbert in 1873 and they had three children together before Elizabeth died at the age of 25. A few years later George senior went on to have a second family of six children with Eliza Emily. The future soldier George was the last born of the six. His mother Eliza died in 1904. This must have been a very difficult time for George. Later, in 1911, George and his 69 year old father had moved to Fulham and were living with his elder brother James and his family. A year later George senior dies too.



George, was a joiner and builder when he attested in Kingston on 8th Nov. 1915. He was living at 94 Haliburton Road, then Isleworth with his sister Ethel Meunier and her husband Moses. He joined the 7th Battalion East Surrey Regiment and was posted to France in December 1916. **George had only been in France for five months before he died.** He is buried in a joint grave at Douai Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. He was 21. He is also remembered on the memorial at All Souls Church, Haliburton Road, St. Margarets.