

John Gare

1891 - 1917



Born in Oxford

Educated at Oxford Boys' High School and St Edmund Hall Oxford

Schoolmaster

Died at Cambrai, aged 26, on 30 December 1917

Family and Education

John Henry Gare was the younger brother of George Vernon Gare, who is also listed on the war memorial. John was born in Oxford on 3 February 1891. Their father was Henry Vernon Gare, a farmer, whose own father in 1881 was a boot manufacturer in St Aldate's parish, with nine employees. Their mother was Kate Alice Mumford, of Steeple Aston, and they had two sisters.

In 1895 the family were at Cold Harbour Farm, Abingdon Road, Oxford, but in the early 1900s they moved to Gosford Hill Farm, Water Eaton, Kidlington. John attended Oxford Boys' High School and from 1909 studied at St Edmund Hall. He played cricket and football for the college, and was considered one of its best oarsmen. He graduated in Modern History in 1913 and went to teach geography at the Royal Masonic School at Bushey in Hertfordshire, where Ronald Morley Hooper, also listed on the memorial, was already working.

War Service: 1/28 (County of London) Battalion (Artists Rifles), London Regiment

John signed up for the 1/28 County of London Battalion (Artists' Rifles) on 8 December 1915. This unit was popular with recruits from public schools and universities and also attracted artists and writers. However, John was kept in reserve, so continued teaching whilst awaiting call-up. He was mobilised on 20 September 1916, and went to General Headquarters in France, where the Artists' Rifles was established as an Officers' Training Corps. He progressed to Lance Sergeant by the end of October.

On 28 June 1917 the 28th Battalion went into active service in the 63rd Royal Naval Division, and in November John was at Passchendaele. He survived until 30 December 1917 when he was in the final action in the Battle of Cambrai,

defending the Welsh Ridge at Marcoing from a German counter-attack. His body was not recovered, but he is assumed to have died that day at the age of 26. The action was commemorated by war artist John Nash, who took part in it, in a painting entitled 'Over the Top'. Of 80 men who took part, 68 were killed or wounded in the first few minutes: Nash was one of the 12 who survived unscathed.

For John's parents his death put the seal on a terrible year, as they had already lost their eldest son George Vernon on 24 May. John is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, and on the memorial at Bushey: the school has remembered him as 'a splendid type of real strong British manhood [with a] genial and kindly disposition'.



John Nash, 'Over the Top', 1st Artists' Rifles at Marcoing, 30 December 1917

This is the story of one of the men who appear on a war memorial at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, UK. These stories were compiled in 2018-19 from a variety of family history and military sources. In particular, Chris Baker's site, 'The Long, Long Trail' has provided valuable details of the men's experience of battle:

<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>

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