**John Aldred Palmer**

John Aldred Palmer, born in 1894 in Gateshead, Durham, was the son of Aldred Palmer and Mary Ann Meek. His sister, Jane, two years his senior, died in 1906 at the age of fourteen, and he then became the eldest of Aldred and Mary’s five children. The census return of 1901 describes his father as a steam crane driver. By 1911 he was a quarry labourer and John, now 17, was employed at the pit head. The family home was 6 Church Row, Windy Nook, near Gateshead, a two roomed cottage.

In August 1914 John enlisted at Westminster as Rifleman 2747 with the 16th (Queen's Westminster Rifles) Battalion, London Regiment. They were part of the 4th London Brigade, 2nd London Division and were mobilized and moved to the Hemel Hempstead area, being billeted in Leverstock Green in the late summer and early autumn of 1914. When John enlisted he was recorded as a resident of Watford, not far from Leverstock Green. The Regiment proceeded to France on the 3rd of November 1914, landing at Le Havre to join 18th Brigade, 6th Division. On the 10th of February 1916 they transferred to the newly reformed 169th Brigade, 56th (London) Division which concentrated in the Hallencourt area. In 1916 they were in action on The Somme taking part in the diversionary attack at Gommecourt on the 1st of July. The Gommecourt 'diversion' was a costly and fatally flawed failure for which 2,206 men paid the ultimate price. John was killed in action on 1 July 1916.

He is remembered with honour as one of the missing of the Somme on the Thiepval Memorial. He is commemorated on the St Matthew’s Church memorial in Oxhey and his death was recorded in the St Matthew’s Parish Magazine.

