

World War 1

Birmingham City Police

PC A39 John Henry CLASPER

Private 16162
2nd battalion Coldstream Guards
Died in France 1st December 1917

John was born in 1892 in Amblecote, Stourbridge, son of Richard and Sophia (nee Holyoake) and he and his family resided in Enville Street, Stourbridge. John was one of thirteen children, he had seven brothers and five sisters.

Two of John's brothers died serving in WW1, they were his elder brother and his younger brother.

His brother Edward, Private 23166 of the 9th Worcestershire Regiment, died on 5th May 1917 in Mesopotamia, Iraq of typhoid fever, whilst a prisoner of war. He is commemorated on Basra Memorial in Iraq.

His other brother Joseph, Guardsman 25906 of 1st Btn Grenadier Guards was killed in France on 5th April 1918. He went to France in December 1914 and in the following three years he was wounded three times, once so seriously, he had to convalesce in England for nine months. He returned to France and was killed during an artillery attack. He was 20 years of age and commemorated on Arras Memorial.

Their mother passed away in 1922 aged 67 years of age and his father died in 1925 aged 72. They had lost their three sons to the war.

John joined Birmingham City Police 17th December 1913, as a 21-year-old brick layer, he served on the A Division with warrant number 8424 and collar number PC A39.

He resigned from the police on 21st May 1915 to join the army.

Birmingham City Police records dated 20th November 1916 states that five A Division officers had been wounded, one being John. The same records dated 13th March 1918 state that John, a single man, had been killed in action.

John was killed in an attack north of Epehy and in a letter his Captain wrote

It was sheer bad luck that he was killed. He had come through one of the hottest attacks that ever, his brigade has ever done, and then the following day a shell pitched right into the trench they had dug and killed him and his two friends. He was one of the best men I had.

John is commemorated Cambrai Memorial, Louveral, France Panel 2