

John Sparkes Mafeking GILPIN

Born Dawlish Q2, 1900
Private 8/38683

Died 13 July 1918, Sherringham, Norfolk, aged 18
Devonshire Regiment, 52nd Graduation Bn.

John Sparkes M Gilpin was one of the unfortunate young men called to serve in the Great War, but who never proceeded beyond training and he died in his own country. The *Dawlish Gazette* recorded his death after only six weeks in training and the cause was put as pulmonary tuberculosis and low blood pressure. It seems quite possible that the rapid onset arose from poor living conditions in camp.

His great grandfather, John Sparkes Gilpin (ca 1786-) was recorded as a mariner in the 1841 census, and married to Elizabeth of a similar age, with a daughter Martha (1824-1895) working as a laundress. The middle name SPARKES is drawn from the marriage of William John Gilpin (1754-) to Anne Sparkes on 22 December 1786.

In the 1861 census, Martha, a dressmaker, appears with her father, John, head of family and now a widower, and her older sister Elizabeth (1822-1887) and four children:

Sarah	grand dau	15	a Servant	born	Dawlish
Elizabeth	"	8	Scholar		"
William	grandson	7	"		"
Minnie	grand dau	4 mo			"

It appears that Martha never married, and family records show that she had five children. She was the grandmother of **John Sparkes M Gilpin**.

The census for 1871 shows Elizabeth was head of household.

Elizabeth	Head	48	Laundress	"
Martha	Sister	45	Dressmaker	"
Elizabeth	Dau	18	Domestic servant	"
William J	Son	17	Labourer	"
Minnie V	Niece	10	Scholar	"
John S	Nephew	7	"	"
George S	"	3		"

They were living in Holmans Court off Brook Street.

John S(parkes) aged 7 was to be the father of **John Sparkes M Gilpin**.

In 1881 the census shows Martha, 56, as dressmaker and head of household, on Town Tree Hill:

Martha	Head	56	Dressmaker
Elizabeth	Sister	58	Laundress
John S,	Son	17	agricultural labourer
George S,	Son	13	

In 1891 the children had split as William John Gilpin had married ca 1875 and his family were living at 2 Town Tree Hill:

William J Gilpin	Head	37	General labourer	Dawlish
Mary A	Wife	39	Charwoman	Dunster, Somerset
William J	Son	14		Dawlish
John S	Son	12	Scholar	"
Frederick J	Son	10	"	"
Alice M	Dau	9	"	"
George C	Son	7	"	"
Bessie L	Dau	5	"	"

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Living nearby in 1891 at 1 Golden Terrace were:

Martha Gilpin	Head	65	
Sparkes **	Son	25	General labourer
George S	Son	23	"

John Sparkes Gilpin ** (1863-1930) married Eliza Jane Hart (1866-1939) in 1899 at the age of 36 and **John Sparkes Mafeking Gilpin** was born in the following year (GRO ref 1900, Apr-Jun, Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 88). He was baptised at St Mark's Church, Dawlish on 8 July 1900. The family were living in Golden Terrace, Dawlish, and the father was a porter. In the last available census, 1911, they had moved to the other end of Golden Terrace and Eliza's father, William Hart, 67, was living with them. **John S M Gilpin** was still at school, aged 11. The 1911 census return shows that John and Eliza Gilpin had only one child and he was **John S M Gilpin**.

It appears that **John S M Gilpin** may have just passed his 18th birthday when he was conscripted or volunteered for the Devonshire Regiment. The 52nd (Graduated) Battalion was one of a number that were formed in late 1917 and early 1918. These battalions concentrated on training young recruits and preparing them for active service. They remained in England throughout the war, supplying many reinforcements to France – especially after the German onslaught in March 1918. Initial training in this case was at Sherringham on the north Norfolk coast. It was here that **John S M Gilpin** was taken ill and quite quickly declined. He was brought home and buried in Dawlish Cemetery where there is a family headstone as well as a CWGC headstone.

John Sparkes Gilpin is inscribed on the Devon Roll of Honour and the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial inscription: GILPIN J.S. PTE. DEVON REGT.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: GILPIN, JOHN SPARKES Private
13/07/1918 Age: 18

Grave Ref: 647. [Dawlish Cemetery](#)

Son of John Sparkes Gilpin and Eliza Jane Gilpin, of 9, Golden Terrace, Dawlish.

Last known address: 9 Golden Terrace, Dawlish

Next of kin: father, John Sparkes Gilpin.

References:

Free BMD refs

The Keep Military Museum website

Dawlish Gazette (see extracts in Documents)

refs from subscription websites:

Census records

Cole family tree – Ancestry.co.uk

Footnote: The name John Sparkes Gilpin occurs within other branches of the family and death records include a John Sparkes Gilpin death on 25 May 1944 at 3 Stockton Cottages, John Sparkes Gilpin death on 14 March 1946.