

St James Parish War Memorial



The memorial is located in the south porch of the church and is dedicated to 10 Navy personnel and 99 Army personnel. The inscription above the names reads:

**'TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN PROUD AND GRATEFUL MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS CHURCH
AND PARISH WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR KING AND COUNTRY
IN THE GREAT WAR'**

This document is intended to be a companion to the individual records of the service men who are remembered on St James Parish WW1 memorial. A group of volunteers investigated each of the names on the memorial and recorded the information they found. We were unable to confirm findings on all of the names, and much information has not been found about the backgrounds of those we did trace. However, a substantial amount of information has been found and recorded and we hope this will be useful to those interested in WW1 and in the lives of the men on the memorial and indeed their families.

Details of the information found on each of the men commemorated can be found by going to our website www.stjamespriory.org.uk/history and clicking on history and going to Family History research

MILITARY LIFE

Age of those remembered

The youngest to die were three, 18 year old young men; William Bryant, a private in the Dorset Regiment who died on the Somme, John Henry Daley a private in the Royal Fusiliers, and Henry Gilbert Edmondson a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

The oldest was 46 years old, he was Sydney A. Berry a gunner with the Royal Field Artillery. He was a shoeing smith in civilian life and came from a family of farriers. He was married and had 4 children.

The average age of those who died was 26.6years, but the largest age group to die were 19 years old. At least 14 of the 109 from St James Parish were 19 years old.

Place of death.

Soldiers'

1916 was the year of highest loss for the parish – losing 32 men, 13 of them in the month of July – which coincides with the start of the battle of the Somme.

Where we could find a place of death numbers were as follows:

36 soldiers of the parish almost certainly died in battles on the Somme. 18 others also died in France.

15 soldiers died in Ypres, Belgium.

9 soldiers from St James Parish died at home and have graves or memorials in this country – mostly at Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol. There are 356 World War 1 service men buried at Arnos vale Cemetery. They died in local hospitals often after being transported back to England. The graves can be found in soldiers' corner near the main entrance. 238 casualties are buried there and commemorated on the wall screen memorial. The remaining WW1 war graves are scattered around the cemetery. 3 Men died in Egypt, 2 in Iraq and 2 in Italy.

Sailors:

Places of death for sailors were more difficult to trace, at least 2 seamen from the parish died when their boat supporting the Gallipoli landings, was torpedoed in the Dardanelles by a Turkish gunboat. These were Ernest William Lewis and George Brain Stone.

The S.S Luis was sailing back from New Brunswick in Canada to Portsmouth, only to be sunk by a German submarine near the Isle of Wight. William John Mazzie, a fireman and trimmer who served on the SS Luis, died a day after this attack.

There were also accidents at sea through collisions with other boats or running aground. For example – HMS Seagull, a minesweeper, sank after a collision in the Firth of Clyde. HMS Argyll was wrecked on Bell rock following a mix up with the lighthouse keepers.

Circumstances of death: This is sometimes difficult to confirm through public sources, but at least 47 of the soldiers were 'killed in action' and 17 'died of wounds'. We found that the causes of naval deaths were more difficult to confirm.

Burial / Memorial: Army and Navy War dead of St James Parish are buried or remembered in at least 57 different cemeteries or memorials in 7 different countries namely Belgium, France, Italy, Iraq, UK., Egypt and Germany.

In Belgium, 7 men are remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, in Ypres. They have no known grave.

In France 11 men are remembered on the Thiepval memorial which is dedicated to those missing on the Somme Battlefields. They have no known graves.

5 of the dead are buried in Bristol's Arnos Vale Cemetery.

4 of the seamen are remembered on Plymouth Naval Memorial in Devon. This is dedicated to Royal Navy personnel. One, William John Mazzie, is remembered at Tower Hill Memorial which is dedicated to Mercantile Marines.

War diary entries: Reading war diary entries at the regimental headquarters of the Gloucestershire Regiment and the Somerset Light Infantry Regiment provided some insight into the conditions and theatre of war faced by the men. For example

Frederick Badman died Ypres 19.12.1914. An extract of the entry for the day he died:

'At 2.30pm precisely (all watches having set by Divisional time) the attacking company dashed forward from the wood. The men carried small mattresses consisting of strips of wire netting stuffed with straw which were intended to be thrown over the wire to form a bridge. Every other man carried wire cutters. After the loading platoon on the right had advanced about 40 yards, a Howitzer shell from ours burst among them and did great damage..... The rifle brigade, who were attacking on our right, did not succeed in advancing up to the road junction which was their objective. And our right joined up with their left only about 70 yards east of the Wood..... the only result obtained was that the enemy were driven out of the Wood across which a line of breastworks was erected.'

Entry signed by C.W. Compton, Major. Commander 1st Somerset Light Infantry.'

Edwin Victor Chapman died 27.9.1915 at Ypres. Extract of war diary on the day he died:

'Except for occasional gun fire on part of Germans, the day passed quietly. About 5.30pm the Germans attempted to bring in one of our wounded, allowed 2 men of No. 3 Company to bring them in. The operation being concluded with mutual cheers from both sides'

Entry signed by L. Worthington Wilmer. Major. Adj. 6th Somerset Light Infantry.'

Ernest Charles Oliver died 13.06.1915 at Ypres. Extract of war diary on the day he died: *'Fine day but rather cold North East wind. Rather too strong for gassing however. Enemy's trench mortars were very annoying today and one killed 7 of B 'coy'; bursting right in their trench. We shelled back with field Guns but this only led to increased shelling of our trenches. Some enemy snipers were also very active from houses and trenches east of Boesinghe Railway bridge. 'A' coy located them and soon obtained superiority of fire and bagged one man whom they saw being carried away. 'H' coy sniped heavily all day and bombarded Fort 17 with hand and Rifles Grenades and towards evening, they set it on fire.*

Entry signed by W.M Sutton Capt and Adj for Lt. Col. Commanding 1st Somerset Light Infantry.'

Frederick Beach Upton died 1st July 1916. Extract from war diary:

"1.7.1916. fine and warm. After a very intense bombardment at 7.20 am, a large mine was exploded under the Hawthorn

Redoubt. Practically no casualties were suffered. At 7.30 the attack was launched .In the second line 1st Hampshires, 1st Somerset Light Infantry, 8th Warwickshires...the battalion has to ease off to the left owing to the ridge which it should have crossed being swept by machine guns and quite impossible and found itself in the German trenches in the neighbourhood of Quadrilateral...men of various battalions were holding part of the Quadrilateral and were engaged in a fierce grenade fight. Our men were for some time severely handicapped by the shortage of grenades but these were afterwards sent up...The battalion lost very heavily. Battalion casualties 26 officers and 438 other ranks. V.H.B Majendie. Major. Cmdg 1st Somerset Light Infantry.'

Arthur Thomas Cook died 9.8.1916. Died of wounds on the Somme. He was seriously wounded on 30th July and unfortunately was not brought to the field hospital till a day had elapsed. He presumably died in hospital nine days later.

Gloucester Regimental diaries record:

30th July 1916. "Attacked the German intermediate line, A & B Coys in front line, C & D Coys in second line. Our attack was held up by **enfilade Machine Gun fire** * and concealed snipers from the right. Our men returned to their original front line at 9.30pm. Casualties – Officers 3 killed, 3 wounded, 3 missing. Major Thynne was wounded in the body while urging on the second line. Other ranks 160."

* "Enfilade" means raking fire running across a line of soldiers.

Background reading into battles of the Somme indicates that machine guns were what seem to have been most feared on the battle field and, at the outset of the war, the Germans were considered to be better trained in their use.

The war diaries mention that they tried to take out machine gun posts with artillery before attacks and it seems to have been machine guns and unbroken barbed wire entanglements which tended to be crucial factors where attacks failed

Awards The majority of soldiers on the memorial appear to have been awarded the Victory and British medal. Some were also awarded the Star.

William Mazzie's widow was awarded the Queens Penny.

Petty Officer A. Harries was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for services during the evacuation of Gallipoli. William Albert Faux was mentioned in dispatches.

CIVILIAN LIFE

Family life: We found that at least 29 of the service men were married and of these, 17 had children. Several of the families, either parents or wives, received charitable donations of clothes or cash from St James Priory, during or shortly after the war years.

4 sets of brothers were lost to their families from St James Parish. They were the Connell brothers who were both killed in action- one in Ypres and one on the Somme, the Gordon brothers who were both killed in action on the Somme. The Mazzie brothers – one a soldier and one a merchant seaman both died and finally the Mahoney brothers died in France within 3 months of each other.

One father and son were also lost to their family. These were William John Bridges and his son Gilbert William Bridges. They were both in the Gloucestershire Regiment and died one year apart in France.

Addresses: We found that several of the service men on the memorial lived in close proximity to each other and may even have been neighbours. 9 lived in Marlborough Hill and Marlborough Street.

4 lived in Dove Street and 1 in Dove Lane. 3 lived in Eugene Street, 3 in Harford Street, 4 in King Square.

Employment: Among the various trades and professions found 5 were career soldiers or sailors. 6 were porters in various industries such as hotels, tailoring industry or general porters. 6 were labourers in the docks, brewery or general. 5 were house painters. 4 were clerks. 3 were in the shoemaking industry. 2 worked in the police constabulary. 2 worked as tram conductors.

Among the other trades mentioned were errand boys, builders, grocers, carpenters, French polishers, iron monger, stonemason, shoeing smith, and ladder maker.

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