

# St Peters WW1 War Memorial

The memorial originally stood at the west end of St Peter's Church having been unveiled at a service on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1920. After St Peter's was damaged in the WW2 blitz, it was re-erected in the south porch of St James Priory. St Peters Parish War Memorial is dedicated to 20 army personnel, 2 naval personnel and possibly one civilian who are recorded as having died in the war.

This document is intended to be a companion to the individual records of the service men who are remembered on St Peters 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. Some of the findings cannot be confirmed, but we have included information which may help others researching the names or possible names.

If you have any information on the individuals commemorated on the memorials or have any questions about the information gathered to date, please contact: [john.jotcham@stjamespriory.org.uk](mailto:john.jotcham@stjamespriory.org.uk)

## MILITARY LIFE

### Age of those remembered

The youngest to die was 18 year old James Preston. He served as an Ordinary Seaman on HMS Monmouth. He was born in Glasgow but lived in Bristol. His parents lived in Castle Green. James Preston died on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914 when HMS Monmouth was shelled and sunk during the Battle of Coronel off the coast of Chile and all hands were lost. He is remembered on Plymouth Naval Memorial. This is a memorial for members of the Royal Navy who have no known grave.

The oldest to die was 36 year old Tom Yandle, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant serving with the Royal Fusiliers. He was born in Dulverton in Somerset, but is recorded as living as a boarder above a shop in Clarence Road in Bristol, where he worked as a Drapers assistant. He was killed in action on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1917 possibly in the Arras Offensive of April and May 1917. He is remembered on the Arras Memorial in France. Those remembered on the Arras Memorial have no known grave.

The average age of those who died was approximately 24 years old. We do not have ages for at least 4 people on the memorial so this is an approximation.

**Rank in the Army** The men were, in the main, privates.

11 privates. Among the other ranks were, for example:

3 Lieutenants

1 sapper (these performed military engineering tasks such as bridge building)

1 sergeant

1 Captain Adjutant

### **Ranks in the Navy**

1 ordinary seaman and possibly 1 chief stoker

### **Regiments of the Army in which those on the memorial served.**

Of the 20 army men commemorated at least 7 soldiers served in the Gloucestershire Regiment. Others belonged to the Royal Berkshire, Worcestershire, Somerset Light Infantry, Royal West Kent, Corps of the Royal Engineers, Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry, Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Rifle Corps, Royal Army Medical corps, Royal Field Artillery and the Royal Fusiliers.

### **Place and timing of death.**

#### **Soldiers'**

Although numbers on the memorial are fairly low – the largest losses were between July and October in 1916 (7 men); and between April and November 1917 (6 men).

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

12 died in France at least 5 of those on the Somme and 2 at Arras.

4 died in Belgium at Ypres.

2 died in Military Hospitals in England

1 died in India

At least 1 died at sea.

Another person on the memorial (Tracey J.F. Villiers) does not appear to have a military record, but is recorded as working in the war cabinet. He died in October 1916 but his cause of death has not been found.

One of those who died in France (Albert E. McMillan) was not killed in battle, but killed by a hand grenade whilst in training.

**Circumstances of death:** This is sometimes difficult to confirm through public sources, but at least 12 of the men were 'killed in action' and 4 'died of wounds'.

**Burial / Memorial:** Army and Navy War dead of St Peters Parish are buried or remembered in at least 16 different cemeteries or memorials in 4 different countries namely Belgium, France, India and UK.

Of the 20 army men, 6 have no known grave. In Belgium 2 men are remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, in Ypres. In France 2 men are remembered on the Thiepval memorial which is dedicated to those missing on the Somme Battlefields. 2 are remembered at Arras on the Memorial dedicated to those who died in the Arras sector and who have no known grave.

**War diary entries:** Reading some of the 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 Caines. Somerset Light Infantry. Died Ypres 25.9.1915.**

*'3.50am. Intense bombardment along German line extending from Railway Wood – Sanctuary Wood. Mine exploded at 04. Guns lifted, assault by troops took place upon German 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line...The battalion held on all day in trenches...Gunfire from German line heavy all day until midday.*

*Casualties. Killed 11, wounded 38, missing 2. Night quiet. All men worked hard at repair of damaged trenches and parapets. Dead were removed and wounded were carried in. L. Wilmer. Major Adj. 6<sup>th</sup> S.L.I.'*

#### **Frederick Fisher. Gloucestershire Regiment. Died Ypres 7.6.1917**

*"Attack launched at 3.10 a.m. by 19<sup>th</sup> division. 8.10 a.m. Battalion attacked Black Line in front of Onreat Wood and took its objective. Patrol pushed out and line in front of Oosttaverne Wood also held.*

*3.10 p.m. Further attack was launched against village of Oosttaverne and Odonto Trench. Battalion took its objective and consolidated position. The result of the day's operation was highly successful."*

## **Ernest Milton Gloucestershire Regiment died the Somme. 23.7.1916**

12.35 am ordered to attack.

*"The attack was quickly discovered by enemy who were holding all trenches strongly. Heavy barrage of artillery and machine gun fire were opened and in spite of being reinforced by B company the objectives were not reached. A fresh attack after new bombardment of 10 minutes by our guns opposite A coys. objective also failed. Stokes guns and oil bombs from mortars were used during preliminary bombardment.*

1 officer killed, 7 wounded. O R (ordinary ranks) 12 killed, 23 missing, 113 wounded.

*At about 3.30 am the Battalion were withdrawn to reserve line, being relieved by 1/1 Bucks Battn., Oxford and Bucks L.I. who after fresh bombardment captured trench 28 without opposition from enemy about 120 of whom surrendered including 2 machine guns.*

11 pm Battalion relieved by 1/4 R. Berks and moved to bivouacs."

**Arthur Thomas Cook died 9.8. 1916 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 9.30 p.m.. 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.

There is a possibility of a civilian remembered on the memorial and he is Tracy James Fyfe Villiers. He is recorded as being born in Bristol, but the 1911 census records him as being a clerk in the civil service war office. He was married and had one child at that time. The circumstances of his death in 1916 are unknown.

## **CIVILIAN LIFE**

**Family life:** We found that possibly 3 of the servicemen were married and of these, we found no evidence that they left children. Unlike the St James Memorial, we found no evidence of brothers or sons and fathers dying in the same war.

**Addresses:** St Peters Church is located in Castle Park and was destroyed in the blitz of WW2. We have been able to find addresses in the immediate vicinity of the church for 5 of the men. James Preston lived in Upper Terrace Castle Green. Leonard Grant lived in Middle Terrace Castle Green, and Edward Boddy lived at 19 Castle Green. Joseph Caines lived nearby on Broad Weir and Albert Lockyer lived in Narrow Wine Street.

The remainder of the men had addresses scattered around the city of Bristol. 3 in St Pauls, 3 in Bedminster and the others in various locations.

**Employment:** The men appeared to work in a variety of trades and professions before they enlisted for war. Among them were 2 carters – one in the print works and one in a laundry. There was also a tobacco worker, draper's assistant, motor driver, student, an office worker and a clerk, an errand boy and a packer in the paint trade.

We know a little more about the employment of one of the men, he was Arthur Cook (who is also remembered on the St James Memorial). He was an assistant in Bristol Art Gallery for 6 years before moving to a position as private secretary to an art collector in London. His memorial record shows a photograph taken in 1908 and it is believed that Mr. Cook is seated to the right in the front row.

We hope that this companion to the individual records in the St Peters Parish WW1 archive proves to be of interest to the reader. Our hope has been to create a more human picture and story about the lives and war experiences of the individuals honoured on the memorial.

St James and St Peters Family History Group  
(Jo Hurst, Rob Harding, Liz Newcomb, Pam Pummell) 2014