

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON
WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

William Board



Gravestone for William Board in Poelcapelle British Cemetery, Belgium

Name: William Board

Rank: Private

Service Number: 25781

Regiment: Somerset Light Infantry

Battalion/Unit number: 7th Battalion

Date/year of Birth: c.1879

Place of Birth: Taunton, Somerset

Place of Residence: 39 St Augustine Street, Taunton

Date of Death: 17th August 1917

Place of Death: Belgium

Burial/Memorial: Poelcapelle British Cemetery

William Board was the son of Abraham and Ellen Board (Nee Adams), both born in Taunton in about 1845. The couple married in 1872 in Taunton. Although it has not been possible at this stage to find Abraham's family in Taunton, so far, Ellen is likely to have been the daughter of Thomas and Mary Ann Adams, Thomas was a shoe maker in East Reach. The couple were married in 1872 and at the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census the family were living in South Street, in St. Mary's Parish; Abraham's occupation is recorded variously as blacksmith or smith. He and Ellen had eight children four of whom had died before 1911. The ones recorded in census returns are Florence, Frederick, William, Lily and Ellen. Abraham's wife, Ellen died in 1888 at the age of 37. It seems that Abraham remained a widow and his daughter Florence took on the role of housekeeper for the family.

William, did not follow his father's occupation, but became a tailor. In 1901 he was living in Bristol, lodging with an Arthur and Bessie Banfield in Clifton. However by 1911 he had returned to Taunton and was living with his 60 year old father and sister Florence in St. Augustine's street, his occupation is described as Master tailor. This area in Priory had only been developed in the early 1900s, so the family would only have moved there relatively recently in 1911.

It would seem from the TDBC Enlistment records that William joined up sometime in mid 1916. He served for 3 months on home service and then 12 months in France before his death on 8th August (as opposed to 7th). It is therefore likely that he was someone who was conscripted following the Military Service Act 1916. This introduced conscription for single men between the ages of 18 and 45. So far we have not been able to discover his medal roll information.

According to information about soldiers on the Taunton war memorial William Board was killed in action during the 3rd battle of Ypres, which was a series of battles which lasted from the 31st July to November, culminating in the Battle of Passchendaele William died in the early stages of this campaign following the Battle of Pilckem Ridge. This period in August was characterised by heavy bombardments and wet weather which made the planned assault on the German position condition extremely difficult.

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Poelcapelle British Cemetery was made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and smaller cemeteries. The great majority of the graves date from the last five months of 1917. There are now 7,479 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in Peolcappelle British Cemetery. 6,230 of the burials are unidentified.



St Augustine Street, Taunton, in 2014. William Board lived at number 39 with his father and sister one hundred years earlier.