

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Lionel Henry Harding

Name: Lionel Henry Harding

Rank: Private

Service Number: 240677

Regiment: Somerset Light Infantry

Battalion/Unit number: 1st Garrison Battalion

Date/year of Birth: c. 1895

Place of Birth: King Street, Taunton

Place of Residence: 54 Winchester Street

Date of Death: 10th September 1918

Place of Death: Murree, India

Burial/Memorial: Karachi 1914-18 War Memorial

Lionel was the middle child of George and Mary Hannah Harding; both worked in the local shirt making industry. In 1911 George was an examiner in a shirt collar factory and Mary a linen collar maker. Lionel had an older brother Sidney and younger sister Gertrude. Sidney suffered from paralysis from birth and died in 1916. In 1911 Lionel, at 16, was working as a glove cutter with the firm W&C French and his sister at 14 was already a collar maker.

Lionel Harding and his family were regular members of St. James Church, as his memorial plaque testifies. He is likely to have attended St. James School, then attached to the church. He was also a choir member and a pupil in the Sunday School, where he later became a teacher. We know that he was a scoutmaster, as there is an appeal in the 1914 parish magazine for someone to replace him when he left to join up. Both Lionel and his father joined the army – Lionel was in the 5th Battalion SLI and his father served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Ordnance Corps at Tidworth.

The 5th were a territorial battalion and were dispatched to India at the outset of the war, in October 1914 for garrison duty to release regular troops for active service elsewhere. Having acclimatised themselves to the conditions in the country and

undergone “Kitchener’s Tests” – field exercises, they were mainly engaged in Northern India, based north of Delhi, in Meerut for part of the time. The battalion left for Egypt and Palestine in April 1917. However Lionel remained in hospital at Murree, a hill station in the Punjab, built for British troops stationed on the Afghan frontier in the 19th century. He suffered appendicitis in 1916 and over the next 17 months underwent six operations; he finally died in September 1918. His death was reported in the Taunton Courier who described him as having “a bright agreeable disposition, and was popular among a large circle of friends.”

By the same post the Harding family had also learned of the death of an Australian nephew, Frank Weedon, who died 9 days before Lionel.

The marble plaque **pictured above** was placed there by his parents and sister.