

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON
WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Fred Hawker

Name: Fred Hawker

Rank: Private

Service Number: 7699

Regiment: Somerset Light Infantry

Battalion/Unit number: 1st

Date/year of Birth: c. 1888

Place of Birth: Thorncombe, Chard

Place of Residence: ?

Date of Death: 28th August 1914

Place of Death:

Burial/Memorial: La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre Memorial

Fred was born in Thorncombe, Chard and was described as living in Chard. The CWG site, refers to his sister, Mrs S.Hodges of Coombses, Tatworth and the 1911 census shows that the surname Hawker was very common in the Chard/Winsham area.

The only other reference is in the 1911 census which mentions a Fred Hawker, aged 24, born in Chard, who was with the SLI in Malta as a cook. This would probably have been the Fred Hawker killed in August 1914 at the start of the war, as at this point only those already in military service would have been ready for the front line.

In August 1914 he would have been with the 1st Battalion on the Western Front as part of the Expeditionary Force when he was killed in action on 26th August, in the opening stages of the war. His battalion had landed at Le Havre only four days before and the force he was with was surprised by the advance of German Cavalry. He died during the battle of Le Cateau, which proved to be a holding operation enabling the allied forces to make a "tactical retreat" in the face of overwhelming German forces. The war diary records that 278 officers and men were

killed, wounded or missing on that day; two other men recorded on the St. James Memorial died the same day.

With regard to a Taunton connection there was a Hawker family living in Winchester Street in 1901 and in Woodbine Cottages, Wood Street in 1911. The Borough Returns mentions the two sons, Edward and Charley as enlisting together with William Hawker, presumably a relative, all living at 13 St James' Street. Edward joined the Wiltshire Regiment and died, aged 30, in Mesopotamia in January 1917 and is buried in the Amara War Cemetery. Charley fought with the SLI and William with the Royal Engineers.