

**ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON**  
**WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT**

# **Sidney Mussell**

**Name:** Sidney Mussell

**Rank:** Lance Corporal

**Service Number:** 14013

**Regiment:** Devonshire Regiment

**Battalion/Unit number:** 10th Battalion

**Date/year of Birth:** c.1879

**Place of Birth:** Bramshaw, Lyndhurst, Hampshire

**Place of Residence:** Priorswood, Taunton (in 1911)

**Date of Death:** 24th April 1917

**Place of Death:** Greece

**Burial/Memorial:** Doiran Military Cemetery

As far as can be ascertained Sidney Mussell was born in Bramshaw Hampshire, the son of Thomas and Fanny Mussell. His father was a gardener and in 1901 sexton of the church. He had five older brothers Thomas, John, Frederick, Archie and Edward and five sisters Rose, Florence, Lilian, Mary and Elsie. The family appear to have followed occupations of service and in 1901 Sidney is employed as a 'labourer in garden'. In 1911 the Taunton connection appears when he is found in Priorswood Taunton as a gardener and lodging with John and Jane Winter in the Lyngford / Priorswood area. John was a cowman and Jane a maternity nurse; it is not clear who Sidney might have been working for.

It appears that Sidney joined the Devonshire Regiment 10th Battalion, which saw service in Greece. He is not named on the Taunton Deane Muster List or the St. James Roll of Honour, possibly because he wasn't from Somerset. His medal card indicates that he served from September 1915 when the 10th Battalion landed in France, where they remained until they went to Salonika in Greece following the defeat of Serbia. There they were engaged in battles against Bulgarian forces allied to the Germans. The High Command's aim was to defeat the Bulgarian forces and effect a breakthrough into the Balkans. This proved unsuccessful throughout the period 1916 to 1918.

Sidney died in April 1917 at the start of a big and ultimately disastrous offensive against Bulgarian forces. A similar offensive the previous year had also been unsuccessful against the Bulgarian Thracian Division. The Bulgarians had been well reinforced and established in entrenchments and as a result repulse the initial attacks:

*“The British infantry began its attack on the night of 24 - 25 April. Twelve companies attacked the Bulgarian 2nd Brigade and after a bloody fight managed to take the "Nerezov", "Knyaz Boris" and "Pazardzhik" positions. After a Bulgarian counter-attack the British were repulsed with heavy casualties and by 8pm had retreated. The British assaults on the right and central fronts were also repulsed with heavy casualties after help from the Bulgarian artillery.....”*  
The British forces had to withdraw but later renewed the offensive.

*“The artillery duel continued until 9 May but due to heavy casualties the British had to abandon all attacks. They lost 12,000 killed, wounded and captured of which more than 2,250 were buried by the Bulgarian defenders. The losses of the Ninth Pleven Infantry Division were 2,000 of whom 900 died from disease and wounds.”*

Sidney is buried at Doiran Military cemetery in Greece, which was formed at the end of 1916 as a cemetery for the Doiran front. The graves are almost entirely those of officers and men of the 22nd and 26th Divisions and largely reflect the fighting of April and May 1917 (the attacks on the Petit-Couronne), and 18-19 September 1918 (the attacks on Pip Ridge and the Grand-Couronne)