

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

William Ewart George Pearce

Name: William Ewart George Pearce

Rank: Private

Service Number: 36194

Regiment: Somerset Light Infantry

Battalion/Unit number: 1/5th Battalion

Date/year of Birth: c. 1899

Place of Birth: Taunton

Place of Residence: 55 Alfred Street Taunton

Date of Death: 10th April 1918

Place of Death: Palestine

Burial/Memorial: Ramleh Military Cemetery

William was born in Taunton, the son of Charles and Elizabeth Pearce. He had three siblings, Lily, Minnie and Henry. His father, a native of Taunton, was a painter and plumber. In 1901 they were living in Blake Street, but by 1911 they were living in Alfred Street. William aged 12 was working part time as a silk winder.

William joined the Somerset Light Infantry 1/5th in early 1916, aged about 17. He served 3 months at home and 9 months in the Middle East. His younger brother Henry joined the Warwickshire regiment and may have joined up either just before or just after William. His period of service totaled 20 months, which may have meant he lied about his age.

William's unit the 1/5th was serving in Palestine / Egypt from May 2017, having been drafted from India. They reformed as part of the 75th Brigade and fought alongside Gurkha/Indian troops in Palestine against the Turks.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Palestine (now Israel) was part of the Turkish Empire and it was not entered by Allied forces until December 1916. The advance to

Jerusalem took a further year. He is likely to have fought alongside fellow Tauntonians Harry Palmer, Bertie Summerhayes and Ernest Gibbs who died on the same day during the battle to take the village of Nebi Samwil (Samuel's Tomb) three miles north of Jerusalem. William would have witnessed the surrender of Jerusalem and the agreement to avoid the destruction of the Holy City, by the surrender and withdrawal of the Turkish forces in December 1917. William died at Ramleh and it may have been that he was wounded in earlier conflict and died in the makeshift hospital wards based at Ramleh.