

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Charles Cecil Pitman

Name: Charles Cecil Pitman

Rank: Private

Service Number: 38487

Regiment: Highland Light Infantry

Battalion/Unit number: 15th (Service) Battalion (1st Glasgow)

Date/year of Birth: June 1888

Place of Birth: Taunton, St James

Place of Residence: 4 Grays Road, Taunton

Date of Death: 6th July 1917

Place of Death: Belgium

Burial/Memorial: Coxyde Military Cemetery

Charles Cecil Pitman was born in 1888. Three years later he was living with his grandmother Kezia, a widow aged 65, at 4 Grays Road, Taunton. Other members of the household were baby granddaughter Violet and Kezia's daughter Alice. Though single in 1891, Alice may have been Charles & Violet's mother and in September 1891, a marriage for Alice Pitman in Taunton to Henry Browning is recorded, (there is a second potential marriage in Jan 1891 in the Wincanton registry district). Whatever the case, Charles appears to have remained at Grays Road and appears in the 1901 census still at 4, Grays Road. There is now no record of Alice and the household consists of Kezia, her married daughter Kate Clarke and Kate's four children, plus Charles now aged 12.

Kezia died later in 1901, so ten years later Kate, (now a widow) is the head of the household at 4 Grays Road with her 4 children and her nephew Charles. Charles, at 22 years old, was an overlooker in a collar laundry (which could have been one of the factories close by on Victoria Street/Viney Street).

At the end of 1915, Charles married Ethel Dorothy Attrill, born in 1890 in Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight. Arthur Attrill, her father, was a head gardener, also born in Bonchurch, while her mother Agnes was from Rowberrow in Somerset. By 1901 the Attrill family had moved to Taunton and were living in Coal Orchard, close to St James church and 10 years later they were at 27 Clarence Street and Ethel was working in a shirt factory as an ironer.

Charles died just two years later while on active service in France. He left £56 1s 9d in his will to his wife. The grave registration reports compiled by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1920 show that Ethel remarried, this time to Walter Harrison and that they were living in her family home in Clarence Street.

For a man whose life and family were so centred on Taunton it seems strange that Charles should become part of the Highland Light Infantry. However, following the Military Services Act in 1916, men were no longer given the choice of which service or regiment they joined, and once enlisted, a soldier could be drafted to any regiment where he was required and presumably this was what happened to Charles. He died in the Somme area while on active service July 1917 shortly before the start of the Third Battle of Ypres in the Somme area of France & is buried in Coxyde Military Cemetery.

Charles is also remembered on the memorial to "The Boozy First" (nickname for the 15th Glasgow Battalion) which can now be found in the Transport Museum, Glasgow.