

**ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON**

**WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT**

# **Frederick Ernest Rapson**

**Name:** Frederick Ernest Rapson

**Rank:** Sergeant

**Service Number:** 17604

**Regiment:** Somerset Light Infantry

**Battalion number:** 1st Battalion

**Date/year of Birth:** 1888

**Place of Birth:** Dulverton

**Date of Death:** 3rd March 1917

**Place of Death:** In hospital, either in Taunton or Keighley, West Yorkshire

**Burial/Memorial:** St James Church Cemetery

Frederick Rapson lived at 45 Greenbrook Terrace with his wife Lucy (nee Knight) with whom he had three children. His parents were Francis and Susan Rapson, and his father had served as a Sergeant in the 18th Hussars.

He was wounded while serving with the Somerset Light Infantry, and brought back to England for treatment, spending some time in hospital in Keighley, West Yorkshire, but died of his injuries on 3rd March 1917.

Before signing up, Fred Rapson had worked for the Somerset County Gazette. As a result his funeral received a full write up in the Gazette, one of the local Taunton newspapers. This was very unusual for the time. By 1917 the press nationally was reporting fewer deaths in detail, partly due to the numbers dying, but also because of the effect it might have on morale. Reports on funerals in the local papers were often reserved for officers, but Fred Rapson's colleagues from the County Gazette clearly felt that his funeral service should receive proper treatment. We reprint the report here in full, partly because of the detail it gives for a military funeral with full honours of that period.

## THE LATE SERGT. F.E. RAPSON, OF TAUNTON.

### FUNERAL WITH MILITARY HONOURS

*Many friends and sympathisers attended the funeral of the late Sergt. F.E. Rapson of the Somerset L.I. at St. James's Cemetery on Saturday afternoon. Military honours were accorded to the deceased soldier, Sergeant-Major Vickery having charge of these arrangements, whilst Lieut. Willett was in command. The pall bearers consisted of twelve warrant officers and sergeants of the Depot, and the firing party, under Colour-Sergeant Miles, numbered twenty rank and file. The burial service was conducted by the Rev. Canon Corfield, chaplain to the troops in Taunton, and the first part was held in the cemetery chapel. After the reading of the lesson the Canon gave a short address on the promise of the Resurrection, and spoke feeling words of comfort for the bereaved family. The coffin, which was covered with the Union Jack and beautiful flowers, was of polished pitch pine with heavy brass fittings and bore the inscription "Frederick Ernest Rapson, Lance-Sergeant 1st Somerset Light Infantry, died March 4th 1917; aged 28 years."*

*The chief mourners were the widow and parents, Miss C. Rapson, Mrs. J.K. Macleod, Miss F. Howard (sisters), Mr. A.E. Rapson, Mr. R.V. Rapson, Mr. J. Howard (brothers), Mrs J. Brown, Mrs. J. Taylor, and Miss L. Knight (sisters-in-law). Several other relatives, through military and other causes, were unable to attend. The "Somerset County Gazette" staff was represented by members of the commercial, literary, and other departments, including Mr. W. Froom (in whose department deceased was formerly employed) and Mr. J. Stone (foreman of jobbing office). The "Somerset County Gazette" Cricket Club was represented by Mr. H.G. Dennett (captain) and Mr. P. Rawlins (secretary) and Mr. P.C. Winter (treasurer). Among the large attendance at the graveside were the Rev. H.S. and Mrs. Urch, Miss Van Trump, and Miss Gertrude Wickenden. Sergeant Rapson was an old boy of St. Mary's and had been a member of the Sunday School and the Church Lad's Brigade. After the coffin had been lowered into the grave the military rendered the final honours, and after the firing the Last Post was sounded by Corporal Giles.*

*Floral tributes were sent in by the following: - "In affectionate and loving remembrance from his loving wife and children"; "His sorrowing mother and Sis"; "In loving memory of our dear one, F., J., A., and G."; "With deepest sympathy from Lily and family, Swansea"; "In loving memory of our dear brother from Lydia and Jack"; "In sorrow from Dad, Maider and Jack"; "In affectionate and loving remembrance from Jim, Mabel, Lewie, and mother": "In loving memory from Naomi, Gwen and Keith"; "In loving memory from Daisy"; "In loving remembrance of Fred - Mrs. Incedon, Nell and Ethel"; "With heartfelt sympathy from A. Chidgey"; "In loving memory from Gertrude Wickenden"; "With sympathy from the Mayor of Keighley (F.W.L. Butterfield)"; "With sympathy from the Mr. and Mrs. J.S. Haggas, Keighley" (Mrs. Haggas is matron of the hospital in which Sergeant Rapson died); "With sympathy from the warrant officers and sergeants of the Depot, Somerset L.I."; "With sympathy from the proprietors of the "Somerset County Gazette"; "With deep regret and sympathy from the 'Somerset County Gazette' Cricket Club"; "With sincere sympathy from the neighbours at Greenbrook Terrace"; With sympathy from Mrs. Routley"; "A token of respect and sympathy from friends of Wood Street" (glass dome); "With sincere sympathy from Sergeant and Mrs. F.A. Abbott, and deepest sympathy from Mr. and Mrs. Gibson." The funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. E.H.C. Gill, of Bridge Street, military undertaker.*

*Mrs. Rapson and family wish to return their sincere thanks for all kind letters and other expressions of sympathy received in their sad bereavement.*  
(From Somerset Country Gazette, 17th March 1917)