

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON
WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Harold John Smith

Name: Harold John Smith

Rank: Private

Service Number: 51005

Regiment: Worcestershire Regiment

Battalion/Unit number: 14th Battallion (Severn Valley Pioneers)

Date/year of Birth: 1899

Place of Birth: Taunton

Place of Residence: 26 Portland Street, Taunton

Date of Death: 3rd June 1918

Place of Death: France

Burial/Memorial: Varennes Military Cemetery

Harold was the youngest child of four children born to Henry and Maria Smith (Doble), both from Devon. His older siblings were Ladora Elizabeth (known as Dora), Ethel May and William Henry James (known as Bill).

The following family information was supplied by descendants of the Smith family now living in Canada.

'From their marriage in 1890 Henry and Maria Smith lived briefly at 31 Portland Street but by 1901 had moved to 26 Portland Street where they remained until they died (Henry in 1932 and Maria in 1944). The family were active parishioners at St. James for many years.

Dora married Bertie Burrows (born Staplegrove, 1890) and they lived their entire lives at 32 Portland Street. They had a long association with St. James Church, serving on the Parochial Church Council and were regular members of the congregation. As children we often visited them. They had one daughter, Marjorie.

Sadly, Marjorie burned letters sent from France about Harold - still a very painful memory she carried until her death.'

The information in Harold's obituary paints a picture of a talented and able young man. He won a scholarship to the Taunton School of Art and later worked for Southwood's engraving company where he showed "*unusual skill*". At six feet tall and well built, Harold was a keen sportsman and swimmer and had won many prizes. The letter sent to his parents by his company officer described the events leading up to his death on 3rd June 1918:

"He had just come out of his dugout bivouac when a shell came unexpectedly, and caught him with its forward burst. He was hit in the neck and leg. His platoon stretcher bearers dressed him at once and conveyed him to the dressing station a short distance away. At once he was sent off in a motor ambulance. Tonight the very sad news came to us that he has died of his wounds. I do not know if left any message at the last. The officers and men of his Company deeply sympathise with you in your great loss. Believe me, yours very sincerely, F. Nicholas, Capt.