

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Herbert George Spiller



Name: Herbert George Spiller

Rank: Private

Service Number: 766878

Regiment: London Regiment

Battalion/Unit number: 28th Battalion (Artist's Rifles)

Date/year of Birth: 1881

Place of Birth: Wilton, Taunton

Place of Residence: 11 Belvedere Road West, Taunton

Date of Death: 12th May 1920

Place of Death: Taunton

Burial/Memorial: St James Cemetery, Staplegrove Road, Taunton

Herbert was born in 1881, the son of George and Emily Spiller. In 1901, they lived in Weir Villa, an impressive detached building on the corner of Staplegrove Road and French Weir Avenue. George was an ironmonger and part of a well known and influential family in Taunton at the time. George's brother, Henry James Spiller was twice mayor of Taunton, and their grandfather John Spiller, was the builder contracted to rebuild the St James church tower in the 1870's (although it was Henry James who was responsible for the completion of the work after the death of his father).

Herbert studied law and by 1910 was working as a solicitor

In 1910 Herbert is listed on the electoral roll for South Perth, Australia, at an address on Suburban Road (now Mill Point Road). With him is his wife Winifred Elva (LEWIS) whom he married on 7 March 1907 in Taunton. They sailed for Australia the same year. Two of their six children were born in Australia George Lewis in 1908 and Elizabeth Lewis SPILLER, who was born on 13 Sep 1909 in Perth. George died in infancy in Australia.

Herbert, Winifred & Elizabeth returned to England on 1 Aug 1910 on the White Star Line vessel 'Afric' and by 1911 the family had their home at 11, Belvedere Rd, Taunton, where they remained, and had four more children Josiah Lewis, Edgar George, Rebecca Elsie and Isobel Winifred.

Herbert's war record survives in the National Archive at Kew and shows that he enlisted on 11th Dec 1915. A solicitor by profession, and aged 33 when war broke out, he may have joined under the 'Derby Scheme'. This encouraged men to voluntarily register their name on the principle that once registered they would be called up for service only when necessary. As an added incentive married men were advised that they would only be called up once the supply of single men was exhausted.

The unit he joined was the 2/28th Battalion Artist Rifles, one of 26 volunteer Battalions that made up the London Regiment. The Artists Rifles was a popular unit for volunteers. It had been increased to twelve companies in 1900 and was formed into three sub-battalions in 1914, and recruitment was eventually restricted by recommendation from existing members of the battalion. It particularly attracted recruits from public Schools and universities. Many of these went on to become officers in other regiments. The cap badge depicts Mars and Athena, Gods of War and Wisdom.

Herbert spent just under 2 years in the Army Reserve before being attested into the 28th London Regiment (Artist's Rifles) on 2 Sep 1917. He was posted to France, leaving from Southampton to arrive in Le Havre on 9 Apr 1918. He saw active service in the Somme area but contracted influenza in July and was returned to England. In Dec 1918 he was reviewed as no longer fit for active service and was discharged.

Herbert died in May 1920, when the cause of death given was nephritis, (inflammation of the kidneys) and he is buried in the St James Cemetery off Staplegrove Road in Taunton. Although he is listed in the CWGC records, his grave stone is sited in the Spiller family plot. His wife, Winifred died in 1932 and they are buried together.



Herbert Spiller's gravestone, in St James Cemetery, Staplegrove Road, Taunton