

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Frederick Luff Stocker

Name: Frederick Luff Stocker (incorrectly listed on the memorial as FL Stocker)

Rank: Lieutenant

Service Number: Not known

Regiment: Royal Fusiliers

Battalion/Unit number: 28th Battalion, City of London Regiment

Date/year of Birth: 20 October 1886

Place of Birth: Kensington, London

Place of Residence: Lingleie, French Weir Road

Date of Death: 23rd August 1918

Place of Death: France

Burial/Memorial: Douchy-Les-Ayette British Cemetery

There is no record of an F.T. Stocker on the Commonwealth War Grave Commission site and all the local evidence points to this being a mistake in the engraving and the line should read F.L. Stocker for Frederick Luff Stocker.

Frederick Luff Stocker was the son of George Luff Stocker, a cycle merchant from Bedfordshire, and Maria Louise Baker, from Mantone, Connecticut. He was born in 1886 in London and baptised with his sister, Laura Louise, on 29 June 1896 (aged 10).

By the age of fourteen Frederick was working for the Great Western Railway as a clerk in the Engineers Department based at Paddington Station on an annual salary of 20 shillings. Later he was appointed to the engineering department in Taunton and in 1911 he was one of four railway employees boarding with the Holcombe family at 7, Belvedere West, Taunton. Because of his GWR employment, Frederick is also remembered on the war memorial at Taunton Station.

Frederick married Constance Ellen Cook, a draper's assistant, in Taunton on 4 June 1913.

Frederick was a keen swimmer and member of Taunton Swimming Club in the days when club activities and competitions such as races, diving and even a form of triathlon took place at the bathing station in the River Tone at French Weir. He won many awards and medals and played water polo Weston-super-mare and for Somerset in county competitions. On being elected as vice-captain of their polo team, the members of Weston-super-Mare Swimming Club presented him with a framed photograph of the team in celebration of his marriage the same year.

Frederick's war record in The National Archive has been 'weeded' but from information there and from his obituary in the Taunton Courier a brief picture of his war record can be built. In January 1915 he joined the Royal Fusiliers, (referred to as the Public School Corps in the obituary, being one of the Pals battalions originally made up exclusively of former public schoolboys). He went to France in October 1915 and soon achieved the rank of sergeant. The following year he was recommended for a commission, recorded in The London Gazette in July 1916.

Frederick was injured with a shrapnel wound in the back in September 1916, which took over 3 months to recover from in hospitals in Cambridge and Plymouth. The following year he was returned to England again, this time suffering with trench fever, a bacterial disease transmitted by body lice. Frederick returned to France for the final time in April 1918 and was killed towards the end of August during the time of the final advance of the British Army across the Somme which brought about the end of the war.

Much of the remaining papers in Frederick's record consist of a series of increasingly terse letters between Constance and the War Office as she tries to obtain probate of Frederick's will. When this was eventually resolved, his estate amounted to £353 12s 6d – equivalent to around £15,000 today.

Postscript:

The other possibility considered was Thomas Fuller Stocker from the Commonwealth War Grave Commission site. Thomas was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. The son of Major Edward Gaved Stocker and Ethel Fuller Stocker, from Cornwall, he was educated at Blundell's School, Tiverton. However, Frederick Luff Stocker seems the most likely candidate.