

**ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON**

**WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT**

# William James Totterdell



The war memorial at Luppitt, Devon, where William Totterdell grew up. He is one of ten men listed on this village memorial.

**Name:** William James Totterdell

**Rank:** Private

**Service Number:** 27300

**Regiment:** King's Shropshire Light Infantry

**Battalion/Unit number:** 6th Batallion

**Date/year of Birth:** 1899

**Place of Birth:** Lupitt, Devon

**Place of Residence:** Cathay Farm, Stockland

**Date of Death:** 1st April 1918

**Place of Death:** Flanders

**Burial/Memorial:** Savy British Cemetery

William Totterdell is one of our mystery men where we can't be entirely sure of his identity. The Borough Returns for Taunton list two men with the surname Totterdell, who enlisted in Taunton – neither seems likely to be our man since both survived the conflict. A search of the CWGC site reveals a W J Totterdell, killed in action on 1/4/1918 and other records indicate this man was born in Luppitt. The UK Soldiers Died in the Great War (accessed on [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk)) shows a William James Totterdell who enlisted in Taunton, born Luppitt but no specific connection to St James.

However, it's clear that some of the other names on the memorial were relatives of members of the congregation rather than people who had lived in the parish and perhaps this applies here, although further in-depth research would be needed to establish a connection. The church magazines of the period refer to a Mr Totterdell who was the organ blower. This was William Joseph Totterdell who lived at 23 St Augustine Street in 1911 with the family of his brother, David. It's noted that William was partly blind from birth and earlier census records find him at the West of England Institution for the Blind at St David's, Exeter.

David Thomas William Totterdell was a fellmonger in the tanyard (on Tancred Street). His son, Arthur William James Totterdell at age 13, worked for a cabinet maker learning French polishing. Arthur Totterdell enlisted in Taunton & served in 21 Battalion Machine Gun Corps in France for 4 years and was wounded four times. He survived the war and married Lily J WARNER in the Bridgwater area in the June quarter of 1921.

William James Totterdell was initially in the 7<sup>th</sup> Training Reserve Battalion and was then posted to serve in France with the 6<sup>th</sup> Bn. Shropshire Light Infantry. He was killed in action on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1918 at the age of just nineteen and is buried in the Savy British Cemetery. It is probable that his body was moved here since the cemetery was not made until 1919 when graves from the battlefields and a number of smaller cemeteries in the area were moved into it.

William is also remembered on the war memorial at St Mary's Luppitt. Not long after the war ended, perhaps because of the loss of his only son, William's father gave up the rental for Cathayes, his farm in Luppitt.