

ST JAMES CHURCH TAUNTON

WORLD WAR 1 MEMORIAL PROJECT

Cecil James Troake



Name: Cecil James Troake

Rank: Private

Service Number: 80050 (formerly 265446 Somerset LI)

Regiment: 10th (Service) Battalion

Battalion/Unit number: Devonshire Regiment

Date/year of Birth: 1892 (baptised 7th Aug 1892)

Place of Birth: Taunton

Place of Residence: Lyngleigh, Priory Avenue, Taunton

Date of Death: 8th August 1919

Place of Death: Batoum, Georgia, Salonika

Burial/Memorial: Haidar Pasha Memorial, Turkey

Cecil James was the son of James and Elizabeth Troake, born in Taunton and baptised at St James on August 7th 1892. He had an older brother John, born at Lyng, and a younger brother and sister, Albert and Winifred (known as Winnie).

The children all went to St James School, located at that time in buildings adjacent to the church. The school log books and church magazines provide many small details of the life of the family such as the tragic death of Albert in 1895, who drowned after falling through ice at French Weir.

The family were regular members of the St James congregation. We know the children went to Sunday School almost every week because they were given a prize for regular attendance. There are several other mentions, such as when Cecil was confirmed – a service notable for the failure of the electricity supply.

When war came, Cecil enlisted in Taunton into the Somerset Light Infantry but was later transferred to the 10th (Service) Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. At the beginning of May the 10th Devonshires were in Batum, in modern day Georgia and close to the border with Turkey. The war diaries record how men are being steadily demobilised to various destinations and describes entertainments that were organised. In horse races on Ascension Day (29 May 1919), the battalion entered two horses and one mule but had no winner. A football league was organised & cricket matches played against the crews of HMS Theseus and Ark Royal.

Then in June, following the signing of the Treaty at Versailles, one of the leaders of the Turkish Army in the region, Lt General Nuri Pasha, surrendered to British troops. He was held in detention in Batum. On 8th August, the diary records how his supporters ambushed the escort guards and helped him escape. Two men were killed and are named – Pte C J Troake and Pte King.

It must have been a terrible blow for James Troake to lose his son when fighting appeared to have been over. Having seen two and a half years home service, Cecil had only been overseas for four months when he died. As well as including his name on the War Memorial, a plaque was erected in church in his memory.

