



DEATH AND SERVICE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Death and Service newsletter.

It's been a busy couple of weeks since the last edition came out. Over two days I have visited a further twenty churchyards and cemeteries, photographing a further 40-or-so gravestones, ready for researching.

But the big news is that I now have an official release date for the new book. I can reveal that *Death and Service Volume II: More Commonwealth War Graves of Somerset* will be officially published on **Friday 6th October!!** Initially available through Amazon as an eBook and paperback, my amazing publishers at Mirador have helped me bring this together really quickly, so my thanks goes out to them!

There will also be an official **Book Launch Event** three weeks later, on Friday 27th October: details will be revealed in the next edition, so keep your eyes peeled for the next issue of the newsletter!

Best wishes,

Richard

Did you know?

Across Somerset, Bath's Locksbrook Cemetery has the most First World War Graves in its grounds, with 90 burials recorded there. Weston-super-Mare's Milton Road Cemetery has the next largest number of WW1 graves (46), followed by Taunton's St Mary's Cemetery (36). The St James' Cemetery in Bath and Wembdon Road Cemetery in Bridgwater both have 28 graves.

At the other end of the scale, 133 Somerset churchyards have just one First World War CWGC grave each.

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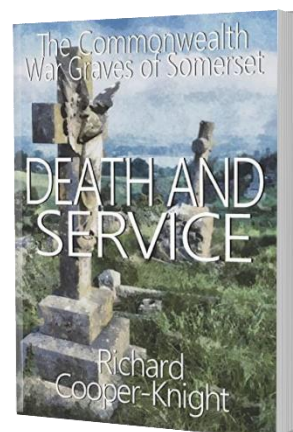
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Death and Service: The Commonwealth War Graves of Somerset is available through Amazon and all good bookshops.



GRAVE OF THE MONTH



Grave Location:

St Michael's Sanatorium
Cemetery
Axbridge
BS26 2HG

Name: Gordon, Sidney

Rank: Officer's Steward 3rd Class

Regiment: Royal Navy

Date of death: 5th March 1919

Age at time of death: 21

Cause of death: Unknown, probably tuberculosis

Sidney Vincent Gordon was born in Upton Park, Essex, on 7th May 1897. There is little information about his early life, other than his mother's name, May.

The 1911 census recorded Sidney as being an inmate at the Scattered Home for the West Ham Union, the workhouse that covered the area. At 13 years of age, he was one of the older of the thirteen students boarding in the home, which was overseen by Emma Caroline Simpson, the House Mother.

When Sidney completed his schooling, he managed to find employment as an undertaker's boy. But he sought out bigger things and, on 8th June 1914, he enlisted in the Royal Navy. His service records note that he was 5ft 6ins (1.68m) tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion.

Being underage when he enlisted, Sidney was given the rank of Boy. He was first sent to HMS Pembroke, the Royal Naval Dockyard in Chatham, for training, and remained there for a couple of months. In August 1914, Boy Gordon was moved down the coast to HMS Actaeon, a torpedo school based in Sheerness, Kent.

After five months, he moved to HMS Wildfire, another part of the Sheerness base, and it was while he was here that he turned 18, and could formally join the Royal Navy. He was given the rank of Officer's Steward 3rd Class and remained at Wildfire until the end of 1915. After a short stint back in Chatham, Sidney was given a new posting on board the supply ship HMS Tyne, where he remained until the following May.

Officer's Steward Gordon returned to HMS Pembroke once more, before being assigned to the newly launched monitor, HMS Erebus. She was to be his home until June 1917, when, having become unwell, he was posted back to HMS Pembroke.

Sidney had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis, which led to him being invalided out of the Navy on 1st August 1917. At this point his trail goes cold once more, but it is likely that, by the start of 1919, his condition had led to his admission to St Michael's.

When he died there, on 5th March 1919, Sidney was just 21 years old. Given his background, it seems probable that his mother, if she was still alive, would not have been able to afford for his remains to be brought back to Essex. Sidney Vincent Gordon was laid to rest in the sanatorium's cemetery, in the foothills of the Mendips, finally at peace.



AUGUST WANDERINGS

Despite the British summer weather, I have managed to get out and about to visit some more Somerset graveyards and cemeteries over the last few weeks. My wanderings have led me to both the far north and far west of the county, taking in (*pictured top and bottom*):

Ashbrittle, Backwell, Brompton Regis, *Brushford*, Butcombe, Cleeve, Congresbury, *Dulverton*, Dundry, Flax Bourton, *Long Ashton*, Luccombe, Minehead, Nailsea, Portishead, *Timberscombe*, Weston-in-Gordano, Winford and *Wraxall*

The Ashbrittle Yew, in St John the Baptist's Churchyard (pictured, right), is recognised as one of the oldest living things in Britain. Reputed to be over 3000 years old, the tree was mature when Stonehenge was in use.



The **Death and Service website** includes the graves of close to 1100 servicemen and women from more than 110 military regiments.

Discover more through the link below.

<https://deathandservice.co.uk/>

Until next time...

Richard