



William Thomas Aldridge (7901) was born to William and Mary Ann Hearn in 1885, and baptised on 27th December in Turnham Green Parish Church. The couple (married on 19th February 1884 in St Peter's, Hammersmith) already had a daughter, Sarah Ann. The family lived in Linden Cottage, Prince of Wales Terrace, Brentford. A son, Albert, was born in 1890, followed by Thomas in 1894.

By 1901, this growing family had moved to 8 North Road Brentford. The Census details that the Aldridge family shared the house with the Graham Family. (William Graham was a widower with four children to support). Both families lived in just two rooms each. At this time, William's father was a waterman and his mother was a laundress. Our future soldier, William (15) was a van boy. Two more siblings, Edith and Mary, were born in 1902 and 1905. William was only 22 when he married Lily White on March 23rd 1907 at St Mary the Virgin in Stanwell. His profession was recorded as Army Bandsman and at that time he was living at Tidworth, an army garrison town in SE Wiltshire.

It is unclear where William and his wife lived after their marriage. However, in July 1909 the couple had a daughter, Ivy May Aldridge. Ivy was baptised in St Pauls Church, Brentford on Aug 15th that year and the baptism record tells us that the couple were then living at 96 Murray Road Brentford and William's profession was listed as a 'dealer'. Sadly, baby Ivy died towards the end of that year. The couple then move to 5 Wellington Place, and a son Charles William was born on 17th September 1910. He was baptised on Oct 14th at St George's Church, Brentford, but died at four months. He was buried in Ealing Cemetery. This couple must have been devastated at the loss of their children. It would only be a matter of time before Lily would lose her husband too. William cannot be found in the 1911 Census. However, Lily (listed as married) can be found working as a general domestic servant at Poplars, a poultry farm in Ashford, Middlesex and William's parent are now living at 6 Shaftsbury Rd, Acton.

There are no service records for William. It is very possible that he was an Army Reservist as we know he was an Army Bandsman. His service number - 7901, indicates that he probably joined 2nd Battalion Border Regiment sometime in 1904. The 2nd Battalion were at Lyndhurst when war was declared and 64 reservists then joined the ranks - William might well have been in this number. By 5th Oct the 2nd Battalion was on its way to Belgium for a war that was expected to be over by Christmas.

It is documented that this particular battalion were worked very hard indeed during the first few months of the war. Their efforts were noted by the Brigadier who commented that it was impossible to praise this Battalion too highly for its fortitude, determination and discipline in battle. Just seven months later William was killed in action at the Battle of Festubert. This was the first British Army night attack of the war. It was brutal – over 100,000 shells were fired, resulting in 11,000 British Expeditionary Force casualties. William became one of these casualties on 16th May 1915. The battle achieved very little. William is buried at Le Touret Memorial Pas de Calais. Panel 19 & 20 and was commemorated at All Saints Church, Church Street, Isleworth



The Colours of the Border Regiment