



William Davis (1888-1916)

William Davis was born on 14th May 1888, in Silvertown Essex where London City Airport now operates. His father William was originally from the village of Holt in Wiltshire and his mother Mary was from Barking in Essex. The 1891 Census records that William Senior is a fireman and the family are living in Garfield Road, West Ham. In 1901, the family had moved to 44 Frederick Road, West Ham, Essex. Ten years later the 1911 Census shows that William Senior is an Engine Attendant, his eldest daughter Matilda (b 1879) is working in a printing company and his younger daughter Ivy (b.1896) is a typist and book keeper. William (22) is an Assistant Teacher probably somewhere in West Ham where the family were living.



William's name appears on the Isleworth War Memorial as he trained as a teacher at Borough Road College. William's 1907 application to study at the college was successful, and it appears that he started his training in 1908. The College Archives record "Little is known about 2nd Lieutenant William Davis other than he had two sisters and was reluctant to be vaccinated before entry to the school. Before the war he was a local preacher of the United Methodist Church, a leader and trustee of his church and a member of the choir". After teacher training, William was employed by the London County Council. There are no surviving army records for William. Fortunately, after the war the LCC produced Memorial Books recording the war-time service of all their members of staff who had lost their lives in the Great War. William's name and service is recorded in this book. It states. **Davis, William (1914-1918); Second Lieutenant, Essex Reg.; France 1 year; Killed in Action. 18th Oct 1916.** We can deduce that William, as a teacher, was probably firm but fair and comfortable giving orders, hence his position as a Second Lieutenant. William's regiment landed at Boulogne in May 1915 (9th Battalion, 12th Eastern Division, 35th Brigade).

In July and August 1916, William fought at the battles of Ovillers and La Boisselle, Bouzincourt and Varennes. In early October he fought at Becordel-Becourt, Montauban, and Flers. The weather was atrocious, the ground a quagmire 'oozing to the continuous fall of rain'. After months of fighting and with the constant fear of death, William must have been exhausted both physically and mentally. The Regimental War Diary documents the end of William's short life: 11.30pm 17th Oct- *'The Battalion moved back into line, 2/Lt W Davis having been previously detailed to lay out white tape parallel to the German front line..a length of about 400 ydsand in front of our own line. The Battalion's objective being Bayonet Trench'*. 3.20 am 18th Oct *'The Battalion was formed up in positions on the tape....40 yards behind a second wave carrying tools. The ground was very heavy'*. 3.40 am *The artillery barrage opened ...and both waves immediately advanced keeping perfect lines..* 3.45am *'the artillery lifted'. C company gained its objective without difficulty but B A & D were all held up by the wire which they found intact. The Officers immediately recommended looking for gaps but as they attempted to penetrate the wire they were picked off from the task by the Germans. 2nd Lt W Davis & 2/Lt A Evans...were both shot and believed to be killed'.*

William was 28 when he was killed in action in France. He is commemorated at the Thiepval Memorial Pier & Face 10D.

