

GUNNER WILLIAM ALEXANDER DAY

L/9378, B Battery, 149th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

Died aged 30 on 15 July 1916

Buried with honour in *Peronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt*; II E 25

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Peronne Road Cemetery,
Maricourt*



*Grave of Gunner W.A. Day
[C. & N. Day]*



*Royal Field
Artillery*

WILLIAM ALEXANDER DAY was born in Tewkesbury in 1886 to Benjamin Bubb Day, a general labourer, and Catherine (formerly Stephens). Benjamin was born in Tewkesbury and Catherine came from Corse, and in 1901 the family was living at 111 Oldbury Road. William was a pupil of Trinity School and, in 1901, he was a stable-boy/groom working at the Kings Head Hotel in Barton Street (now converted into flats). In 1909 he married Annie Elizabeth Smith from Bredon's Norton where they were living in 1911; William was still a groom. By 1916, however, William and Annie were living in Tewkesbury in Jeynes Buildings with their three children, Albert, Nancy and Doris.

William seems to have volunteered in Tewkesbury soon after the outbreak of war, although his casualty records indicate that he enlisted in Manchester. He joined the Royal Field Artillery; as it still used horses, it was a logical choice given his civilian occupation. He was posted to the 149th (County Palatine) Artillery Brigade, one of three such brigades in the Divisional Artillery for the 30th Division, a Kitchener's New Army Division formed in April 1915 from locally raised or 'Pals' infantry battalions in the Liverpool and Manchester areas.

William arrived in France on 11 November 1915 around the same time as the Division. The first campaign in which the Division took part was the joint Anglo-French Somme offensive, a series of battles which became known collectively as the *Battles of the Somme 1916* (1 July-18 November 1916). In the opening phase of the offensive, the *Battle of Albert* (1-13 July 1916), the 30th Division was involved in the

attack in the southern sector of the British line and achieved considerable success, unlike the ill-fated attempts further north, including the capture of Montauban. The artillery bombardment was more effective in this part of the line and it can be assumed that the 149th Brigade played its part in paving the way for the successful infantry assault. William was serving in 'B' Battery, one of four batteries in the brigade each with six 18-pounder field guns.

Gunner William Alexander Day was killed in action on 15 July 1916, two days after the nominal close of the *Battle of Albert*. As the Division was not involved in any action at that time, it is likely that he was killed during the normal artillery exchanges. William's descendants were told that he '*was in charge of the Cavalry. He got blown up among the horses – killed instantly by shell burst*'. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records indicate that he was buried initially in a battlefield grave and that after the Armistice he was re-interred in *Peronne Road Cemetery*, Maricourt. William was awarded the '*1914-15 Star*' medal.

Two of William's brothers also volunteered: Sapper Benjamin John Day served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and Private Thomas Day in the 7th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. Both survived the war, although Thomas was wounded at Gallipoli and discharged from the Army in 1916. After William's death, Annie had to take on several jobs to support the family and was always short of money. It meant that when she was too old to work she depended on her husband's family for a home for the rest of her life.