

PRIVATE ERNEST WILLIAMS

11176, 6th Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment

Died aged 22 on 13 December 1915

Buried with honour at *Birr Cross Roads Cemetery, Ypres*; IV A 8

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Birr Cross Roads Cemetery, Ypres



1914-15 Star Medal



Dorsetshire Regiment

ERNEST WILLIAMS was born in 1893 in Tewkesbury, the third son of Thomas Williams, a Shoemaker, and Sarah (formerly Garland). Thomas was born in Tewkesbury and Sarah came from Worcester. In 1891, the family of five daughters and two sons lived at 4 Mayalls Court, Church Street. Sarah died in 1897 (probably in childbirth), at which time the family comprised five daughters and four sons. In 1902 Thomas remarried, to Sarah Ann Herbert. In 1911 Ernest was a Journeyman Butcher living at home in Mayalls Court, with Thomas and Sarah as well as two of his siblings – an older brother Thomas and a younger brother Harry.

Sometime between 1911 and 1915 Ernest and his older brother Thomas, for reasons unknown, moved to Port Talbot in South Wales. They both volunteered for military service, enlisting there on the same date, 10 April 1915. They were allocated initially to the same unit, the local Territorial Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery – a classic case of brothers joining up together. Thomas remained with the Royal Horse Artillery until his death in November 1918 but Ernest was transferred soon after enlistment to an infantry battalion, the 6th (Service) Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment.

This battalion was formed at Dorchester on 6 September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Second Army. In March 1915 it was incorporated into

the 50th Infantry Brigade in the 17th (Northern) Division, landing at Boulogne on 14 July 1915.

According to Ernest's medal rolls (which mistakenly show his forename as Edward), he went to France on 13 July 1915; clearly he was already serving in the 6th Dorsetshires when they embarked for Boulogne. In December 1915 the battalion was stationed in the front line in the southern area of the Ypres Salient. Ernest was awarded the '1914-15 Star' medal.

Private Ernest Williams was listed as killed in action on 13 December 1915 although, as there were no major actions being fought at the time, it does suggest that his death was caused by trench warfare, through random shelling or sniper fire.

Ernest was originally buried in a battlefield grave or in one of the small cemeteries in the area but he was re-interred after the war. He now lies in *Birr Cross Roads Cemetery*, near Ypres, which was not created until 1917, some two years after Ernest's death. The cemetery was greatly enlarged after the war when graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and from certain smaller cemeteries.

Ernest Williams's elder brother, **Lance Bombardier Thomas Williams** [†], succumbed to influenza on 3 November 1918 and is buried in *Premont British Cemetery*, near Cambrai in France.