

CORPORAL REGINALD GEORGE WILLIAMS

10408, 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers

Died aged 28 on 17 July 1917

Buried with honour in *Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Poperinghe, Belgium*; I G 18

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Dozinghem Military Cemetery



Cpl. R. Williams [Graphic 12/6/1915]



South Wales Borderers

REGINALD GEORGE WILLIAMS was born in Tewkesbury in 1889, the fourth child of John Williams and Dorothy Harriet (formerly Venn). John was then a labourer from Tewkesbury whilst Dorothy was a laundress born in Norwich. They married in Tewkesbury in 1880 and lived in Laights Court, Church Street. Dorothy died in 1893 at the age of 34.

Reginald's obituary in the *Record* recounts his story: *'The gallant Sergeant, who was 27 years of age, was educated at the Abbey School, and was for five years in the employ of the late Mr. W. Bloxham, of Church Street. He joined the Army in 1910, and was with his regiment on Foreign Service when war broke out. He was present in the taking of Tsingtao in China, in this campaign in Gallipoli, where he was wounded in the head, and subsequently in France [when his photograph was published]. He was a steady respectable young man, and our readers will doubtless remember the excellent descriptive letters from his pen published in our columns before the present restrictions came in. He was home on leave in November last, and a fortnight before he died, he wrote that he was coming home with the intention of getting married to the young lady to whom he was engaged – Miss King of Barton Street.'*

The obituary has been proved accurate; it is also known that Reginald served until his death with the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers. In Gallipoli he disembarked at Cape Helles on 25 April and remained throughout the campaign, being wounded in June 1915. In January 1916 the division was evacuated to Egypt, before moving two months later to France in preparation for the *Battles of the Somme*, 1916.

The battalion was involved in the disastrous first day when it attacked the impregnable village of Beaumont Hamel, costing 399 casualties. After the Somme campaign, Reginald was one of the few allowed home leave.

When he re-joined the battalion it had been transferred to Ypres – but then returned to France for the *Arras Offensive* (9 April-16 June 1917). The main action was in the *Battles of the Scarpe* when it was reported that the battalion had fought *'most gallantly in April and May 1917'*. In July 1917 there were no specific actions taking place, the successful capture of *Messines Ridge* took place in June and meticulous preparations were being made for an attempt to break out from the Ypres Salient. The battalion was then mainly occupied with absorbing new recruits. Reginald may well not have been with them; his records indicate that, when he died, he was an Acting Sergeant attached to '29 Div Res'. Wherever he was serving, it is likely that he was wounded in trench warfare, possibly by random shell fire.

Corporal Reginald George Williams died on 17 July 1917 and was buried in the nearby *Dozinghem Military Cemetery*. His officer wrote: *'I saw the nurse who had been looking after him, and she told me that he was very bad, so that probably he was not able to suffer too much. He will be buried close to the Central Clearing Station, and his grave will be marked'*. Reginald was awarded the *'1914-15 Star'* medal.

Reginald's older brother, **Private Basil Williams** [†], served in the Gloucestershire Regiment and survived the war but died in 1924.

*A Poem written at the Front by
Cpl. Williams is printed on page 125*