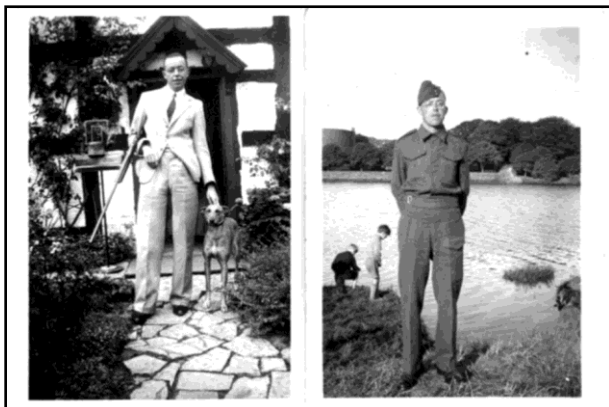


Lance Corporal EDWIN JOHN DAVIES¹

4037545, 4th Bn., King's Shropshire Light Infantry
who died age 28 on 1 July 1944

Son of Albert Henry and Francis Mary Davis; husband of Edith A. Davis, of Tewkesbury,
Remembered with honour in ST. MANVIEU WAR CEMETERY, CHEUX

The fully researched story of **L/Cpl. Davis** has been published already by **Tewkesbury Historical Society**; he was chosen as an example of a local man who had lost his life following D-Day as a commemoration of the 60th Anniversary.²



Photographs of Edwin Davis supplied by his family

Edwin Davis was a civilian, called to the colours and was one of the young soldiers whose first battle came after the D-Day landings. Like so many in that operation, he was an unseasoned soldier who quickly accustomed himself to the rigours of battle.

Born in Twynning, he lived in Chance Street after his marriage on 4 December 1939 to Edith Brookes. He also attended Tewkesbury Grammar School and his name is included on the plaque in the Town Hall. Unfortunately Reg. Eastman could not be precise about Edwin's pre-war occupation since he married into the family after Edwin's death. However, he said that "*Edwin worked as a barman in the Quinton area of Birmingham and I gather that he was a quiet and friendly individual*".

It is likely that Edwin was called-up in May 1940, when the *King's Shropshire Light Infantry* absorbed an intake of 350 raw recruits who were not 'Salopians'. Most arrived from the Potteries in Staffordshire - but did the intake include our Tewkesburian, Edwin Davis?³ He spent the next four years training.

Initially my research had been hampered by the War Office which had informed his widow that her husband had been killed on 8 June 1944. I later ascertained that, on D-Day 6 June 1944, he was still at Aldershot: it was not until 13 June that he embarked for France at Newhaven.

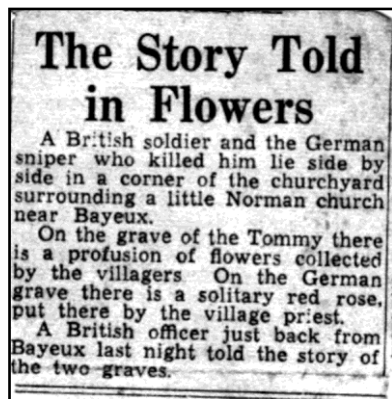
By now a L/Cpl., he was involved in the costly *Operation Epsom* which was an attempt to reach Caen. On the night of 30 June/1 July there was "*severe and accurate shelling [which] heralded a heavy enemy attack during the early morning.....; ...casualties were inevitable*". The attackers had been none other than the 9th/10th Panzer Divisions of the SS, the size of which

¹ This is the spelling used by CWGC – note the discrepancy with his parents. I will use **Davis**.

² The full article, together with detailed references, can be read in *THS Bulletin 14 (2005)* which can be purchased from all good local bookshops. In this research I was deeply grateful to his relation by marriage, Reg. Eastman and to the *KSLI* Museum, Shrewsbury.

³ Edwin's service record would have confirmed this but it was not practicable to obtain it.

was measured by the 23 captured machine guns, 25 infiltrators killed and the 10 prisoners taken. Because of this, military historians concluded that "*the success of the action gave great encouragement to the Battalion*".⁴ Unfortunately, the battle also turned Edwin into a fatal casualty.



I am still not sure exactly how he died but a clue may lie in this 'poignant story', contained in his widow's papers. It was reported that the H.Q. mortar platoon, sited in a field behind *Baron Church*, came under "very heavy small arms fire." Perhaps Edwin's life was extinguished by that snipe, who was one of "a complete phobia of the Allied troops".⁵

In the *Register* report of his death on 22 July 1944, I was impelled to further research after Mrs. Davis expressed the hope "to hear in the future the name of the ruined church in the churchyard of which her husband was laid to rest".

Mrs. Davis had moved to South Africa, and so my hopes were not high.-

In the *Register* report of his death on 22 July 1944, I learned that his widow hoped "to hear in the future the name of the ruined church in the churchyard of which her husband was laid to rest".

Sadly by the time I was able to write, my letter arrived too late since Mrs. Davis had recently died. Apparently, she had emigrated to South Africa in 1949 as a lady's companion. There she met and married an Englishman, Alfred Dowe by whom she had a son, Jimmy.⁶ Unfortunately, I was too late to fulfil the wish of Mrs. Davies.



⁴ C:\My Webs\wendysweb\4kslipart3.htm -_ftn8#_ftn8

⁵ C:\My Webs\wendysweb\4kslipart3.htm -_ftn12#_ftn12

⁶ It is Jimmy who has so kindly sent me papers belonging to his late mother.