

## **Private Edwin George Williams<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental number: 302463**

**2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment**

**born: 1898 - died: 15 July 1917**

Private Edwin George Williams was born in 1898 in Bodmin, Cornwall,<sup>1</sup> the son of Thomas Henry and Sarah Ann Williams.<sup>2</sup> His parents were both born in Wales—Thomas in about 1871 in Newport, Monmouthshire, and Sarah Ann in about 1873 in Pontypool, Monmouthshire.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas was an employee of the Great Western Railway.<sup>4</sup> He joined in January 1886 in Newport, Wales as a cleaner. Three years later he became a shunt fireman and, between 1889 and 1896, he worked his way up to become 1st Class Fireman. In 1897, he was an engine turner and then, in 1905, he became a 3rd Class Engineer. His career took him from Newport in 1886 to Landore, Wales, back to Newport, then to Bodmin, where Edwin was born, and then back to Newport, where he was “called upon to retire” because of “trade depression” in 1932. During the period, he had only one disciplinary incident—in July 1903, he was cautioned for “slightly overrunning platform when working Goods train, and failing to notice position of catch point, before setting back, resulting in engine leaving the rails.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1895, Thomas married Sarah Ann Lewis in Pembroke.<sup>6</sup> They had at least fifteen children—thirteen before 1911,<sup>7</sup> seven of whom were still living in 1911: Olive May (born in 1897),<sup>8</sup> Edwin, Reginald Thomas (born in 1899)<sup>9</sup> Doris (born in 1900),<sup>10</sup> George (born in 1901),<sup>11</sup> Clifford (born in 1903)<sup>12</sup> and Arthur (born in 1909).<sup>13</sup> At least four more children were born after 1911: Howard (born in 1911),<sup>14</sup> Ivy (born in 1913),<sup>15</sup> Raymond (born in 1915)<sup>16</sup> and Melvin (born in 1917).<sup>17</sup>

This Baptist<sup>18</sup> family lived at 26 Capel Street in Newport at least from 1901 until 1958.<sup>19</sup>

Edwin enlisted in the Manchester Regiment in Newport,<sup>20</sup> sometime after July 1916.<sup>21</sup> Less than a year later, Edwin was with the 2nd Battalion of his regiment in the trenches near Nieuport, Belgium<sup>22</sup>—perhaps the family noted later the coincidence that he would die near a village of the same name as that of his home. Around the middle of the month, the battalion was subject to heavy shelling, including gas shells, by the enemy. The 2nd Battalion relieved a battalion of the Highland Light Infantry on 11 July and was “heavily shelled during relief.”<sup>23</sup> On 12 July, “[g]as shells were freely used by the enemy.”<sup>24</sup> The following day, “A heavy bombardment commenced at 9 PM. Tear shells were used on front line and Communication trenches.”<sup>25</sup> On 15 July, “[e]nemy shelled 1st and 2nd lines. 3rd line shelled very heavily.”<sup>26</sup> Edwin may have been injured in one of these attacks because he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of gas poisoning on 15 July 1917.<sup>27</sup> His mother, who was his next of kin, was notified of his death.

Edwin was buried in Adinkerke Churchyard Extension (Grave Reference: 811).<sup>28</sup> Adinkerke is near Veurne, Belgium, and this Belgian Military Cemetery is located on the west side of the churchyard less than a kilometre from the Adinkerke Military Cemetery. Commonwealth troops held the Front from the Belgian coast inland for about 70 kilometres from June to November 1917. No. 1 CCCS was at Adinkerke for a short time in June. There are 67 Commonwealth graves from the Great War in the extension cemetery.<sup>29</sup>

His father received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.<sup>30</sup>

Edwin was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>31</sup>

Edwin's brother Reginald also served in and lost his life in the Great War. He was a milkman when he enlisted on 13 October 1916<sup>32</sup>—just before his eighteenth birthday and probably a few months after his brother. Reginald was mobilized in April 1917 and went to France with the 3rd Battalion of Cheshire Regiment (Regimental number: , arriving in Etaples on 31 March 1918. His service on the Front was short. In April 1918, while serving with the 10th Battalion, he was reported missing. He had been taken prisoner of war and later died of dysentery at the hospital in Czersk, Poland. He died on 1 November 1918—so close to the end of the war. Evidence of his death was given by A/Sergeant H. G. Burgess, who was a prisoner of war repatriated from Czersk. He is buried in Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery (Plot III, Row C, Grave 4) in Poznan, Poland. Like his brother, Reginald was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

After his death, the family reported that Reginald had eight siblings—Olive May was not listed among his siblings—but no evidence could be found of her death.

In 1939, Edwin's parents were living with his brother Howard and sister Ivy, still on Capel Street.<sup>33</sup> His father died on 6 January 1958 with probate to Edwin's brother Arthur, who was a commercial clerk.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Edwin George, Registration district: Bodmin, Volume 05C, Page 65

<sup>2</sup> "1901 Wales Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Edwin G Williams, Registration district: Newport (Monmouthshire), Sub-registration district: Newport, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 23, Household schedule number: 252, Piece: 4958, Folio: 99, Page: 37

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833–1956," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Thomas Henry Williams

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Thomas Henry Williams, District: Pembroke, County: Pembrokeshire, Volume: 11A, Page: 1535

<sup>7</sup> "1911 Wales Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Edwin Yeage William [*sic*], Registration district: Newport, Registration district number: 587, Sub-registration district: Newport, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Household schedule number: 467, Piece: 31973

<sup>8</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Olive May, Registration district: Bodmin, Volume 05C, Page 65

<sup>9</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Edwin George, Registration district: Newport Mon, Volume 11A, Page 223

<sup>10</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Doris, Registration district: Newport Mon, Volume 11A, Page 231

<sup>11</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, George Henry, Registration district: Newport Mon, Volume 11A, Page 230

<sup>12</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Clifford, Registration district: Newport Mon, Volume 11A, Page 236

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- <sup>14</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Howard, Registration district: Newport (Mon), Volume 11A, Page 564; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 13 July 2017), entry for Thomas H Williams, Ref: Ref: RG101/7422C/014/24 Letter Code: —
- <sup>15</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 16 July 2017) entry for Williams, Ivy, Registration district: Newport (Mon), Volume 11A, Page 4661; 1939 reg
- <sup>16</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 December 2017), entry for Raymond Williams, Registration district: Newport, Inferred county: Monmouthshire, Volume: 11a, Page: 516
- <sup>17</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 December 2017), entry for Melvin Williams, Registration district: Newport M, Inferred county: Monmouthshire, Volume: 11a, Page: 453
- <sup>18</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Williams, E.
- <sup>19</sup> "1901 Wales Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Edwin G Williams; "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July December 2017), entry for Thomas Henry Williams
- <sup>20</sup> "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Edwin George Williams
- <sup>21</sup> Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 July 2017), entry for Edwin George Williams
- <sup>22</sup> "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 July 2017), Regiment or unit: Manchester Regiment, Sub-unit: 2nd Battalion, Division: 32nd Division, Diary dates: 1916 Jan - 1918 Jan  
Piece description: Piece 2392/2: 2 Battalion Manchester Regiment (1916 Jan - 1918 Jan), Piece number: 2392
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Williams, E.
- <sup>28</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Williams, E. G., Service No: 302463
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