

Driver Christmas Williams[©]

Regimental number: 194239

"D" Battery, 174th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: 1886–died: 4 October 1918

One would have thought that the first name Christmas would be fairly rare: yet it appears that over 200 children (both boys and girls) born in Wales in the 1880s were given the name Christmas.¹ Driver Christmas Williams was one of them. Over several generations, a number of less common names were given to children in the Williams family—Christmas, Garfield, Glandon, Malachi, and Christabel.

Christmas was born in 1886 in Merthyr Tydfil (called Merthyr throughout this biography), Glamorganshire,² about 40 kilometres north of Cardiff, Wales. His parents were David Williams and the former Elizabeth Ellis Angove, who had married in 1876 in Merthyr.³ David was born in about 1857 in Freystrop, Pembrokeshire, Wales⁴ and Elizabeth in 1853 in Redruth, Cornwall, England.⁵ They had 10 children, 2 of whom died before 1911.⁶ In addition to Christmas, the children probably included:⁷

- Ada (born on 14 June 1877)⁸
- Honor Elizabeth (born on 21 March 1879)⁹
- Janney (born in 1881 and probably died the same year)¹⁰
- Richard John (born in 1883 and died the following year)¹¹
- David John (born on 22 June 1888)¹²
- Garfield (born in 1890)¹³
- Glandon Malachi (born on 13 May 1893)¹⁴
- Christabel (born on 3 December 1896)¹⁵

Their father David was a coal miner. In 1881, the family was living at 61 Taft Street in Merthyr.¹⁶ In 1891, they had moved to 2/3 Prospect Place,¹⁷ and, in 1901, they were at the same address, but Elizabeth was now working for herself as a greengrocer.¹⁸ Christmas was with his maternal grandparents when the census was taken in 1901. His grandparents, Richard and Honor Angove, lived in Phillack, Cornwall, about 15 kilometres from Redruth. Christmas was an apprentice barber.¹⁹

In 1911, his parents and four of their children were living at Penzance House in Merthyr. David was now a fireman at the colliery.²⁰ Christmas was not with them because he was married to Beatrice Amelia Cole (born on 27 March 1885²¹);²² they were probably wed in 1905 in Cardiff.²³ In 1911, Christmas was a platelayer in a coal mine and the family was living at 27 Cottrel Street in Merthyr with their first three children:²⁴

- Phyllis Madeline (born in 1906)²⁵
- Glandon Christmas (born on 20 June 1908)²⁶
- Christabel Beatrice (born on 5 February 1910)²⁷

Christmas and Amelia had two more children before he enlisted to serve in the Great War:

- Alfred David (born in 1912)²⁸
- Florence Elizabeth (born in 1914)²⁹

In about July 1916³⁰ Christmas enlisted in Cardiff, joining the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery,³¹ and he was a driver with the 174th Brigade of the RFA when he died.³² At the end of September 1918, his brigade was stationed in northern France.³³ On 29 September, the brigade engaged in harassing fire in support of a minor operation—that is what it had been doing for most of the previous few days. Two days earlier, the batteries had fired in support of a 1st Canadian Division attack.

It is not known how Christmas was injured, but he was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 29 September with shrapnel wounds that penetrated his abdomen and left arm. He survived for a few days but succumbed to his wounds on 4 October 1918.³⁴

A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not soon die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.³⁵

Christmas was buried in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 8, Row A, Grave 87) on 4 October with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.³⁶ Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.³⁷ No. 1 CCCS arrived at the beginning of September 1918 and was stationed near Duisans for two months.³⁸

A notification letter was sent to his wife at 43 Wedmore Road, Grayston, Cardiff.³⁹ She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.⁴⁰ Christmas was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).⁴¹

Two of Christmas' brothers enlisted to serve in the Great War. **Garfield** tried to enlist on 29 October 1915 (regimental number 78128).⁴² At the time, he was a hairdresser and living with his parents at Penzance House. He planned to join the Royal Army Medical Corps but was discharged only a few weeks later—he was considered unlikely to make an effective soldier because his eyesight was congenitally defective.

His younger brother **Glandon** also enlisted in 1915.⁴³ He too was living at home but working as a colliery clerk. He joined the Labour Corps (regimental number 44886) and was mobilized in February 1917. He probably first went overseas in May 1917 and was demobilized in late 1919. Like his brother Christmas, he was probably awarded the British War and Victory Medals. While he was still serving, Glandon married Winifred J. James in Merthyr in 1918.⁴⁴ In 1939, they were living at 24 Mervyn Street in Merthyr, where Glandon was a colliery pay clerk.⁴⁵ He died on 20 June 1960 in Merthyr.⁴⁶

Two of Christmas' siblings moved away from Wales. **Ada** probably married William George Grist in Islington, London, in 1901.⁴⁷ A few months later, they were living at 4 Annette Road in Islington with an infant son, where William was a market clerk.⁴⁸ Ten years later, they had moved to 30 Wedmore Gardens, Upper Holloway, in Islington North.⁴⁹ By 1939, Ada was a widow and working as a housekeeper at Rose Cottage, West Penwith, in Cornwall, the county of her birth.⁵⁰

Honor married George Herbert Lewis in 1901.⁵¹ Just after their marriage, they were living at 124 Tewkesbury Street in Cardiff, where George was a railway signalman.⁵² Ten years later, they and four children were living at 24 Cornewall Street in Hereford, Herefordshire, and George was a

managing salesman.⁵³ In 1939, Honor was a widow, living at 72 Coleshill Road in Birmingham, Warwickshire.⁵⁴ She probably died in Coventry, in the West Midlands, in 1975.⁵⁵

Two siblings remained in Wales. Christmas' brother **David** was a hairdresser and living with his parents in 1911. In 1939, he was living at 2 Station Square in Merthyr, probably with his wife Edith Alice and two daughters.⁵⁶ He died in Merthyr on 26 April 1954.⁵⁷ **Christabel** married Sydney G. Heath in 1920 in Merthyr and, in 1939, they were living at 23 Victoria Street in Merthyr. She died there on 15 July 1976.⁵⁸

Janney was given this first name at birth. She was probably born in March 1881 because, at the age of 1 month, she appeared in the census (taken on 3 April 1881) with the family and her name was recorded as Fanny Williams.⁵⁹ When she was baptized on 8 May 1881, her name was recorded as Jane. No further evidence was found of Jane. There were several deaths of a Jane Williams at a young age in the Merthyr in the 1880s—one who died at the age of 1 in 1882. Perhaps this was the third Williams daughter.

Christmas' widow Beatrice remarried after the war; she wed William Seaborne in 1919.⁶⁰ Just before the Second World War, they were living at 43 Wedmore Road in Cardiff, where William was a railway motor driver. Their son, Robert, born on 11 May 1924, was living with them and was a sheet metal worker's assistant.⁶¹ Beatrice died in Cardiff at the age of 70.⁶²

Nothing is known about three of Christmas' own children—Phyllis, Alfred and Florence. Son Glandon married Eveline Day in 1930⁶³ and died in Norwich, Norfolk, in November 1996.⁶⁴ Daughter Christabel married William F. Charles in 1910⁶⁵ and, in 1939, they were living at 45 Hereford Street in Cardiff with two children.⁶⁶ She died in 1986.⁶⁷

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¹ "All England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 June 2020), entry for the first name Christmas for births in Wales in 1885 +/- 5 years

² "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Williams, Christmas, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume 11A, Page 550

³ "England & Wales Marriages 1837-2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2020), entry for David Williams, District: Merthyr Tydfil, County: Glamorganshire, Volume: 11A, Page: 620

⁴ "Wales, Select Births and Baptisms, 1541-1907," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for David Williams, FHL Film Number: 105141

⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Elizabeth Ellis Angove, Registration district: Redruth, Inferred county: Cornwall, Volume: 5c, Page: 266

⁶ "1911 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2020), entry for David Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Registration district number: 590, Sub-registration district: Lower Merthyr Tydfil, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 18, Household schedule number: 195, Piece: 32442

⁷ It was difficult to identify the children with certainty because there were at least two Williams-Angove families in Merthyr Tydfil in the 1880s and 1890s. There are several other children who might have been the children of David and Elizabeth, but the evidence is not conclusive.

⁸ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Ada Crist [*sic*], Schedule number: 11, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: WBVN, Registration district: 300-3

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- ⁹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Honor E. Lewis, Schedule number: 152, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: QBKH, Registration district: 384/8
- ¹⁰ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 June 2020) entry for Williams, Janney, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume: 11a, Page: 472; "GRO online index-death," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Williams, Jane, Volume 11A, Page 299
- ¹¹ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Williams, Richard John, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume: 11a, Page: 495; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Richard John Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Inferred county: Glamorganshire, Volume: 11a, Page: 318
- ¹² "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for David J. Williams, Schedule number: 20, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: XHNX, Registration district: 590/2
- ¹³ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Williams, Garfield, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume: 11a, Page: 615
- ¹⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Glandon M. Williams, Schedule number: 208, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: XHNU, Registration district: 590/2
- ¹⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Christabel Heath, Schedule number: 97, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: XHNW, Registration district: 590/2
- ¹⁶ "1881 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2020), entry for David Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Sub-registration district: Lower Merthyr Tydfil, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 15c, Piece: 5311, Folio: 58, Page: 1
- ¹⁷ "1891 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2020), entry for Christmas Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Sub-registration district: Lower Merthyr Tydfil, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 4435, Folio: 102, Page: 32
- ¹⁸ "1901 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for David Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Sub-registration district: Lower Merthyr Tydfil, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 34, Household schedule number: 67, Piece: 5027, Folio: 69, Page: 12
- ¹⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams, Registration district: Redruth, Sub-registration district: Phillack, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 2245, Folio: 62, Page: 20, Household schedule number: 122
- ²⁰ "1911 Wales Census," entry for David Williams
- ²¹ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for William Seabourne, Reference: RG101/7272J/018/8, Letter code: XGTZ
- ²² "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914-1923," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams, Reference Number: 5/W/1232
- ²³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christopher [sic] Williams, Registration district: Cardiff, Inferred county: Glamorgan, Volume: 11a, Page: 678. In spite of the discrepancy in first name, it is assumed that this was Christmas' marriage to Beatrice, as her name corresponds with other records.
- ²⁴ "1911 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Registration district number: 590, Sub-registration district: Lower Merthyr Tydfil, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 17, Household schedule number: 257, Piece: 32441
- ²⁵ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Williams, Phyllis Madeline, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume: 11a, Page: 283

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- ²⁶ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Glandon Christmas Williams, Registration district: Norwich, Inferred county: Norfolk, Register number: C18B, District and sub-district: 6391C, Entry number: 159
- ²⁷ “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry*, entry for Christabel Heath
- ²⁸ “GRO online index (birth),” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Williams, Alfred David, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Volume: 11a, Page: 1707
- ²⁹ “GRO online index (birth),” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Williams, Florence Elizabeth, Registration district: Cardiff, Volume: 11a, Page: 1006
- ³⁰ 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: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams
- ³¹ “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams
- ³² “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Williams, C.
- ³³ “174th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery war diary,” *The National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 25 June 2020), Catalogue reference: WO-95-2574-3j
- ³⁴ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Williams, C.
- ³⁵ “Casualty Clearing Station,” *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station: accessed 2 May 2020)
- ³⁶ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Williams, C.
- ³⁷ “Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 7 October 2015)
- ³⁸ “War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31,” *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>: accessed 17 June 2015)
- ³⁹ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Williams, C.
- ⁴⁰ “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams
- ⁴¹ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams
- ⁴² “British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Garfield Williams. Unless otherwise specified, all information about Garfield’s military service comes from this source.
- ⁴³ “British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Glandon Malachi Williams. Unless otherwise specified, all information about Glandon’s military service comes from this source.
- ⁴⁴ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Glando [*sic*] M. Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Inferred county: Glamorganshire, Volume: 11a, Page: 1100
- ⁴⁵ “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry*, entry for Glandon M. Williams
- ⁴⁶ “England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Glandon Malachi Williams
- ⁴⁷ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Ada Williams, Registration district: Islington, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1b, Page: 399

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- ⁴⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Ada Grist, Registration district: Islington, Sub-registration district: Highbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 36, Piece: 202, Folio: 12, Page: 16, Household schedule number: 133
- ⁴⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Christmas Williams, Registration district: Islington, Registration district number: 10, Sub-registration district: Tufnell, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 09, Piece: 784
- ⁵⁰ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Ada Crist [*sic*]
- ⁵¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Honour Elizabeth Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Inferred county: Glamorgan, Volume: 11a, Page: 823
- ⁵² "1901 Wales Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Honor E. Lewis. Registration district: Cardiff, Sub-registration district: Central Cardiff, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Household schedule number: 309, Piece: 4977, Folio: 195, Page: 59
- ⁵³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 June 2020), entry for Honor Elizabeth Lewis, Registration district: Hereford, Registration district number: 337, Sub-registration district: Hereford City, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 01, Piece: 15700
- ⁵⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Honor E. Lewis
- ⁵⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Honor Elizabeth Lewis, Registration district: Coventry, Inferred county: West Midlands, Volume: 33, Page: 0179
- ⁵⁶ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for David J. Williams
- ⁵⁷ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for David John Williams
- ⁵⁸ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 June 2020), entry for Christabel Heath
- ⁵⁹ "1881 Wales Census," *Ancestry*, entry for David Williams
- ⁶⁰ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2020), entry for William Seabourne, District: Cardiff, County: Glamorganshire, Volume: 11A, Page: 1186
- ⁶¹ "1939 Register," *Findmypast*, entry for William Seabourne
- ⁶² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 June 2020), entry for Beatrice A. Seabourne, Registration district: Cardiff, Inferred county: Glamorganshire, Volume: 8b, Page: 138
- ⁶³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Glandon C. Williams, Registration district: Cardiff, Inferred county: Glamorganshire, Volume: 11a, Page: 839
- ⁶⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry*, entry for Glandon Christmas Williams
- ⁶⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Christabel B. Williams, Registration district: Merthyr Tydfil, Inferred county: Glamorgan, Volume: 11a, Page: 1971
- ⁶⁶ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Christabel B. Charles, Schedule number: 192, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: XGTZ, Registration district: 588/3
- ⁶⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 June 2020), entry for Christobel [*sic*] Beatrice Charles, Registration district: South Glamorgan, Inferred county: South Glamorgan, Volume: 28, Page: 2192