

OWEN WILLIAMS (DADCU),
DAVID MORGAN WILLIAMS &
OWEN JOHN WILLIAMS

As I grew up, my Grandfather Wynford would talk fondly of ‘the twins’ his brothers who were killed in the Great War. Twins David Morgan Williams (known as Dai) and Owen John Williams (known as Jack), were born in 7 Queen’s Terrace Cardigan, West Wales on 28 February 1895. Their parents, my Dadcu and Mamgu, Owen, a blacksmith and Catherine, had eight children in total including the twins. Their siblings were Caradog, Trevor, Wynford (my grandfather), Bessie, Eluned and Katie.

*Owen (Jack) was a member of the Territorial Unit C company 1/4th battalion Welsh Regiment. The Territorials were away on annual camp in Porthmadoc when they were recalled to Cardigan arriving by train at 10.00 p.m. on the Monday night 3rd August 1914. As a busy shipping port, Cardigan had already sent its 60 naval reservists to Devonport that morning as storms were brewing over Europe. The Territorials, preceded by the Gwaun Cae Gurwen band, were marched to their headquarters in the Town Drill Hall in Finch Square. The next day they got their equipment in order and were being given medicals when war was declared. Instructions were received the following day, 5th August, the day of the local Agricultural Show, which was rushed to a close so that the town could see the men off. At 5.00 p.m. the men paraded at the Drill Hall and headed by the band once again, marched up to the Guildhall through the crowded streets. Mayor R W Picton Evans who had fought in the Boer War, addressed them, wishing them God Speed for their journeys. The men marched to the station and boarded the waiting train for Dale in Pembrokeshire.

In July 1915, Owen embarked at Devonport bound for Port Said, Egypt where his regiment stayed until ordered to Mudros Harbour where they arrived on 5th August. The troops had been at sea in harsh conditions for three weeks without landing and the men were physically unfit for battle in the height of the hot weather as they found themselves at Gallipoli. The 4th battalion Welsh Regiment had completed disembarkation on 9th August, coming under shellfire and suffering casualties. Early on 10th August they took part in a renewed attack at Suvla Bay where they were met by murderous fire. Captains Howard and Green commanding the two leading companies were both killed, but Captain Green's company seized a ruined house on a knoll and held on for a while before being driven back.

Owen was wounded badly in both legs and was evacuated to Alexandria where he died on 30th August 1915. Owen is buried at Alexandria Chatby Military and War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt (F.172). Private Andrew Thorn, who also served at Gallipoli and was evacuated home, later recalled that Owen had been wounded badly in both legs, but remained happy and cheerful through it all. Private Thorn remained with Owen throughout the night he had been injured and as there were no splints available, they had used rifles instead and bandaged him with putties. Among our family memorabilia, I have photographs of Jack, the telegram that my great grandparents received telling them that he had been seriously wounded and lots of letters.



Family portrait of the Williams family
 From left, top row: Bessie, Owen (Jack), David (Dai), Owen (Dadcu), Trevor
 From left, bottom row: Wynford, Catherine (Mamgu), Eluned, Caradog, Katie.

Prior to the war David (Dai), Owen's twin brother, worked at the Post Office; he enlisted in April 1915 and served as a rifleman with the 8th battalion, London regiment, Post Office rifles. After six months of training he was drafted out to France on 20th October 1915.

David died of wounds received in the battle on 10th June 1917 at 22 years old. David is buried at White House Cemetery, Ypres, West Vlaanderen, Belgium (II.C.25).

The twins are both remembered at Cardigan and District War Memorial Hospital formerly The Priory designed by John Nash. The Memorial Hospital was opened on 28th July 1922 by Dame Margaret Lloyd George, wife of the Prime Minister David Lloyd George. This is where I was born 40 years later. Owen and David are also commemorated on the memorial in Bethania Chapel, Cardigan where they were worshippers. The parish roll of honour located on the south wall of St Mary's Church Cardigan also remembers the boys among 94 others who lost their lives in the Great War. The twins are also remembered on Cardigan Town Cenotaph.

Owen Williams senior (my Great Grandfather, Dadcu) enlisted on 5 July 1915 as a War Munitions Volunteer, then again on 20 July 1915, but was discharged on 1 June 1916 being no longer physically fit for war service (see service record page 1). He served as a Private in the Army Service Corps (no 115939) for 318 days – he worked in munitions initially from 20 July 1915 to 6 August 1915, but on 7 August 1915 went over to France where he served until 2 December 1915. He was injured but served at home from 3 December 1915 to 1 June 1916 until his discharge.

