

## Private 33029 Walter Davies

10th Battalion South Wales Borderers  
1886 -1917



### Life in the Community

Walter's family lived in a cottage in Bishpool Lane. At the time of the Census in April 1891 he was a scholar, 5 years of age living with his father William (34) who was employed as a Labourer, his mother Caroline (33), his brother William (15), and his three sisters Emily(8) and Alice (3) and Mable Florence(1).

At the time of the Census in April 1901 he was 15 years of age and, like his father and brother William he was a Limestone Quarryman. They all lived in the same cottage with his mother Caroline (43), and his four sisters Emily(18) and Alice (13) Mable Florence(10) and Edith (4).

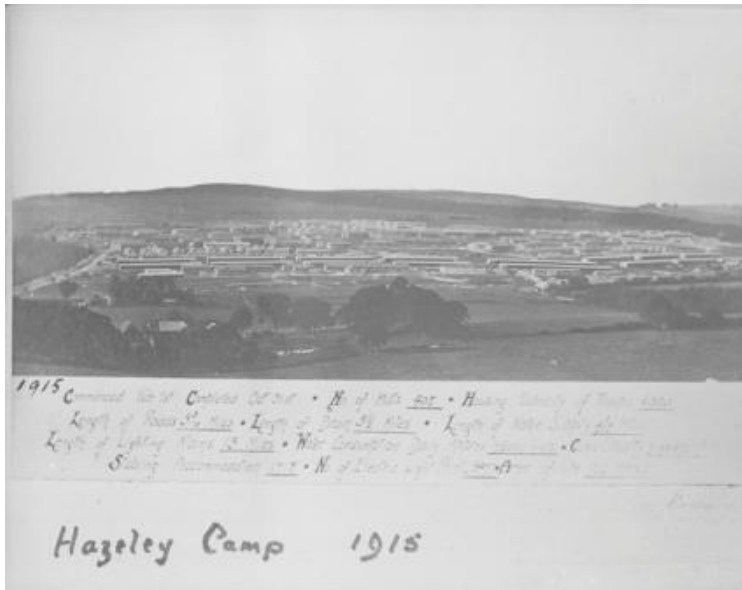
At the time of the Census in April 1911 he was 25 years of age and still employed as a Limestone Quarryman with his father and brother at John Davies & Company Quarry. They all lived in the same cottage with his mother Caroline (53), and his two sisters Mable Florence (20) and Edith (14).

Walter married Ethel Agnes Lucy Theobald at St Peters Church Llandevaud on 11th August 1913 witnesses were William Davies, Mabel Florence Davies, Celia Elizabeth Davies and Thomas Carman.

Their first son Walter John Davis was born on 27th March 1914 and Christened on 10th May 1914 at Llandevaud Church. Their second son Bernard William Edward Davies was born 16th February 1916 and Christened on 3rd June 1916. They lived at Wisteria Cottage, Llandevaud but moved to 6 Livingstone Place, Maindee after June 1916.

### Military Service

It is not clear from the remaining service records when Walter enlisted into the 10th (1st Gwent) Battalion, South Wales Borderers which was raised at Brecon in October 1914 by the Welsh National Executive Committee as part of Kitchener's New Army. After initial training close to home they moved to Colwyn Bay and joined the 115th Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division when it was formed on the 29th of April 1915.



They moved to Hursley Park near Winchester in July 1915 but then to Hazeley Down Camp for final training. It had taken nine months to build this military transit camp on a 105 acre site. Facilities included water, electricity, more than five miles of roads, huts to accommodate up to 6,510 troops and stabling for 1,718 horses.

Walter was with the Battalion when it was mobilised for war and proceeded to France, landing at Le Havre on the 3rd of December 1915. They were engaged in various actions on the Western front. On 7th July 1916 they were in action at Mametz Wood on The Somme, suffering severe casualties. The first attack failed to reach the wood. Welsh soldiers, who were expected to make a frontal assault in daylight on German positions, were machine-gunned as they moved across open fields. 10th July saw another assault on the wood this time the attack was launched at dawn and was preceded by a heavy artillery barrage of German positions. The attackers still had to cross hundreds of yards of open ground in the teeth of machine gun and rifle fire. Many men were cut down, but the Welsh troops forced their way into the wood, where they outnumbered the German defenders by three-to-one.

Wood fighting was brutal, much of it involving hand-to-hand combat, and German resistance was fierce. The plan of attack had envisaged the wood being taken by 08:15 on 10 July - in fact it took until 12 July for the enemy to withdraw completely.

By dawn on 12 July, Mametz Wood had been taken and the 38th (Welsh) Division was relieved and taken out of the front line. Overall, the division suffered severe casualties and did not return to major action for more than 12 months.

In 1917 they were again in action in the Battle of Passchendaele (Third Battle of Ypres) which was one of the major campaigns of the First World War.

As was the norm for any major Allied offensive, on 18 July 1917 a heavy preliminary artillery bombardment was effected for the ten days prior to the launch of the attack at 03:50 on 31 July. The bombardment made use of 3,000 guns which expended four and a quarter million shells. Given such an onslaught the German Fourth Army fully expected an imminent offensive: the element of surprise was entirely absent.

Thus, when the attack was launched across an 18 kilometre front, German Fourth Army was in place to hold off the main British advance around the Menin Road, and restricted the Allies to fairly small gains to the left of the line around Pilckem Ridge. Similarly, the French were halted further north by the German Fifth Army.

British attempts to renew the offensive over the course of the next few days were severely hampered by the onset of heavy rains, the heaviest in 30 years, which churned the Flanders lowland soil into a thick muddy swamp. Tanks found themselves immobile, stuck fast in the mud.



Similarly, the infantry found their mobility severely limited as in places the mud had become so deep that both men and horses were drowned, lost forever in the stinking quagmire. Ironically the very force of the preliminary bombardment had itself destroyed drainage systems, exacerbating the problem. In addition, the artillery shells that had rained down in the days prior to the attack's launch had peppered the very ground that needed to be traversed by the advancing Allied forces.

As a consequence, no renewed major offensive could be contemplated until 16 August when the attack was resumed, to little effect. Stalemate reigned for another month until an improvement in the weather prompted another attack on 20 September. The Battle of Menin Road Ridge, along with the Battle of Polygon Wood on 26 September and the Battle of Broodseinde on 4 October, established British possession of the ridge east of Ypres. The eventual capture of what little remained of Passchendaele village by British and Canadian forces on 6 November the battle had taken over three months with 325,000 Allied and 260,000 German casualties



Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
DAVIES, Walter	S. Wales B'd. Pte.	Pte.	33029.
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	7/1/01 B. 13.	2691	K. in A. 31/7/17.
BRITISH	do	do	
15 STAR	7/1/02 1.582		
Theatre of War first served in	W. France		
Date of entry theatre	3/12/15		

Walter was reported "Killed in Action" on 31st July 1917. At the time of his death Walter was reported as the son William and Carrie Davies, of Christchurch, Newport; husband of Ethel Agnes Lucy Davies, of 6, Livingstone Place, Maindee, Newport, Monmouthshire.

The Army record of soldiers effects show that his widow received £1-12s-8d on the 20th December 1917 and a War Gratuity of £9-00 on 22nd November 1919. This would have the equivalent purchasing power of £380 in 2017.



### Medal Entitlement

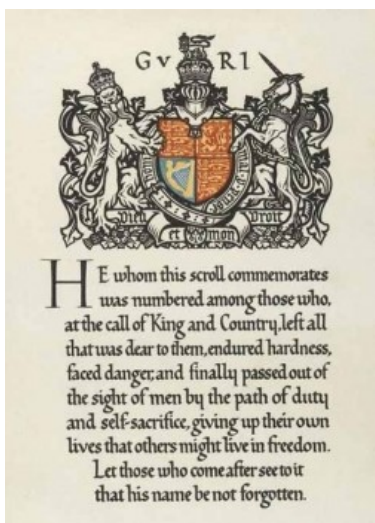
Private 33029 Walter Davies's medal entitlement was the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

In the 1920's when the First World War medals were issued they were commonly referred to as "Pip, Squeak and Wilfred".

It coincided with a popular comic strip published by the Daily Mirror newspaper which first appeared on 12th May 1919. Pip was the dog, Squeak the penguin and Wilfred the young rabbit. For some reason the three names of the characters became associated with the three campaign medals being issued at that time to many thousands of returning servicemen, and they stuck.

The medals were issued to the fallen serviceman or woman's legatees if a Will existed. If no Will existed, they were issued to the next-of-kin in the order of precedence laid down in Army Order 256 of 1917.

This Scroll accompanied the medals of servicemen and women who fell in the War and carried the full Name, Rank and Number beneath the last line of the script.



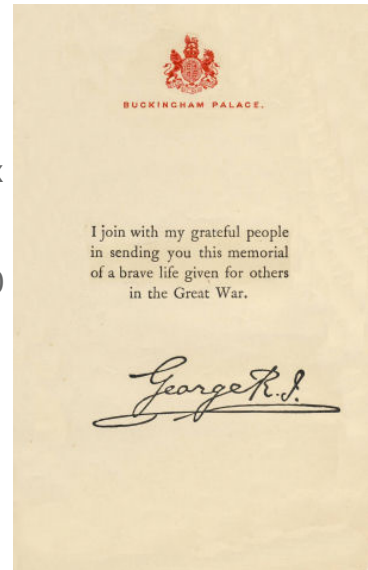
HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.



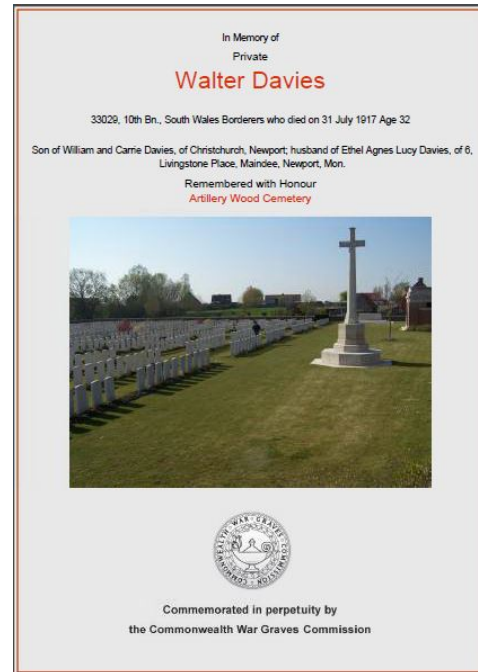
## Commemoration of the Fallen



The Bronze Memorial Plaque was issued to the next of kin of servicemen or women who had fallen in the Great War. It just had the recipient's name cast in the box above the lion's head no rank was given as it was intended to show equality in their sacrifice. 1,355,000 plaques were issued, which used a total of 450 tonnes of bronze. 600 of these plaques were issued to women. Distribution started in November 1919 and they continued to be issued into the 1930s to commemorate people who died as a consequence of the war. The circular shape and coin-like appearance soon contributed to the nickname of this memorial plaque becoming widely known as the "Dead Man's Penny", the "Death Penny", "Death Plaque" or "Widow's Penny".



Walter is buried at Artillery Wood Cemetery Boezinge in Belgium. There are 1,307 First World War casualties buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 506 of the burials are unidentified but special memorials commemorate 12 casualties known or believed to be buried among them.



Walter is also remembered on the Christchurch War Memorial and the Magor War Memorial and in the Book of Remembrance held on the Peoples Collection Wales website.

The Newport cenotaph was unveiled by Lord Tredegar in June 1923, to commemorate the local people who died in active service in the First World War. It now also commemorates people who died in subsequent wars. There are no names on the memorial but Private 33029 Walter Davies's name appears on the listing together with the names of his son [Petty Officer 145335 Walter John \(Jack\) Davies](#) and his brother-in-law [Lance Sergeant 17082 Edward George Theobald](#).