

MEN NAMED ON THE GRETTON WAR MEMORIAL

**Erected to the glory of the men of the village who gave
their lives for their country in the Great War**

SECOND WORLD WAR

EDWARD COTTERELL DAVIS

ERNEST ALBERT DAVIS

SIDNEY FRANK HOBBS

EDWARD COTTERELL DAVIS

Private 5434630 Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

Died May 29, 1940, at sea, aged 35. Commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial

Edward was one of the four sons of George and his second wife, Anna Maria Davis who were living at 119 Highfield Road Birmingham. when the death of their oldest son James was killed fighting with the Warwickshire Regiment near Arras on May 9, 1917. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial. He was also the brother of Ernest, who is buried in Gretton churchyard.

The family moved to the Gretton area sometime in the 1920's with their three remaining sons and three daughters. Edward married a local girl. Jane. In the 1911 census George senior, who was born in Worcester, gave his occupation as dairyman, so the family may have moved for him to take a new job.

At the beginning of the war, Edward joined up and was sent to the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry Regiment. His regiment was sent to France, where his battalion was part of the 4th Army Division. They were sent to Belgium to try to push back the invading Germans, and were involved in fighting at Avelgem, on the river Escaut. A bridge was blown up to make it difficult for the Germans to pursue them, and the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry withdrew west through the areas fought over in the First World War, south of Ypres, sometimes fighting German army units.

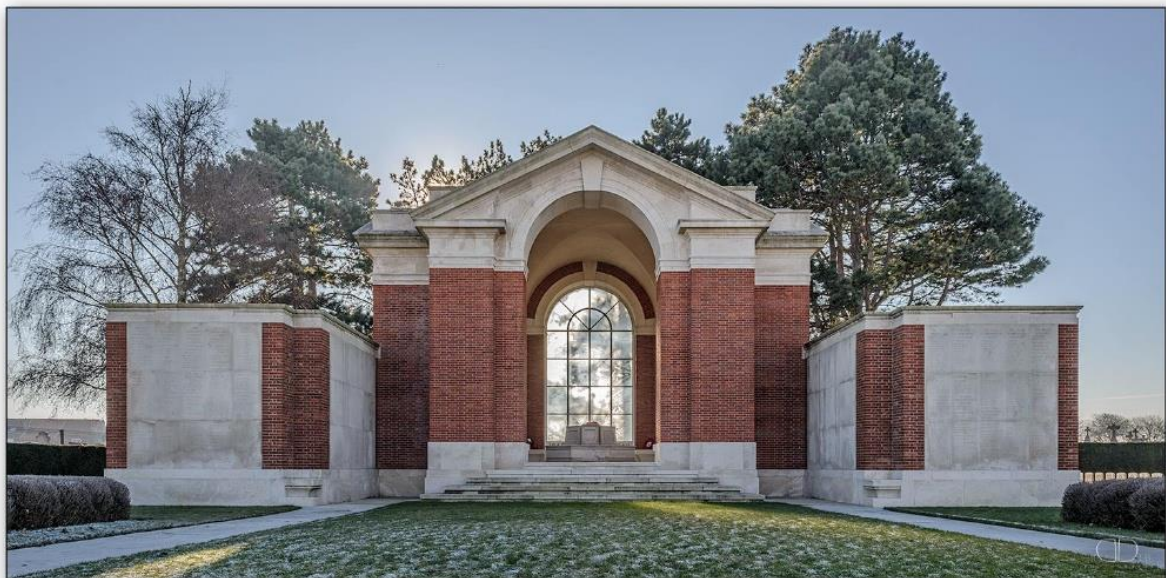
Edward made it back to the beaches of Dunkirk where he was picked up. The Germans were continually bombing the beaches and the ships trying to rescue the British and many French soldiers crowded on the beaches and in the water.

Edward was picked up but the ship which was rescuing him was sunk. Members of the family heard that one of the bombs which sank the ship actually went straight down the funnel, which did happen to the destroyer HMS Grenade, on May 29, 1940. The ship was hit several times and was then towed out of the harbour where it sank. Edward was

recorded as having been lost at sea. His body was never found, and he is commemorated on the Dunkirk memorial, in France where there are 4.500 names.



HMS Grenade



The Dunkirk Memorial



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

The Queen and I offer you
our heartfelt sympathy in your
great sorrow.

We pray that your country's
gratitude for a life so nobly
given in its service may bring
you some measure of consolation.



George R.I.

**The letter sent to the Davis family by the King and sent to the families of all who
died in service during the war.**

ERNEST ALBERT DAVIS

Corporal 5493475, The Gloucestershire Regiment. Died 1 February 1942, Age 34.

Buried in Christ Church, Gretton and included on the Memorial in the church.

Ernest, the younger brother of Edward (above) was married to Mary Edmunds in Cheltenham in 1938. The card sent by Ernest shows she was living with Mrs Trigg the Gretton school caretaker, while Ernest was away in January 1940, but it is not certain where their home in Gretton was. They had two sons.

Ernest was born in 1908 and was one of the four sons of George and his second wife, Anna Maria Davis who were living at 119 Highfield Road Birmingham. when their oldest son James was killed fighting with the Warwickshire Regiment near Arras on May 9, 1917. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.

Although the Soden family remembered for the loss of three sons, the Davis family suffered a similar loss, but over a longer period, and were a less well-known family.

Ernest joined a local football team - he sits on the right on the ground in the photograph, with dark socks.



Written by Carol Harris. Updated by Gretton Village Association.

He joined the Army on June 9, 1939, before the outbreak of the war and left England with the 5th Gloucesters on January 14, 1940, when Ernest sent the official and censored card. The Germans had invaded France, and the British Expeditionary Force was sent to try and drive them back.

They spent the winter at Thumeries. after a brief halt at Caudebec, training and preparing anti-tank obstacles. In the spring they moved into the front line to confront the Germans. On March 3, 1940, the battalion was involved in a fierce fight at Grindorff, near the German border. They then moved back to Auby and on May 13 they were at Waterloo near Brussels. They then faced a long march from Brussels to Bruyelle on the river Escault, where they were again involved in heavy fighting. On May 22 came the order to withdraw towards Dunkirk – more long marches.



Ernest's unit in the 5th Gloucesters

By May 25 there was continual fighting and the Gloucesters were ordered to hold outpost positions in the small villages of Arneke and Ledringhem, where they prepared to make a stand. But they were caught by the Germans wheeling round to try and cut off the escape to Dunkirk, on May 27, with fighting going on all around them, at Areke and Cassel, the Gloucesters decided to try and withdraw, but not before enemy mortar bombardment and sniper and shell fire made it difficult to plan.

Ernest Davis seems to have been with his neighbour from Gretton, Sidney Hobbs when Sidney was wounded, possibly in the churchyard as they Germans fought their way through the village. As the Gloucesters withdrew in silence and single file through the burning village in darkness. Sidney Hobbs was left behind with other wounded men in the school and died some time during the night.

The other men, including Ernest Davis, reached Herzelee at dawn and moved on to Bambecque, having taken a few German prisoners on the way. An officer in the 8th Worcesters who saw them coming wrote that he saw 'dirty and haggard' men, with 'eyes sunken and red from lack of sleep, and their feet as they marched seemed to me no more than an inch from the ground'. The survivors were then taken to Dunkirk, in the hope of being rescued by the armada of little ships which had sailed from England in the last few days of May to try and pick up as many men as they could.

Ernest Davis waited for some hours at Dunkirk and was probably standing in the sea, being bombed with the long lines of soldiers, both British and French, who had made it to the coast. His family also believed that at least one of the boats which picked him up was sunk and he spent some time swimming near Dover. He became ill as a result and was discharged from the army in 1941. He died in Over hospital near Gloucester on February 1, 1942, and was buried in the churchyard.



The Davis grave in Christ Church, Gretton

SIDNEY FRANK HOBBS

Private 518737 5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment

Died on May 28 or May 29, 1940, aged 35, during the retreat to Dunkirk.

Buried in the churchyard of Ledringhem Church, some 20 km from Dunkirk.

Sidney's family lived in a house near the old church tower. He joined the 5th Gloucesters with his neighbour, Ernest Davis. After training they were sent to fight in France on January 14, 1940, as the Germans invaded and moved towards the coast.

They spent the winter at Thumeries, after a brief halt at Caudebec, training and preparing anti-tank obstacles. In the spring they moved into the front line to confront the Germans. On March 3, 1940, the battalion was involved in a fierce fight at Grindorff, near the German border. They then moved back to Auby and on May 13 they were at Waterloo near Brussels, in Belgium, which had also been invaded. They then faced a long march from Brussels to Bruyelle on the river Escault, where they were again involved in heavy fighting. On May 22 came the order to withdraw towards Dunkirk – more long marches.

By May 25th there was continual fighting and the Gloucesters were ordered to hold outpost positions in the small villages of Arneke and Ledringhem, where they prepared to make a stand. But they were caught by the Germans wheeling round to try and cut off the escape to Dunkirk. On May 27th with fighting going on all around them, at Areke and Cassel, the Gloucesters decided to try and withdraw, but not before enemy mortar bombardment and sniper and shell fire made it difficult to plan their escape.

Ernest Davis seems to have been with Sidney, his neighbour from Gretton, when Sidney was wounded, possibly in the churchyard as the Germans fought their way through the village. As the Gloucesters withdrew in silence and single file through the burning village in darkness, Sidney Hobbs was left behind with other wounded men in the school and died sometime during the night. It is not known exactly when he died. He was buried in the churchyard at Ledringhem with about 23 other men from the 5th Gloucesters who

had been killed in the fighting around the village, or who had died when they had to be left behind wounded.



British war graves at Ledringhem. At least 24 men of the regiment are buried in Ledringhem Churchyard, who died in the last three days of fighting in the village.

Sidney may have been slightly disabled, despite having been allowed to enlist. His family came originally from Gotherington, where he was born on February 4, 1905. When his parents moved to Gretton in 1910, he entered Gretton School.

On June 29, 1940, Sidney's death was reported in the Cheltenham Chronicle.

GRETTON SOLDIER DIES OF WOUNDS

A young Gretton man Private Sidney Hobbs, the eldest son of Mrs J H Hobbs, is reported killed in action. Private Hobbs, who was 34 years of age, joined the Gloucestershire regiment about a year ago. It is understood that he died of shrapnel wounds in the

Written by Carol Harris. Updated by Gretton Village Association.

Dunkirk retreat. He was very well known and respected in the Gretton and Winchcombe district, where he had lived all his life. After leaving Gretton School, he worked for about 12 years under Gloucestershire County Council.

