

## **Thomas Pounder DAVIS,**

Born Dawlish, 8 April 1876                      Died Edinburgh, 19 April 1916, aged 38  
Able Seaman, Royal Navy, Service No: 162870                      H.M.S. VIVID

**Thomas Pounder Davis** was the third of six children of the first marriage of John George Davis (1853- ) to Frances Ann Cox Pearce (1851 – 1881) in June 1871.

In 1881 the family lived at 6 Church Street, Dawlish where John G Davis was a joiner.

The children were William J G, (1873- ), John P, (1876- ), **Thomas Pounder (1876-1916)**, Charles George, (1878- ) Frances William Pearce, (1881-1961) and Henry P, (1881-1964). Frances A C Davis died in 1881, possibly after giving birth to twins.

The second marriage of John George Davis was to Mary Ann Evans (1858 – 1900) in June 1882 and there were four more children, the eldest of which was Frederick Albert Davis\*\* (1883-1914) (\*\* *another Dawlish War Casualty, on 1 November 1914*), Beatrice Mary (1885- ), George John (1888- ) and Ethel Frances (1888-1954).

In the 1891 census John George Davis is shown with his second wife, living with seven of the children, including **Thomas**, 14, at 2 Manor Cottages, Dawlish.

**Thomas** joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Seaman, 2<sup>nd</sup> class, on 17 September 1891 when he was sent to the Boy Seaman's training ship H.M.S.IMPREGNABLE. He was shown having the previous occupation of errand boy.

At the age of 18 he signed on for "12 years" and served on various ships, being rated Able Seaman after three years. On 30 March 1905 he moved to the Royal Fleet Reserve following a six month period in the Barracks at Devonport (H.M.S.VIVID). At this point he was given the service number R.F.R. Dev.B.929.

The Royal Fleet Reserve was established under the authority of "The Naval Reserve Act, 1900," and of "The Naval Forces Act, 1903," to provide a reserve of trained men for service in His Majesty's Fleet in time of emergency.

- **Class B**, received a retainer of 6d. a day, and a gratuity of £50 when they are 40 years of age and have completed 20 years' service in the Fleet and Royal Fleet Reserve combined.

**Thomas Pounder Davis** married Frances Lily Steer Leaman (1885-1937) in September 1906 in St Thomas district Exeter.

By the 1911 census they were living at 1 Church Cottages, Dawlish with four children, Beatrice, 4, Edith Mary, 3, Thomas William G, 1 and Frederick J L, 2 months. **Thomas** is shown as a gardener.

**Thomas** re-enrolled with the R.F.R. on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1910 for another five years w.e.f. 30.3.10. On the outbreak of war he was called up for service in the Royal Navy once more with his original service number 162870. He was sent to H.M.S.ENDYMION and on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1914 he joined H.M.S.HILARY, when she was first commissioned by the Admiralty.

A captioned photograph appeared in *The Devon & Exeter Gazette* of Friday August 6, 1915 in which "six sons of the late John Davis of Church Street, Dawlish and a grandson" are shown. Thomas Davis is referred to as an Able Seaman, R.F.R., H.M.S.HILLERY (*sic*).

## Dawlish World War One Project

H.M.S.HILARY, originally named SS "Hilary", was a cargo and passenger liner built in 1908 by Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, Dundee, for the Booth Steamship Company to operate on the Europe/South America route. She could accommodate 210 first-class and 372 third-class passengers.

On the outbreak of First World War she was requisitioned by the Admiralty and converted into an Armed merchant cruiser. Fitted out in Liverpool and commissioned 7/12/1914 as the Armed Merchant Cruise H.M.S. "Hilary" with the 10th Cruiser Squadron.

She formed part of the Northern Patrol blockading trade to Germany and was employed patrolling the area South of Faroe Islands.



(HMS "Hilary" was sunk, after being torpedoed by German submarine U-88, on May 25th, 1917, whilst en route for Swarbacks Minn to coal. )

**Thomas Davis** service on H.M.S.HILARY ends on 31 March 1916 when he was transferred to the strength of H.M.S.VIVID.

From the ship's log for **1 April 1916**

At Busta Voe

Lat 60.38, Long -1.35

5.30am: Commenced coaling

7.55am: Sub Lt Cleary left ship

8.10am: Ceased coaling

9.15am: Resumed coaling

10.0am: **1 AB sent to hospital**

It seems very likely that this was A/B Davis as the ship proceeded on patrol and was at sea until after the date of Davis' death. During this period the sick list averaged three persons per day.

At the time of his death the naval-history.net website shows him attached to H.M.S.VIVID/R.N.Barracks, Devonport, and this may be a record for him in hospital ashore pending recovery.

**Thomas Pounder Davis** died at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, on 19 April 1916 "from disease." He was buried in Dawlish Cemetery, plot 2459.



He left £128.7s.10d to Frances Lily Steer Davis.

His widow married again in June quarter 1925 to Ernest Aggett and she died in December 1937.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: Wed 19 April 1916, illness, H.M.S.VIVID, R.N.Barracks, Devonport. Davis, Thomas Able Seaman 162870. Grave ref 2459, Dawlish Cemetery. Husband of FLS Davis of 5 Swan Court, Dawlish

Dawlish War memorial inscription: DAVIS THOS. Smn R.N.RESERVE

He is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour

Devon Heritage site info:

162870 Able Seaman Thomas Davis of the Royal Navy, H.M.S.VIVID. Husband of Frances Lily Davis of 5 Swan Court, Dawlish. Born in Dawlish 8 April 1876. Died 19 April 1916 aged 40. Buried in Dawlish Cemetery.

Dawlish World War One Project

Last known address: 1911 census - 1 Church Cottages, Dawlish  
CWGC site - 5 Swan Court  
Probate entry (1924) – Town Tree Hill  
Next of kin: Frances Lily Steer Davis, wife.

References: BMD and census records. CWGC site Naval-History.net ( **Royal Navy Log Books of the World War 1 Era** HMS HILARY – December 1914 to March 1917, Northern Patrol (10th Cruiser Squadron)) Naval service record (National Archives, Kew)  
UK RN & RM Graves Roll SARAH\_S family tree (Ancestry) Probate records.

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