

Early life

John Lilburne Davison was born in Portobello, Midlothian, Scotland, to Jessie Weir Davison and Reverend William Hope Davison, a congregational minister from Bolton, Lancashire. He was the second youngest of six children. His older siblings were William, who also gave his life during the Great War, Emilin, Marjorie and James, and his younger brother was named Andrew. From 1899-1901, he attended George Watson's College, a school in Edinburgh. The family subsequently moved to Bolton, and Davison attended the Bolton School. In 1911, Davison worked as an Assistant Librarian, becoming Chief Assistant at the Astley Bridge Library.



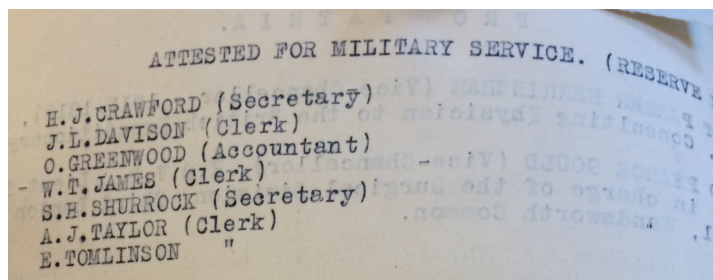
Photograph, found at GWC.org.uk, George Watson's College War Records



Troops of the 7th Battalion resting on their way back from the trenches, near Albert, May 1917. Found in Imperial War Museum, Ministry of Information First World War Official Collection

University of London

Davison was hired a Clerk in Goldsmith's Library of the University of London. He was living in Wimbledon at this time. Although he was of age to join the army in active service during his employment, he was not given permission to enlist until February 1916, at which point his employers at Goldsmith's Library allowed him to leave. He was attested for military service along with six other members of the University's administrative staff, initially to a Reserve Battalion.



Attestation for military service, 1916. Found in Senate House Library Archives, Central File series, 1915-16 Staff Records (ref. UoL/CF/1/16/636)

REGIMENT OF CORPS		ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS ENTITLED TO THE VICTORY MEDAL AND THE BRITISH WAR MEDAL GRANTED UNDER ARMY (MEDALS) ACT 1917		of 10	
Regt. No.	Rank	NAME	Service No.	Remarks	Remarks
808008	Pte	DAVISON, John	808008	Infantry Base Depot	
808008	Pte	LITSHILL, Frank	808008	Infantry Base Depot	
808008	Pte	WILLIAMS, Alfred	808008	Infantry Base Depot	

Service Medal and Award Roll, 1921. Found in Ancestry.co.uk Military Records

The Great War

Having been granted permission from the University, Davison enlisted in Middlesex, London in April 1916, and joined the 7th Kings Shropshire Light Infantry as a Signaller. He served in the Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders. The 7th Battalion served entirely on the Western Front in the war, firstly in the Ypres Salient in late 1915 and early 1916. The battalion was heavily involved in the Battle of the Somme, firstly appearing at the Battle of Bizentin Ridge in July 1916 and at Serre on the Ancre in November, one of the concluding attacks of the Somme Offensive. The battalion also served at Arras and the Battles of the Scarpe in April and May 1917. Returning to the Ypres sector, the 7th Battalion fought at Polygon Wood in Flanders, where Davison was hit by shrapnel and killed on 26th September 1917. Of the eight battalions of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry which saw active service overseas, the 7th suffered the most casualties, and gained the most war honours.

He features in *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour*, in which his Commanding Officer wrote to his family: "I am grieved to have to tell you of the death of your son in action. It would be idle to attempt to tell you how highly esteemed he was. His noble character, unassuming bearing, intelligence and efficiency in his work soon came to my notice. He was a keen and untiring worker, and a man in the highest sense of the word. I can assure you that his loss is deeply mourned by his fellow signallers and myself, for he was respected and loved by us all. We know that quite recently he had lost a brother; both his comrades and myself tender to you our heartfelt sympathy in this second loss that you have been called upon to bear." Davison was interred at Belgium's Tyne Cot Memorial. His name appears on the Senate House memorial, and also on the Bolton County Borough Roll of Honour, 1914-1918. In March 1921, Davison and two other privates in his regiment were named as eligible recipients of the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. In his will, the effects of £102, eight shillings and sixpence were left to his father William.