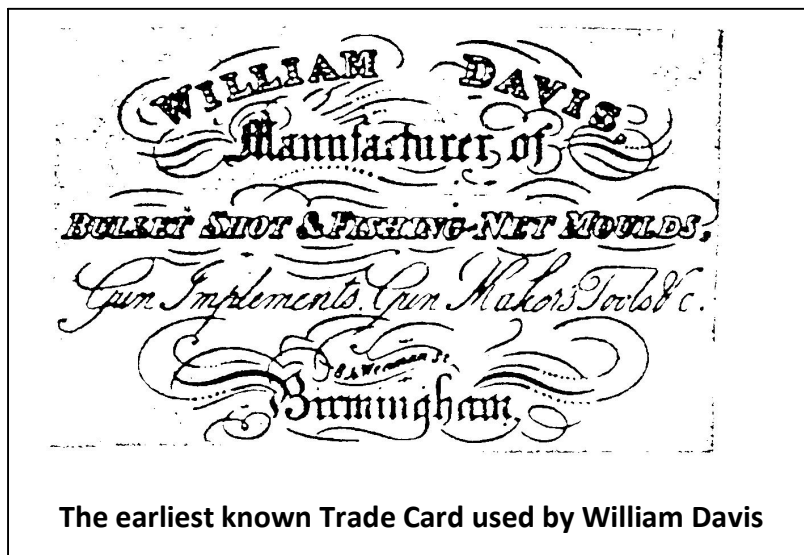


## William Davis Gun Implement Maker

An article by **Mike Newland**

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William Davis was born in Birmingham in 1790. He was taken on as an apprentice in the gun trade at the age of nine but exactly who was his master remains a mystery to this day. In 1806 he left the trade to join



**The earliest known Trade Card used by William Davis**

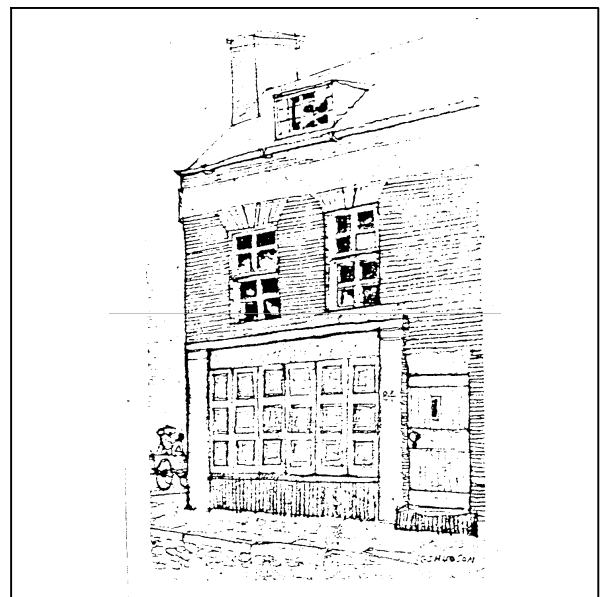
the army, serving in the Peninsular Campaign and later at Waterloo. Two years later, in 1817, he left the army and returned to his home town and took up his old trade. This time however he set up in business on his own as a manufacturer of gun implements and tools, operating from humble premises at 7 Weaman Street in the heart of the Birmingham Gun Quarter. All of his products were clearly marked with his initials W.D. These are not to be confused with the marks of the War Department which were virtually identical,

except that they were usually accompanied by the broad headed arrow symbol.

Sometime in the early 1820's William Davis moved to number 84, these were more prestigious premises on the corner of Weaman Street. By this date he was married and he and his wife Sarah had a number of children. Number 84 Weaman Street was not only his place of work but also served as the family home. It is not clear precisely how many children were born to William and Sarah Davis but what is certain is that they were all girls.

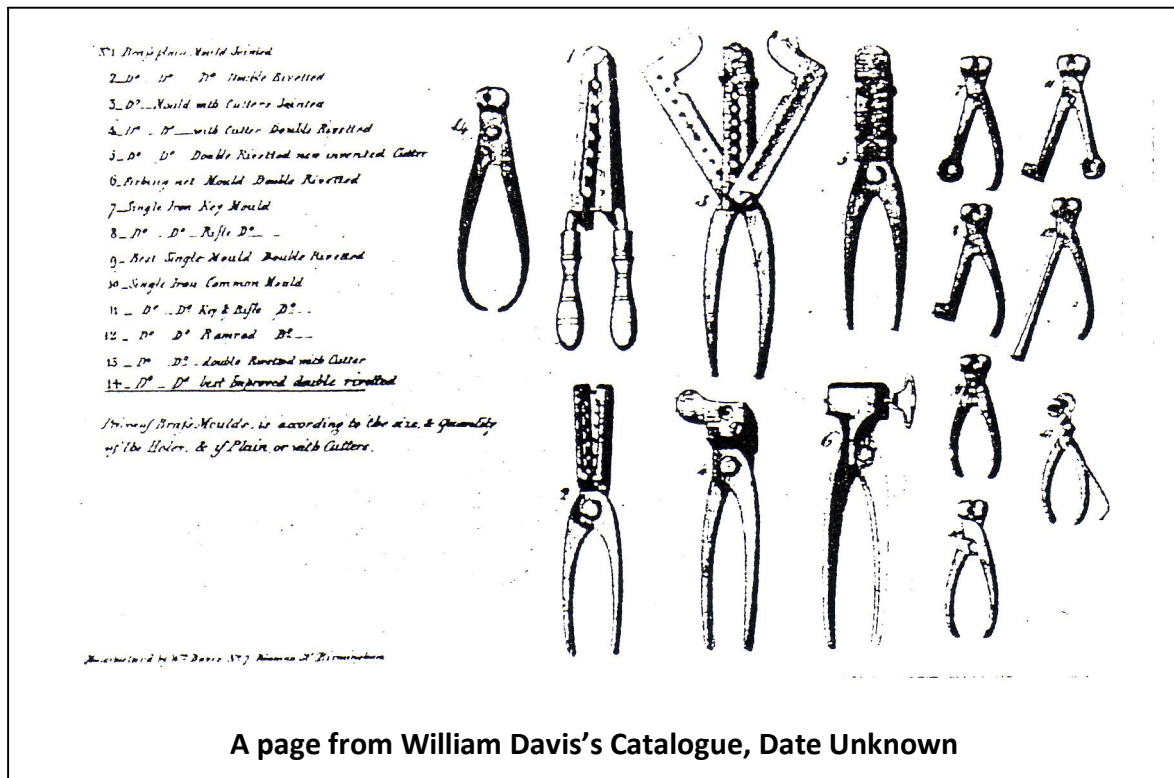
William died in 1831 at the relatively early age of forty-one and the business passed into the hands of his widow, Sarah. With the help of her eldest daughter Caroline, Sarah Davis continued to run the business under her husband's name. She was a woman of great energy and enterprise, regularly travelling by coach to London to canvas orders from the London gun trade.

In 1838 Caroline Davis married Philip Webley, a gunlock maker who was in partnership with his elder brother



**The home and combined workshop of William Davis at 84 Weaman Street, Birmingham, from a drawing by Graham S Hudson**

James at an address in St. Mary's Row, Birmingham. Following their marriage Philip Webley became increasingly involved in the Davis's family business and actually began trading under his own name as successor to the Late William Davis. At this time however, despite trading under the Webley name, the firm was, financially at any rate, still firmly in the hands of Sarah Davis.



**A page from William Davis's Catalogue, Date Unknown**

Eventually, in 1845, Philip Webley dissolved the partnership with his brother James and sold his interest in the St. Mary's Row project, using the money to purchase Sarah Davis's business outright. Although his partnership with James Webley had now officially ceased Philip continued to work in close conjunction with his elder brother, particularly with regard to the design and manufacture of percussion revolvers.