

170: Samuel Williams

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: S. Williams

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: 9th Bn. East Surrey Regiment

Service Number: 26698

Date of Death: 04 September 1918

Age at Death: 19

Buried / Commemorated at: Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, Aubigny-en-Artois, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Alfred John and Ellen Williams, of Dee View Cottages, Leighton Road, Neston

Samuel Williams was the son of Alfred and Ellen Williams of Liverpool.

Joiner Alfred John Williams (28, of 3 Dunkeld Street) married Ellen Orme (17, also of 3 Dunkeld Street) at the Emmanuel Church, West Derby Road, Everton, on 5 August 1895. This church, consecrated in February 1867, was demolished in about 1970. N^o. 3 Dunkeld Street was the home of Ellen's parents, coach smith Edward and Elizabeth Orme.

Samuel was born on 4 June 1899 and he was baptised at St George's Church in Everton on 20 August 1899.

It has not proved possible to locate the family in either the 1901 or 1911 census returns in England and Wales; certainly, the family was not living at Dunkeld Street in 1901 or at Dee Cottages on Leighton Road at the time of the 1911 census; it is possible that they moved to Neston after Samuel had enlisted or, possibly, after he had died in September 1918. It is plausible, therefore, that Samuel had only a limited, or insignificant, connection to Neston. Nothing further is known of Alfred and Ellen Williams and they were not living at Dee Cottages at the time of the 1939 Register.

As Samuel's Service Record has not been found it is not possible to detail his time in the army although it is recorded that he served initially with the Manchester Regiment (Reg. N^o. 63312) before joining the East Surrey Regiment.

No details of Samuel's service with the 9th Battalion East Surrey Regiment survive although the War Diary of the Battalion covering the early part of September 1918 exist and are detailed, below.

The 9th (Service) Battalion [the 'Gallants'] was formed in September 1914 at Kingston-on-Thames as part of Kitchener's Third New Army (K3). The battalion moved initially to Worthing and in April 1915 they moved to Shoreham to join the 72nd Brigade of the 24th



The Dunkeld Arms on the corner of Dunkeld Street (to the left) and West Derby Road in about 1974. This area has since been rebuilt.

Division and then to Blackdown (Aldershot) in June 1915. Mobilised for war, the troops landed at Boulogne on 1 September 1915 and engaged in various actions on the Western Front including The Battle of Loos (25 September - 14 October 1915) soon after reaching the front line.

The Battle of Loos was the largest British battle that took place in 1915 on the Western Front and was the first time the British used poison gas and the first mass engagement of New Army units. The British battle was part of the attempt by the Allies to break through the German defences in Artois and Champagne and restore a war of movement. Despite improved methods, more ammunition and better equipment, the Franco-British attacks were contained by the German armies, except for local losses of ground. British casualties at Loos were about twice as high as German casualties.

During 1916 the Battalion was involved in the German gas attacks at Wulverghem in April and June. The first gas discharge took place on 30 April 1916 and was followed by another attack on 17 June, part of the sporadic fighting which took place between battles in the Ypres Salient on the Western Front. The British Second Army held the ground from Messines Ridge north to Steenstraat. British divisions opposite the German XXIII Reserve Corps, had received warnings of a gas attack in the ten days beforehand and from 21–23 April British artillery-fire exploded several gas cylinders in the German lines around Spanbroekmolen, which released greenish-yellow clouds of gas. A gas alert was given on 25 April, when the wind began to blow from the north-east and routine work was suspended; on 29 April, two German soldiers deserted and warned that an attack was imminent. Just after midnight on 30 April, the German attack began and a gas cloud moved on the wind through no man's land, into the British defences and then south-west towards Bailleul.

The gas used by the German troops at Wulverghem was a mixture of chlorine and phosgene, which had been used against British troops on 19 December 1915 in the First German phosgene attack on British troops at Wieltje, north-east of Ypres.

The first German gas attack at Wulverghem on 30 April caused 562 gas casualties and 89 gas fatalities but German raiding parties, deployed to find and destroy mine entrances, were repulsed with small-arms and artillery fire. A second attempt by the Germans on 17 June, caused about the same number of gas casualties and the British easily repulsed German patrols. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_attacks_at_Wulverghem]

Later in 1916 the 9th Battalion was engaged in action at The Battle of Delville Wood and The Battle of Guillemont. In 1917 the Battalion continued in action at significant encounters including The Battle of Vimy Ridge, The Battle of Messines, The Battle of Pilckem Ridge, The Battle of Langemarck and the Cambrai Operations (20 November - 30 December 1917) when it was reported that *"The Battle of Cambrai ranks as one of the most thrilling episodes of the whole war. Tanks at last came into their kingdom. The notion that the Hindenburg Line was impregnable was exploded"* [Captain Stair Gillon]

During 1918 the Battalion was at The Battle of St Quentin, The Actions at the Somme Crossings, The Battle of Rosieres and The First Battle of the Avre (4 - 5 April 1918) but, around the time when Samuel Williams died, there was only limited and localised action involving the 9th Battalion East Surrey Regiment. Without Samuel's Service Record it is not possible to know what part he played in any of the warfare leading up to his death (just 10 weeks before the Armistice) and we have no details of the circumstances of his death. However, although the War Diaries for the Battalion indicate only limited involvement in the early days of September 1918 they record that he was wounded in action that month and, as he is buried at Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension it is very probable that Samuel was removed from the front line to a Casualty Clearing Station at Aubigny (west of Arras and several miles away from the front line) which was then held by Commonwealth troops. Indeed, burials were made in the Extension until September 1918 and it was developed and used extensively by the 42nd Casualty Clearing Station.

It seems very probable that Samuel received his injuries in the first two days of September 1918 and died very shortly after being removed from the front line. Notification of his death does not appear to have reached his commanding officer until very much later, there appearing to be no record of this in the War Diaries.

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| 750554 | 3/7/16 | Williams Samuel | 9 th Bn E. Surrey Regt 1/2 9/26/98 | 4-9-18 wounds | 14/18 10-18 | 2 14 1 | 2 14 1 | 11/18 | 5-11-18 5.12.19 | 14.0.19 | 2 14 1 | 4 10 |
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WAR GRATUITY.
 14.20
 15.8.19
 Transfer 5854
 Regd. Paper 2/2020
 Serial No. 11954 C.51

A. F. W. 8070 SENT
 DATE 24.7.19

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid. In July 1919 Samuel's father Alfred received a payment of outstanding wages of £2 14s 1d from the army and, in August, a War Gratuity of £4 10s. This, a total value of £7 4s 1d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £1100 in 2016.

The record notes that Samuel died of wounds.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

| Name. | Corps. | Rank. | Regtl. No. |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|------------|
| WILLIAMS Samuel | E. Surrey R. | PLT | 26698 |
| Medal. | Roll. | Page. | Remarks. |
| VICTORIAN | E/1103B/2 | 2277 | |
| BARRIAM | | 16 | |
| SEA | | | |
| Theatre of War first served in | | | |
| Date of entry therein | | | |

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920

4th.

The enemy remained very quiet during the day. Our 'planes were very active as also were the enemy's. Two of our patrols went out at night & discovered enemy working parties. They also did some very good work salvaging some of our rifles, Lewis gun magazines & spare parts bags, which the enemy had not been able to remove when he "snaffled" one of our posts. Two of the bodies of men of "A" Coy. (L/Cpl. Hayes, N.M. & Pte. Clements) were also brought in.

1918

September ST. EMILE SECTOR

1st. A message came through from Division to say that a prisoner, captured by the Division on our left, stated that the enemy had evacuated LENS. Daylight patrols were sent out which penetrated to the CITE ST. AUGUSTE RD. but later were driven in by superior outflanking forces. These patrols were pushed out again at night & the two posts on our left tried to get into touch with the West Kents who had got to FOSSE I. The three left posts again pushed back - but the two right ones remained out & eventually succeeded in getting in touch with the West Kents.

5th.

During the early hours of the morning after a 'strafe' with 'Minnies' & 'darts' the enemy again attempted to rush one of our posts. One man was reported missing & three others were wounded. We, however, re-established our posts at once. The remainder of the day passed quietly, altho' the enemy H.G.s. & Snipers were active. During the night a number of gas shells were sent over both on the E. of CITE ST. PIERRE & further back round about FOSSE II. Our men put out a lot of wire round our posts & carried out this work uninterrupted except for some gas shells.

2nd. Posts were again established in the enemy front line during the night of the 1st/2nd. Once again just after dawn the three left posts were forced to withdraw by superior enemy forces. The right posts held. The men who had manned the three left posts rested during the afternoon & again at night pushed forward. The enemy has remained quiet so far - a few snipers being active. There has been scarcely any Artillery activity. This Bn. was the first to set foot in LENS since the enemy took it in 1914.

6th.

In the early hours of the morning the man who was reported missing y'day (Pte. Hammond of "A" Coy.) managed to get back to our lines. He was chased round the ruins of LENS by a party of the enemy until he finally fell exhausted into a shell-hole, where luckily they failed to discover him. After seeing the C.O. he was sent down for the Brigadier to interview as he noticed quite a lot of enemy movement &c. The day passed quietly & in the evening the Battalion was relieved by the 8th 1st Bn. North Staffordshire Regiment. Relief was rather late owing to the new posts which were handed over, completion being at 1.3 am.

3rd. During the night of the 2nd/3rd we established posts in the enemy's front line again - but were prevented from penetrating to CARP TRENCH on the left by H.G. fire & bombs. These apparently came from two "Jack-in-the-boxes" quite close up to the enemy's old front line. In the morning no less than three attempts were made by the enemy to oust our posts. Twice they were beaten back, but the third time a large force which attacked us drove back our left posts & unfortunately inflicted casualties. The Adjutant, Captain W.H. Lindsey, M.C. was killed while going round the posts. We, on our side, managed to kill several of the

6th.
ctd.September

3rd. enemy & brought in one dead Hun. This occurred at about 1 pm. Artillery behind the 73rd Infantry Brigade luckily spotted the raiding party & brought down an excellent barrage - thus preventing the enemy from regaining his trenches. During the afternoon once more we sent out our men - but this time only to the right sector, so that now we are holding from FOSSE I to along the enemy's trench to CONDUCTOR SAP. The enemy remained quiet during the night - shelling our old front line very slightly.

BULLY - GRENAVY

7th.

The morning was spent by the Battalion in cleaning up, baths, clothing parades, &c. In the afternoon a military funeral was given to Captain Lindsay, M.C. & the 4 other men who had been killed. The band played the "Dead March in Saul" as the mournful procession proceeded to AIX NOULETTE Cemetery where the burial took place. Wreaths were placed on the graves & the ceremony was a most impressive one. All the Battalion was present & the Brigadier & Brigade Staff also. The "Red Diamonds" (17th I.B. Concert Party) gave a good show at BULLY Theatre in the evening.

8th.

To-day being Sunday the men had a Voluntary Church Parade & the remainder of the day free. All the Officers went out for a Staff ride over to the MARQUEFFLES Training area in preparation for the Tactical Exercise on the next day. The enemy shelled round about the Square in the early hours of the morning.

Extract of War Diary of the 9th Battalion East Surrey Rgt.,
1 - 8 September 1918, for the St. Emile Sector (near
Lens).

There is no mention of the death of S. Williams although,
in the listings for the end of September, he is noted as
having been wounded in action

[<http://qrrarchive.websds.net/>]

Samuel Williams was buried at the Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension.

From March 1916 to the Armistice, Aubigny was held by Commonwealth troops and burials were made in the Extension until September 1918. The 42nd Casualty Clearing Station buried in it during the whole period.....and the 57th in 1918.

[CWGC]