

89: Reuben Joseph Williams

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

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

Rank: Private

Battalion / Regiment: Depot Cheshire Regiment

Service Number: 11285

Date of Death: 01 February 1919

Age at Death: 24

Buried / Commemorated at: St Mary & St Helen Churchyard, Neston

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of the late William and Mary Williams. Also served in Gallipoli, France and Palestine

Reuben Joseph Williams was the 7th child of Neston collier William & Mary Williams; his birth was registered in late 1894 and he was baptised at Neston 4 January 1895.

It is possible that (Thomas) William Williams married Mary Elizabeth Peers in the last quarter of 1891 although no record of the marriage has been found. In the 1911 census, she gives her name as Mary Ann.

William was recorded as a collier, or miner, at the birth of each child except for the couple's last child, Harriet Jessie, when William was a labourer (although, most probably, still working at the colliery). There is good reason to believe that George Forshaw Williams (born 1st quarter of 1901) was a grandson - Mary Elizabeth's illegitimate son - rather than a 'son' as recorded in the 1901 census.

William Williams	40	Coal Miner	X	Denbighshire Holyhead
Mary	28	Scholar		Cheshire Neston
Mary Elizabeth	8			do do
Ellen	7			do do
William	4			do do
John Robert	2			do do
Emily	1			do do

1891 census (extract) – Little Neston

William Williams	40	coal miner	born Holyhead, Denbighshire
Mary	28		born Neston
Mary Elizabeth	8		born Neston
Ellen	7		born Neston
William	4		born Neston
John Robert	2		born Neston
Emily	1		born Neston

Mary Elizabeth Williams was born in late 1882. Mary (21) of Bridge Street, Neston, married George Forshaw, 24, labourer, of Hoylake at Neston Parish Church on 7 June 1903. It is highly probable that Mary Elizabeth was the mother of George Forshaw Williams (born in early 1901); in the 1901 census George is recorded as a son of William

and Mary (not an unusual method of concealing illegitimate children) but, in the 1911 census, he is recorded as a grandson.

George Forshaw, who was born in Barnston, was the son of blacksmith Robert (born in Little Neston) and Ann (born Gayton) Forshaw. In 1901 George was recorded as being 22, a blacksmith's striker, boarding with Hannah Blanchard in Hoylake. George and Mary Forshaw have not been located in the 1911 census.

By the time of the 1901 census Mary Williams was recorded as a widow - William had died, recorded as being 45, and was buried at Neston Parish Church on 28 April 1900.

Mary Williams	Widow	39	✓	Do	Neston Cheshire
Ellen	Daughter	17	✓	Do	Liverpool
William	Son	15	✓	Collier Mining	Neston
John	Son	13	✓	Do	Neston
Emily	Daughter	11	✓	Do	Little Neston
Kate	Daughter	9	✓	Do	Colliery Cheshire
Reuben	Son	7	✓	Do	Do
Harriet	Daughter	16 months	✓	Do	Neston Cheshire
George	Son	3 months	✓	Do	Do

1901 census (extract) – The Cross, Neston

Mary Williams	39	widow	born Neston
Ellen	17		born Liverpool
William	15	collier, mining	born Neston
John	13		born Neston
Emily	11		born Lt. Neston
Kate	9		born Colliery
Reuben	7		born Colliery
Harriet	16 months		born Neston
George	3 months		born Neston

The known baptismal dates for William and Mary's children are:

Ellen	8 January 1885
William	9 July 1886
John Robert	13 July 1888
Emily	17 January 1890
Kate	24 June 1892
Reuben Joseph	4 January 1895
Harriet Jessie	14 January 1900 (William was recorded as a labourer)

It is known that William and Mary Williams baptised another son, Alfred Owens Williams on 26 February 1897 but that he died and was buried, aged 18 months, at Neston on 21 July 1898. The family was then living at Colliery and William was recorded as a collier.

By the time of the 1911 census (2 April) Reuben was a railway porter on the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), presumably at the now-dismantled Neston South station which was located in Station Road, Neston:

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

Number of Schedule 45
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE		PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
			State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of— Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.) Children born alive to present Marriage has lasted. Total Children Born Alive. Children who have died.	Personal Occupation. The reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &c. If engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated. (See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	Industry or Service with which worker is connected. This question should generally be answered by stating the business carried on by the employer. If this is clearly shown in Col. 10 the question need not be answered here. No entry needed for Domestic Service in private employment. If employed by a public body (Government, Municipal, &c.) state what body. (See Instructions 9 and Examples on back of Schedule.)	Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account. Write opposite the name of each person engaged in any Trade or Industry. (1) "Employer" (that is employing persons other than domestic servants), or (2) "Worker" (that is working for an employer), or (3) "Own Account" (that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employer).	Whether Working at Home. Write the word "At Home" opposite the name of each person carrying on Trade or Industry at home.				
1. Mary Ann Williams	Head	46	Widow	18	9	8	1	Labourer, building	W.D.	Little Neston, Lancs.	British Subj.
2. William Williams	Son	24	Single					Labourer, building	W.D.	Neston, Lancs.	"
3. Reuben Jos. Williams	Son	18	Single					Police Constable	W.D.	Neston, Lancs.	"
4. Harriet Jessie Williams	Daughter	11	Single					Teacher	W.D.	Neston, Lancs.	"
5. George Forshaw Williams	Grandson	9						Teacher	W.D.	Neston, Lancs.	"

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—
(1) All the names on this Schedule are entered in the proper age columns.
(2) I have entered the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared the sum with the total number of persons.
(3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator AW

Total.		
Males	Females	Persons
3	2	5

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (House, Tenement, or Apartment). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop.

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature Mary Ann Williams
Postal Address Bridge St., Neston, Lancs.

1911 census (condensed) – Bridge Street, Neston

Mary Ann Williams	46	widow	born Little Neston
William	24	labourer, building	born Neston
Reuben Jos.	18	railway porter	born Neston
Harriet Jessie	11		born Neston
George Forshaw Williams	9	grandson	born Neston

Mary had been married for 18 years and eight of her 9 children had survived.

In 1911 John Robert Williams was a joiner's labourer, 22, living at the home of his cousin, police constable Willie Davies, in Rock Ferry.

As the Service Record of Reuben Williams has not been found it is not possible to detail his army career although it is known that he had served in Gallipoli (where he contracted dysentery and enteric fever), France (where he 'was wounded in the knee, cheek and breast') and Palestine. Having returned to Britain to recuperate after one of the incidents, the ship taking him back to the front lines was torpedoed and sank although Reuben escaped with only a minor injury.

When he died, on 1 February 1919 (some 3 months after the end of the war) he was attached to the Depot Cheshire Regiment and was buried in Neston. Presumably, therefore, he died either as the consequences of an accident, from war-related injuries or from illness. It is probable that Reuben died in Neston.

In 1917 Mary Williams had three sons serving in the Forces as her eldest son, William ('Willie'), was serving with the Royal Engineers in Palestine and John Robert Williams ('Jack') was serving aboard a hospital ship with the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Kate Williams, Reuben's elder sister married a James Fisher Samson at St Paul's Church, Birkenhead, in April / June 1916 and James served as an Air Mechanic in the Flying Corps. in the war.

James may have been the son of ship's cook John and Janet Samson; in the 1901 census, although James had been born in Birkenhead the family was living in West Derby. James may have been a pupil at the Jesuit-run Mount St Mary's College, an independent day and boarding school at Spinkhill between Chesterfield and Sheffield. Kate died, aged 27, on 3 February 1919, just two days after Reuben's death; she is buried in Neston Parish Churchyard. The date of James' death is uncertain.

Very little further is known of the family although it is possible that William Williams (recorded as William Owen Williams), Reuben's brother, married Annie Whitby) at a Civil Marriage on Wirral in July/September 1908. William died on December 11 1938 aged 52.

Other members of the family have not been traced with any certainty and have not been found in the 1939 Register.

LETTERS FROM SOLDIER SONS. Mrs. Williams, of Park street, has every reason to be proud of her three soldier sons, who enlisted immediately war broke out, and the youngest of whom, Private Reuben Williams, has had some thrilling experiences. He took part in the Dardanelles campaign, where he fell a victim to dysentery and enteric fever, and was invalided home. Later, he saw active service in France, where he was wounded in the knee, cheek and breast, and of this his mother has an interesting souvenir in the shape of a bullet shattered button which probably saved his life. On recovering, he was again sent to one of the various battle fronts, and while on the journey, had the exciting experience of being torpedoed, of which he writes as follows: "I want you all to know that I am all right, although I have had a terrible experience. I was aboard the ship when she went down. It is an awful experience being taken down with the suction. I thought I was never going to come up again, but anyway I am all right now, so don't worry about me. I got a tap on the head, but it's nothing much. The people are all very kind to us here. They seem as if they can't do enough for us. I have lost touch with the lads through coming into the hospital. I saw Albert Wilde on the boat. I have not seen him since we were first struck. I expect he got away in one of the boats." The second son, Jack, who is in the R.A.M.C. and serving in a hospital ship, gives a graphic account of one of their journeys. Mrs. Williams's eldest son, Sapper Willie Williams, has taken an active part in the operations in Palestine, and so far has escaped injury, while her son in law, Air Mechanic Samson, has done good work with the Flying Corps.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 26 May 1917

ROLL OF HONOUR.—News came through to the father of Private Harry Grundy on Sunday that his son had been wounded in France. At the time of writing it is stated the wounds are in the mouth, nose and eye, and that he has arrived in England and is being treated at a hospital at Colchester. Pte. Grundy is the son of the licensee of the "Greenland Fisheries." He is a well known sportsman, and once played for the Everton football team with conspicuous ability. He joined up with the Cheshires and has been in France for some time. It is also rumoured in regard to Private Reuben Williams, who was wounded twice in Gallipoli and France, and was on his way to the front again, that his boat has been torpedoed but he is safe, only receiving slight injuries. Further particulars are awaited with interest.

Chester Chronicle - Saturday 19 May 1917



Reuben Williams' war grave in Neston Parish Churchyard

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	CREDITS				CHARGES				Date of Authority	To whom Authorized	Amount Authorized			No. of List in which advertised
					Account and Date	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	Account and Date			£	s.	d.	
911651	715236/1	Williams Reuben Joseph	Bedfordshire Pte 11255	1-2-19 in front of Farlo Leeton	Shawes 4/19	14	1	10					5/7/20	Cro. William " John St. Elizabeth Forshaw.	2	10	-	223-12-18 Via R.G. celebrate
War gratuity £5-0-0 P.O.S.B. deposit £25 6s/6d 19 see also 5/11/929846 2/9																		

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In Summer 1919, and for some time after, 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 1920 Reuben's brothers William and John, and Reuben's married sister Mary Elizabeth Forshaw, received a payment of outstanding wages of £14 1s 10d from the army and a War Gratuity of £5. This was allocated as: William - £2 10s; John - £6 2s; Elizabeth Forshaw - £5 9s. This, a total value of £19 1s 10d, is equivalent to a *labour value* (wages) of around £2950 in 2016. Additionally, the Register notes that there was also a P.O.S.B. (Post Office Savings Bank) account containing £25.

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.

The form also, under 'Date and Place of Death' appears to record 'Farlo Leeton' – the significance of this is unknown.



The Williams' family grave in Neston Parish Churchyard. It is not clear whether Reuben is buried here or at the site of his War Grave stone near the entrance to the church.

In Loving Memory of

RUTH ROBERTS

Who Died Oct. 26th 1890

Aged 9 Months

Also REUBEN JOSEPH WILLIAMS

Who Died Feb. 1st 1919

Aged 24 Years.

Also KATE SAMSON

Beloved Wife of JAMES SAMSON

And Sister of the above

Who Died Feb. 3rd 1919

Aged 27 Years

In the Midst of Life We are in Death

Also WILLIAM

Dearly Loved Husband of ANNE WILLIAMS

And Brother of the Above

Who Died December 11th 1938

In His 53rd Year

"At Rest"

Ruth Roberts was a daughter of labourer Thomas and Sarah Roberts (née Blythe); Ruth was baptised at Neston on 11 January 1890 but the relationship between the Roberts and Williams families is unknown.

The hucksters haggle in the mart
The cars and carts go by;
Senates and schools go droning on;
For dead things cannot die.

A storm stooped on the place of tombs
With bolts to blast and rive;
But these be names of many men
The lightning found alive.

If usurers rule and rights decay
And visions view once more
Great Carthage like a golden shell
Gape hollow on the shore,

Still to the last of crumbling time
Upon this stone be read
How many men of England died
To prove they were not dead.



"For a War Memorial"
G. K. Chesterton
(1874 - 1936)

