



The Repatriation of the Sick and Wounded

The Tragic Case of

Private 7822 Arthur Williams ‘C’ Company, 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers

It was inevitable that hospitals and medical staff at home would also have to care for the sick and injured enemy soldiers in their custody. The Prisoner of War Societies and the Red Cross worked tirelessly to bring about repatriation or exchange wherever they could, although this tended to be in cases where the men were very ill and would continue to need hospital care on their return. They were not soldiers who would be patched up and set back into action. Illness was often realised to be terminal and it was felt that where possible they should be returned to be near their family. However, there were often great delays in completing the bureaucracy before the exchange could be confirmed. If men were well enough, they were interviewed by the authorities on their return to obtain any information they could divulge about what was happening behind the lines.

One such prisoner fortunate to be exchanged was Private 7822 Arthur Williams, of ‘C’ Company, 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers. Arthur was born in Wolverhampton in 1887, the son of Arthur Henry Williams and Anne Elisa Williams of Major Street (*right*), his father working in the adjacent chemical factory. By 1901 the family had moved to nearby 28 Johnson Street, while Arthur junior found his first employment as a cycle fitter, aged fifteen. A short time after that young Arthur had found work as a brass dresser, but looking for a life of excitement and probably better pay, Arthur enlisted for the



Army at Bilston on 7 Oct 1904. He signed up for three years (plus 9 years in Reserve) and was assigned to the Royal Munster Fusiliers.



Two months later on 13 December he was in Tralee, County Kerry, the HQ of the Royal Munster Fusiliers (*left*), where he would begin his education and training. On 23 March 1905 he received his first posting – to Gibraltar, where he served

for 2 years and 348 days, before his return to the UK on 6 March 1907. After a few months training back in Ireland, his term was over, and he was transferred to the Army Reserve on 6 October 1907. Arthur returned home, but by 1911 the family were living in their first house in Ellesmere Port, in 43 Heathfield Road, both men now working as galvanised sheet packers in the new iron works. Like many other Ellesmere Port families, they had come from the Black Country to follow the move made by the Wolverhampton Iron Works after its pre-war relocation to the Port. Sometime later, before the war, Arthur had moved out to Dudley Terrace, in a neighbouring street, while his parents and family moved to the adjacent street to 64 Princes Road.



43 Heathfield Road (left) and in 1910 (above)



2 Dudley Road (left) and in the road in 1910 (above)



The family home – 64 Princes Street.

Three years later, when war was declared on 4 August 1914, Arthur, as a Reservist, was called up immediately and was mobilised on 6 August at Tralee. Within days the Royal Munsters were in France with the BEF, and swiftly into the thick of the action in the first major engagement, which resulted in what became known as the Great Retreat during the Battle of Mons. A strategic rearguard action was called for in order to allow the BEF to escape and the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers, in their very first action in France, were tasked with holding their ground under all circumstances, thereby achieving a military feat seldom paralleled in modern warfare.

A brigade may occasionally have the task of trying to delay a whole enemy division. A division may perhaps be deployed in an attempt to turn aside or halt an advancing army corps - but for a single battalion to stem the advance of an entire army by their sole action was unprecedented. In fact, less than a battalion in strength, just three companies of the 2nd Battalion of The Munsters, supported by a couple of field guns, engaged the German attackers. The Munsters fell back to an orchard near Étretux, and as night fell on the evening of 27 August, found themselves surrounded. Having exhausted their ammunition, they surrendered.



(Right) Royal Fusiliers (9th Brigade, 3rd Division) on 22 August, 1914, resting in the square at Mons, Belgium, the day before the Battle of Mons.

In their action at Étretux, the 2nd Munsters were decimated, with only five officers and 196 other ranks surviving. Nevertheless, the Battalion's action halted the advance of the German Army for fourteen hours in the area of Oisny and Étretux, effectively preventing German pursuit, thus enabling the rest of the British Army to withdraw to a safe distance of twelve miles. The Munsters were outnumbered at odds of over 6 to 1, and when finally defeated, the survivors were congratulated on their supreme bravery by the German soldiers they had fought.

In 1922, a cross was erected in an orchard in Étretux, just behind the railway station, to the memory of 120 men of the Munsters's 2nd Battalion who fell there in their last stand on 27 August 1914. The officers and men of the Regiment who died in that battle are buried there alongside the carved monumental cross dedicated to their memory.



Part of the inscription reads " In proud and lasting memory of the officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers who laid down their lives during The Great War in the cause of Freedom and Justice, 1914-1918"



A more detailed battle account comes from the Étretux memorial (Commonwealth War Graves) webpage,

The Rearguard Action at Étretux

The first major battle fought by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the Western Front took place at Mons on 23 August 1914. In the wake of the Battle of Mons, the British Forces, along with their French allies, began retreating south west toward Paris. The men of the 2nd Munsters had remained in reserve at Mons and had not been involved in any fighting by the time they halted about four miles north of Étretux on the evening of 26 August. Along with the two cavalry units of the 15th Hussars and a section of the Royal Field Artillery, the Munsters were tasked with acting as a rearguard for III Corps of the BEF as it continued to retreat south toward the village of Guise.



The weather was warm and sultry as the men of the rearguard rose at dawn on the 27th and prepared to meet a possible German attack. Several early assaults by small by small groups of German troops were repulsed by well-aimed rifle and machine-gun fire, but by midday German infantry were attacking in strength and the Munsters were forced to retreat to village of Fesmy-le-Sart. Fesmy was the scene of heavy fighting throughout the afternoon as German units charged at the British lines and were repeatedly beaten back.

By 5 p.m., the battalion was in danger of being overrun and began to retire south toward Étreaux in order to rejoin the main force of British troops which had been retreating for most of the day. Yet as they approached Étreaux, the Munsters discovered that much of the town had already been occupied by German troops who now began to lay down heavy machine-gun and artillery fire. Cut off from its own army and greatly outnumbered by the enemy, the rearguard now began to suffer serious casualties as it tried to fight its way through the German lines. British troops charged again and again at the houses in the northern outskirts of the village, which were full of German soldiers, but were beaten back by intense enemy fire. By 7 p.m. the rearguard was under attack from all sides, the commanding officer had been killed, and the surviving officers and men had retired to an apple orchard from where they continued to resist the advancing German forces. Shortly after 9.15 p.m. those who were still standing, about 250 men, finally surrendered. By the time they laid down their arms, the Munsters had been fighting for over 12 hours against a German force that outnumbered them by about six to one. On the day after the battle many of the dead Irishmen were buried in the same apple orchard in which they had fired their last shots. Over 600 British soldiers were killed during the rearguard action at Étreaux, but by engaging so many German troops for so long the Munsters had allowed III Corps of the BEF to continue its retreat with only minor losses.

Private Arthur Williams was one of the survivors, but he had been taken prisoner. On his return to Britain he wrote a long letter to the Prisoner of War Society in the Ellesmere Port, which remains the most detailed account of war experience written by any of the Ellesmere Port men in the forces. He wrote the following letter on 3 January 1916 in the hospital he was taken to in London, the contents of which no doubt touched many of those later asked to contribute to the Prisoner of War Fund (by this time his condition was said to be improving);

**A true account of my internment,
by
Private A Williams, Royal Munster Fusiliers**

I was taken prisoner on 27 August 1914, at a place called Etreux in France on the historic retreat from Mons after a very severe engagement in which my regiment 'The Dirty Shirts' (so called because it was reported that they turned out in their shirt sleeves to fight an engagement in India) lost very heavily; and the few that were lucky enough not to be killed were taken prisoners. It would be about 10 o'clock on the Thursday night and after being knocked and cuffed about we were taken and put in a cloth factory in the village where the fight had taken place, and remained there twelve days. Never will I forget these first twelve days. We were allowed to tear up bales of cloth and linen to rest our weary bones on at night time. The sanitary arrangements here were something awful. I often wonder how it was we were not struck down with some disease.

The next day after my capture we were sent out to bury some of our dead comrades. This was very sorrowful as only a few hours before they had been light-hearted and happy, and some of them were mangled beyond recognition. As regards the food, it was nothing but sheer starvation. We got small drops of

coffee, about half a pint in a morning, half a pint of soup at noon, and the same amount of coffee again in the evening. During this time we only got five or six issues of bread, amounting to about 15 or 16 ounces altogether, but I mention that the German officer in charge told us that that was the best they could do for us, because they were living on loot themselves. We were kept in this place nine days before we were allowed out in the fresh air for exercise, and I remember well that they had to break several windows in this factory to let in fresh air, or else we should all have been stricken down with illness.

Whenever the Germans required a fatigue party there used to be a general stampede to try and get out as there was a chance to pick up a stray carrot or some other kind of vegetable. Often have I seen myself and also my comrades pick up the peel of vegetables and eat it just to satisfy the terrible craving for food. On the 12th day we got the news that we were going to be removed to Germany. On that day we got nothing to eat at all. All we got was a small drop of coffee in the morning. We moved off that day about noon to a village about eighteen miles away. I do not know the name. Along the route we were allowed to pick up a marigold out of a field and we ate it with the greatest relish. Arriving at this village we were placed in a church for the night, resting the best way we could in pews; and the few wounded we had with us managed to have a bit of straw to lie on.

The following morning we again marched off about another twelve or thirteen miles to a town called Formies in France [most likely Fourmies]. Again we got nothing to eat, but the good people placed pails of milk on the road for us to drink, and this managed to keep us from fainting. Here we were to entrain for Germany, so we were put in cattle trucks, huddled together like bees in a hive. On the side of the line here was a convoy of bread, which had been sent down the line for the German troops. It had lain for days in the rain and had gone all mouldy, so they decided to give us the bread to eat on the way. When you broke this bread, clouds of dust would fly out of it, but nevertheless we ate what we could out of it, washing it down with water, as this was the only drink they would give us. They told us water was good enough for the swine of an Englishman. We met with some very hostile treatment going up the line, the civilians shouting and jeering at us and throwing stones; and I saw one incident where a German officer struck one of my comrades with a blow on the back with his sword. This was only a beginning of German Kultur. What I have seen since makes me put down the majority of Germans as cowards and bullies, with the greatest of all tyrants their king.

Coming to my story again, we were in the train about forty hours, arriving in Sennelager, Westphalia on the Friday morning about 6 o'clock, 11th September 1914. After being paraded and marched about, we were taken to the canteen and given the first good meal since our capture, and it



consisted of barley, potatoes and meat. I think this was the best meal I ever enjoyed in Germany as I was so hungry, the same time I could have eaten leather. After this we were told we were going to have a bath, so we were marched down to the bath houses, but never a bath did we see? They gave us towels and left us there till evening time. Afterwards we were marched away to the camp ground. Here we were told we were lucky to get a tent, as most of the prisoners had been sleeping in the open air. After being given our issue of bread and coffee, for which we had to wait hours in the rain, we were given one blanket and a bit of straw. We were told, 'off to your tent'. This first night was terribly wild. It blew and rained all night, and was intensely cold, and out of the poor unfortunates, who were sleeping out in the open, there were seven or eight died from cold and exposure. The following morning I had my first glimpse of the interned civilians and how sorry I felt for them, for they had no shelter at all. Their sufferings must have been very bad: but what did the Huns care! They were only 'English swines' to them! And so commenced my life in Sennelager No.3.

The food here was not up to the mark. We had black coffee, no milk or sugar for breakfast, watery soup for dinner and coffee again for tea, and one large loaf of black indigestible bread between six men. On this diet we had all kinds of fatigues to do, with an occasional small bun and a bit of sausage or cheese in the way of recompense. But for all that we managed to keep a light heart.

LARGER TINS 3^d 6^d & 1^s
Keating's Powder

DONE TO DEATH
KILLS BUGS FLEAS MOTHS BEETLES

KEATING'S SONG.
 KEATING'S POWDER does the trick,
 Kills all Bugs and Fleas off quick;
 Keating has a jolly trick,
 'Tis 'Bravo! long live Keating!

Keating he's the man who knows
 How to bring 't sweet repose
 When in sleep our eyelids close!
 Stop the Fleas from biting!

"DONE TO DEATH" or, WHO KILLED THE COCKROACH?
 I. Who killed the Cockroach?
 Says KEATING, "Twas I—
 My Powder did it,
 And so killed the Cockroach."
 II. Who saw him die?
 Says Cookie, "Twas me—
 I watched him with glee,
 And I saw him die."
 III. Who caught his blood?
 No blood was there seen—
 He "dropped off" quite clean!
 So none caught his blood."
 IV. "Shall I dig his grave?"
 I; said the Boy—
 III dig it with 'ry—
 Let me dig his grave!

So, if you would soundly sleep,
 Keating's Powder always keep;
 Peace and comfort you will reap!
 Is not that inviting!

If all folks would use the same,
 See each Tin bears "Keating's" name,
 Fleas would stop their little game,
 And their midnight meeting.

V. What caused the crowd?
 The numbers that flew—
 The marvel to view—
 'Twas they caused the crowd."
 VI. Who saw them come?
 Thomas KEATING stood by—
 With grins and eyes,
 And he saw them come."
 VII. Who'll ring the bells?
 We'll ring the Nation—
 We'll ring an overture—
 Oh! we'll ring the bells!

Then a chorus of boys' voices sang, and yet louder
 In praise of 't, "Keating's Powder."
 And all Boys joined too big—"was meeting"
 To see their best friends to TOMMY KEATING.

KEATING'S POWDER
 IS PERFECTLY UNRIVALLED IN DESTROYING
BUGS, FLEAS, MOTHS, BEETLES,
 And all insects (which perfectly harmless to all animal life). All Woolens and Furs should be well
 sprinkled with the Powder before being worn. It is invariable to take to the Sewing. To avoid
 disappointment insist upon having "KEATING'S POWDER."
 SOLD IN LARGER TINS PRICE 3^d, 6^d, and 1^s EACH.

As the days rolled on the weather began to get extremely cold, and we were very poorly clad. Our socks and boots were nearly worn out and we had only one shirt which by this time was much 'verminised'. I think it was about November 20th when we got our first bath, and got our clothes fumigated: and the Germans gave us a thin shirt so that we could have a change. Up till December 1st we were sleeping in old tents on a small bit of dirty straw, but by this time they had given us another blanket. About December 1st we were moved into wooden huts which had been built for the benefit of the prisoners: but here two men had to sleep on one old straw mattress, and the conditions were not much better. However, with a plentiful supply of Keating's powder, and clean clothes which we got from home, we managed to get gradually cleaner.

The form of punishment here was very severe to my mind. For the least offence you were tied to a tree with rope for three days, two hours each day, which the German's considered equal to three days' solitary confinement. I also witnessed occasional bullying on the part of some of the sentries; such acts as kicking and punching and striking men with the butt of their rifles was very common at this time. One day, while on fatigue round the German troops' barracks, I was called by a decent German to have a basin of soup. Hearing him call there were several Frenchmen ran for this soup, as well as me, but being the tallest I reached over to get it, when the sentry in charge gave me a punch in the back worthy of Jack Johnson. I need not tell you that I did not get the soup.

Coming to Christmas Day, our bill of fare was dry black bread for breakfast with coffee. We were told we were going to have a grand dinner, but when we got it

what a shock! It consisted of carrot water soup with a little meat, which was like boiled string. But they were decent enough to give us five cigars. This was the only thing that reminded us that it was Christmas Day, and we had a little tune or two on the mouth organ for supper.

About this time we started to get parcels and that helped to cheer us up a bit. Well in fact, only for the people of England being so good and kind in sending parcels out to the poor prisoners of war, I don't know how they would live. As regards the fatigues, some of them were very hard. There was one fatigue especially which was very hard. We called it the "farm fatigue" and all we got extra for it was a bit of sausage, cheese or a herring. The day we would be on this fatigue we got dinner which consisted always of some kind of soup at 7 a.m., and then proceeded to the farm where we used to stay until 3.15 with nothing to eat, unless we happened to save some bread from the night before. There were several kinds of work on this farm, such as dragging a harrow or towing machines about as they had no horses; also digging drains making roads, etc. Often have we got ringing wet, and having no change of clothes we used to sit on our old mattresses until we were dry again. I don't know if they were getting short of bread, but they cut our rations down. Instead of six men to a loaf, they made it ten, and the occasional bun we used to get was taken away altogether. Often did we ask for great coats, but they would not give us one. They said we would sell them. It's true there were a few men where clothing had been sold, but it was sold to try and get bread with the money. I ask you, what can a starving man do?

I stayed in Sennelager until March 15th 1915, when I was told I was off for a working party. Before going we got two new shirts, two pairs of underpants and clogs, and then proceeded to a place called Dorsten, which was Detachment No.2 Camp of Dulmen. Here the work was very hard. At first we used to go out at 7 am, return for soup at 12 o'clock; go out again at 1.30, and return at 6pm. The work consisted chiefly of turning land over ready for growing produce. After a while the hours were changed. We went out at 6am and returned at 3pm having half an hours rest while we were out.

(Right: Work detail of French prisoners about to leave Dulmen Camp)



After this we had another change, going out at 4am and returning at 1pm. Then we had another change, going out at 6am and returning at 6 pm with two hours rest on fatigue, during which we got a small drop of soup. I might say that after a few weeks here they commenced to pay us a small amount for the work we did. The pay was 1d for bad work, 2d for medium and 3d for good. The food here at the confinement was fairly good, but it gradually dropped back to the same old thing. I remember once they gave us some raw salty herrings to eat. As this food was totally unfit to eat, we naturally threw them in the swill tub. The officer in charge somehow managed to see them, and for punishment deprived us of coffee

for one month, which I think was a very unfair punishment. The same officer would also visit some nights at about midnight and have a fire alarm sounded. I might say on these occasions he was nearly always drunk.

I will now tell you about a wanton act of cruelty on the part of a German sentry. We were out on fatigue, levelling land over after it had been ploughed by a steam plough. There was a squad of around fifteen men, including myself. One of the men, a gunner of the R.F.A., did not seem to be doing the work to the sentry's liking, so he took the spade off him and showed him how he wanted it done, handing the spade back. The man tried to do the work the way the sentry showed him. Again he did not seem to give satisfaction, so the sentry deliberately stabbed him in the thick part of the leg. This was one of the most cowardly actions I have ever seen, as the man never gave any provocation whatsoever, not by word or action.

I remained in this place until September 19th, when I was taken to a civil hospital in the town suffering from a bad attack of diabetes [*according to the official interview when he returned to London, this hospital was Dorsten*]. My treatment in this hospital was good. After remaining in this hospital for about ten days, I was removed to a prisoner of war hospital at Wesel-on-Rhine. Here my treatment



was very good, but I can't say the same for the other patients as I was on a special diet. While here my eye-sight went very bad, and on the application of Mr L. Wilkinson of Ellesmere Port, the British Red Cross Society sent me the money to pay for the glasses which the German oculist recommended me to wear. I must also pay a tribute to the good work the Prisoners of War Society, Ellesmere Port, is doing, for without parcels from home I

do not know what the prisoners would do. In this hospital there were boards over the bed cots to let you know what diet you were on. There were Form 1 and Form 2. Form 1 was for any prisoners who were enjoying good bodily health, but were wounded. This consisted of coffee and bread and butter at 7am, soup at noon, coffee again at 2pm and soup again at 6pm and nearly always very watery. Form 2 was for the patients not in good health. I was called Form 2 with extras, and the extras consisted of different things, according to the patient's health. Attached to this hospital was a courtyard, where we were allowed out for walking exercise between the hours of 11 am and 12, and again from 2pm until 5pm. During this time we were allowed to smoke.

I cannot express my joy, when on 30th October I was told I was for England on account of my health. That day I passed two inspectors, and was told I was to hold myself in readiness for the next exchange on 21st November. I was ordered to get ready to proceed to the exchange depot. So, proceeding to the station in the charge of an escort, I was taken to Düsseldorf and placed in hospital there, where I was told we had to stay until the authorities got the papers through from England.



Here we remained ten days, the conditions being much the same as at Wesel. On 1st December we left for the exchange at Aachen. The hospital we were taken to was a lovely place. Everything there was clean and comfortable, with as much food as we could eat, with a nice smoking and sitting room, where we often had a bit of an accordion played by a Belgian private. On the 4th we passed the board of inspection and out of 99 there were 28 rejected and out of the poor unfortunates were men missing an arm. The worst part of exchanging was that you do not know until the last minute if you are rejected or not. This is I think is very cruel as it keeps men in suspense. On leaving this place we were given whatever articles of clothes we were short of. What a contrast this was after what we had all gone through. I think they gave us these just to try and make the dear people of our country think we had been well treated during our internment.



On the evening of the 5th the names of the men who were rejected were read out. Some were sent back to camp, and some to hospital and those that had passed the board were taken to the station in a motor ambulances and placed in a hospital train and put to bed. These hospital trains were very comfortable each ward having about ten beds with an orderly in attendance. About midnight the train started for Flushing, travelling to Brussels. Here the Belgian exchange prisoners that were travelling with us were taken off.

Reaching the first station in Holland, we had a very good reception, stopping there two hours. The good people brought us sandwiches, cakes and tea, cigars and cigarettes and English papers. It did the heart good to read a bit of truth once more, for the only paper we read in Germany was a paper called the "*Continental Times*" supposed to be edited by a man named White and printed for the benefit of Americans in Europe, and full of all kinds of lies. In fact, they put what news in they thought would dishearten us, but we only used to laugh and say "Who's next for a read of the "*Continental Liar*"?" About 5pm we reached Flushing, and we were taken aboard the hospital ship, where everything was ready for our comfort. The following morning at daybreak, we set sail and reached Tilbury docks the same evening, where again we had another fine reception.

Now I hope my trials and troubles are over for a while, so let us pray, pray to God that the Allies win this gigantic struggle. All I can say is ‘God helping us if we lose’.

Yours truly

Private A. Williams



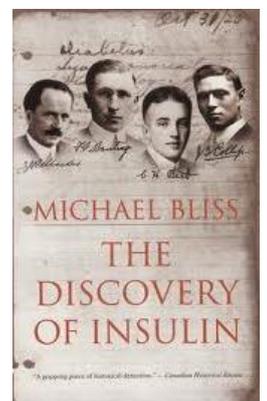
The next hint of Private Williams’ movements is contained in an article published about the ‘Comforts Fund’;

Good progress has to be recorded, although contributions have been below normal for the past few weeks, owing to stress of circumstances. The set-back has been met to some extent by means of a special appeal during the past fortnight, by which it is hoped to raise £10. Through the kindness of Mr J Winn of the Knot Hotel, who has offered the use of the green for the purpose, arrangements are well in hand for conducting a bowling tournament. The officials of the local league have offered every assistance. The secretary continues to receive numerous letters and postcards in acknowledgement of parcels sent out, while during the past few days the personal thanks have been expressed of Private A Williams, an ex-prisoner of war, Private T.C. Rutherford and Private Wellock, all recently discharged, and now at home. Lance-Corporal H Elmore, now lying wounded at Norwich, sends his regards and thanks. Private J Hyde says he is pleased his ‘fellow mates’ still think of him as also are a number of other Port men with whom he is serving. Messages of thanks and appreciation also have been received from Private H. Talbot, T.W. Arnold, Private J. W. Thomas, Sid Riley, Corporal E. Corns, Corporal J.T. Stone, Private Albert Wellock (who unfortunately has had a leg amputated), G. Taylor, W. Reid, J. Holding, C. Shelley, A. Wright and others.

Chester Observer, February 1916

So Arthur Williams was now safely at home in Ellesmere Port, although there is no doubt he was still very ill. Although it has been found that the occurrences of diabetes was actually reduced during the First World War, due mainly to less excess and an improvement in balanced diets, this could not include those who were on a deprived diet such as a Arthur Williams, and it is likely this was the cause of his condition. In the early 20th century, physicians could do little to combat diabetes and patients remained little more than human guinea pigs. Some doctor’s prescribed low calorie diets with as little as 450 calories per day. This diet prolonged the life of people with diabetes but kept them weak and suffering from near starvation. Pity poor Arthur if this was his treatment considering what he had already endured. In his book, *The Discovery of Insulin*, Michael Bliss describes the painful wasting death of the diabetic before insulin:

‘Food and drink no longer mattered and often could not be taken. A restless drowsiness shaded into semi-consciousness. As the lungs heaved desperately to expel carbonic acid (as carbon dioxide), the dying diabetic took huge gasps of air to try to increase his



capacity. 'Air hunger' the doctors called it, and the whole process was sometimes described as 'internal suffocation.' The gasping and sighing and sweet smell lingered on as the unconsciousness became a deep diabetic coma. At that point the family could make its arrangements with the undertaker, for within a few hours death would end the suffering.'

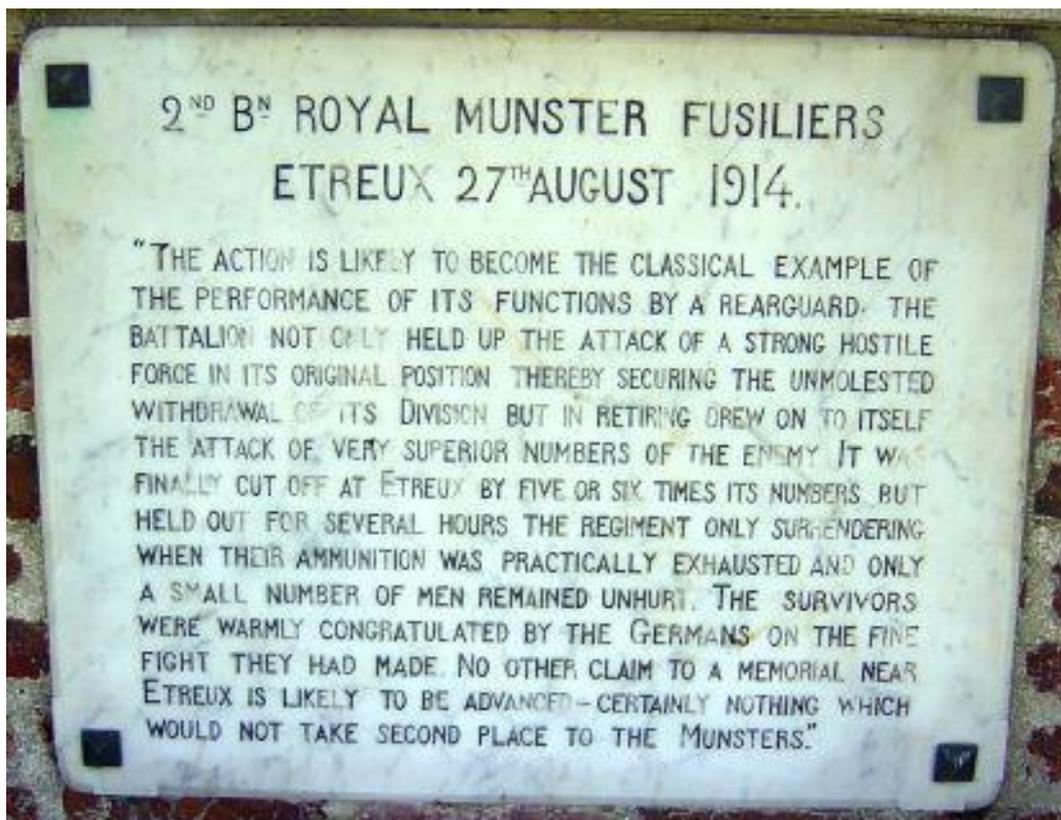
Tragically for Arthur Williams, it would not be until 1921 before the miracle extract, insulin, would be discovered and ensure diabetes was no longer a terminal disease. Arthur had undoubtedly come home to die, but at least he was home in the care of his family. He passed away aged thirty on 4 September 1917, the cause of death officially recorded as diabetes.

FORMER PRISONER OF WAR PASSES AWAY

The many friends of Mr A. Williams, 64 Princes Road, Ellesmere Port, will be sorry to learn of his untimely death at the age of thirty years as a direct result of the exposure and treatment which he met with while a prisoner of war in Germany. It was the Ellesmere Port Prisoners of War Society who were instrumental in bringing his case before the British Red Cross Society, who secured his exchange. For a time he was in hospital in London and he took part in the Royal Munster's Prisoner of War matinee, which took place at the Shaftesbury Theatre. He was then sent to a hospital at Hoole, and it was from here that he visited Ellesmere Port and spoke at a matinee at the Queen's Theatre in aid of the Prisoners of War Funds. In fact Mr Williams was ever ready to help the Prisoners' Society. He was taken prisoner at Etreux on August 17th 1914. It was here he spent twelve terrible days of fearful privation, and later he assisted in burying some of his own comrades. He was glad at that time to feed even upon the skins of vegetables and was given mouldy bread for rations.

Birkenhead News 15 September 1917

Arthur Williams was laid to rest in Christchurch, Ellesmere Port, the parish church of his home, in a Commonwealth War Grave. [Plot B, Row 7, Grave 21.]



DOCUMENTS AND SOURCES

Administrative County of <u>Wolverhampton</u>		The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the										Page 6					
Civil Parish of <u>Wolverhampton</u>		Municipal Borough of <u>Wolverhampton</u>		Municipal Ward of <u>St George</u>		Urban-Sanitary District of <u>Wolverhampton</u>		Town or Village or Hamlet of _____		Rural-Sanitary District of _____		Parliamentary Borough or Division of <u>Wolverhampton West</u>		Ecclesiastical Parish or District of <u>St Luke</u>			
Col. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (1) or (2)	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (3) or (4)	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (5) or (6)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	Employer	Employed	Employed	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb	(2) Blind	(3) Lunatic	(4) Inebriate, Imbecile or Idiot
					Kate M. Maddocks	Son							Belton Staffs				
33	Hilberham Lane	1	4		John R. Do	Son				General Labourer	X		Wolverhampton Co				
					Barrett Do	Wife							Disentured Warwick				
					Henry Do	Son							Do				
					Henry Jones	Brother				Do has taken another job	X		Wolverhampton Staffs				
34	Mayor St	1	4		Richard Lister	Head				Medicine Keeper	X		England				
	Do				Ann Do	Wife							Essex - Great Borely				
34	Do	1	2		Albert J. Thorne	Head				Iron Plate Printer	X		Wolverhampton Staffs				
					Sarah L. Do	Wife							Walsall Co				
					Albert J. Do	Son							Wolverhampton Co				
25	Do	1	4		Thomas Dery	Head				Blacksmith	X		Do				
					Mary B. Do	Wife							Do				
					George Do	Son				Iron Tinsmith	X		Do				
					Ann Blackwell	Daughter				sew			Do				
36	Do	1	4		James Birdall	Head				Labourer at the Works	X		Do				
					Ann Do	Wife							Do				
					Arthur Do	Son				Colours			Wolverhampton Staffs				
					James Do	Son							Do				
					Caroline Do	Daughter							Do				
					Adrian Do	Daughter							Do				
37	Do	1	6		Arthur H. Williams	Head				Labourer in Chemical Works			Stanley Do				
					Ann P. Do	Wife							Staffs				
					William Cooper	half brother				M. Co			Wolverhampton Do				
					Eda M. Williams	Daughter				colours			Do				
					Arthur J. Do	Son							Do				
38	Do	1			Thomas Davis	Head				Engine fitter	X		Do				
					Sarah Do	Wife							Do				
					Edwin L. Do	Son				colours			Do				
					Polly Do	Daughter							Do				
					James Do	Son							Do				
7	Total of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms ...	5			Total of Males and Females...				17	16							

Administrative County of <u>Staffordshire</u>		The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the										Page 25					
Civil Parish of <u>Wolverhampton</u>		Ecclesiastical Parish of <u>St Luke</u>		County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District of <u>Part of</u>		Ward of Municipal Borough of <u>St Luke</u>		Rural District of _____		Parliamentary Borough or Division of <u>Part of</u>		Town or Village or Hamlet of _____					
Col. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (1) or (2)	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (3) or (4)	HOUSES in which the person is enumerated (5) or (6)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	Employed	Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb	(2) Blind	(3) Lunatic	(4) Inebriate, feeble-minded
143	29 Johnson St	1			Lilina Beach	Wife		20					Staffs Lipton				
					Hilda do	Daughter		2					do Wolverhampton				
					Edward B. do	Son		10 mo					do do				
					Arthur H. Williams	Head		21		Chemical Works Labourer	Worker		do Hanley				
					Annie E. do	Wife		28					Staffs Brierley Hill				Staffs
					Eva M. do	Daughter		17		Washer at the Works	do		Staffs Wolverhampton				
					Arthur do	Son		15		cycle fitter	do		do do				
					Felix do	Daughter		6					do do				
					Etie L. do	Daughter		3					do do				
					Walter do	Daughter		10 mo					do do				
144	24 do do	1			Henry Parkes	Head		56		Iron f. houlder	do		do West Bromwich				
					Thomas do	Son		23		General Labourer	do		do do				
					George do	Son		16		do do	do		do Wolverhampton				
					John do	Daughter		11					do do				
145	20 do do	1			Jane Mason	Head		64		Huckshop		at Home	Staffs Staffordshire				
					Harriet Hollyoak	Daughter		54		at			Staffs Wolverhampton				
					William H. do	do		32		Iron Roller	do		do do				
					William do	do		10					Nottingham				
					Harriet do	do		8					do do				
146	31 do do	1			Henry Hale	Head		28		Grocers Porter	do		Wiltshire				
					Elizabeth do	Wife		27		Charwoman	do		Staffs Wolverhampton				
					Beatrice L. do	Daughter		2					Staffs Guildford				Staffs
					Mice Blackmore	Daughter		54					Staffs Wolverhampton				
					Hannah do	Daughter		23		Washer at the Works	do		do do				
147	32 do do	1			Francis Turner	Head		28		Brass f. aeter	do		do do				
					Annie do	Wife		27		Brass f. aeter	do		do do				
					Emma do	Daughter		1					do do				
					Frederick do	Son		6					do do				
					Albert do	Son		6 mo					do do				
					Emma do	Daughter		6 mo					do do				
148	33 do do	1			Frederick Marsden	Head		38		Boat Maker	do		do Stafford				
6	Total of Schedules of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms ...	6			Total of Males and of Females...				13	18							

Census: 1891 (top) / 1901 (bottom).

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.

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 previous Marriage has had.	Total Children Born Alive.	Children still living.	Children who have died.	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.	Whether Employed, Worker, or Working on Own Account.	Whether Working at Home.				
1. Arthur Henry Williams	Head	50	Married								Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
2. Ann Eliza Williams	Wife	47	Married	29	8	5	3						Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
3. Lily Williams	Daughter	16	Single										Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
4. Elsie May Williams	Daughter	13	Single										Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
5. Violet Williams	Daughter	10	Single										Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
6. Arthur Horro Williams	Son	14	Single								Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
7. John Saxlor	Boarder	56	Single								Wood Sawyer	Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
8. James Linnock	Boarder	29	Single								Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Works at Home	Wales	Wales	
9. Joseph Jellicoe	Boarder	26	Single								Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Galvanizing Sheet Worker	Works at Home	Wales	Wales	

(To be filled up by the Enumerator)

I certify that—		Total.	
(1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column.	Males	Females	Persons.
(2) I have counted the males and females in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.	54	4	9
(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.			0

Initials of Enumerator: *J.H.W.*

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

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

Signature: *Arthur Henry Williams*

Postal Address: *43 Northfield, R. E. Glamorgan*

four 5

Census 1911

1914

Campaign

(A) Where decoration was earned.

(B) Present situation.

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)		
				MEDAL	ROLL	PAGE
(A) WILLIAMS	R. Munster Pte		7822	VICTORY	A/103 B10	1625
(B) Arthur	"	"	"	BRITISH	A/7	102
Action taken				Disched		
B.W.V. medals, Reta (14+3.K.R.1912) 8153/adt						
B.W.V. List 1.V.B 1242 d/y/12/32 NW/4/21414						
NW B List A/17						
QUALIFYING DATE.				13. 8. 14.		
(6 34 46) W231—HP5590		500,000 4/19 HWV(P240)		K608		8153/adt [OVER.

Medal Card

Former Prisoner of War Passes Away.

The many friends of Mr. A. Williams, 64, Princess-road, Ellesmere Port, will be sorry to learn of his untimely death at the age of 30 years as a direct result of the exposure and treatment which he met with while a prisoner of war in Germany. It was the Ellesmere Port Prisoners of War Society who were instrumental in bringing his case before the British Red Cross Society, who secured his exchange. For a time he was in hospital in London, and he took part in the Royal Munster's Prisoners of War matinee, which took place at the Shaftesbury Theatre. He was then sent to a hospital at Hoole, and it was from here that he visited Ellesmere Port and spoke at a matinee at the Queen's Theatre in aid of the Prisoners of War funds. In fact, Mr. Williams was ever ready to help the Prisoners' Society. He was taken prisoner at Etreaux on August 27th, 1914. It was here he spent twelve terrible days of fearful privation, and later he assisted in burying some of his own comrades. He was glad at that time to feed even upon the skins of vegetables, and was given mouldy bread for rations.

Mrs.

ER

TRANMERE MAN KILLED.

Birkenhead News 15 September 1917

P.O.W. Interviews

When Prisoners of War returned home they were usually interviewed by military authorities to gather intelligence about the enemy. Men who were to be hospitalised were subjected to a series of questions for similar reasons, but also to learn how men had been treated medically by the enemy. Records are still intact and are held in The National Archives. This is the actual interview experienced by Private Arthur Williams.

HOSPITAL ENQUIRY SHEET.

- (1) Name, Rank, No., and Regiment.
- (2) Home Address.
- (3) Place and date of capture.
- (4) Nature of wound, if any.
- (5) Any attention at field dressing station? Kindly treated?
- (6) Name of Hospital to which ultimately sent.
- (7) Length of journey to hospital.
Nature of conveyance.
- (8) Treatment on journey by—
 - (a) Guard.
 - (b) Others.
- (9) Any food on journey? If so, what and how often?
- (10) Behaviour of German Red Cross.
- (11) Length of time in this Hospital.
Give dates if possible.
- (12) Treatment in Hospital.
 - (a) Medical.
 - (b) Nursing.
 - (c) Lodging.
 - (d) Food.
 - (e) Sanitary conditions; if bad, state way in which defective.Any difference of treatment made between different nationalities.
- (13) Names of doctors who attended informant; humane or reverse?
Any operation? If so, under anaesthetic? If not, why not?
- (14) Clothing.
Any supplied by Germans?
What? Underlinen? Bed linen?
How often changed?
- ✓(15) Postal arrangements. Received letters and parcels sent? Regularly or not? Opened in informant's presence? Any articles removed?
- (16) Date of discharge from hospital.
To what camp? Length of journey.
Treatment on journey.
- (17) General remarks on points not included above.
- (18) Opinion of Examiner as to intelligence and reliability of informant.

Wesel.

H. 87.—(1) Williams, Arthur, Private, No. 7822.
Royal Munster Fusiliers.
(2) 2, Dudley Terrace, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.
(3) Etreu, France. 27th August 1914.
(4) No wound.
(5) Nil.
(6) Dorsten Hospital for 10 days from 19th September. Then sent to Wesel Hospital.
(7) Nil.
(8) Bad. Bad food. Mouldy bread and water on the journey. (a) The guard treated us fairly. (b) The civilians in Germany threw stones at us, and threatened us.
(9) Mouldy bread and water. Plenty of it.
(10) Nil.
(11) At Wesel Hospital, from 29th September 1915 to 21st November 1915.
(12)—(a) The doctor was very good to me.
(b) No nurses.
(c) Good.
(d) Very good.
8th December 1915.

(e) Good. I consider I had excellent treatment for my complaint (diabetes).
No difference.
I must speak highly of my treatment in Wesel Hospital.
(13) I do not know.
No.
(14) Special hospital uniform supplied by Germans. Our own underlinen. Hospital sheets. Good bed linen.
Sufficiently often.
(15) Satisfactory.
(16) 21st November 1915.
To Dusseldorf.
Well treated on journey and at the hospital at Dusseldorf, where I stayed 10 days on my way home.
(17) The doctor took a special interest in my case and placed me on an excellent diet and treated me very well.
(18) I consider Williams is of very fair intelligence, and a fair-minded man, who can be relied upon.
STEWART JOHNSON.

259.—(1) Williams, Arthur, Private, No. 7822.
2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers.
(2) 2, Dudley Terrace, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.
(3) Sennelager, No. 3.
(4) From 11th September 1914 to 31st March 1915.
(5)—(a) About 5,000. (b) About 1,200.
(6) Not known.
Character of Commandant pretty fair.
(7)—(a) In huts. One straw palliassé between two men, no pillow. Two blankets per man and one sheet.
(b) The huts were cold. Three fires in a hut for about 200 men.
(c) Pretty good. There were baths.
(d) Bad as could be. Fatigue parties had to clean out the latrines and urinals, which smelt badly.
(e) My comrades told me that the hospital was bad. I never went in.
(8)—(a) Not sufficient. 8 ozs. black bread. Soup (very watery) with small bit of meat if lucky. Black coffee for breakfast, made from maize with no sugar and no milk.

B 4

259.—Williams, Arthur, 7822. 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers.

(2) 2, Dudley Terrace, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.
(3) Dorsten Detachment, No. 2 Camp, Dulmen.
(4) From 31st March 1915 to 19th September 1915.

(5)—(a) About 200. (b) 20 English.

(6) I do not know the names. The Commandant. Very severe. A bully to the prisoners and his own men also.

(7)—(a) In a music hall. Good.

(b) Only there in warm weather.

(c) Plenty of facilities.

(d) Proper flush closets and urinals; good.

(8)—(a) Fair.

(b) Good canteen, run by the owner of the public-house.

(c) Fair.

(d) Fair condition. Arrived all right.

(9) Good.

(10) Not much room. Only a small yard. We were wired in in the yard.

Games allowed, but yard too small for football.

(11) Any indoor game.

At any time in the yard.

(12) The R.C.'s were taken to a church, but no religious services for the others.

(13) Agricultural work.

From 10 pfennigs to 30 pfennigs a day.

No.

(14) The regulations were read out in English and posted up also.

The usual things under martial law.

Cells. Three days the general punishment.

No.

(15) No.

Gunner Kidd, 117th Battery, R.F.A., was bayoneted in the thigh for no offence. I saw it all. We were in the field levelling the ground after the steam plough. Kidd did not do this to the sentry's liking and the sentry bayoneted him in the thigh. The man fell down. I saw the blood. He was bandaged by some of our R.A.M.C. and taken back to barrack. He lost plenty of blood. He was taken to the hospital and I did not see him again.

(16) No difference between French and English.

No.

I was taken ill with diabetes and taken to the civil hospital.

(17) Good arrangements.

No complaint.

(18) I do not think he came.

(19) The conditions were fair all the time.

(20) A fairly good place.

(21) Nil.

Signature of Examiner: STEWART JOBSON
8th Dec. 1915.

Williams, Arthur, Private, 7822. 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers.

The stabbing affair that I mentioned took place when I was at Dorsten Camp Detachment Camp of Dulmen. It was about the month of May. There were 10 English working in one squad. I was one, Private Kidd was another. He was a gunner of the 117th Battery, R.F.A. I knew him well. He was in my company up to that time. We were working in a field. It was in the morning about 7.30. The squad was in charge of a German sentry. He had not been at the camp more than two or three days. We had to level the ground after the steam plough. We were getting the ground ready for harrowing. The German sentry complained to Kidd of the way he was doing the work. He spoke to him in German and made signs of how he wanted the work done. Kidd did not answer the sentry, but tried to do the work as the sentry wanted. The sentry seemed to get angry suddenly and stabbed Kidd with the bayonet. Kidd dropped to the ground bleeding from the wound. The wound was a flesh wound in the thigh, from the back towards the front. Kidd had his back to the sentry when he was stabbed. I saw the whole affair. He seemed to lose plenty of blood. It ran out of his leg pretty freely. There were about four R.A.M.C. men in the squad, and they bandaged him with a field dressing which they had with them. The sentry

evidently knew he had done wrong. The R.A.M.C. men made up a stretcher and carried the man back to barracks. He could not walk. Kidd cried with pain when he was stabbed. He gave no provocation to the sentry before he was stabbed.

He was afterwards removed to a hospital, and I never saw him again.

I saw him before he went to the hospital, and he complained of his leg being very painful.

The sentry was never in charge of a squad after that. He was sent away, and a German sergeant afterwards said he had been killed at the front.

The names of the other men in the squad that I knew were—

Private Blackburn, R.A.M.C.

.. Steel, R.A.M.C.

.. Potter, of the Lincolns.

.. Lancaster, R.A.M.C.

The following men were in the same bungalow as Kidd, and, no doubt, saw him when he had been stabbed—

Private McKenna, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

.. Roach, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

.. Parsons, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

.. Wheeler, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

These are still in Germany except the R.A.M.C. men.

STEWART JOBSON,
11th Dec. 1915.

Williams, Arthur, 7822. 2nd R.M.F.

In Dec. 1914 when I was at Sennelager, the majority of the Irish prisoners were separated off from the rest of us, and put in separate huts. We tried to get to know why this was done, but could not find out. A company was formed, which was called the Irish Company, from these men that were set apart. The Irish went away just before Christmas. We understood they went to Limberg. After that our letters (for Munster Fusiliers) used to be delivered with the post-mark Limberg on them. I daresay about 150 men of my regiment were in this Irish Company.

I can give the names of some of them—

Sergeant Murphy.

Sergeant Foley.

Company Sergeant-Major Brown.

Corporal Danneha.

Private Butler.

Private Haines.

Private Sullivan.

Private Braddish.

We were able to mix with them when they were in the separate huts. They did not know why they were kept separate. They knew two or three days beforehand that they were going away, but they did not know where they were going to or for what object. They were thoroughly loyal men.

I never heard the name of Casement while I was in Germany. I could not say if he ever visited the camp.

STEWART JOBSON,
11 Dec. 1915.

In Memory of

Private

Arthur Aaron Williams

7822, "C" Coy. 2nd Bn., Royal Munster Fusiliers who died on 04 September 1917 Age 30

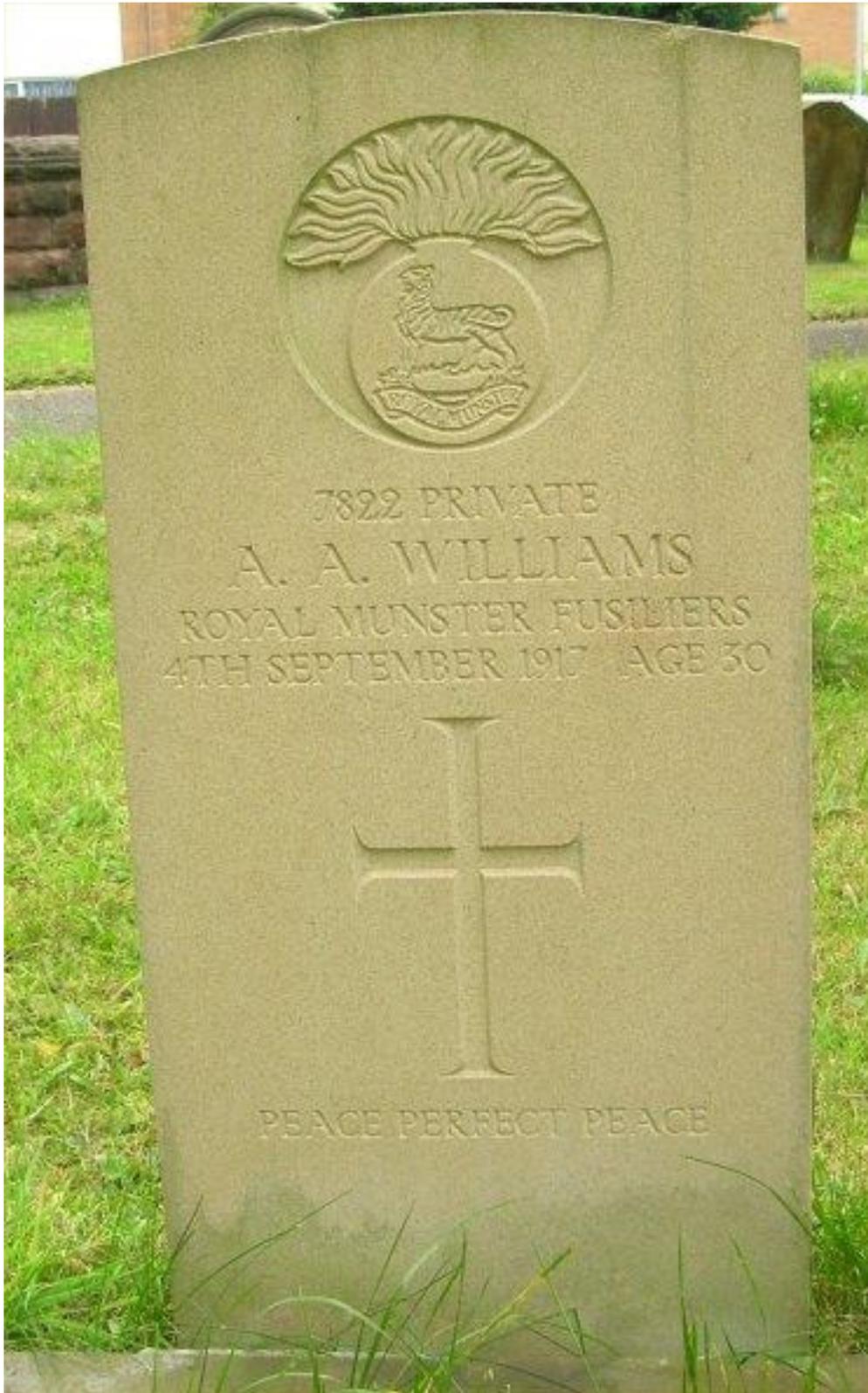
Son of Arthur and Anne Eliza Williams, of 64, Princess Rd., Ellesmere Port. Born at Wolverhampton.

Remembered with Honour

Ellesmere Port (Christ Church) Churchyard



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Private 7822 Arthur Williams
'C' Company, 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers
Commonwealth War Grave
[Plot B, Row 7, Grave 21.]
Christchurch, Ellesmere Port

CWGC records reveal the original inscription requested by the family was

'A Mons Hero'

**Researched and written
by
Mike Royden**

Photographs in France also by the author

www.roydenhistory.co.uk