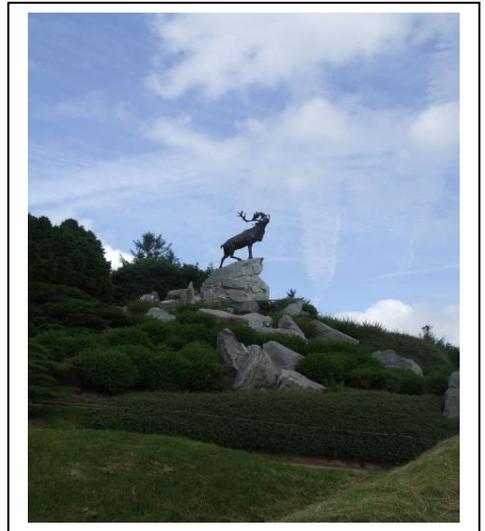


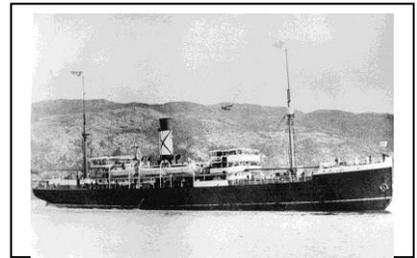


Private Hugh Williams (Regimental Number 3581), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

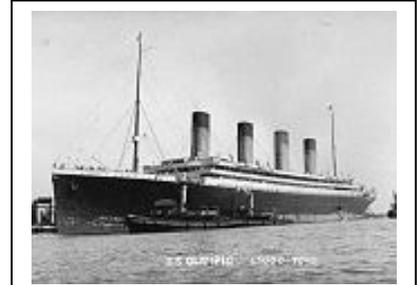
His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a lumberman earning a monthly \$30.00, Hugh Williams was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 10 of 1917, he then also enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same day.



Private Williams was not to depart from Newfoundland for overseas service until May 19, when the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) left en route to Halifax. His contingent of three officers and one-hundred eighty-two *other ranks*, and also ninety-nine recruits of the newly-formed Newfoundland Forestry Unit, then left Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom on board an unspecified\* vessel, on May 29.



*\*The ship in question may well have been the White Star liner Olympic (right) – sister ship to Titanic – requisitioned as a troop transport during the war, which sailed on June 2 from Halifax with Canadian military personnel as well – there are no other departures on or about this date. May 29 may have been the date of embarkation by the Newfoundland contingent.*



Arriving in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on June 9 the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr\* had already been in existence as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

(continued)

*\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion was transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

It was not to be until November 6, 1917, that Private Williams took ship again; on this occasion he was on his way to the Continent, passing through the English south-coast port of Southampton as one of the one-hundred eleven *other ranks* of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Draft from Ayr. The Newfoundlanders disembarked in Rouen on the following day and made their way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot there for a few days of final training and organizing\* before making their way to a rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

By that time, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign, on October 17, in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. It had been ordered back south from Belgium into northern France to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

It was there that, on November 14, four officers and one-hundred forty-one *other ranks* – one of them Private Williams – reported from Rouen *to duty* with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

That new offensive, the so-called *Battle of Cambrai*, was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Martin Williams (former fisherman, deceased October, 1910) and Lucinda (Lucy) Margaret Williams (née *Goodyear*, she later *Mrs. Charles Wimbleton*) – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Springdale in the District of Twillingate, he was also brother to at least Alexander\*, to Janet and to Finley.

Private Williams was reported as having been *killed in action* on December 1, 1917, while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting near Marcoing and Masnières. The report of Private Williams' burial was submitted by the Reverend W. Keary, attached to the 17<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

At home, it was the Reverend W. F. Kelloway of Springdale who was requested to notify his family.

*\*Private Alexander Williams, Regimental Number 2051, had been killed in action at Gueudecourt on October 12, 1916.*

Hugh Williams had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and eight months.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)

(Right: *The War Memorial in Springdale honours the sacrifice of the brothers Privates Alexander Williams and Hugh Williams. – photograph from 2014*)

Private Hugh Williams was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

