



COLDWATER REMEMBERS

PRIVATE HILTON WILLIAMSON

Hilton Williamson was born on September 13, 1890, the son of Emma (Beard) and James Williamson of Jarrat, a small community located 15 km south-east of Coldwater, Ontario. The family moved out west in the early 1900s, so when the call to arms came, Hilton enlisted with the 46th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, in Regina, Saskatchewan, on Nov 1, 1915. He was 24 years old and single. On his Attestation Form he is described as 5 feet 8 inches tall, with grey eyes and brown hair. He identified his trade as farm hand, with no previous military experience.



Private Hilton Williamson, regimental number 426701, sailed from Halifax on the S.S. Lapland on October 21, 1915, and disembark nine days later at Devonport, England. After months of training (and fighting influenza) in England he finally joined his front line infantry unit in France, the 3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment), on June 19, 1916.

Private Williamson was killed in action on October 9, 1916, in the area of the Somme. Although his unit's War Diary states that all was quiet on that day, the entry for the previous day provides the context surrounding Williamson's death, describing in length an assault that proved costly for the battalion. *"At zero time all was ready for the attack to be launched. 14 officers and 481 O.R. [Other Ranks] made up the attacking party which went forward in 4 waves of 2 platoons per company."* The War Diary describes the assault as initially successful, most companies reaching their objectives by mid-morning. But soon the Germans counter-attacked with heavy shelling. *"By 11 a.m. all the officers in B and C companies were dead, and most officers in A and D companies were casualties."* At the end of the day, only 1 officer and 85 O.R. were left standing; Private Williamson was not among them.

By that time James and Emma Williamson had moved back to Ontario and settled in Coldwater. An official telegram would have reached them there to deliver the tragic news. Four years later, James and Emma should have received the awards their son was entitled to: the 1914-1918 British War Medal; the Inter Allied Victory Medal; a Memorial Plaque (a bronze medallion often referred to as "Dead Man's Penny"); and an official scroll from King George V. There would also be a "Mother's Cross" for Emma.

Private Hilton Williamson is buried at Adanac Military Cemetery, Somme, France, near the village of Miraumont. In Canada he is commemorated on page 183 of the *First World War Book of Remembrance*, inside the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa. As of November 11, 2018, he is also commemorated on a plaque on the Cenotaph in front of the Coldwater Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

We will remember him.