

Private Alexander Samuel
Regimental Number: 536215
5th Canadian Field Ambulance, Canadian Army Medical Corps

born: 3 May 1894 - died: 16 November 1918

Private Alexander Samuel was born on 3 May 1894 in Glasgow, Scotland,¹ son of Alexander Samuel, a flesher (butcher),² and his wife, Janet Smith, born about 1872 in Glasgow.³ Alexander and Janet were married on 22 July 1890 in Glasgow. Alexander had an older sister, Margaret, born on 2 April 1892, also in Glasgow.⁴ In 1901, Margaret and Alexander were living with their mother, Janet, at 124 Green Street, Glasgow.⁵ Alexander may have been living with his father in Glasgow in 1911.⁶

Alexander enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on 12 July 1916 in St John, New Brunswick. He was a labourer, 22 years old, 5' 4½" tall, with a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair, and was considered fit for serving in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force. He was a Presbyterian.

He served in the 5th Field Ambulance, a front-line medical unit, of the Canadian Army Medical Corps. The 5th Field Ambulance had moved to Denain, in northern France, on 2 November 1918 and set up operations in a local hospital, which had been used previously by the German army as a prisoner of war camp.⁷ The staff and patients received the news of the signing of the Armistice on 11 November enthusiastically. Even though the terms of the Armistice were not yet known, "[t]here was a certain amount of demonstration on the part of the civilian population, waving of flags and decoration of streets."

It is unlikely that Alexander took part in these festivities since, on 12 November, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, which was just 15 kilometres away. He died four days later of influenza and was buried the same day in the British Military Cemetery in Auberchicourt (Grave 22, Plot 1, Row A) with the Canadian chaplain, A. D. Reid presiding. His sister, Miss Margaret Samuel, was notified of his death at her address of 118 Wentworth Street, St John, New Brunswick.

The day he was admitted, the 1st CCCS war diaries noted "Hospital still very busy. A considerable number of wounded still arriving."⁸ Sixty-seven people (soldiers and civilians) died at the 1st CCCS in November 1918. The work of the Centre had shifted from being primarily surgical to medical, to deal with the influenza pandemic.⁹ Influenza accounted for most deaths at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station after the Armistice. In spite of the horrific number of soldiers killed in World War I, the influenza pandemic, which affected the whole world and scourged Europe in 1918-1919, killed more people than the war itself.¹⁰

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 kilometres to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918.¹¹ The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919 while the 6th, 23rd and 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were located nearby.

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¹ "Statutory Registers: Birth," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>; accessed 24 March 2015) entry for Alexander Samuel, District: HUTCHESONTOWN, City: GLASGOW CITY/LANARK, MR GROS: 644/11 1023

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- ² "Occupations," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/content/help/index.aspx?430>; accessed 28 March 2015)
- ³ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 23 March 2015), entry for Alexander Samuel, ED: 19, Household schedule number: 50, LINE: 8, Roll: CSSCT1901_281
- ⁴ "Statutory Registers: Birth," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>; accessed 24 March 2015) entry for Margaret Samuel, District: GORBALS, City: GLASGOW CITY/LANARK, MR GROS: 644/12 0423
- ⁵ "1901 Scotland Census," entry for Alexander Samuel
- ⁶ "1911 Census Returns", *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>; accessed 24 March 2015) entry for Samuel, Alexander, 644/03 067/00 006
- ⁷ "War Diaries of the First World War: 5th Canadian Field Ambulance 1914/11/09-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada*, (http://data4.collectionscanada.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=ambulance&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=7&f=G; accessed 21 March 2015)
- ⁸ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G;
- ⁹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)
- ¹⁰ "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," (<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>; accessed 3 February 2015)
- ¹¹ "Auberchicourt British Cemetery," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/59509/AUBERCHICOURT%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 3 February 2015)