

Private Aloysius Paul O'Connor[©]

Regimental number: 3132

3rd Battalion, Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians)

born: 1890–died: 22 May 1916

Private Aloysius Paul O'Connor, the son of Joseph and Kathleen O'Connor,¹ was born in Blackrock, County Cork, Ireland,² in 1890.³ In 1901, he was living with his parents and three siblings—Joseph J. (born in about 1886), John F. (born in about 1889) and Caroline (born in about 1896) at 20 South Terrace in the city of Cork. All the children were born in Cork, as was Aloysius' father Joseph, an accountant, who was born in about 1857. His mother was born in about 1865 in Limerick, Ireland.⁴

Aloysius enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force at the beginning of the war. He enlisted in Cork⁵ in about August 1914⁶ but did not go to the Front until 25 October 1915.⁷ Seven months later, Aloysius was with the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians).⁸ The regiment was given the name "Royal Canadians" because, in 1898, the Leinsters began two years' service in Nova Scotia, as the last regular British infantry unit to be garrisoned in Canada.⁹

At the beginning of May 1916, the 2nd Battalion was in reserve at Kortepyp Camp in Belgium.¹⁰ It was there that the troops received word that all leave to Ireland was cancelled because of the Easter Rising. On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, Irish nationalists had staged a rebellion against the British government and proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic. Although the rebellion was put down by British troops and had limited support from the Irish people, support grew, and this rebellion led eventually to the creation, in 1922, of the Irish Free State.¹¹

By 6 May, the battalion had relieved the 7th Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment in the trenches near Wulverghem, Belgium. The tour was quiet, except for the occasional enemy machine gun fire, and considerable work was done on the trenches. It was on 9 May that the troops received the following congratulatory message:

The Commander of the 2nd Army has expressed a wish to convey to the Units engaged during the recent gas attack on their front his appreciation of this steadiness and courage displayed by all ranks, whereby the enemy failed to obtain any advantage from Gas Emissions.

In communicating the above the Corps Commander should like to express his appreciation of the high soldierly qualities shown by all ranks under the very trying circumstances.¹²

The battalion returned to the reserves at Red Lodge on 12 May but, sadly, there had been casualties during the time in the trenches—one killed and 11 wounded. More gas alerts were received before the troops returned to the trenches on 18 May. Two days later the troops received word that the tours in the trenches would be eight days instead of the previous six days.

It is not known how or when Aloysius was injured—perhaps during the tour in the trenches from 6 to 12 May—but he died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at 12:10 a.m. on 22 May 1916 of wounds to his abdomen.¹³ He is buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot I, Row A, Grave 14).¹⁴ Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres. It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre, not

just for No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.¹⁵

A letter was sent to his mother, who was living at 3 Church Avenue, Blackrock, Cork County, after the war, to notify her of her son's death.¹⁶ His father received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.¹⁷

Aloysius was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁸

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 22 December 2018), entry for O'Connor, Aloysius, Service No: 3132

² "Ireland, Casualties of World War I, 1914–1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2019), entry for Aloysius O'Connor

³ "Ireland Civil Registration Indexes, 1845–1958," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FBDN-XTP>: 10 March 2018), entry for Aloysius Paul O'Connor; citing Cork, Oct–Dec 1890, vol. 5, p. 131, General Registry, Custom House, Dublin; FHL microfilm 101,063

⁴ "1901 Ireland census," *The National Archives of Ireland* (<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>: accessed 21 December 2018), entry for Lucins P Oconnor [sic]

⁵ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius O'Connor

⁶ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius Paul O'Connor

⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius O'Connor

⁸ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius O'Connor

⁹ "The Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians)," *National Army Museum* (<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/prince-wales-leinster-regiment-royal-canadians>: accessed 22 December 2018)

¹⁰ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 December 2018), Regiment or unit: Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), Sub-unit: 2nd Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov–1918 Jan, Piece description: Piece 2218/1: 2 Battalion Leinster Regiment (1915 Nov–1918 Jan), Piece number: 2218

¹¹ "Easter Rising," *History* (<https://www.history.com/topics/british-history/easter-rising>: accessed 22 December 2018)

¹² Ibid. I assume it's a different topic in History – cite page?

¹³ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 22 December 2019), entry for O'Connor, H. H. [sic]

¹⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 22 December 2018), entry for O'Connor, Aloysius

¹⁵ "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017)

¹⁶ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 22 December 2019), entry for O'Connor, H. H. [sic]

¹⁷ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius Paul O'Connor

¹⁸ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 August 2018), entry for Aloysius O'Connor