

Private Matthew Connerton
Regimental number: 4370
2nd Battalion, Leinster Regiment

born: about 1893 - died: 19 April 1916

Private Matthew Connerton, born in about 1893¹ in Tang, County Westmeath, Ireland,² was the son of James and Ann Connerton. James and Anne were probably married in 1868 near Ballymahon, just a few miles from Tang.³ They had at least seven children – five sons and two daughters: John (born in about 1872), James (born in about 1876), Anne (born in about 1878), Ellen (born in about 1881), Mathew, Patrick (born in about 1886) and Thomas (born in about 1888).⁴

In 1901, Matthew's father was a farmer and his sons, John, James and Matthew were labourers. This Roman Catholic family was living in Lisaquill (Noughaval), County Westmeath.⁵ Five years later, Matthew had an incident with the police. He was charged with drunkenness having been found "drunk on a public street at Glasson, on 28 April 1906."⁶ He was convicted and fined.

Matthew enlisted in the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster Regiment, probably in late 1915 or early 1916.⁷ In April 1916, the Battalion was stationed in Wulverghem, Heuvelland, Belgium.⁸ On 12 April, all leave was cancelled and all soldiers on leave had to return to the unit by 18 April. In the period between 12 and 18 April, the situation was described as "generally hostile artillery fire on or near our front line and supporting points but not much damage was done. Our front line is now held very lightly by day..." During that period, four soldiers were killed and sixteen were wounded. Matthew may have been one of the wounded, since he died of his wounds at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, which was stationed in Bailleul, France, just 12 kilometres away, on 19 April.⁹ The day that he died, 116 soldiers were admitted to the 1st CCCS and one died¹⁰ – perhaps it was Matthew.

He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 176).¹¹ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.¹²

A letter was sent to his mother in Lissaquill, Taug, Ballymihon, to notify her of his death. The monies owing to him from the army after his death were sent to his father.¹³

Matthew was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre)¹⁴ and is commemorated in "Ireland's Memorial Records 1914 – 1918."¹⁵

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¹ "1901/1911 Census Search," The National Archives of Ireland (www.census.nationalarchives.ie/; accessed 16 July 2015), entry for Mathew Connerton, 1901

² Soldiers died Gt war "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 July 2015), entry for Matthew Connerton

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- ³ "Ireland Civil Registration Indexes, 1845-1958," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FY94-726>; accessed 18 July 2015), entry for James Connorton; citing Ballymahon, 1868, vol. 3, p. 44, General Registry, Custom House, Dublin; FHL microfilm 101,250
- ⁴ "1901/1911 Census Search," entry for Mathew Connorton, 1901
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ "Ireland, Petty Sessions Court Registers, 1828-1912," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKSR-FNZH> : accessed 18 July 2015), entry for Mattw Connorton, 1906.
- ⁷ Matthew did not receive the 1914-15 Star, which was for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915. This suggests that he did not enlist long before the end of 1915. November 2015), entry for Matthew Connerton
- ⁸ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 20 July 2015), 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
- ⁹ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 57
- ¹⁰ "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 17 June 2015)
- ¹¹ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 22 June 2015), entry for Connerton, M.
- ¹² "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 July 2015), entry for Matthew Connerton
- ¹⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," entry for Matthew Connerton
- ¹⁵ "Ireland, Casualties of World War I, 1914-1922," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 July 2015), entry for Matthew Connerton