

Private Oliver Llewellyn Boon

Regimental number: 16842

1st Battalion, North Staffordshire (Prince of Wales's) Regiment

born: 1879 - died: 30 April 1916

Private Oliver Llewellyn Boon was born in 1879 in Mow Cop, Cheshire¹ and was baptised on 7 September of that year.² He was the son of William and Edith Boon. William was born in about 1848 in Biddulph, Staffordshire and Edith about two years later in Shrewsbury, Shropshire.³ William and Edith (formerly Griffiths) were married near Congleton in 1867.⁴ They had seventeen children, fourteen of whom survived to 1911. The children were Robert (born in 1868, but died in 1869),⁵ Albert John (born in 1870),⁶ Alfred Edward (born in 1871),⁷ Charlotte Maria (born in 1873),⁸ Frederick William (born in 1874),⁹ Archibald (born in 1875),¹⁰ Peter (born in 1877),¹¹ Lettice (born in 1878),¹² Oliver, Laurence (born in 1881),¹³ Edith Alice (born in 1882),¹⁴ Gertrude Selina (born in 1885),¹⁵ Mabel Ruth (born in 1887),¹⁶ Constance Millicent (born in 1888),¹⁷ Evalyn Beatrice (born in 1889, but died in 1889),¹⁸ Rufus (born in 1890)¹⁹ and Gladys Lilian (born in 1892).²⁰

In 1881, the family was living in Mow Cop, near Odd Rode, Cheshire, where Oliver's father was a coal miner.²¹ In 1891, Oliver's father was a colliery fireman and the family was living on Albert Street in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent. Oliver was a "potters' jigger turner" (halftime).²² In 1901, the family had moved to Cromartie Street in Longton. Oliver's father was still a colliery underground fireman, but his son had joined him underground, where he was a coal miner "loder underground."²³

In the summer of 1902, Oliver married Lilian Dain Clay.²⁴ Lilian was born in 1884 in Bursalem, Staffordshire and baptised at St John's Church on 10 December of the same year.²⁵ She was the daughter of Alfred and Alice (nee Dain) Clay.²⁶ They subsequently had six children: Doris Margetta (born on 13 January 1903), Elsie Edith (born on 22 June 1904), Millicent (born on 8 January 1906), Alfred Ralph (born on July 1913), Norman Llewellyn (born on 11 May 1909) and Oliver John (born on 8 May 1916).²⁷ Oliver John was born just eight days after his father's death.

In 1911, Oliver and his family were living at 24 Foley Place, Fentons, near Stoke-on-Trent, where Oliver was a coal miner and hewer.²⁸

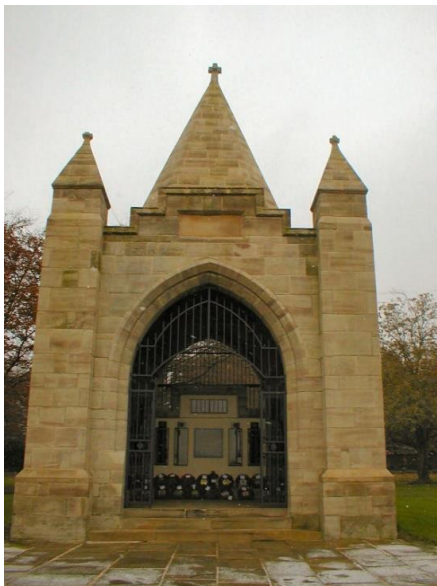
Oliver was 35 years old when he enlisted in the North Staffordshire Regiment on 9 February 1915 in Longton, Staffordshire.²⁹ He has previously served four years as a volunteer. He was 5' 6" tall, a collier and living at 24 Foley Place, Fenton in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. He served with the 1st Battalion, which first went to France in September 1914.³⁰ Oliver joined the Battalion and the British Expeditionary Force in France on 14 December 1915.³¹

In April 1916, the 1st Battalion was stationed north of Wulverghem, Belgium.³² At 12.55 a.m. on 30 April a gas alarm was given. There was one wave of gas, probably chlorine, which lasted about 20 minutes. With winds blowing 10 miles per hour, the gas covered about 50 metres in eleven seconds. That did not give the men much time to adjust their helmets and a large portion of the men were gassed. At 1.20 a.m. a German attack began. There was considerable confusion because of the suddenness of the attack and the fact that the men were still wearing their smoke helmets and, as a result, were partially blinded. Although the Battalion had to evacuate the area, the enemy was not able to advance and much of the area was reoccupied. A shortage of bombs prevented anything more than a steady advance of the Battalion and the enemy was able to return to its own lines. The enemy had taken one man prisoner and killed or wounded a dozen more men. "Our losses from gas-poisoning were considerable chiefly owing to the speed with which the gas travelled over the short

distance between the trenches. Smoke helmets when adjusted properly in time proved most effective. A large number of men suffered from after-effects being taken ill 12 to 24 hours after the gas had passed. Most of their cases, however, were only slight.”³³

Unfortunately this was not the case for Oliver. He died of gas poisoning on 30 April 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, less than five months after arriving on the Front.³⁴ The effects of the gas attacks were also felt at No. 1 CCCS, stationed near Bailleul,³⁵ which was just about six miles from Wulverghem. In April and June 1916, the 1st Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment suffered well over 500 casualties in two serious gas attacks, while in the trenches north of Wulverghem.³⁶ Oliver lost four comrades from his battalion in the few days at the end of April and beginning of May: Private James Morgan, Private Samuel Bertrem (Bert) Clewlow, Private George William Burrows and Private Thomas Alfred Hulme. Most of his comrades had been poisoned by chlorine gas.

Oliver was a member of the Church of England³⁷ and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 132).³⁸ 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.³⁹



Longton Cenotaph War Memorial
Source: Roll of Honour (www.roll-of-honour.com)

A letter was sent to his wife, who was living at 292 Uttoxeter Road in Normacott, Stoke-on-Trent, to notify her of his death.⁴⁰ She also received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.⁴¹ His personal effects were returned to his wife and included a first aid book, a note book, a “title,” a disc, a dictionary, letters and photographs.⁴²

Oliver was awarded 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).⁴³ He is recognized on the Longton Cenotaph War Memorial.⁴⁴

Oliver’s older brother, Peter, also served in the Great War. He was a miner when he enlisted on 31 August 1914, at the age of 34, as a Private in the North Staffordshire Regiment.⁴⁵ He transferred to the Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters) and then to the Durham Light Infantry.

He was serving with the 2nd Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment when, in October 1917, he was considered no longer fit for war service and was discharged. This was a result of an illness that was aggravated by active service. He was living with his wife, the former Mary Davies, and their three children (Lawrence, Harold and Bertha) at 10 Summer Row, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent. He died just five years later at the military hospital in Cannock Chase, Staffordshire. He died on 22 November 1922 of a duodenal ulcer that he had had for about seven years.

It was not determined if any of Oliver’s other older brothers served in the Great War.

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- ¹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Oliver Llewellyn Boon
 - ² "Diocese of Chester Bishop's Transcripts of Baptisms c1600-1910," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Oliver Llewellyn Boon
 - ³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Oliver L. Boon, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Sub-registration district: Longton, ED, institution, or vessel: 31, Piece: 2618, Folio: 141, Page Number: 32, Household schedule number: 206
 - ⁴ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for William Boon, District: Congleton, County: Cheshire, Volume: 8A, Page: 381
 - ⁵ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Robert Boon, FHL Film Number: 1656489, Reference ID: 62; "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Robert Boon, District: Congleton, County: Cheshire, Volume: 8A, Page: 156
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 - ⁷ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Albert Edward Boon, FHL Film Number: 1656489, Reference ID: 87
 - ⁸ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Charlotte Maria Boon, FHL Film Number: 1656489, Reference ID: 107
 - ⁹ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Frederick William Boon, FHL Film Number: 1656489, Reference ID: 118
 - ¹⁰ "GRO online index," General Register Office (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 10 November 2016) entry for Boon, Archibald, Volume 08A, Page 307
 - ¹¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Peter Boon, Registration district: Congleton, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 330
 - ¹² "England, Select Cheshire Bishop's Transcripts, 1598-1900," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Lettice Boon, FHL Film Number: 1647668
 - ¹³ "England & Wales births 1837-2006," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Lawrence Boon, District: Congleton, County: Cheshire, Volume: 8A, Page: 311
 - ¹⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Edith Alice Boon, Registration district: Congleton, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 336
 - ¹⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Gertrude Selina Boon, Registration district: Congleton, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 295
 - ¹⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Mabel Ruth Boon, Registration district: Congleton, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 297
 - ¹⁷ "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Constance Millicent Bonn
 - ¹⁸ "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Evalyn Beatrice Boon, Archive reference: D3276/1/1/7, Page: 543
 - ¹⁹ "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Rufus Bonn
 - ²⁰ "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Gladys Lilian Bonn
 - ²¹ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Oliver Boon, Registration district: Congleton, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 3536, Folio: 38, Page Number: 39

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- ²⁵ "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Lilian Dain Clay, Archive reference: D3571/1/9, Page: 254
- ²⁶ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 August 2015), entry for Lilian Clay, Registration district: Wolstanton, Sub-registration district: Burslem, ED, institution, or vessel: 06, Piece: 2593, Folio: 133, Page Number: 19, Household schedule number: 95; "Staffordshire baptisms," entry for Lilian Dain Clay
- ²⁷ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Oliver Llewellyn Boon
- ²⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Oliver Boon, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Registration District Number: 361, Sub-registration district: Fenton, ED, institution, or vessel: 11, Household schedule number: 35, Piece: 16581
- ²⁹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," entry for Oliver Llewellyn Boon. Unless otherwise stated, all information about his military career comes from his army service record.
- ³⁰ "North Staffordshire Regiment," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Staffordshire_Regiment; accessed 16 August 2015)
- ³¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 18 August 2015), entry for Aliver Llewellyn Boon
- ³² "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 August 2015), Regiment or unit: Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire) Regiment, sub unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov –1919 May, Piece description: Piece 2213/1: 1 Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment (1915 Nov–1919 May), Piece number: 2213
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ "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 67
- ³⁵ "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)
- ³⁶ "North Staffordshire Regiment"
- ³⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 67
- ³⁸ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 3 December 2015), entry for Clewlow, Bert, Service No: 8390
- ³⁹ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- ⁴⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 and 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 67
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⁴² "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," entry for Olivier Llewellyn Boon

⁴³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,"), entry for Aliver Llewellyn Boon

⁴⁴ "Staffordshire," Roll of Honour (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Staffordshire/Longton.html>; accessed 23 September 2015)

⁴⁵ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 30 August 2015), entry for Peter Boon. All information about his military career comes from his army service record.