

20 Private James O'Neill d 3 July 1916 Canadian Infantry (Saskatchewan Regiment)



Son of William & Bridgett (*sic*) O'Neill 7D Blake St CWGC

Born 22/10/1890 in Manchester, New Hampshire. Cook. Joined up May 15th 1915 at Saskatoon.

His address is given as 'Norfolk War Office, Thorpe St. Andrew' (a suburb of Norwich) in the Barrow Cemetery Burial Register.

The grave is unusual in that his mother Bridget (died 1940), and niece Norah Brocklebank d 1919) are also commemorated on the gravestone. This is because it was originally a private family grave, taken over by the Canadian War Graves organisation some time ago.

A letter received by his mother after his death reads:

Dear Mrs O'Neill,

You will have been informed from the War Hospital Thorpe of the death of your son James. But the last request he made to me was that I should write to you "my mother" as he said, in order to tell you that he had had a priest, and I promised I would do so.

I visited him several times, & gave him all the last rites of the Church. I may say that he died in the best of dispositions, and although no doubt you will naturally feel his loss, still it ought to be a consolation to know that he had a good death. R.I.P. I remembered him in mass this morning at the War Hospital, & asked the prayers of those present for the repose of his soul.

Yours in sympathy, E. Scott, Chaplain. (Letter kindly lent by his great-niece)

His Attestation Paper © Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is reproduced below:

ATTESTATION PAPER
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

No. *10000*
Folio.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.
(ANSWERS)

- What is your name? *JAMES O'NEILL*
- In what Town, Township, or Parish, and in what Country were you born? *Manchester N.H. U.S.A.*
- What is the name of your next-of-kin? *Mother Bridget O'Neill*
- What is the address of your next-of-kin? *7b, Blake Street, Barrow in Furness Eng*
- What is the date of your birth? *Octr 22nd 1890*
- What is your trade or calling? *Cook*
- Are you married? *No*
- Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? *Yes*
- Do you now belong to the Active Militia? *No*
- Have you ever served in any Military Force? *No*
- Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? *Yes*
- Are you willing to be attested to serve in the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? *Yes*

James O'Neill (Signature of Man.)
E. Scott (Signature of Witness.)

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *James O'Neill*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

James O'Neill (Signature of Recruit.)
Date *May 15th* 1915 *E. Scott* (Signature of Witness.)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *James O'Neill*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

James O'Neill (Signature of Recruit.)
Date *May 15th* 1915 *E. Scott* (Signature of Witness.)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at *Saskatoon* on the *15th* day of *June* 1915.

E. Scott (Signature of Justice.)

I certify that the above is a true copy of the Attestation of the above-named Recruit.

(Approving Officer.)

DESCRIPTION OF *JAMES O'NEILL* ON ENLISTMENT.

Apparent Age *24* years *7* months.
(To be completed according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Examiners.)

Height *5 ft. 5 1/2* ins.

Weight *140* lbs.

Complexion *Fair*

Eyes *Grey*

Hair *Fair*

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.

Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will enter the same accordingly in any previous service, attaching a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer.

Birth when fully expanded *14 in.*

Range of expansion *14 in.*

Religious Denomination

Church of England *No*

Presbyterian *No*

Methodist *No*

Baptist or Congregationalist *No*

Other Protestants (Communicants to be stated) *No*

Roman Catholic *X*

Jewish *No*

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I have examined the above-named Recruit and find that he does not present any of the causes of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.

He can see at the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs, and he declares that he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him *fit* for service in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force.

Date *May 15th* 1915

Place *Saskatoon*

W. H. H. R. D. Medical Officer.

*Insert here "fit" or "unfit."

Notes.—Should the Medical Officer consider the Recruit unfit, he will fill in the foregoing Certificate only in the case of those who have been attested, and will attach thereto a copy of the certificate.

CERTIFICATE OF OFFICER COMMANDING UNIT

James O'Neill having been finally approved and inspected by me this day, and his Name, Age, Date of Attestation, and every prescribed particular having been recorded, I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.

James O'Neill (Signature of Officer.)

Date *7 July* 1915

He was actually born in Barrow (Cumbria BMD B/53/385), so perhaps Manchester, New Hampshire was his last address before enlisting.

On *Ancestry* he can be found in the *1891 Census* at 20 Emlyn Street, with the O'Neill family occupying two rooms (The McBride family at the same address have 3). The family is father William O'Neill (49), a shipyard riveter, born Belfast, Ireland; mother Bridget (32), born Dundee, Scotland; Jane O'Neill (11), scholar, born Barrow; Mary E. O'Neill (9), scholar, born Barrow; Sissie (or Lissie) O'Neill (5), born Barrow, and James O'Neill (5 months). It is difficult to marry these up with information on *Cumbria BMD*. There is a Jane O'Neill born 1879, mother's maiden name McCann; a Mary Short O'Neill born 1881, mother's maiden name O'Neill; a Rose Mary O'Neill born 1886, mother's maiden name O'Neill; and a James O'Neill born 1890, mother's maiden name Martin. *Are these our family?* A William O'Neill married a Bridget Martin in Barrow in 1890. Perhaps this was William's second marriage.

In the *1901 Census* the family have moved to 7 Emlyn Street, where they still share the building with the McBride's. Bridget O'Neill (44), widow, Spinner Jute Hemp. Born Dundee, Scotland is Head; and the following children (all born Barrow) are living with her: Mary E. O'Neill (17), Spinner Jute Hemp; Elizabeth (15) Jute Factory Shifter(?); James (10); Margaret (8); Catherine (6). Checking on *Cumbria BMD* the last 3 children have a mother maiden name Martin.

Searching for Jane O'Neill, she can be found on the *1881 Census* living with father William (39, ship's riveter, born Belfast, at 12H Devonshire Buildings. Mother is Jane O'Neill (33), born Greenock, Scotland. There is also an elder brother, Robert (12), born Greenock, scholar; grandfather John O'Neill (66), widower, Boilermaker, born Ireland, and 3 boarders, all shipyard workers from Scotland.

NORFOLK WAR HOSPITAL

NOTICE OF DEATH

Ward XI

Name O'Neill James

Died at 6-28 o'clock p. m.,

Date July 3rd 1916

A. Baldwin for Sister Rogers

This form to be sent with the Case Notes to the Registrar without delay.

Papers in his war records on *Ancestry* show that James died of Septicaemia having been shot in both legs and the right arm.