

Sutton Mandeville

Roll of Honour



Lest we Forget

World War I



553551 RIFLEMAN

J. MULLINS

QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS

14th APRIL, 1917 AGE 25

Though Death Divides

Fond Memory Clings

By His Loving Wife Nell

James MULLINS

James Mullins was born in 1890 at Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire to parents Frank & Margaret Mullins (nee Habgood). His parents had married in 1868 at All Saints Church, Sutton Mandeville.

The 1891 Census recorded James Mullins as a 9 month old living with his parents at Sutton Row, Sutton Mandeville in a 4 bedroomed dwelling. His parents were listed as Frank Mullins (General Labourer, aged 48, born Tisbury) & Margaret Mullins (aged 43, born Broadchalke). James was the youngest of 10 children, all born at Sutton Mandeville, in this Census - Frank (General Labourer, aged 20), Walter (General Labourer, aged 18), Alfred (General Labourer, aged 15), William (Agricultural Labourer, aged 12), Edward (Scholar, aged 11), Fred (Scholar, aged 9), Sidney (Scholar, aged 7), Gilbert (Scholar, aged 5), Henry (aged 4) then James.

The 1901 Census recorded James Mullins as a 10 year old Scholar, living with his parents at "Bonds" Sutton Mandeville. His parents were listed as Frank Mullins (Shoemender, aged 58) & Margaret Mullins (aged 53). James was the second youngest of 10 children in this Census - Walter (Roadman on Highway, aged 28), Alfred (Labourer on Highway, aged 25), Albert W. (Stone Mason's Labourer, aged 22), Edward (Horseman on farm, aged 20), Fred (Labourer on Highway, aged 18), Sidney (Shepherd, aged 16), Gilbert (Labourer on Farm, aged 15), Henry (Labourer on Farm, aged 13) then James & Dorothea (Scholar, aged 6, born East Tisbury).

The 1911 Census recorded James Mullins as a 21 year old Cow Boy Servant at the Crosskeys Inn at Fovant. He was living with Edwin (Innkeeper, aged 60) & Elizabeth Perrett (aged 66). Two visitors were listed at the Inn – John Marsh (Barrack Depot, A.S.C., aged 50) & his wife Jane Marsh (aged 49).

James' parents & siblings were still living at "Bonds" at Sutton Mandeville, a 5 roomed dwelling in the 1911 Census. His parents were listed as Frank Mullins (Boot repairer, aged 68) & Margaret Mullins (aged 63). Frank & Margaret had been married for 43 years & had 15 children, 3 had died. The rest of the family listed were – Dorothy (General Servant, aged 17), Frank (Labourer on Farm, aged 40), Edward (Labourer on Farm, aged 30), Fred (Labourer, aged 29), Sidney (Labourer on Farm, aged 27), Gilbert (Mason's Labourer, aged 25) & Harry (Labourer on Farm, aged 24).

A marriage was registered between James Mullins & Nell G. Clarke, in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire in the December quarter 1915. They had married at St George's Church, Fovant, Wiltshire.

James Mullins enlisted at Salisbury & was attached to the 16th (City of London) Battalion (Queen's Westminster Rifles). He was given the rank of Rifleman & a service number of 7189. Records show that he was last attached to attached to 1st 16th (County of London) Battalion (Queen's Westminster Rifles) London Regiment.

Rifleman James Mullins was killed in action on 14th April, 1917, aged 25 years.

1/16th (County of London) Battalion (Queen's Westminster Rifles) London Regiment were a territorial unit with Headquarters at 58 Buckingham Gate when war broke out in August 1914. They were part of the 4th London Brigade, 2nd London Division. They were mobilised and moved to the Hemel Hempstead area, being billeted in Leverstock Green in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, where they are commemorated with a stained glass window in the local church. They proceeded to France on the 3rd of November 1914, landing at Le Havre to join 18th Brigade, 6th Division. On the 10th of February 1916 they transferred to the newly reformed 169th Brigade, 56th (London) Division which concentrated in the Hallencourt area. In 1916 they were in action on The Somme taking part in the diversionary attack at Gommecourt on the 1st of July. Also The Battle of Ginchy, The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval in which the Division captured Combles and The Battle of the Transloy Ridges. In 1917 they were in action during The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Battles of Arras in April, then The Battle of Langemarck in August, then the Cambrai Operations in November.

From the publication : *"The War History of the 1st Battalion Queen's Westminster Rifles, 1914 – 1918 (16th London Regiment)"*

July-Aug 1916 – The following report sent into Battalion Headquarters gives a far more vivid idea of the operation than would a more elaborate account: "Fonquevillers, July 13th. – Patrol told off in three parties left our advanced trench at 12.10 a.m. Two parties under 2nd Lieut. Dyson and Sergeant Step reached the German line about thirty yards south of corner of the Z; they found the trench apparently empty. They moved to the corner of the L where there was a dugout and called on the occupants to surrender, but a shot was the only reply. Sergeant Step threw a bomb into the dugout and groans were heard. 2nd Lieut. Dyson was wounded by a shot fired from the hedge. Germans were seen coming down the hedge. The patrol fired at them and Sergeant Step then ordered the party to retire. Lance-Corporal Jones took his party back by the Poplars and then saw two Germans, one of whom he took prisoner and brought in himself – the other got away. 2nd Lieutenant Dyson was too badly wounded to help himself, and Sergeant Step left Rifleman Mullins ** (2nd Lieutenant Dyson's servant) with him while he himself went back for help. A party went out with a stretcher, but were unable to find 2nd Lieutenant Dyson or Rifleman Mullins and eventually returned to our lines at 3.30a.m." (** *Two Rifleman Mullins were listed on the Roll of Honour for 1st Battalion Queen's Westminster Rifles – Rifleman H. J. Mullins & J. Mullins – the above does not identify which Rifleman Mullins was being referred to.*)

Also from the publication : *"The War History of the 1st Battalion Queen's Westminster Rifles, 1914 – 1918 (16th London Regiment)"*

The Battles of Arras 1917 – (The day Rifleman James Mullins was killed in action)

The final orders for the attack were received at 11.45 p.m. on April 13th, fixing zero hour at 5.30 a.m. the next morning. These orders stated that an enfilade barrage, consisting chiefly of high-explosive shells had been arranged; and that this barrage would open at zero hour and dwell, for a few moments, to enable the infantry to advance up to it, after which it would move forward at the rate of 100 yards in four minutes. In view of the fact that high-explosive shells were to be used, it was directed that 100 yards was the nearest distance at which the infantry could follow the barrage with

safety. Orders were given that the attacking waves must be widely extended, and that there was to be an interval of at least six paces between the men.

In the early hours of the morning, the Queen's Westminsters moved up from the position in the Cojeul Switch, and relieved the L.R.B. on the Tower Ridge, on the left flank of the Divisional front.

The men were thoroughly exhausted, having had not more than one hour's sleep in the twenty-four for the past three days. No previous reconnaissances of the ground over which they were to attack had been possible, and there was no time for any proper explanation to them of what they were to do. In fact, little more could be done than to give them the dispositions for the attack and the general line of the advance on objectives which none of the attacking troops had even seen.

The first objective (the ridge to the west of Cherisy) was allotted to A and B Companies, who formed the first wave of the attack; and the second objective (the capture of the village) was given to C and D Companies, who were to form the second wave. Each wave was to advance in two lines of men extended to six paces' interval, with 200 yards' distance between the lines; and the second wave was ordered to follow the first, at a distance of 300 yards from its second line, in order to conform with the advance of the Q.V.R. on the right.

A few minutes before the barrage was timed to commence, the enemy started a heavy bombardment of the neighbourhood of Wancourt Tower, which was on the ridge, from which the Battalion was preparing to advance, and on the immediate left flank of the Battalion. It appears that the enemy was launching an attack on the position, but the attack does not seem to have been pressed, and in any case it did not interfere with that of the 169th Infantry Brigade.

At zero hour (5.30 a.m.) the attacking waves advanced, A Company on the right, B Company on the left, followed by C and D Companies respectively. It was a beautiful morning and quite bright with the remains of the moon to help the dawning day. The men went forward with confidence; but as soon as the leading waves had gone over the Tower Ridge, and started to descend into the valley between it and the first objective, they were met by a murderous machine-gun fire from the front and from both flanks. At the same time a number of the enemy appeared on the slopes of the ridge in the left rear of the leading companies. The British barrage was quite powerless to keep down the heads of the German machine gunners or to stop their fire; in fact. It was described by the survivors of the attacking waves as "seeming to be negligible compared to that put down by the enemy".

The Battalion suffered the severest losses, and in very short time most of the officers were either killed or wounded; yet the now almost leaderless men pushed on until they reached the furthest of some shallow enemy practice trenches, almost 500 yards down the slope of the Tower Ridge and almost in a direct line between Heninel and Cherisy.

By this time the foremost wave had been nearly wiped out and was consequently disorganised, but the second wave came up to reinforce, and keeping touch with the Q.V.R. on the right, pushed on to the practice trenches and established itself in rear of the few survivors of A and B Companies.

The Battalion was no longer in sufficient strength to press the attack over ground that was absolutely devoid of cover, and swept by shell, machine-gun and rifle fire of the fiercest description. By 6.30 a.m. not only had the attack been brought to a standstill, but the enemy had delivered a counter-

attack. This was successfully beaten off by Lewis-gun and rifle fire, all ranks displaying great courage and resource. Practically no messages got back, and there were hardly any survivors from the leading waves of the attack; consequently very few details of what happened are available. The following particulars, extracted from the Battalion records, will give some idea of the character of the fighting.

On the right, Rifleman E. F. Barrett and Rifleman G. A. Pelling, both of A Company, found themselves on the right flank of their company, in a captured trench down which the enemy commenced a bombing attack. Mounting their Lewis guns, in the open, under heavy machine-gun fire, they succeeded in driving back the enemy, and then built a block in the trench. At about the same time, Corporal D. Francis, of D Company, brought up a Lewis gun on the right in a very gallant way. When the advance was held up he found the man who was carrying the gun had been wounded and was lying in the open some distance back; he immediately ran back a distance of about 150 yards, under heavy machine-gun fire, and returned with the gun. He then mounted it in a good position from which, later in the morning, he helped to repel a counter-attack. He well-earned the Military Medal which he was awarded for his conduct.

Battalion Headquarters, which had been in the ruined village of Wancourt, had followed up the last wave of the attack, and, at 6.00 a.m. were established just below the crest of the Wancourt Ridge. The situation was very obscure. Up to 6.40 a.m. no message had reached headquarters, and all that was known was that all the Battalion were over the ridge, and that the front companies were held up. A message sent to the Brigade by Colonel Shoolbred, at that hour, conveyed the information that a number of 6th Durhams were being driven back by the enemy on the right, and that the Germans were apparently close up to Battalion Headquarters. The message further stated that some 8th Durhams had come up from the right rear.

Reference has already been made to the exposed left flank of the 169th Infantry Brigade. It had been intended to fill the gap which existed on that flank, and hurried orders had been sent, in the early hours of the morning, for the 151st Infantry Brigade (50th Division), which was then out of the line, to establish a defensive flank facing north, roughly along the line of the railway, on the north-eastern slopes of Wancourt Ridge, with its left on Wancourt Tower.

Wancourt Tower, a conspicuous landmark, had been blown up during the night; and in the darkness, the troops of the 15th Infantry Brigade got too much to their right, and deployed for their advance in the middle of the Battalion's assembly area. Eventually they crossed the line of the Battalion's advance and, working still more to the right, they came into support of the Q. V. R., instead of being on the left of the Queen's Westminsters; they were then held up on the Tower Ridge. In the meantime two companies of the L.R.B. had been sent up to the left flank, one company to hold the trench from which the attack had started, and the other to form a defensive flank on the left near the river. By 6.50 a.m. the enemy had overrun the left company of the Queen's Westminsters and had worked round the left flank of the attack, where he was held up.

Rifleman J. Mullins was buried in Heninel Communal Cemetery Extension, France – Grave No. B. 4. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Rifleman J. Mullins, 553551 of 1st/16th Battalion, London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) as being the son of Mr and Mrs Frank Mullins of Sutton Mandeville, Salisbury; husband of Nell Gwynne Brown (formerly Mullins) of Oatlands, Tasmania. (Nell G. Mullins married Owen Brown & their marriage was registered in March quarter 1919 in the district of Wilton, Wiltshire)

Rifleman James Mullins was entitled to the British War & Victory Medals. His Medal Index Card does not show a date that he had entered a Theatre of War. His original regimental number with the 16th London Regiment was 7189 before being renumbered to 553551.

J. Mullins is remembered on the 1914 -1919 Memorial plaque located inside All Saints Church at Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire.

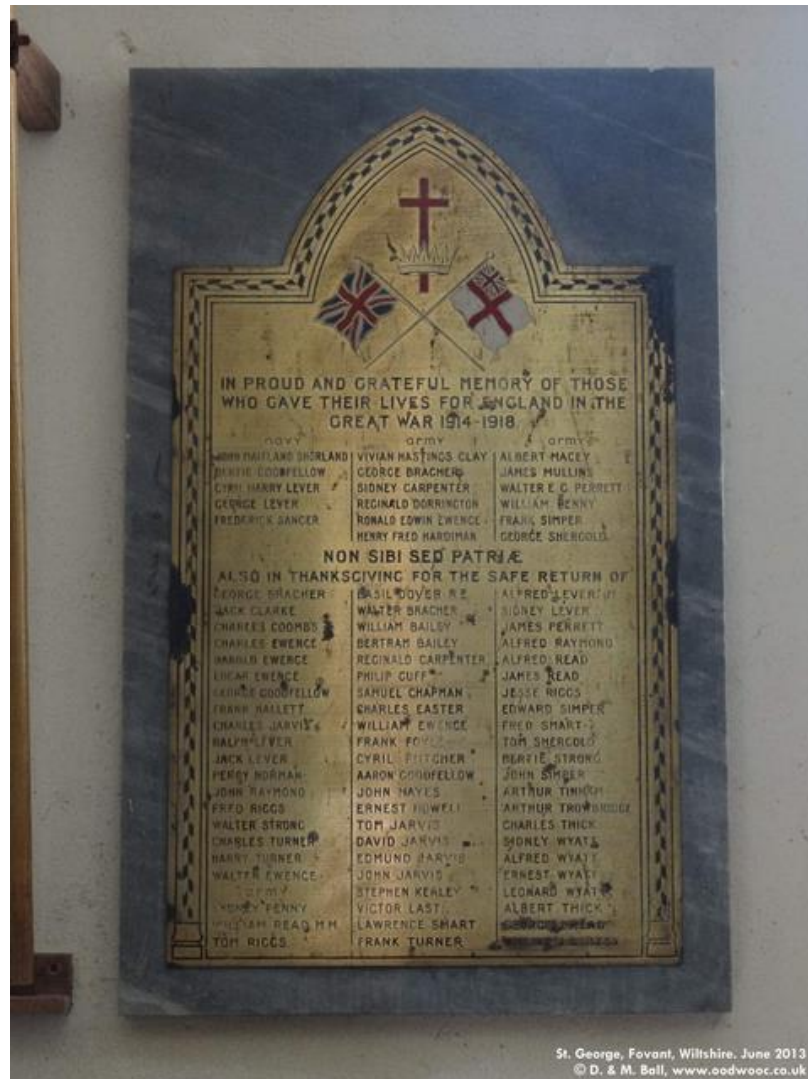


World War 1 & 2 Memorial Plaques

(Photo by Antony Firth)

J. Mullins is also honoured in the Casualties of World War 1 Diocese of Salisbury Memorial Book.

James Mullins is also listed on the World War 1 Memorial inside St. George Church, Fovant, Wiltshire.



WW1 Plaque inside St George's Church, Fovant

(Photo by D & M Ball)

James Mullins is also listed on the World War 1 Memorial outside Fovant Village Hall, Wiltshire.



(Photo from [Fovant History](#))

Heninel Communal Cemetery Extension

Heninel is a village some 10 kilometres south-east of Arras on the D33 in France. The Cemetery is a little north-east of the village on the north side of the road from Heninel to Cherisy down a 500 metre track.

Historical Information

Heninel village was captured in a snowstorm on 12 April 1917 by the 56th (London) and 21st Division and the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, advancing from Heninel on the two following days, captured Wancourt Tower.

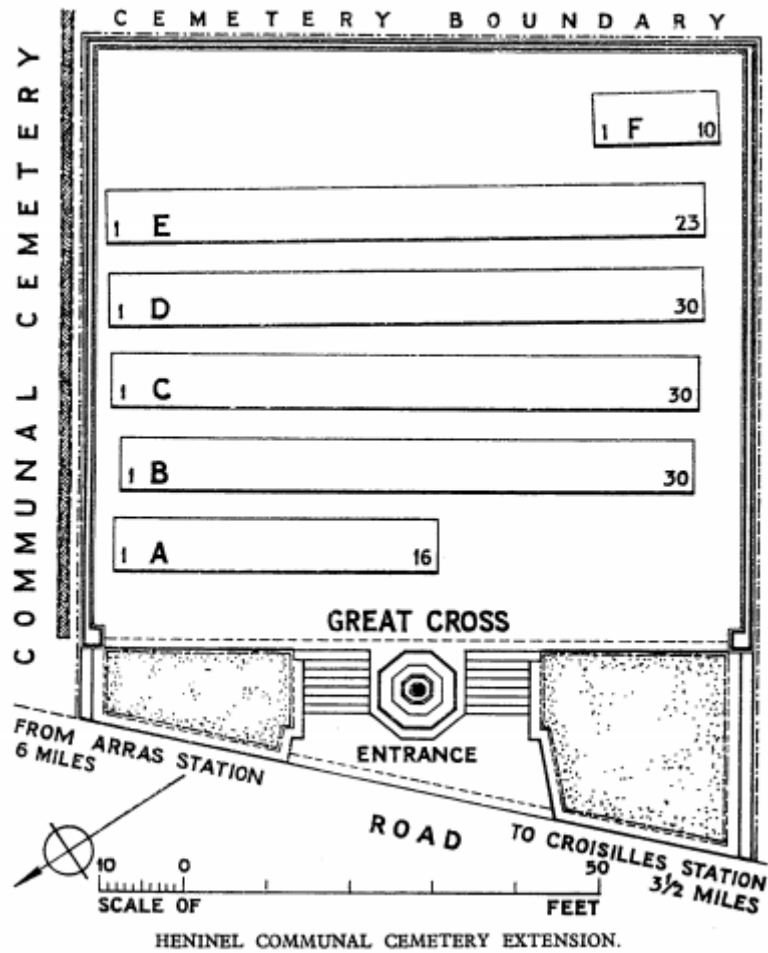
The extension was begun by the 50th Division Burial Officer in April 1917 and was used by fighting units until the following November. The cemetery contains 140 burials from the First World War, seven of them unidentified. (CWGC)



Heninel Communal Cemetery Extension (Photo courtesy of [In Memory](#))



(Photo courtesy of David Milborrow)



HENINEL COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION.