

Sutton Mandeville

Roll of Honour



Lest we Forget

World War I



31778 PRIVATE

J. COOMBES

2ND BN. WILTSHIRE REGIMENT

21st MARCH, 1918

John COOMBES

John Coombes was born at Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire to parents William & Eliza Coombes. (nee Stacey). His birth was registered in the district of Tisbury, Wiltshire in the March quarter of 1898. John's parents had married in 1894 at St George's Church, Fovant, Wiltshire.

The 1901 Census recorded John Coombes (born Sutton) as a 3 year old living with his family at Fovant St, Fovant, Wiltshire in a 2 bedroom dwelling. His parents were recorded as William Coombes (Agricultural Labourer, aged 34, born Swallowclift) & Eliza Coombes (aged 36, born Fovant). John was one of four children listed in this Census – Percival G. (aged 6, born Fovant), William (aged 4, born Sutton), then John & Flossie A. (aged under 1 month, born Fovant).

The 1911 Census recorded John Coombes (born Sutton Mandeville) as a 13 year old Farm Labourer living with his family at Cross Ways, Swallowclift, Salisbury, Wiltshire in a 3 bedroom dwelling. His parents were recorded as William Coombes (Labourer on Farm, aged 40) & Eliza Coombes (aged 43). John was one of seven children listed in this Census – Percival George (aged 16), William Charles (aged 14), then John, Flossie A. (aged 12), Lillian Kate (aged 10, born Fovant), Walter Edgar (aged 5, born Fovant) & Frederick Douglas (aged 1, born Swallowcliffe).

John Coombes enlisted with the Wiltshire Regiment at Devizes, Wiltshire. His residence was listed as Salisbury & he was given the rank of Private & a service number of 31778. Private Coombes' records show that he was attached to 2nd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment.

Pte John Coombes was killed in action on 21st March, 1918.

War Diary – 2nd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment

21st March, 1918 Location – France, Trenches

Entry: An intense enemy bombardment of our trenches and back areas with HE and gas shells at 4.30am and continued throughout the day. The enemy attacked at 10 am with two Divisions on our Battalion front, and owing to the dense mist which prevailed broke through on our flanks and surrounded the Battalion in spite of the strong resistance which was offered. No definite information was forthcoming owing to the Battalion being cut off, but a message was received by pigeon carrier at 1.30pm from Lt Col AVP MARTIN to the effect that he was still holding out in the redoubt with 50 men. The Battalion Transport moved back from FLUQUIERES to DURY at 4.40am and again moved at 11pm to ESMERY HALLON

(War Diary Information from [The Wardrobe](#))

Pte J. Coombes is remembered on the Pozieres Memorial in France – Panel 64 as he has no known grave. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Pte John Coombes, 31778. 2nd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment as the son of William & Eliza Coombes of Sutton Mandeville, Wiltshire.

Pte John Coombes was entitled to the British War & Victory Medals. His Medal Index Card does not show the date when he had entered a Theatre of War.

UK Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914 – 1919 (published in 1921 by authority of the War Office) has Pte J. Coombes listed as Coombs.

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

Pozieres Memorial

Pozieres is a village 6 kilometres north-east of the town of Albert in France. The Memorial encloses Pozieres British Cemetery which is a little south-west of the village on the north side of the main road, D929, from Albert to Pozieres.

On the road frontage is an open arcade terminated by small buildings and broken in the middle by the entrance and gates. Along the sides and the back, stone tablets are fixed in the stone rubble walls bearing the names of the dead grouped under their Regiments.

It should be added that, although the memorial stands in a cemetery of largely Australian graves, the

Memorial itself does not bear any Australian names. The Australian soldiers who fell in France and whose graves are not known are commemorated on the National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

The Pozieres Memorial relates to the period of crisis in March and April 1918 when the Allied Fifth Army was driven back by overwhelming numbers across the former Somme battlefields, and the months that followed before the Advance to Victory, which began on 8 August 1918.

The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21st March to 7th August, 1918. The Corps and Regiments most largely represented are The Rifle Brigade with over 600 names, The Durham Light Infantry with approximately 600 names, the Machine Gun Corps with over 500, The Manchester Regiment with approximately 500 and The Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery with over 400 names.

The memorial encloses Pozieres British Cemetery, Plot II of which contains original burials of 1916, 1917 and 1918, carried out by fighting units and field ambulances. The remaining plots were made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields immediately surrounding the cemetery, the majority of them of soldiers who died in the Autumn of 1916 during the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme, but a few represent the fighting in August 1918.

There are now 2,758 Commonwealth servicemen buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 1,380 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to 23 casualties known or believed to be buried among them. There is also 1 German soldier buried here.

Replacement of 50 panels will start on the 3rd February 2014 and is due to finish on 9th May 2014.



Pozieres Memorial enclosing Pozieres Cemetery.

(Photo from CWGC)

