

8176 Private John James Sibley

Yorkshire Regiment

3rd June 1887 – 4th July 1916

John James Sibley was born on the 3rd June 1887 in Stratfield Mortimer, a small village south of the town of Reading in Berkshire.

John was one of 12 children who were all born in Mortimer to his parents Charles and Sarah.

Charles and Sarah had come from Misterton in Somerset and had settled in Mortimer where there was plenty of Agricultural work available.

In the 1901 census, John was living at home and is listed as a “Domestic Boy”. His father had by now moved on from being a Cowman to a Bricklayer.... quite a change of employment.



We next find John enlisting in the Army. From the Regimental number he was given by the Yorkshire Regiment (8176) the most educated guess is that he enlisted in Aldershot around 1905/1906 but this cannot be proven easily at this time. Certainly there is a photograph, taken at Aldershot, of a young man in the uniform of the Yorkshire Regiment. He looks to be about the right age at this stage.

We have assumed that John joined the 1st Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment because all the later information points this way. However as we will see in later years he is said to be with the 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment and this is very puzzling.

In the 1911 census we find John is with a Detachment, 1st Battalion Alexandria, Princess of Wales Own (Yorkshire Regiment) in Ras-el-Tin Barracks in Alexandria, Egypt under the command of Major R E Noyes.



He is listed as a Private and has a trade or occupation as a Butcher.

We know that the 1st Battalion stayed in Egypt throughout the First World War so at some point John must have either returned to the UK or changed Battalions for some reason?

The 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment was in Guernsey during 1913/1914 and was recalled to Southampton on the 28th August 1914. From here they were attached to the 21st Brigade, 7th

Division and sent to Belgium on the 6th October 1914. On the 20th December 1915 they were transferred with the Brigade to the 30th Division.

These dates are important as from the WW1 Medal records we can see that John was only awarded two medals, the Victory and the War medal but **NOT** the 1914 Star nor the 1914-15 Star. Where was he at this time? He could not have been serving in France otherwise he would have qualified for the medal.

What we do know is that John got married on the 7th August 1915 to Emma Sale in St Johns Church, Wadesmill, Ware, Hertfordshire.



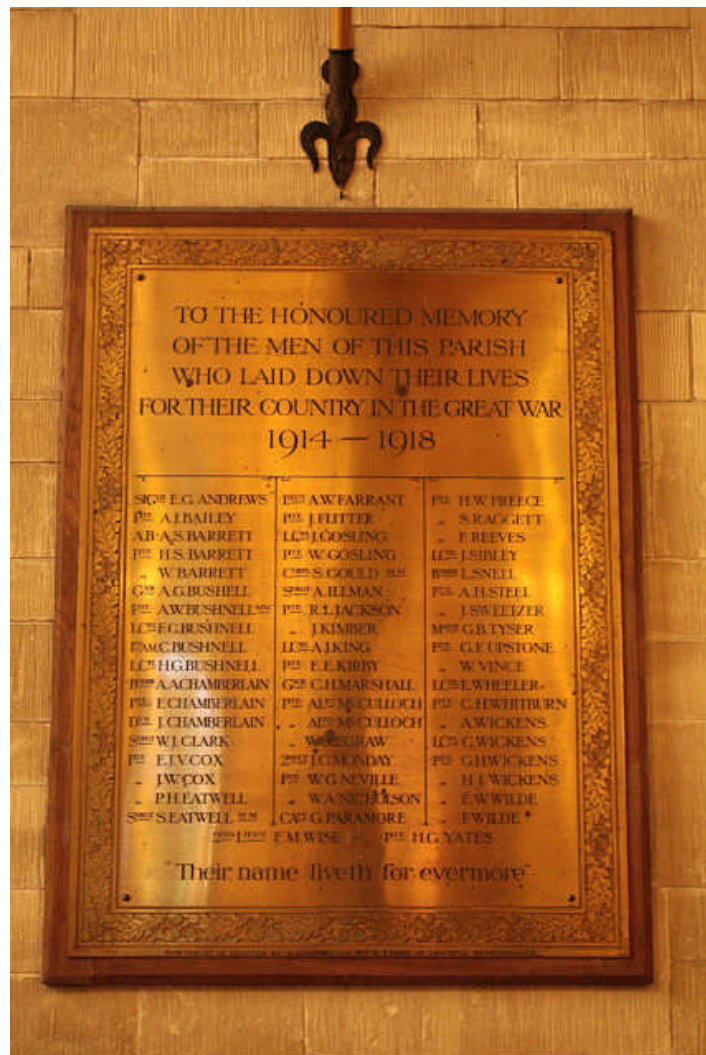
Here we see him in his uniform with two distinctive observations.

He is showing two inverted stripes on his left arm which usually signify "time served". Could this be because he enlisted in 1905/06 as we think?

On both his upper arm areas he is showing a single stripe to signify a Lance Corporal.

On his marriage certificate it states that he is a Lance Corporal in the Yorkshire Regiment and that his residence at the time of marriage is stated as Richmond, Yorkshire (the home of the regiment). This is useful information for our ongoing investigations.

The Lance Corporal rank is also shown on the brass plaque that hangs in St Mary's Church, Mortimer for all the men of the village that fell in WW1.



We therefore assume that he had remained in Yorkshire either as part of a “reserve” unit or as a result of some other action and did not go to France with the rest of the Regiment?

Finally, we see that he was part of the 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment and was killed on the 4th July 1916 in the Battle of the Somme.

On his headstone at the cemetery in Daours, near Amiens, France shows his rank as Private. Could this be a mistake somehow?



On the 7th April 2011 we made the pilgrimage to Daours near Amiens in France.

The sun shone brightly with clear blue skies.

The cemetery is in a small village surrounded by vast open fields of green farmland. It was still and very calm.

High in the sky the sweet sound of a skylark could be heard.

O how different the scene would have been on the 4th July 1916 some 95 years ago.

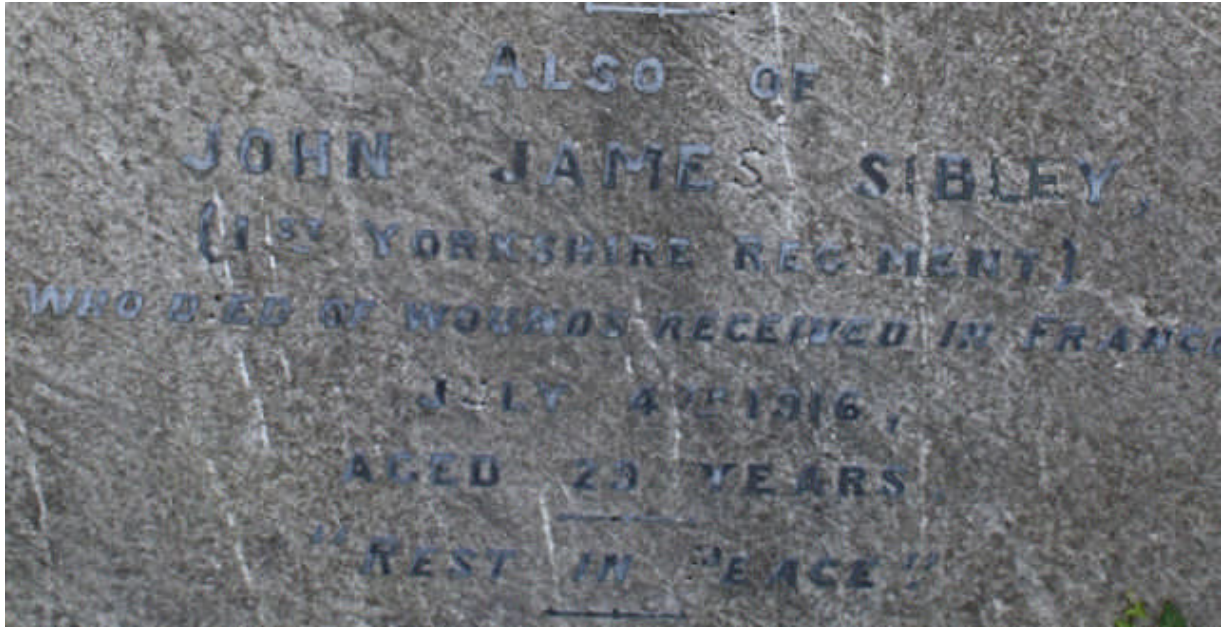
We placed a photograph of his mother and father together with his wedding day picture at the foot of his headstone before taking our own memories of this visit back to relatives at home.

John is remembered at three other places.



The war memorial in Mortimer shows his name on the main plaque.

The inscription on his mother and father in laws headstone in St John's Churchyard in Ware, Hertfordshire shows that he was in the **1st Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment.**



Finally, on his own mother and father's grave which is in St Mary's Churchyard in Mortimer, his name is shown around the base (the lettering is now rather poor but still readable up close)



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