

Corporal Albert Henry Coombs[©]

Regimental number: 9777

8th Battalion, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)

born: 5 September 1888 – died: 11 May 1916

Corporal Albert Henry Coombs' mother, Caroline Wallen, was born on 26 March 1865¹ in Coventry, Warwickshire, the daughter of Henry and Sarah Wallen.² On 16 August 1886, she married Harry Combs in St Michael's Church in Coventry³ and they had two children—Sarah, born on 1 September 1886,⁴ and Albert, born on 5 September 1888.⁵ Sarah was baptized on 3 November 1886⁶ and Albert on 5 September 1888—both at Holy Trinity Church in Coventry.⁷

Harry Combs must have died soon after Albert's baptism because his wife was a widow when she remarried in 1889. She married George Gascoigne in Coventry on 19 July 1889⁸ at St Peter's Church. (George was born in Evesham, Worcestershire, in about 1862.⁹) Between 1889 and 1911, they had ten children: George (born on 26 June 1889),¹⁰ Beatrice Dora (born in 1892),¹¹ Alice Caroline (born in 1894),¹² Alexander (born in 1896),¹³ Ada Lily (born in 1899),¹⁴ Rosina Violet (born in 1901),¹⁵ Edith Annie (born in 1903),¹⁶ Harold Ernest (born in 1905),¹⁷ Davis May (born in 1907)¹⁸ and Ivy Hilda (born in 1911).¹⁹

George was a bricklayer's labourer and, in 1891, the newly composed family was living on Coventry Street in Coventry with Caroline's two children, Sarah and Albert, and Caroline and George's first son George. Four more children followed. In 1901, they had eight children living at home, including Albert, who was recorded as a Gascoigne. They were living at the back of No. 3 North Street in Coventry, where George was now working for a plasterer.²⁰ Ten years later, the family was living at 52 Brook Street and George was again working for a bricklayer. There were now nine children living at home, but Albert was no longer at home.²¹

It is not known where Albert was in 1911 but, in about August 1914²² he enlisted in the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment in Coventry.²³ He embarked for France on 15 January 1915.²⁴ Nearly a year and a half later, he was wounded in the abdomen and died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 11 May 1916.²⁵ He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 46).²⁶

No. 1 CCCS was stationed in Bailleul at the time.²⁷ Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres.²⁸ It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre, not just for No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.²⁹

When his mother was notified of her son's death, she was living at 52 Brook Street in Coventry.³⁰ She and Albert's sister, Emily (also known as Sarah) Knibbs, received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.³¹ In 1939, Caroline was still living at 52 Brook Street, with her son George.³² She probably died in Coventry in 1946.³³ Her husband George had probably died in 1928.³⁴

Albert's sister Sarah had married Charles Knibbs in 1907³⁵ and, in 1911, they were living with their first child at 79 Eagle Street in Coventry.³⁶ In 1939, Charlie and his daughter Rose were living with Charlie's brother and their mother at 56 Adelaide Street, Coventry.³⁷ There is no evidence of where Sarah was living in 1939—she did not die until 1977.³⁸

Albert was awarded posthumously 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).³⁹

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- ¹ “1939 Register,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 September 2018), entry for Caroline Gascoigne, Ref: RG101/5660A/012/16, Letter code: —
- ² “1871 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 August 2018), entry for Henry Wallen, Registration district: Coventry, Sub-registration district: Holy Trinity, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Household schedule number: 193, Piece: 3179, Folio: 70, Page: 33
- ³ “Warwickshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1910,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 August 2018), entry for Harry Coombs
- ⁴ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Coombs, Sarah, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 483
- ⁵ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Coombs, Albert Henry, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 514
- ⁶ “Warwickshire Baptisms,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Sarah Coombs
- ⁷ “Warwickshire Baptisms,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2018), entry for Albert Henry Coombs
- ⁸ “Warwickshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1910,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 September 2018), entry for George Gascoigne
- ⁹ “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Catharine [sic] Gascoigne, Registration district: Coventry, Registration district number: 390, Sub-registration district: Holy Trinity, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 24, Piece: 18562
- ¹⁰ “1939 Register,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 September 2018), entry for Caroline Gascoigne
- ¹¹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Beatrice Dora, Registration district: Foleshill and Sowe, Volume 06D, Page 500
- ¹² “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Alice Caroline, Registration district: Foleshill, Volume 06D, Page 504
- ¹³ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Alexander, Registration district: Foleshill, Volume 06D, Page 524
- ¹⁴ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Ada Lily, Registration district: Foleshill, Volume 06D, Page 568
- ¹⁵ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Rosina Violet, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 587
- ¹⁶ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Edith Annie, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 582
- ¹⁷ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Harold Ernest, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 580
- ¹⁸ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Davis May, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 582
- ¹⁹ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 3 August 2018) entry for Gascoigne, Ivy Hilda, Registration district: Coventry, Volume 06D, Page 1069
- ²⁰ “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Kate Gascoigne, Registration district: Coventry, Sub-registration district: Holy Trinity, Enumeration district, institution, or

vessel: 32, Piece: 2913, Folio: 99, Page: 45, Household schedule number: 232. One of the children listed was Emily (born in about 1886). This is likely an error and should have been Sarah, who was born in 1886. Sarah was still using the name Sarah when she married in 1907.

²¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Catharine [sic] Gascoigne

²² Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Albert Coombs

²³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Albert Coombs

²⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Albert Coombs

²⁵ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Coombs [sic], A.

²⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Combs, A, Service No: 9777

²⁷ "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=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G)

²⁸ "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017)

²⁹ "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017) *Ibid.*?

³⁰ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Coombs [sic], A.

³¹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 August 2018), entry for Albert Coombs. Albert's sister is, once again, referred to as Emily. However, this is probably Sarah—she was called Sarah when she married Charles Knibbs.

³² "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 September 2018), entry for Caroline Gascoigne

³³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 July 2018), entry for Caroline Gascoigne, Registration district: Coventry, Inferred county: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 983

³⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 July 2018), entry for George Gascoigne, Registration district: Coventry, Inferred county: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 572

³⁵ "Warwickshire Marriages," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 5 August 2018), entry for Sarah Coombs

³⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Sarah Knibbs, Registration district: Coventry, Registration district number: 390, Sub-registration district: Holy Trinity, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 42, Piece: 18580

³⁷ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 September 2018), entry for Charles Knibbs, Ref: RG101/5648I/012/12, Letter code: —

³⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 September 2018), entry for Sarah Knibbs, Registration district: Preston and South Ribble, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 40, Page: 1962

³⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 August 2018), entry for Albert Coombs