

## **Corporal John Blunden White<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental number: 17357**

**15th Battalion (2nd Portsmouth), Hampshire Regiment**

**born: 1888–died: 15 May 1916**

Corporal John Blunden White was the son of John Baptist White and Sarah Jones.<sup>1</sup> Both his parents were born in about 1862/3 in Brighton, Sussex,<sup>2</sup> but they married in Portsea Island, in Portsmouth, Hampshire, in 1886.<sup>3</sup> They lived in Portsmouth all their married lives. John Blunden was their first child (born in 1888)<sup>4</sup> and William Henry, their second (born in 1891).<sup>5</sup>

In 1891, the family was living at 7 Bishop Street in Portsmouth and John Baptist was a mechanical engineer. Sadly, Sarah died at the young age of 37 in 1900<sup>6</sup> and in 1901, John Baptist was a widower with two children, ages 9 and 12. His sister, Mary Ann White, was living with them and they were still living at 7 Bishop Street, where John Baptist was a steam engine fitter. Ten years later, another of John Baptist's sisters, Winifred Mary White, had joined the family and they had moved to a seven-room house at 38 Besant Road in Fratton, Portsmouth—a home that would be in the family for at least several decades. John Blunden was now a clerk, working for a wholesale provision merchant, and his brother William was a motor mechanic.

John Blunden married Winifred Agnes Kidney (born on 9 February 1888)<sup>7</sup> in 1912 in Portsmouth and their only child, Winifred Mary, was born on 1 August 1914<sup>8</sup>—just before the outbreak of the Great War.

John Blunden probably enlisted in May 1915<sup>9</sup> in Portsmouth<sup>10</sup> just as the 15th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment was being formed as one of the “pals battalions” that were made up of men who enlisted together in a local recruiting drive. They were promised that they would serve together, rather than being split up into other battalions.<sup>11</sup> The 15th was formed in Portsmouth in April 1915 by the mayor and a local committee and adopted by the War Office on 30 May 1915.

In October John's battalion moved to the Aldershot army camp and then, in February 1916, to Marlborough Lines.<sup>12</sup> The battalion joined the Western Front, landing at Le Havre on 2 May 1916.<sup>13</sup> The next day the battalion soldiers were taken by train to Godewaersvelde, near the French–Belgium border, and, from there, they marched approximately 8 kilometres to billets near Méteren. Four days later, they marched approximately another 8 kilometres to billets in La Crèche area outside Bailleul.

The soldiers had two days of instruction in trenches attached to the 11th Battalion of the Royal Scots Regiment.<sup>14</sup> Heavy enemy bombardment of the trenches occupied by the Royal Scots resulted in probably the first casualties of the war for the 15th Battalion—two officers, five non-commissioned officers and four Other Ranks men. John may have been one of these men.

John's war was short. He died, with two fractured legs, at 3:30 a.m. on 15 May 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station<sup>15</sup>—he had been in France for less than two weeks. He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row B, Grave 93).<sup>16</sup> Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres. It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre not just for No. 1 CCCS but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.<sup>17</sup>

A letter was sent to his wife Winifred, who was living at 32 Besant Road in Portsmouth—just a few houses away from her father-in-law.<sup>18</sup> She also received the monies owing to her husband from the army upon his death.

Five years later, Winifred remarried. She wed Albert Cornborough (born on 18 November 1887 in Wimbledon, Surrey)<sup>19</sup> in 1921.<sup>20</sup> They had three children—a son, Donald A. (born in 1925),<sup>21</sup> and then twins, Audrey T. and Derek F. (born in 1927).<sup>22</sup> Albert had enlisted in the Royal Navy as a sea boy in 1905, on his 18th birthday.<sup>23</sup> This may be what brought him from a London suburb to the seaside city of Portsmouth. He served in the navy until probably 1939.<sup>24</sup> However, when the 1939 Register was taken in the autumn of 1939, he was not at home with his wife, his step-daughter and her husband. John's daughter Winifred married Thomas H. Cummings in 1936<sup>25</sup> and was living with her husband and her mother at 70 Copnor Road in Portsmouth in 1939.<sup>26</sup>

John was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>27</sup>

It is not known if John's brother William served in the Great War but, if he did, he survived. In 1939, he was living at 38 Besant Road, Portsmouth, with his wife (the former Mabel Ellen Cobbett, whom he married in 1914)<sup>28</sup> and a daughter.<sup>29</sup> He probably died in 1960 at St. Marys' Hospital in Portsmouth.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2018), entry for John B. White, Sub-registration district: Landport, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 867, Folio: 91

<sup>2</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for John Baptist White, Registration district: Brighton, Inferred county: Sussex, Volume: 2b, Page: 198; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2018), entry for Sarah White, Registration district: Portsea Island, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 423

<sup>3</sup> "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2018), entry for John Baptist White, District: Portsea Island, County: Hampshire, Volume: 2B, Page: 965

<sup>4</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for White, John Blunden, Registration district: Portsea Island, Volume 02B, Page 450

<sup>5</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for White, William Henry, Registration district: Portsea Island, Volume 02B, Page 521

<sup>6</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 August 2018), entry for Sarah White

<sup>7</sup> "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for Winifred A. Cornborough, Ref: RG101/2269D/007/44, Letter code: —

<sup>8</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for White, Winifred Mary, Registration district: Portsmouth, Volume 02B, Page 749; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for Winifred A. Cornborough

<sup>9</sup> Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 August 2018), entry for John White

<sup>10</sup> "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 13 August 2018), entry for John White

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- <sup>11</sup> "Pals battalion," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pals\\_battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pals_battalion): accessed 24 November 2018)
- <sup>12</sup> "15th (Service) Battalion (2nd Portsmouth)." *The Long, Long Trail* (<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/hampshire-regiment/>: accessed 24 November 2018)
- <sup>13</sup> "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), Regiment or Unit: Hampshire Regiment, Sub-unit: 15th (Service) Battalion, Division: 41st Division, Diary dates: 1916 May–1917 Oct, Piece description: Piece 2634/5: 15 Battalion Hampshire Regiment (1916 May–1917 Oct), Piece number: 2634
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 4 November 2018), entry for White
- <sup>16</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2018), entry for White, J., Service No: 17357
- <sup>17</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)
- <sup>18</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 4 November 2018), entry for White
- <sup>19</sup> "UK, Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services, 1848–1939," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for Albert Cornborough, Service number: 225426
- <sup>20</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 November 2018), entry for Winifred A. White, Registration district: Portsmouth, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 1142
- <sup>21</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for Cornborough, Donald, Registration district: Portsmouth, Volume 02b, Page 697
- <sup>22</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for Cornborough, Audrey T., Registration district: Portsmouth, Volume 02b, Page 654;
- <sup>23</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 24 November 2018) entry for Cornborough, Derek F., Registration district: Portsmouth, Volume 02b, Page 654
- <sup>23</sup> "UK, Royal Navy Registers of Seamen's Services, 1848–1939," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for Albert Cornborough
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 5 January 2018), entry for Winifred M. White, District: Portsmouth, County: Hampshire, Volume: 2B, Page: 1507
- <sup>26</sup> "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for Winifred A. Cornborough
- <sup>27</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 14 August 2018), entry for John White
- <sup>28</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 November 2018), entry for William H. White, Registration district: Portsmouth, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 1183
- <sup>29</sup> "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 24 November 2018), entry for William H. White, Ref: RG101/2264A/011/19, Letter code: —
- <sup>30</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 January 2018), entry for William H. White, Registration district: Portsmouth, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 551