

Sydney Cooper

17661, 11th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. DOW 16 July 1916, aged 24

Sydney was born in 1892, the third of nine children of James Cooper, a farm labourer, and Harriet (nee Ayres). The family lived at Tick Fen and Sydney was baptised in Warboys Parish Church 8 January 1896 aged 4. His mother Harriet died in 1904 when he was eight and his father, James, died in the spring of 1915.

Sydney enlisted in Chatteris in 1915, joining the 11th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. They crossed to France in January 1916 and fought in the trenches at Armentieres moving to the Somme in May where preparations began for the Battle of La Boisselle.



Early in the morning of 1st July 1916 the men were given tea laced with rum. At 7.30 am the men began to advance but after a few yards came under very heavy machine gun fire. A soldier wrote home **“there machine guns mowed us down like cutting coleseed down the drove.”** Another wrote **“I do not want to experience hell again. I am sure I was mad.”**

The battalion's historian wrote;

“Men were being spun round and dropping everywhere. By 8.00am the battle as far as the 11th battalion was concerned was practically decided. All that remained of their effort was a great mass of prostrate figures.”

After the battle the G.O.C. of the 101st Brigade, to which Sydney's Battalion belonged, sent the following to their Colonel.

“Their courage was magnificent as in spite of wave of wave being mown down they fearlessly pressed forward.....No troops could have done better.”



691 men of the 11th battalion were killed or wounded that day Sydney very likely being one of them. He was sent back to England to Edmonton Military Hospital where he died of wounds on 16 July 1916 aged 24

Edmonton Military Hospital

He is buried in Warboys Churchyard in an official war grave. He is not commemorated on the War Memorial as his name was omitted in error. A promise was made that it would be added later. On 15th July 2014, 93 years after the unveiling of the war memorial a memorial bench was dedicated at a service there and Sydney's name is inscribed on that seat along with **Thomas Amps** who also has an official war grave in the church cemetery but whose name is also not on the War Memorial

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