

Graves of two missing Lance Corporals from World War One identified in Belgium

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Lance Corporal William Voice MM was born in Horsham, Sussex in 1886. Lance Corporal Lionel Weller Sandell - known to his family as Solly, was born in Worthing, Sussex in 1899. Both men were buried after the war in graves marked simply Known to God.

The previously un-named graves of two soldiers who gave their lives during World War one have been identified in Belgium. Lance Corporal (LCpl) William Voice MM served with 8th Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment and died near Zillebeke on 1 August 1917, whilst LCpl Lionel Waller Sandell served with 10th Battalion Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment and died near Comines on 29 September 1918.

Rededication services for both men were organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'War Detectives'. The service for LCpl Voice was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Bedford House Cemetery this morning, and the service for LCpl Sandell took place at Zantvoorde British Cemetery this afternoon. (28 April 2026).

JCCC Caseworker, Alexia Clark, said:

I am grateful to the two researchers who put such a lot of effort into discovering the stories of these two men, and the records behind the un-named graves and who ultimately submitted the cases for their identification. Their work has led us to recognise the final resting places of Lance Corporals Voice and Sandell, to restore their names to them and to allow their families to honour their sacrifice. It has been a privilege for me to have contributed to these cases and to have organised the services of rededication today.

Lance Corporal William Voice MM

1886 - 1 August 1917

William Voice was born in Horsham, Sussex in 1886, and joined the army on 28 June 1916. Although conscription had begun in 1916, as a father over 30 William would not have been amongst the first to be conscripted, and so it is possible that he was a volunteer. Unfortunately, his service record has not survived to tell us anything about his army career, but we do know that on 19 June 1917 he was awarded the Military Medal.

In late July 1917, the 8th Battalion of the Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment were in trenches in the area of Klein Zillebeke. They were suffering repeated shelling and taking substantial casualties. William was one of those killed or missing that day, and following the way when his remains could not be identified his name was placed on the Menin Gate Memorial to the missing in Ypres.

In the summer of 1921 the remains of an unknown British soldier, the winner of a military medal, and a member of the Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment were recovered at Klein Zillebeke. At the time it was impossible to identify him, and so he was buried at Bedford House Cemetery as an unknown soldier. Research has now allowed us to connect those remains with the last known

movements of William Voice, identifying his final resting place.

Family and military party at the graveside of LCpl Voice (Crown Copyright)

Lance Corporal Lionel Weller 'Solly' Sandell

14 April 1899 - 29 September 1918

Lionel Weller Sandell - known to his family as Solly, was born in Worthing, Sussex in 1899.

Lionel's first attempt at joining the war occurred on 9 November 1914 when he was just 14 years old. He successfully managed to enlist in the 2/4th (Home Service) Battalion, of the Royal Sussex Regiment under Service No.2654. He told the recruiters he was 17 years & 7 months old. On the 4 September 1915 he was posted to the 72nd Provisional Battalion. On the 18 February 1916 Lionel's father intervened, sending a letter to the Army along with Lionel's birth certificate to 'claim' his son. Lionel was discharged on 25 February 1916 with the reason given in his papers that he had "made a mis-statement as to age on enlistment". He returned to live with his father in Worthing.

Lionel re-enlisted at Worthing in May 1917 when he was 18 years & 1 month old, having spent some time working as a chauffeur / mechanic in the intervening year. His initial period of service was at home with the Army Service Corps, Motor Transport battalion before being posted to the East Surrey Regiment in June 1917. He was promoted to Lance Corporal on 7 November 1917 and attended the Brigade School of Musketry, undertaking a Lewis Gun Course, and eventually attaining the standard of 1st Class Gunner.

He left for France on 30 March 1918, posted to 1st Battalion, East Surrey Regiment. On 2 April 1918 he was transferred to the 10th Battalion of the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment. He suffered from poor health whilst in France including several bouts of influenza and trench fever.

On the morning of the 29 September 1918 the 10th Battalion formed up to attack along the eastern side of the Ypres-Comines canal. The war diary records that this was their first experience of open warfare that year, and that their final objective was a location east of Houthem and 500 yards north of the railways station at Comines. The morning was fine, but ground fog hid the attack from the enemy and allowed the 10th to overcome several machine gun posts with little loss. The day was initially successful with the battalion reaching their objective with only 6 casualties, however later in the day they were compelled to withdraw to Houthem. The total casualties by the end of the day were substantial, and Lionel was one of those killed. In the chaos of the withdrawal, any records which might have been made of his death or burial were lost, and following the war his name was placed on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing at Ypres. Research has now revealed that Lionel was in fact been buried at Zantvoorde, and today we rededicate his grave accordingly.

Colonel Mark Nooney presents the Union Flag to the great-niece of Lionel Sandell (Crown Copyright)

The headstone was replaced by CWGC. Fergus Read, Commemorations Case Officer at CWGC, said:

We are privileged to support the rededications of Lance Corporal Voice and Lance Corporal Sandell's graves. Thanks to the efforts of many, we are honoured to mark their

final resting places with new headstones bearing their names and personal inscriptions chosen by their family, on behalf of those who loved them a century ago. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission ensures that all those who served and fell are commemorated by name and today we renew our commitment to care for their graves in perpetuity.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/graves-of-two-missing-lance-corporals-from-world-war-one-identified-in-belgium>