



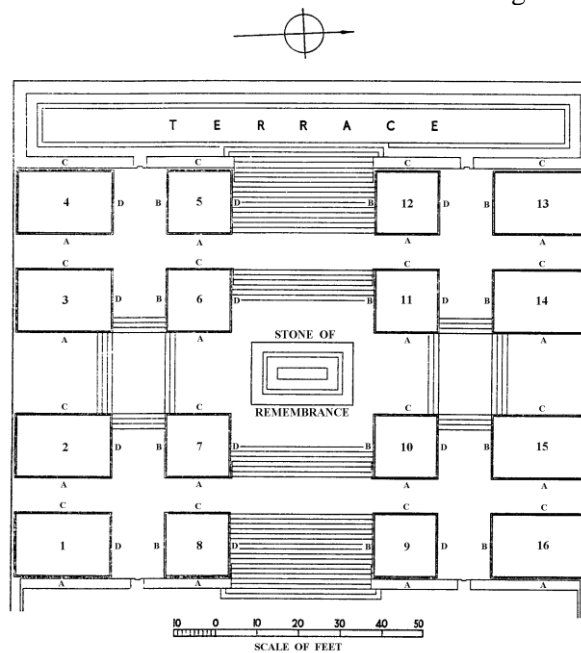
William John Smith joined the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1915. For the next few months he did his initial training, before being sent to join the 9<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Rifle Corps in France on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Life was hard and William was admitted to hospital on several occasions with bronchitis. William was a company bomber and was trained in the use of the Mills Bomb (a fragmentation hand grenade). His job, along with the other bombers, was to clear the German trenches and dugouts by throwing the grenades in large enough numbers to drive the enemy back, so the battalion could occupy their trenches.

On 20<sup>th</sup> August the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion relieved the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion the Rifle Brigade in Delville Wood. Fierce fighting had been going on in Delville Wood since 14<sup>th</sup> July, involving many units especially the South Africans. The wood itself was a hell of shattered trees, shell holes, wire, explosions, shrapnel and bullets. The final push to clear the Germans out was planned for the 24<sup>th</sup> August.

At 3.45pm on 24<sup>th</sup> August, a heavy bombardment engulfed the German trenches, but they replied in kind, raining shells down on the assembling troops. At 5.45pm, the bombardment ceased, and men climbed out of the trenches, to be met with a hail of shell, machine gun and rifle fire. 'C' and 'D' Companies, their objectives 250-300 yards away, slowly made their way over the shattered ground. 'A' Company, as the third wave, also left Devil's Trench and joined in the attack. The casualties were appalling - most of the Officers were hit early on and the NCOs had to rally and lead the soldiers to their objectives. They came under heavy fire from an enemy strongpoint at Edge Trench. The fire and fighting were intense-and at 2.00am the 9<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Rifle Corps, along with 9<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade, made sustained bombing attacks on Edge Trench and by the morning had cleared Delville Wood. The casualty list tells its own story – 5 officers killed, 6 wounded, 1 missing believed dead. Other ranks – 41 killed, 190 wounded, 46 missing.

It is not known when William fell in the battle. His body was never identified. He may have been blasted to atoms, or is still be waiting to be found. He may lay in the cemetery at Delville Wood, under a nameless stone which bears the Epitaph "A Soldier of the Great War, Known unto God".

He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial, reference Pier and Face 13A & 13B, as one of the thousands killed during the Battle of the Somme who has no known grave.



**THIEPVAL MEMORIAL**

THE NUMBERS OF THE PIERS  
AND LETTERS OF THE FACES

William John Smith



William is shown on the Roll of individuals of The King's Royal Rifle Corps entitled to the Victory and British War medals.

THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS. REGIMENT OR CORPS. 268730

of 1919 ORIGINAL

On 15/11/18 or on becoming  
an effective

Regt. No.	Rank	NAME	Unit previously served with Regt. No. and Rank in same on entry into theatre of war	Theatre of war in which served								Clasp awarded (to be left blank)	Remarks of disposal of decorations	REMARKS	
				From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To				
R/13405	Pte	ALLEN George	10th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13405 Pte.												
R/13408	Pte	MAY William A.	2nd Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13408 Pte.												
R/13409	Pte	TANSELEY Harold	21st Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13409 Pte.												
R/13410	Pte	TOMLIN Frank	8th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13410 Pte.												
R/13411	Pvt	RUSSELL Charles A. (N.N.)	9th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13411 Pte.												
R/13415	Pte	HARRISON William H	7th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13415 Pte.												
R/13416	Pte	BERRY George A.	8th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13416 Pte.												
R/13418	Pte	COLES Arthur E.	8th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13418 Pte.												
R/13417	Pte	SMITH William J.	8th Bn. K. R. Rif C. R/13417 Pte.												

I certify that according to the Official Records the individuals named in this ROLL are entitled to the Medal or Medals as detailed above.

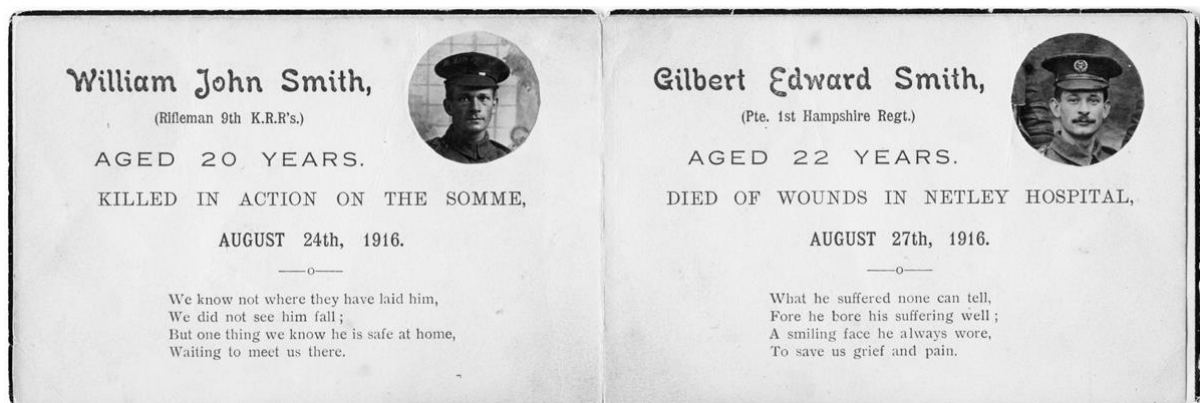
Date: 10 APR 1920  
Place: WINCHESTER

Signature and rank of Officer certifying: *Chapman*

04/11/2016

William John Smith

William's name is also on the tombstone in St Mary's Churchyard, Overton of his brother Gilbert, who died 3 days after him and of their father Henry, who died the following year.



Memorial card for William and his brother Gilbert.