

**All Saints Cemetery,  
Nunhead, Greater London, England**

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**1019 SERJEANT**

**V. R. COOMBE**

**15TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**29TH SEPTEMBER, 1915 Age 27**

## Victor Ronald COOMBE

Victor Ronald Coombe was born at Campbell Town, Tasmania on 8th December, 1888 to parents William Thomas & Isabella Jemima Coombe (nee Brown).

Victor Ronald Coombe attended State School at Campbell Town, Tasmania.

The 1914 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Wilmot, subdivision of Latrobe, Tasmania recorded Victor Ronald Coombe, Storekeeper, Sassafras.

Victor Ronald Coombe was a 25 year old, single, Storekeeper's assistant from (care of) William Thomas Coombe, Storekeeper, Latrobe, Tasmania when he enlisted at Pontville, Tasmania on 20th September, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 1019 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr William Thomas Coombe, Storekeeper, Latrobe, Tasmania.

Victor Ronald Coombe for recruit training He was posted to 15th Battalion Infantry "G" Company as Sergeant from 1st October, 1914.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ceramic (A40)* on 22nd December, 1914 with the 15th Infantry Battalion "G" Company.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe proceeded to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli Peninsula on 12th April, 1915.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was wounded in action at Gallipoli on 26th April, 1915. He was admitted to E. G. (Government) Hospital at Alexandria on 1st May, 1915 with G.S.W. (Gunshot wound/s) to upper extremities. Sergeant Coombe was transferred to Convalescent Camp at Mustapha on 20th May, 1915.

### War Diary – 15th Battalion

*26th April, 1915:*

*At 9 am the balance of troops disembarked from the Seangbee and Capt Quinn was ordered to support the right of 3rd Bde. The portion of the Bn under the C/O took up a position at the head of Gulch between the positions held by 1st & 2nd Bdes & remained there until 30th.*

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

The Secretary of Defence sent a communication to W. T. Coombe, Storekeeper, Latrobe, Tasmania, on 20th May, 1915 advising that his son Sergeant V. R. Coombe was wounded.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was transferred to Overseas Base at Mustapha on 1st June, 1915 then on 21st June, 1915 he was transferred to Convalescent Camp at Cyprus with G.S.W. to Shoulder. Sergeant Coombe disembarked at Alexandria from *Surada* from Cyprus (no date recorded). He embarked from Overseas Base at Mustapha on *Cawdor Castle* on 28th July, 1915 then embarked from Alexandria on 29th July, 1915 for Dardanelles. Sergeant Coombe rejoined 15th Battalion at Gallipoli Peninsula on 2nd August, 1915.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was wounded in action (2nd occasion) at Gallipoli on 8th August, 1915 (Note: Later communications to his father stated Sergeant Coombe was wounded between 7th & 8th August, 1915). He was admitted to No. 16 Field Ambulance (as per handwritten Casualty Form, however the typed Casualty Form recorded he was admitted to 16th Casualty Clearing Station) at Anzac on 8th August, 1918 with G.S.W. to Head – severe then was transferred to Hospital Ship *Itonus* & admitted to Military Hospital, Auberge de Baviere, Malta on 14th August, 1915. Sergeant Coombe was transferred to Hospital Ship *Carisbrook Castle* on 26th August, 1915 seriously ill & embarked for England.

## 15th Battalion

The 15th Battalion AIF was raised from late September 1914, six weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. Three-quarters of the battalion were recruited as volunteers from Queensland, and the rest from Tasmania. With the 13th, 14th and 16th Battalions it formed the 4th Brigade, commanded by Colonel John Monash. The Queensland and Tasmanian recruits were united when the battalion trained together in Victoria. They embarked for overseas just before Christmas. After a brief stop in Albany, Western Australia, the battalion proceeded to Egypt, arriving in early February 1915. Australia already had an AIF division there, the 1st. When the 4th Brigade arrived in Egypt, it became part of the New Zealand and Australian Division. The 4th Brigade landed at ANZAC late in the afternoon of 25 April 1915.

From May to August, the battalion was heavily involved in establishing and defending the front line of the ANZAC beachhead. In August, the 4th Brigade attacked Hill 971. The hill was taken at great cost although Turkish reinforcements forced the Australians to withdraw. At the end of the month, a detachment from A Company reinforced the 14th Battalion's unsuccessful attack on Hill 60. The 15th Battalion served at ANZAC until the evacuation in December.....

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

### From the War Diary of 15th Battalion for 7th August, 1915:

*Our Casualties during this period of the Operations were*

*7 Officers wounded*

*Approx. 3 Other Ranks Killed*

*Approx. 75 Other Ranks Wounded*

*Estimated that the 15th Battn captured 40 Prisoners killed 100 and wounded 100.*

### From the War Diary of 15th Battalion for 8th August, 1915:

*15th Bn Casualties in this Operation were*

	<i>Officers</i>	<i>Others</i>
<i>Killed</i>	-	100
<i>Wounded &amp; Missing</i>	7	95
<i>Wounded</i>	3	185

*(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)*

Senator R. K. Ready, Parliament House, Melbourne, wrote to The Secretary for Defence on 12th August, 1915 with the following: *"I desire to obtain a certificate from the Defence Authorities as to when 1019 Sergeant V. R. Coombe, No. 4 Company, 15th Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade, A.I.F. was wounded and when he returned to duty. His Friendly Society will pay the ordinary sick pay to his relatives on this certificate being obtained. Will you attend to matter and advise me as early as possible."*

The Acting Secretary replied to Senator Ready on 14th August, 1915 advising: *"...I desire to inform you that enquiries have been made and it has been ascertained that Sergeant Coombe was reported wounded by cable dated 14th May, 1915, and no intimation has yet been received of his having returned to the Front."*

Senator R. K. Ready, Parliament House, Melbourne, wrote to The Secretary for Defence on 16th August, 1915 with the following: *"...as soon as you receive intimation that Sergeant Coombe has returned to duty, please advise me at once."*

The Acting Secretary replied to Senator Ready on 17th August, 1915 advising that they *"...have noted your request that you be advised of the date on which he returns to duty."*

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was admitted to King George's Hospital, Stamford St, London, England on 3rd September, 1915.

The Secretary of Defence sent a communication to W. T. Coombe, Storekeeper, Latrobe, Tasmania, on 8th September, 1915 advising that his son *"Private V. R. Coombe slightly wounded disembarked Malta Hospital Itonus 14th August will advise upon receipt further particulars."*

Another communication was sent from The Secretary Defence to Mr W. T. Coombe on 13th September, 1915 advising that his son Sergeant V. R. Coombe was *"wounded second occasion between 7th and 8th August. This apparently refers my wire 8th instant will advise upon receipt further particulars."*

The Secretary of Defence sent a communication to W. T. Coombe on 26th September, 1915 advising that his son Sergeant V. R. Coombe was seriously ill with gunshot wound to Head in King George Hospital, London.

A Telegram was sent on 27th September, 1915 to Secretary Defence, Melbourne, from W. Coombe. Latrobe, Tasmania with the following message: *"Grateful if you cable for report son sergeant V R Coombe."*

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe died on 29th September, 1915 at King George's Hospital, Stamford St, London, England from wounds received in action at Gallipoli Peninsula - G.S.W. to Head.

A death for Victor R. Coombe, aged 26, was registered in the December quarter, 1915 in the district of Lambeth, London, England.

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was buried at 1.30 pm on 2nd October, 1915 in All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead, Greater London, England – Grave No. 31914 Sq. 89.

Mr W. T. Coombe, Latrobe, Tasmania was advised by Base Records on 8th December, 1915 the following details from High Commissioner's Office regarding his son's Funeral: *"With reference to my cables of 29th September and 13th October, I have to report that the funeral of the late No. 1019 Sergeant Victor Coombe, 15th Battalion, took place from the King George Hospital, Stamford Street, London, S.E. on the 2nd October, 1915 at 1.30 pm. The deceased was interred in the Nunhead Cemetery, near Peckham Rye and the number of the grave is 31914, in Square 89. The High Commissioner was represented by Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Lee, V.D., A.I.F. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack and was borne on a Gun Carriage. An escort was furnished by the 28th Battalion, County of London (Artists) Regiment, and full military honours were accorded at the graveside. The Rites observed were those of the Church of England."*

Base Records wrote to Mr W. T. Coombe, Storekeeper, Latrobe, Tasmania on 20th April, 1920 with the following: *"With reference to my communication of 8th December, 1915, regarding the regrettable loss of your son, the late No. 1019 Sergeant V. R. Coombe, 15th Battalion, I am now in receipt of further advice which shows that his remains have been exhumed from former site, and re-interred in Grave No.7, Australian Section, Nunhead Cemetery, Nunhead. This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain. The utmost care and attention is being devoted to the graves of our fallen soldiers, and photographs are being taken as soon as possible for transmission to next-of-kin."*

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe's place of burial is now recorded by Commonwealth War Graves Commission as Plot number 16.33431 O. and he now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Mr W. T. Coombe, Latrobe, Tasmania wrote to Base Records on 20th November, 1915 asking where he could apply for a Certificate of Death for his son Sergeant V. R. Coombe *"...as there are several things to be settled but must have the certificate to enable us to do so. I also want Certificates from the Military Authorities giving the dates when he was wounded the first time & when he returned to the front, also the date when he was wounded the second time..."*

Base Records replied to Mr W. T. Coombe on 29th November, 1915, enclosing the certificate of report of death if the late No. 1019 Sergeant V. R. Coombe, 15th Battalion as well as certificates of reports of wounding. "...There is no record in this office of the date of his return to duty after recovering from his first casualty."

Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Sergeant Coombe's father – Mr W. T. Coombe, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent March, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe – service number 1019, aged 26, of 15th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of William Thomas & Isabella Jemima Coombe, of Ulverstone, Tasmania.

V. R. Coombe is remembered on the Methodist Church Honour Roll, located in Sassafras Uniting Church, 75 Chapel Road, Sassafras, Tasmania.



**Sassafras Methodist Church Honour Roll** (Photo from *AWM Places of Pride* – Arthur Garland)

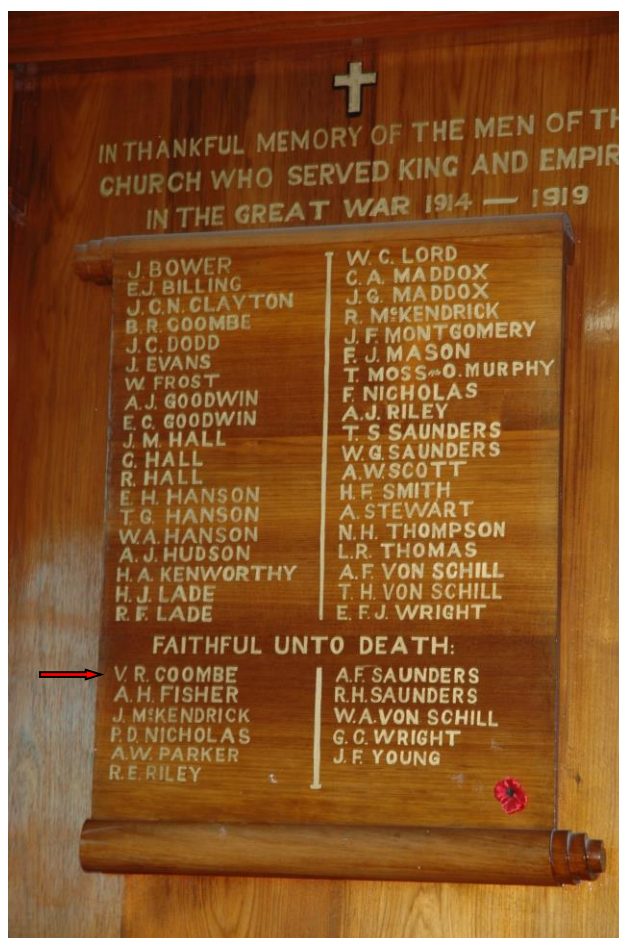


V. R. Coombe is remembered on the St. Luke's Honour Roll, located in St Luke's Anglican Church, Hamilton & Cotton Streets, Latrobe, Tasmania

Sergeant V. R. Coombe is apparently also named on an individual memorial inside St Luke's Anglican Church, Latrobe, Tasmania.



St Luke's Anglican Church

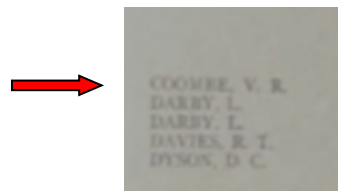


St. Luke's Honour Roll (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)

V. R. Coombe is remembered on the Latrobe Honour Roll, located in Latrobe RSL Club, 160 Gilbert Street, Latrobe, Tasmania.



Latrobe Honour Roll (Photo from AWM Places of Pride – Arthur Garland)





V. R. Coombe is remembered on the Latrobe War Memorial, located in War Memorial Park, Gilbert Street, Latrobe, Tasmania.



Latrobe War Memorial (Photos from Monument Australia)





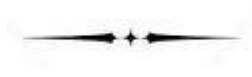
Sergeant V. R. Coombe is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 75.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(79 pages of Sergeant Victor Ronald Coombe's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **The Australians**

#### **22nd Casualty List**

#### **26 Tasmanians Included**

Wounded in Action

Tasmania

Sergt V. R. COOMBE, 15th Battalion

*(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 25 May, 1915)*

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Mr W. T. Coombe, of Latrobe, on Friday received a wire to say that his oldest son, Sergeant V. R. Coombe, had been wounded in the fight at the Dardanelles.

*(Examiner, Launceston, Tasmania – 26 May, 1915)*

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## **Tasmanian Casualties**

Yesterday morning Mr W. T. Coombe, of Latrobe, received a cable from his son, Sergeant V. R. Coombe, who was reported as wounded on August 7, to say that he was wounded in the head and that he was in King George's Hospital, London, and that he was progressing favourably. His many friends wish him a speedy recovery.

(The North West Post, Forby, Tasmania – 21 September, 1915)

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## **Roll of Honour**

### **Tasmanian Casualties**

#### **The 86th List**

##### **WOUNDED IN ACTION**

Sergt V. R. COOMBE, 15th Battalion (Latrobe), second occasion, in hospital, London

(*Examiner*, Launceston, Tasmania – 5 October, 1915)

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## **Roll of Honour**

### **Tasmanian Casualties**

#### **Two Lists Issued**

Included among the new names in the 95th and 96th Australian casualty lists are the following Tasmanians:-

##### **DIED OF WOUNDS**

Sergt V. R. COOMBE. 15th Battalion (Latrobe), previously reported wounded (second occasion) and seriously ill.

(*Examiner*, Launceston, Tasmania – 21 October, 1915)

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## **LETTERS FROM THE FRONT**

### **TRIBUTE TO A BRAVE SOLDIER**

Trooper P. M. Waterhouse (Bon) writing to a friend from the trenches, speaks of Staff-Sergeant V. R. Coombe, who has since given his life for the great cause of freedom. He says:— "Poor old Vic Coombe has again been wounded. We all feel it deeply, and it's hard luck for him, as last time he missed getting his commission, because of being wounded. Berne (his brother) is away sick. Well, they are two fine men, two of the best. Latrobe should be very proud of them." The writer goes on to say— "Where are all the boys I used to know around Sheffield, Barrington, Nook, Sassafra, and other places. Why don't they come? It's a cause that must be fought and won, for you all out there, as well as over here. How can they stay at home?"

"Much better with the countless slain to sleep,  
Upon some far-off, foreign, field of war;  
Than, living, hold his country's peril cheap,  
A coward to the core."

(*Examiner*, Launceston, Tasmania – 10 November, 1915)

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## THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

### LATROBE'S TRIBUTE TO THE HEROIC DEAD

On Sunday afternoon a citizens' memorial service to our fallen soldiers was held in the Latrobe Oddfellow's Hall, when another large gathering of the people of the district took place.....

The audience were requested to stand whilst the names of the municipality's fallen soldiers were read and the "Deal March" played. The following are the names of the fallen:

Richard Appleby

.....

Victor Ronald Coombe

...

*(The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, Tasmania – 8 August, 1917)*

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### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Sergeant V. R. Coombe does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

### **All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead, Great London, England (also known as Nunhead Cemetery)**

Nunhead (All Saints) Cemetery contains 592 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war. The majority are in three war graves plots; the United Kingdom plot (in Square 89) has 266 graves, the Australian plot (near the main entrance) has 23 and the Canadian plot (in Square 52, also containing New Zealand and South African burials) has 36. The graves in the Australian and Canadian plots are marked with individual headstones. The graves in the United Kingdom plot and the remaining war graves scattered throughout the cemetery could not be marked individually; the casualties buried in these graves are therefore commemorated by name on a Screen Wall inside the main entrance gate to the cemetery.

A second Screen Wall commemorates the 110 burials of the 1939-1945 war in a further war graves plot in Square 5 and elsewhere in the cemetery whose graves could not be marked by headstones.

There is also 1 Belgian burial of the 1914-1918 war and 7 Non-war Service burials, all commemorated on the Screen Wall. *(Information from CWGC)*





All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead



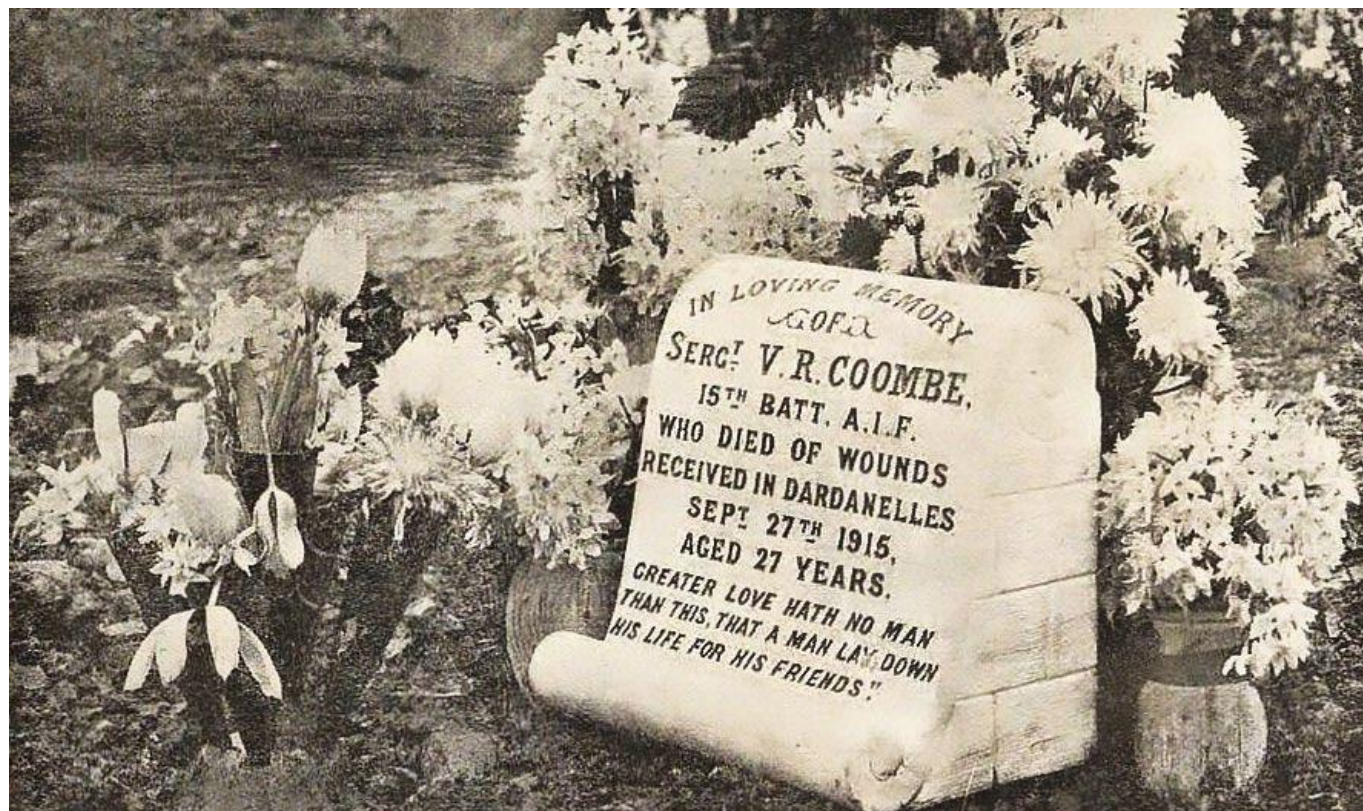




AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

J00776

The Australian area at Nunhead Cemetery. The grave in the centre front is 27 Lance Corporal Eric Lyndon Lowe, 18th Battalion, from Clarence Town NSW, who died on 10 September 1915 aged 18 years. The grave to the right is 1560 Private (Pte) Leslie Raymond Talbot Gilbert, 14th Battalion, born in England, from Kogarah West NSW, who died on 20 January 1916 aged 19 years. **The grave 2nd row right side is 1019 Sergeant (Sgt) Victor Ronald Coombe, 15th Battalion, of Campbelltown, Tas, who died on 29 September 1915 aged 26 years.** From the collection of Mr Alfred Thomas Sharp. Mr Sharp was the Commonwealth Immigration Officer of Victoria and was based in the London Office during the First World War. He and his wife hosted and visited many soldiers, particularly those from Victoria, who were recuperating in London. He also photographed many Australian graves in English cemeteries. His photograph collection relating to this period in London was bequeathed to the Memorial in 1922 after his death. During his time in London he was a member of the British Volunteer Regiment, serving with the Willesden Battalion, Middlesex Volunteer Regiment.



(Photo from Find a Grave – DaveE)





**Australian War Graves in All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead** (Photos courtesy of Neil Bright)





Photo of Serjeant V. R. Coombe's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead, Greater London, England.

