

Private John Frederick Brookings

Regimental number: 45147

“B” Company, 1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment

born: 1898 - died: 26 September 1918

Private John Frederick Brookings, born in 1898 in Paddington, Middlesex,¹ was the son of William Henry and Clara Brookings.² William Henry was born in Oxford in 1867,³ the son of Thomas Frederick and Rhoda Brookings.⁴ Clara (née Hodgetts), was born in 1871 in Worcester, the daughter of Samuel and Eliza Hodgetts.⁵ William and Clara married in Worcester in 1894⁶ and had seven children.⁷ Five of the children were still living in 1911: William Henry (born in 1895), John Frederick, Albert Edward (born in 1900), Rhoda (born in 1901) and Thomas (born in 1903).

John’s father, William, worked for the Great Western Railway in Oxford.⁸ He began as cleaner in 1882. He wanted a promotion but had difficulty with writing and spelling. The testing involved writing from dictation and he obviously passed the test at some point because, by 1890, he was a shunt fireman 3rd Class. In 1891, he moved to Pontypool, Wales. In 1896, he moved to Paddington, Middlesex. Beginning in 1898, he had a number of health-related incidents at work. In August 1898, his head was slightly injured after a fall in the cab of his engine. The following July, he was off work for a while as a result of sunstroke. Six months later, while eating his dinner, he appeared to have a fit but he told his co-workers that he had chocked on piece of cheese. An examination showed no evidence of a fit. In March 1900, a coal box ran over his foot and crushed his big toe. In August, he was found in the engineman’s cabin in convulsions. The incident would probably have been concealed from the foreman, if the foreman not entered the cabin to see his co-workers holding him down. This time, when he was examined in November, he was told that he could not go in an engine again but, for the time being, he could work in the shed. In March 1901, William was found in the tank tool house at Westbourne Park with his clothes on fire. It was believed that he had had a fit and had fallen on the stove in the tool house. He was sent to St Mary’s Hospital in Paddington with burns to his back. He was still in hospital over seven months later. At that point, it was decided that he could no longer work for the railway.

When John was in hospital, Clara and two children were living at 75 Bravington Road in Paddington.⁹ Clara’s sister was living with them. Their eldest child, William, was living with Clara’s parents in Worcester.

William and Clara had their last child in 1903. William died the following year.¹⁰ This left John’s mother, Clara, a widow with five children under the age of 10.

By 1911, Clara had moved back to Worcester. She and three children were living at Rose Cottage, Infirmary Walk. John and his older brother, William, were not living with their mother and siblings. William may have been in the Royal Albert Orphanage in Henwick, Worcestershire.

John enlisted in the Worcestershire Regiment soon after outbreak of the Great War.¹¹ He joined the Front in France at the end of August 1914 and survived more than four years before being fatally wounded. On 21 September, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to both legs and thighs.¹² He survived for five days, dying on 26 September. He was buried the same day in Duisans’ British Military Cemetery (Grave 70, Plot 6, Row H) with the chaplain, W. Fisher presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.¹³ The 1st CCCS arrived the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.¹⁴ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

His mother was his next-of-kin and was notified of his death.¹⁵ She and his four siblings received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.¹⁶

John was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).¹⁷

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¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for John Frederick Brookings, Registration district: Paddington, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 56

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for John Brookings, Registration district: Paddington, Sub-registration district: St Mary, Paddington, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Piece: 6, Folio: 12, Page Number: 16, Household schedule number: 114; "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for Clara Hodgetts, Registration district: Worcester, Inferred County: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 407

³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for William Henry Brookings, Registration district: Oxford, Inferred County: Oxfordshire, Volume: 3a, Page: 619

⁴ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for William H. Brookings, Registration district: Oxford, Sub-registration district: Oxford, ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Household schedule number: 64, Piece: 1441, Folio: 8, Page Number: 10x

⁵ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 23 January 2016), entry for Clara Hodgetts, FHL Film Number: 415132, 415133, 415135, 561598

⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," entry for Clara Hodgetts

⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for Clara Brookings, Registration district: Worcester, Registration District Number: 377, Sub-registration district: Worcester, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 286, Piece: 17628. Only the children who survived until 1911 have been identified. However, one of the children who died in infancy may have been Clara Mabel who was born in early 1897, but died a few months later. ("England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for Clara Mabel Brookings, Registration district: Worcester, Inferred County: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 283; "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2016), entry for Clara Mabel Brookings, Registration district: Worcester, Inferred County: Worcestershire, Volume: 1a, Page: 2)

⁸ "UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for William Henry Brookings

⁹ "1901 England Census," entry for John Brookings

¹⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for William H. Brookings, Registration district: Worcester, Inferred County: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 158

¹¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2016), entry for John F. Brookings

¹² "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2016), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 674

¹³ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)

¹⁴ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)

¹⁵ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 674

¹⁶ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2016), entry for John Frederick Brookings

¹⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," entry for John F. Brookings