

Private Albert Victor Copeland[©]

Regimental number: 71252

34th Brigade, Machine Gun Company, Dorset Regiment

born: 16 March 1893 — died: 19 February 1918

Private Albert Victor Copeland signed up to begin a career in the military on 16 February 1914,¹ when he was just one month shy of his 19th birthday.² He enlisted in Bournemouth, for a six-year term, with the Machine Gun Corps of the Army Special Reservists.³ When WW I broke out on 28 July 1914, Albert's unit was quickly mobilized (on 8 August) and by October that year, he was posted on active service.

For the next few months, Albert underwent basic training and specialized instruction. Those men selected for the Machine Gun Corps were considered to be the cream of the army and received six weeks' specialized training to operate their guns. In February 1915, Albert accidentally received a gunshot wound to his right arm that kept him in hospital for four days. On returning to duty, he continued his training with the 1st Battalion of the Dorset Regiment and remained with the local depot until his injury was completely healed; eventually, in May 1915, he joined his unit in the field.⁴

After less than a month at the Front, on 5 July 1915, Albert received his second gunshot wound, this time to his right shoulder. Again he was sent to hospital and then on leave to the U.K. to recover.⁵ On 24 October 1915, he was redeployed to the field and transferred to the Machine Gun Corps of the 5th Battalion, with the 34th Brigade.⁶ At that time, the 5th Battalion was actively involved in the Gallipoli Campaign and Albert would have joined them there. This was shortly before they were evacuated to Egypt on 16 December 1915.⁷ From January to March 1916, Albert was hospitalized for a third time, due to illness, then returned to the field, where his unit remained until they were sent to serve in France on 7 July 1916.⁸

Albert served in France until he took ill again in April 1917.⁹ By that time something must have gone slightly wrong for Albert, as he began to have disciplinary problems, beginning in December of 1916. Albert's difficulties continued until July of 1917.

His first case of formal discipline was for disobeying an order early in December of 1916 and for insolence to a NCO in January. This was followed by failure to comply to an Army Traffic order later that same month. From January to July, nothing appeared on his record until 17 July 1917, when he was disciplined for insolence once again, this time to a lance corporal.¹⁰ Perhaps his difficulties were related to the length of time he had been in the field, because once he had been granted a short leave back to England (22 July to 3 August 1917), he was never disciplined again.¹¹

Albert returned to the front on 3 August 1917 and served there until he was wounded in action on 16 February 1918. He received shrapnel wounds to his abdomen, arm, chest and back and succumbed to his injuries three days later, on 19 February 1918. Albert was 25 years of age.¹²

Albert participated in the following battles with his brigade: Somme, Albert, Bazentin Ridge, Pozières Ridge, Flers—Coucellette and Passchendaele.¹³

He is buried in the Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension—in Plot III, Row E, Grave number 33.¹⁴ Barlin is a village southwest of Bethune between the Bethune-Arras and Bethune-St. Pol roads. The Communal Cemetery and Extension lies to the north of the village on the road to Houchin.

The extension was begun by French troops in October 1914 and when they moved south in March 1916, it was used for burials by the 6th Casualty Clearing Station, largely for Commonwealth casualties. In November 1917, Barlin began to be shelled and the hospital was moved back to Ruitz. The extension was used again in early 1918 during the German advance on this front. It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and contains 1095 Commonwealth, 63 French and 13 German burials from the First World War.¹⁵

Albert Victor Copeland was posthumously awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for his service in an operational theatre) during WW I.¹⁶ His family did not receive his medals until his mother wrote requesting them, in 1921.

Albert grew up in Christchurch, Bournemouth, Hampshire.^{17, 18} He was the son of John Henry Copeland and Frances (Fanny) Elsworth.¹⁹ Albert Copeland was an industrious young man, who by 1911 was serving as a kitchen boy at Celtie House, Warren Edge Road, Southbourne Christchurch, Bournemouth, Hampshire.²⁰ He was living just four miles from his family home at 49 Cardigan Road, Winton.²¹ At the time of his enlistment with the Army Reserve, Albert had been working for Mr. George Day, a fruit merchant, for five months. He received a good reference from Mr. Day for his care of a pair of horses.²²

John and Fanny had ten children, eight of whom were still living at the time of the 1911 Census.²³ Albert was their seventh child and fourth son. His siblings were: Ada May (b. 1884),²⁴ Evelina Beatrice Mabel (b. 1885),²⁵ Robert Henry (b. 1887),²⁶ Maud Elizabeth (b. 1888),²⁷ Alexander William (b. 1889),²⁸ Edith Elsie (b. 1892),²⁹ John Henry (b. 1896),³⁰ Maud Amelia (b. 1897)³¹ and Edward Kenneth (b. 1902).³² Maud died at the age of four,³³ a year before Albert was born, and his brother John died in 1906.³⁴

Of Albert's brothers, only Robert Henry would serve in WW I; he enlisted with the Royal Army Service Corps and was demobilized in July 1919.³⁵ Robert eventually moved to the United States, where he died in Michigan in 1969.³⁶

Edward Kenneth, the youngest of Albert's siblings, also immigrated to North America, where he settled in Ontario. He died in Toronto in 1969.³⁷ The remaining brother, Alexander William, stayed in the United Kingdom and died in Basingstoke, Hampshire in 1932.³⁸

Albert's mother Frances died in Hampshire in 1940³⁹ and his father John Henry in Cheshire, in 1948.⁴⁰

In the summer of 1904, both Ada May and Evelina Beatrice Mabel Copeland boarded the SS *Celtic* from Liverpool, arriving in New York on 27 August 1904. Their destination was Washington County, Michigan, where they were to visit cousins who had paid for their passage.⁴¹

Two years later, in August 1906, in Windsor, Ontario, Ada May married Robert William Crowden,⁴² who was from Ohio. In 1938 Ada was living in Detroit, Michigan.⁴³

Evelina Beatrice Maude Copeland also remained in the United States and married a man with the last name of Charles. She died in 1965 and is buried in Los Angeles, California.⁴⁴

Edith Elsie married Albert Frederick J. Sellers in Christchurch, Hampshire in the spring of 1920.⁴⁵ She died in 1971, at the age of 79, still living in Hampshire, England.⁴⁶

© 2016 BIFHSGO

¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Victor Copeland

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Dorset Regiment—Battalions of the Regular Army," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/>: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for the Dorset Regiment & 34th Brigade

⁸ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Victor Copeland

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 9 July 2015), entry for A.V. Copeland

¹³ "Lists of the Battles of the First World War," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_War_I_battles: accessed 14 July 2016)

¹⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 November 2014), entry for Albert Victor Copeland, Service No: 71252.

¹⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 25 July 2016), entry for Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension

¹⁶ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Victor Copeland.

¹⁷ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 903, Folio: 142, Page: 1

¹⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Sub-registration district: Bournemouth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 38, Household schedule number: 257, Piece: 1045, Folio: 91, Page: 44

¹⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland and Frances Elsworth, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 895

²⁰ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Albert Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Registration district number: 95, Sub-district: Christchurch, Sub-district number: 1, Enumeration district: 15, Piece: 5823

²¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Registration district number: 95, Sub-registration district: Christchurch, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 41, Household schedule number: 61, Piece: 5872

²² "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Victor Copeland

²³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland

²⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Ada May Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 675

²⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16

July 2016), entry for Evelina Beatrice M. Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 654

²⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Robert Henry Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 675

²⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Maud Elizabeth Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 663

²⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Alexander William Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 672

²⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Edith Elsie Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 654

³⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 655

³¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Maud Amelia Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 658

³² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Edward Kenneth Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 629

³³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Maud Elizabeth Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 410

³⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837–1915," *FreeBMD* (<http://www.freebmd.org.uk>: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 414

³⁵ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Robert H. Copeland

³⁶ "Wassail Family Tree," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Robert Henry Copeland

³⁷ "Wassail Family Tree," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Edward Kenneth Copeland

³⁸ "England & Wales, Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Alexander W. Copeland, Registration district: Basingstoke, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 270

³⁹ "England & Wales, Death Index, 1916–2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Frances Copeland, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 1896

⁴⁰ "England & Wales, Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 July 2016), entry for John Henry Copeland, Registration district: Basingstoke, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 270

⁴¹ "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 July 2016), entry for Mabel Beatrice Copeland, arrival 27 Aug 1904 on the *Celtic* from Liverpool

⁴² "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 July 2016), entry for Ada May Copeland, Marriage county or district: Essex

⁴³ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 July 2016), entry for Albert Victor Copeland

⁴⁴ "Wassail Family Tree," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2016), entry for Robert Henry Copeland

⁴⁵ "England & Wales, Marriages Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 July 2016), entry for Edith E. Copeland and Albert F. J. Sellers, Registration district: Christchurch, Inferred county: Hampshire

⁴⁶ "England & Wales, Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 July 2016), entry for Edith Elise Copeland, Registration district: Kingsclere, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 1160