

Private Joseph Henry Brookfield©

Regimental number: 4221

9th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment

born: 1894 – died: 29 or 30 June 1916

Private Joseph Henry Brookfield was born in 1894 in Woolwich, London,¹ the son of Jane Brookfield.² Jane, formerly Jane Elizabeth Lewing, was born in about 1869 in Plumstead, Kent.³ She married Harry Brookfield on 5 April 1885 at St Nicholas' church in Plumstead.⁴ According to their marriage certificate, Jane was 18 years old; however, other birth records suggest that she was only 16. Harry was probably born in 1864⁵ in Munslow, Shropshire and, at the time of his marriage, was a private in the light infantry.

Joseph was probably the last of Harry and Jane's children. He had two older sisters: Isabella Louisa Jane (born in 1886)⁶ and Mary Ann J. (born in 1890 but died at the age of 4).⁷

In the 1880s, Joseph's father was serving as a Lance Corporal in the 1st Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment in India, when he was awarded the India Medal of 1854 for service between 15 November 1889 and 30 April 1890.⁸ The medal was awarded for various minor military campaigns in India, during 1852 to 1895.⁹ His award was for service in the Chin Lushai 1889–1890 expedition. He was likely still away from home in 1891, when Jane and her two children were living with her parents, James and Louisa Lewing, at 145 Horn Street in Plumstead.¹⁰

Harry likely died sometime between 1893 and 1896, as Jane remarried in 1897. She married Benjamin Wells early in 1897¹¹ in Woolwich and their first son, Benjamin Arthur, was born later that year.¹² A second son, Arthur J., was born in 1900.¹³

In 1901, Jane and Benjamin were living at 37 Abbey Grove in Plumstead, with Jane's two children, Isabella and Joseph, and their own two children.¹⁴ Benjamin, who was born in about 1862, was a bricklayer's labourer. Jane probably died later that year in Woolwich, at the age of 32.¹⁵ In 1911, Benjamin was a widower, living 31 Hylton Street, Plumstead, with his two children and two step-children.¹⁶ By then, Joseph was working as a factory lad.

Joseph enlisted in the army in Woolwich early in the Great War and served with the Royal Sussex Regiment.¹⁷ He joined the Western Front in France on 31 August 1915.¹⁸

In the middle of June, the 9th Battalion was stationed in Saint-Jans-Cappel, a community of northern France.¹⁹ On 20 June, the battalion moved from Saint-Jans-Cappel and then, on 27 June, it relieved the 13th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment in the trenches. The next day there were several raids on the battalion's right and the enemy retaliated all along the line with trench mortars, mine launchers and shelling. On the 29th, the enemy bombarded the line three times during the night. Joseph was likely injured during these attacks. He was admitted to No 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of his wounds on 29 or 30 June 1916.²⁰

He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: II. E. 132).²¹ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several casualty clearing stations, including the No 1 Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April

1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when soldiers' remains were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.²²

His half-brother Benjamin, who was living at 18 Hylton Street in Plumstead, was his next of kin and was notified of his death. Alfred's sister Isabelle, Benjamin and his other half-brother Arthur received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.

Joseph 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).²³

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¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph Henry Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 1231

² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Brookfield, Joseph Henry, Service No: 4221

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2016), entry for Jane E Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Sub-registration district: Plumstead, East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 538, Folio: 8, Page: 10

⁴ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Jane Elizabeth Lewing, Parish: St Nicholas, Plumstead, Borough: Greenwich, Register type: Parish register

⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 September 2016), entry for Harry Brookfield, Registration district: Ludlow, Inferred county: Shropshire, Volume: 6a, Page: 514

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Isabella Louisa J Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 1322

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Mary Ann J Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 1232; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Mary Ann J Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 623

⁸ "UK, Military Campaign Medal and Award Rolls, 1793–1949," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Harry Brookfield, Regimental Number: 2247

⁹ "India General Service Medal (1854)," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_General_Service_Medal_\(1854\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_General_Service_Medal_(1854)): accessed 29 September 2016)

¹⁰ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Jane E Brookfield

¹¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Jane Elizabeth Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 1307

¹² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 September 2016), entry for Benjamin Arthur Wells, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 1260

¹³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph H Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Sub-registration district: Plumstead East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 30, Piece: 577, Folio: 69, Page: 44, Household schedule number: 270

¹⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph H Brookfield

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- ¹⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Jane Elizabeth Wells, Registration district: Woolwich, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 761
- ¹⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph Brookfield, Registration district: Woolwich, Registration district number: 30, Sub-registration district: Plumstead East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 2917
- ¹⁷ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph Brookfield
- ¹⁸ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph Brookfield
- ¹⁹ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 September 2016), Regiment or unit: Royal Sussex Regiment, Sub-unit: 9th Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Aug–1919 May, Piece description: Piece 2219/2: 9 Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (1915 Aug–1919 May), Piece number: 2219
- ²⁰ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Brookfield. Although the No 1 CCCS chaplains' journal records his death as occurring on 29 June, other military records indicate that it was 30 June.
- ²¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Brookfield, Joseph Henry
- ²² "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>: accessed 5 August 2015)
- ²³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 September 2016), entry for Joseph Brookfield