

Private Thomas Albert Cooper[©]

Regimental number: 68597

4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

born: 1878 - died: 29 May 1918

Private Thomas Albert Cooper was a son, husband and father. His wife requested this inscription for his gravestone:

AT REST
IN LOVING MEMORY
WIDOW, CHILDREN, FATHER MOURN¹

Thomas' widow was the former Kate Smith, born in Stowmarket, Suffolk, in about 1882,² whom he married in 1909 in Croydon, Sussex.³

The first of Thomas' children was his daughter, Lilian Kate Cooper, born in 1910 in Croydon.⁴ The inscription on the gravestone suggests there were probably other children—perhaps born in south London, where Lilian was living during and after the war. Perhaps she had moved there from Croydon, while Thomas was away.

Thomas' father was John Cooper (born in Frostenden, Suffolk, in about 1841).⁵ His mother was Thomas' second wife, the former Sarah Coventry (born in Marylebone, Middlesex, in about 1837). They married on 26 November 1874 at the church of St John's, in Penge, Surrey,⁶ and had two children—Alfred, born in 1876,⁷ and Thomas, born in 1878.⁸

John also had children with his first wife—probably the former Eliza Morgan. They married in 1864⁹ and had at least two children; John, born in 1866,¹⁰ and Charlotte, born in 1868.¹¹ John, Eliza and the two children were living in Croydon in 1871.¹² Sadly, his daughter Charlotte died the following year.¹³ It appears that his wife Eliza also died two years later.¹⁴ John remarried later the same year.

In 1881, Thomas was living with his father, mother and step-brother John at 3 Heath Terrace in Penge, Surrey, where John senior was a foreman in a brick depot.¹⁵ John lost his second wife Sarah eight years later in Croydon. In 1891, John, a widower and still a brickmakers' foreman, was living at 11 Padua Road in Penge with his son Thomas.¹⁶

John was 56 years of age when he was wed for the third time. He married Ann Pullen, a spinster born in Berkshire in about 1848,¹⁷ on 28 January 1897 at St. John the Evangelist church in Penge.¹⁸ In 1901, Thomas, then 22 years old, was a gardener living with his father and his new wife.¹⁹

Ten years later, Thomas was married and living at 18 Raleigh Road in Penge with his wife Kate and their first child. He was now a nurseryman's assistant, working for a florist.²⁰ His father and his wife Ann were still living in Penge.²¹

Five years later, in about April 1916,²² 38-year-old Thomas joined the Suffolk Regiment (regimental number 202741).²³ He enlisted in Bromley,²⁴ now part of London. He later joined the Royal Fusiliers (London Regiment)²⁵ and was with the 4th Battalion near Chocques, in northern France, in mid-May 1918. From 13 to 16 May, the battalion was in camp and the soldiers had the opportunity

for baths and range practice. The battalion returned to the front line on 16 May, where it relieved the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. The next three days were moderately quiet; however, after that there were a few casualties each day. On 29 May, one company was heavily shelled and two Other Ranks (non-officers) were killed and five wounded. There were also two cases of shell shock.²⁶

Thomas may have been one of these casualties, as he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 29 May 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his right arm and shoulder, as well as his side and chest. He died the same day and was buried the following day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row D, Grave No. 28) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding. The chaplain was not aware of his next of kin, which suggests that Thomas may already have been unconscious when he arrived at No. 1 CCCS.²⁷

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁸ Thomas was one of 95 injured admitted to No 1. CCCS on 29 May 1918. In total, there were nearly 4,000 soldiers admitted to this CCCS in the month of May and 115 died.²⁹

After the war, Thomas' wife Kate was living at 16 Marlow Road, in Anerley, London.³⁰

Thomas was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).³¹

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Cooper, Thomas Albert, Service No: 68597

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2018), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper, Registration district: Croydon, Registration district number: 39, Sub-registration district: Penge, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 89, Household schedule number: 207, Piece: 3412

³ "England and Wales Marriage Registration Index, 1837–2005," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2D6P-DVG>: 13 December 2014), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper, 1909; from "England & Wales Marriages, 1837–2005," database, *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com>: 2012); citing 1909, quarter 4, vol. 2A, p. 573, Croydon, Surrey, England, General Register Office, Southport, England

⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2018) entry for Cooper, Lilian Kate, Registration district: Croydon, Volume 02A, Page 330

⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas Cooper, Sub-registration district: Croydon, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 75, Piece: 600, Folio: 23

⁶ "England, Kent, Parish Registers, 1538–1911," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QJD2-HVZN>: 8 December 2017), entry for John Cooper and Sarah Coventry, 26 Nov 1874; citing Marriage, St John, Penge, Surrey, England, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone; FHL microfilm 992,642

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 May 2018) entry for Cooper, Alfred, Registration district: Croydon, Volume 02A, Page 255

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 May 2018) entry for Cooper, Thomas Albert, Registration district: Croydon, Volume 02A, Page 252

⁹ "England, Kent, Parish Registers, 1538–1911," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QJD2-HJH2>: 8 December 2017), entry for John Cooper and Eliza Morgan, 14 Feb 1864; citing Marriage, St John, Penge, Surrey, England, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone; FHL microfilm 992,641

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- ¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 May 2018) entry for Cooper, John, Registration district: Croydon, Volume 02A, Page 175
- ¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 May 2018) entry for Cooper, Charlotte, Registration district: Croydon, Volume 02A, Page 172
- ¹² "England and Wales Census, 1871", *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VRNZ-6K7>: 11 December 2017), entry for John Cooper, 1871
- ¹³ "England and Wales Death Registration Index 1837–2007," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2JL5-7RD>: 31 December 2014), entry for Charlotte Cooper, 1872; from "England & Wales Deaths, 1837–2006," *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com> : 2012); citing Death, Croydon, Surrey, England, General Register Office, Southport, England
- ¹⁴ "England and Wales Death Registration Index 1837–2007," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2JR2-1D2>: 31 December 2014), entry for Eliza Cooper, 1873; from "England & Wales Deaths, 1837–2006," *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com>: 2012); citing Death, Croydon, Surrey, England, General Register Office, Southport, England
- ¹⁵ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper, Registration district: Croydon, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 64, Piece: 824, Folio: 81, Page: 36
- ¹⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas Cooper
- ¹⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper, Registration district: Croydon, Sub-registration district: Croydon, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 107, Piece: 652, Folio: 58, Page: 3, Household schedule number: 20
- ¹⁸ "England, Surrey Parish Registers, 1536–1992", *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QGZR-H5D3>: 16 March 2018), entry for John Cooper and Ann Pullen, 1897
- ¹⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper
- ²⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2018), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper
- ²¹ "England and Wales Census, 1911," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XW8P-TV2>: accessed 2 August 2017), John Cooper, Penge, Penge, Surrey, England; from "1911 England and Wales census," *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com> : n.d.); citing PRO RG 14, The National Archives of the UK, Kew, Surrey
- ²² Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper
- ²³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper. Another record indicates that he was with the 4th Res. Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment (regimental number 41445). ("UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper)
- ²⁴ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas Albert Cooper
- ²⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper
- ²⁶ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 June 2018), Regiment or unit: Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), Sub-unit: 4th Battalion, Division: 3rd Division, Diary entry start date: Sep 1916, Diary entry end date: 1 Sep 1916, Diary dates: 1914 Jan 1–1915 Dec 31, Piece description: Piece 1431/1-3: 9 Infantry Brigade: 4 Battalion Royal Fusiliers (1914 Aug–1919 Apr), Piece number: 1431
- ²⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Cooper, T.
- ²⁸ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

²⁹ "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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)

³⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Cooper, Thomas Albert, Service No: 68597

³¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Thomas A. Cooper