

Lance Corporal Ernest Edwin Cowley[©]
Regimental number: 81303
4th (City of London) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

born: 1 July 1883–died: 4 May 1918

Lance Corporal Ernest Edwin Cowley was the son of James Cowley¹ and Kate Elizabeth Senogles.² Ernest's father James was born in about 1843 in Westminster, London. Kate was born in about 1857 in Hackney, London,³ and was baptized on 23 October 1859 at Wycliffe Congregational Church, in Tower Hamlets, London, the daughter of William Henry and Frances Senogles.⁴ It is not clear that Ernest's parents married, but they had six children:

- Beatrice Elizabeth (born in about January 1881),⁵
- Percy George (born on 23 April 1882),⁶
- Ernest Edwin (born on 1 July 1883),⁷
- Arthur James (born on 2 February 1885),⁸
- Gladys (born on 14 September 1886)⁹ and
- Norman (born on 2 August 1888).¹⁰

In 1881, James and Kate were living at 2 Cedar Villa in Camberwell, London, with their first child Beatrice. James was a traveller.¹¹ Ten years later, they had had another five children, but in the spring of 1891, when the census was taken, the family was divided up. James was now a baker and living on his own at 95 High Street in Hackney.¹² Kate was a visitor in the home of Anne Rowe at 1 Victoria Road in Hackney and working as a baker's shop assistant. She was recorded under her maiden name, Kate Senogles, and her marital status was single.¹³ Yet she was the mother of six children, all of whom were visiting in the home of John H. Noyes, a painter, and his wife Flora at 1 Coburg Villas in Teddington, Middlesex.¹⁴ They were there with Alice M. Senogles, Kate's 21-year old, single sister.¹⁵ However, the presence of the children in the Noyes home was probably only a visit, because when the children enlisted in school in the 1890s, they were living at the same addresses as their parents.

Ernest and Percy were living at 95 High Street when they enlisted in Homerton Row School on 10 November 1891. Five years later the family had probably moved to 9 Clarence Road in Hackney, because that is where Arthur and Norman were living when they enlisted at the same school on 28 September 1896. Gladys was also living at the same address when she enlisted in Sigdon Road School on 5 March 1898—the year the school opened.

In 1901, the family was once again split up. James had probably died in 1900.¹⁶ Kate, now called Kate Cowley and recorded as a widow, was living at 9 Clarence Road in Hackney with her three youngest children—Arthur, Gladys and Norman. Kate was working as a baker and bread maker. Her son Arthur had joined as a baker's assistant. Beatrice may have been visiting in the home of John Hume at 12 Glenferrie Road in St. Peter, Hertfordshire. The remaining two children—Percy and Ernest—were living at 16 Gloucester Road, Hackney.¹⁷ Percy was working as a shopkeeper and Ernest as a postman.¹⁸

At some point over the following decade, the family seemed to come together for a while. Four children married in 1907–1908, and three of them were married from the house at 9 Clarence Road where Ernest's mother was living:

- On 1 September 1907, Beatrice, who was living at 9 Clarence Road, married Herbert Knight, an accountant, at the parish church of St John Hackney;¹⁹
- In the last few months of 1907, Percy married Christabel Fanny M. Davidson in Hastings, Sussex;²⁰
- Just about a year later, Ernest, who was then a civil servant, married Lilian Alice Shipp. They married on 24 October 1908 at St Mark Dalston in Hackney.²¹ Lilian had been born on 7 December 1886 and baptized in Hackney;²² in 1908, she was living there at 85 Navarino Road. Ernest was living at 9 Clarence Road.²³
- Two months later, Arthur James married Ellen Louisa Daly on 26 December 1908, at the same church as his sister—St John Hackney.²⁴

In 1911, Kate was still a baker's shopkeeper and living at 9 Clarence Road with two children (Gladys and Norman) and Norman's wife of three years, Grace.²⁵ Percy, also a baker/confectioner, was living at 50 William Avenue in Herne Bay, near Hastings, Sussex, with their daughter Gwenneth [*sic*].²⁶ Arthur, his wife Ellen Louisa and their daughter Dora Ellen were living at 1 Lea View Terrace, Bakers Hill, Upper Clapton. Unlike other family members, who were bakers or confectioners, Arthur was a butcher.²⁷

Ernest, Lilian and their son, George, were living at 85 Navarino Road—Lilian's home before she married—and George was working as a sorter at the London Postal Service.²⁸ Their son George Ernest was born on 21 January 1910.²⁹ Their second child, a daughter named Lilian Doris, was born on 23 March 1915.³⁰

About a year and a half later,³¹ Ernest enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force. He first served in the 8th Battalion of the London Regiment (regimental number: 6326), which was known as the Post Office Rifles.³² At some point, Ernest transferred to the 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, a battalion that served in Malta, Egypt and Gallipoli before joining the Western Front.³³

At the beginning of May 1918, the battalion was stationed in Tilloy, east of Arras in northern France, and was working on wiring and improving trenches. The orders were received to extend the front towards the Arras-Douai railway. The Royal Fusiliers moved north to the Arras-Cambrai Road. On 4 May, there was very little activity and, in spite of the battalion patrolling No Man's Land, no enemy patrols were encountered.³⁴ It is not known how Ernest was wounded, but he was dead when he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 4 May. Shrapnel wounds had penetrated his lungs. He was buried the following day in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row A, Grave 44) with the Canadian chaplain G. C. d'Easum presiding.³⁵

Pernes British Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.³⁶ Ernest was one of 29 Other Ranks in his battalion either killed or wounded in May 1918.³⁷

The chaplain sent a letter to Ernest's wife to notify her of his death.³⁸ She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death³⁹ and had the following inscription included on his gravestone:

A LOVING & DEVOTED
HUSBAND AND FATHER
HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE⁴⁰

Ernest was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).⁴¹ He is honoured on the General Post Office Eastern District Office War Memorial on Whitechapel Road in London.

Ernest's wife continued to live at 85 Navarino Road until her death. In 1918, she was living there with her father, George Shipp. Her father died about 1930 and, after that, she was living with her son George⁴² until her own death in 1941.⁴³ By 1939, she was incapacitated, but George was working in the wholesale textile business.⁴⁴

Although his wife stayed in her home for several decades, Ernest's mother and siblings did not. It is not clear when members of the Cowley family first went to the United States, but Ernest's mother and sister Gladys returned from the States in 1912, leaving from New York and arriving in Liverpool on 13 October.⁴⁵ They were probably just visiting the United States, because their last residence was stated to be England. However, Ernest's brother Norman travelled to the United States just a month later, arriving in New York on 10 November 1912.⁴⁶ The following year, he was a baker, living at 643 Dixwell Avenue in New Haven, Connecticut.⁴⁷ He remained in the US.

Kate and Gladys returned to the US in 1914, and their last permanent address in England was at the home of Percy at 50 William Street in Herne Bay, Kent. They arrived in New York on 19 April 1914.⁴⁸ His mother appears to have spent a while in the States, because she died there just after the war. She died on 12 June 1919 in New Haven and was buried in Hamden Plains Cemetery.⁴⁹

A few months later, Ernest's sister Beatrice, her husband Herbert and their children crossed into Canada from the United States. It is not known how long they had been in the US, but it was long enough for the birth of their second child, Geoffrey. On 21 June 1914, they left Connecticut and moved to Saskatchewan.⁵⁰

As the United States was preparing to enter the World War in 1917, the government of Connecticut conducted a military census to collect information from men over the age of 16 and identify the resources available for the war effort. Norman, still a baker, was living then at 259 West Ivy Street in New Haven with his wife and two children. He provided interesting information about his skills to contribute to the war effort. He could ride a horse and handle a team; however, he could not drive a car or motorcycle, understand telegraphy, operate a wireless or handle a power or sail boat; he had no experience with steam engine or electrical machinery, coast navigation or high-speed marine gasoline engines.⁵¹ Although Norman was still a British citizen, he registered in the first round of the WW I draft in June 1917. He claimed an exemption from the draft because he was then working as a "filer" in a munitions plant⁵²—Winchester Repeating Arms Company in New Haven, which made Enfield rifles and machine guns during the war.⁵³ After the war, Norman was still living in New Haven with his wife Grace and their two children—Joyce (born in about 1912) and Leslie (born in about 1914).⁵⁴ Over the years, until his death in 1973,⁵⁵ Norman continued to live in New Haven, although it appears that he was no longer with Grace and his new partner was Catherine M. As with his first marriage, no marriage record was found for Norman's marriage to Catherine. However, he and Catherine were buried with Norman's mother in New Haven.⁵⁶

In 1921, Beatrice and her family were living in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, with three children—Bertha (born in about 1910 in England), Geoffrey (born in about 1913 in the US) and Clifford (born in 1920 in Canada). Herbert was an accountant.⁵⁷

Ernest's other siblings remained in England: Arthur died on 1 July 1965 in London⁵⁸ and Percy probably died in 1968 in Chatham, Kent.⁵⁹ It is not known what became of Gladys.

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- ¹ "London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1932," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2019), entry for Ernest Edwin Cowley
 - ² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Cowley, Ernest Edwin, Registration district: Hackney, Volume 01B, Page 448
 - ³ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Beatrice E. Cowley, Registration district: Camberwell, Sub-registration district: Camberwell, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 674, Folio: 63, Page: 56
 - ⁴ "London, England, Non-conformist Registers, 1694–1931," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Kate Elizabeth Tenogles [*sic*]
 - ⁵ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Beatrice E. Cowley. Beatrice was 3 months old when the census was taken in April 1881.
 - ⁶ "London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840–1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Percy Cowley
 - ⁷ "London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840–1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Ernest Cowley
 - ⁸ "London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840–1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Arthur Jas Cowley
 - ⁹ "London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840–1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Gladys Cowley
 - ¹⁰ "London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840–1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
 - ¹¹ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Beatrice E. Cowley
 - ¹² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for James Cowley, Registration district: Hackney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 38, Piece: 200, Folio: 125
 - ¹³ "1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Kate Senogles [*sic*], Registration district: Hackney, Archive reference: RG12; Piece number: 205, Folio: 109, Page: 5
 - ¹⁴ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Ernest E. Cowley, Registration district: Hampton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 15, Piece: 618, Folio: 60
 - ¹⁵ "1871 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Kate Elizh [*sic*] Senogles, Registration district: Hackney, Archive reference: RG10, Piece number: 327, Folio: 9, Page: 11
 - ¹⁶ "England & Wales Deaths 1837–2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 5 May 2019), entry for James Cowley, District: Hackney, County: London, Volume: 1B, Page: 286
 - ¹⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2019), entry for Kate Cowley, Registration district: Hackney, Sub-registration district: Central Hackney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 08, Piece: 217, Folio: 24, Page: 1, Household schedule number: 5
 - ¹⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2019), entry for Beatrice Cowley, Registration district: St Albans, Sub-registration district: St Albans, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 1313, Folio: 15, Page: 22, Household schedule number: 135
 - ¹⁹ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Beatrice Elizabeth Cowley, Register type: Parish register
 - ²⁰ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 May 2019), entry for Percy George Cowley, District: Hastings, County: Sussex, Volume: 2B, Page: 39
 - ²¹ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2019), entry for Ernest Edwin Cowley, Register type: Parish register
 - ²² "London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Lilian Alice Shipp

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- ²³ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2019), entry for Ernest Edwin Cowley
- ²⁴ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Arthur James Cowley, Register type: Parish register
- ²⁵ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Kate Cowley, Registration district: Hackney, Registration district number: 3, Sub-district: Central Hackney, Sub-district number: 3, Census reference: RG14PN1080 RG78PN36 RD11 SD3 ED7 SN54, RG78 code number: 36, Piece number: 1080. No evidence was found of the marriage of Norman and Grace.
- ²⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Percy George Cowley, Registration district: Blean, Registration district number: 11, Sub-registration district: Herne, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Household schedule number: 202, Piece: 4353
- ²⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Arthur James Cowley, Registration district: Hackney, Registration district number: 11, Sub-registration district: North Hackney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 7, Piece: 1040
- ²⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Ernest Cowley, Registration district: Hackney, Registration district number: 11, Sub-registration district: Central Hackney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 1076
- ²⁹ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for George Ernest Cowley
- ³⁰ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Lilian Doris Cowley
- ³¹ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.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 2019), entry for Ernest Edwin Cowley
- ³² "Post Office Rifles," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Office_Rifles: accessed 8 May 2019)
- ³³ "4th (City of London) Battalion, London Regiment," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_\(City_of_London\)_Battalion,_London_Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_(City_of_London)_Battalion,_London_Regiment): accessed 11 May 2019)
- ³⁴ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), Regiment or unit: London Regiment, Sub-unit: 12th (County of London) Battalion (The Rangers), 4th (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers), Division: 56th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov–1919 May, 1916 Feb–1918 Jan, Piece description: Piece 2954: 168 Infantry Brigade (1915–1919), Piece number: 2954
- ³⁵ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Cowley, E. E.
- ³⁶ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ³⁷ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), Regiment or unit: London Regiment, Sub-unit: 12th (County of London) Battalion (The Rangers), 4th (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers), Division: 56th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Nov–1919 May, 1916 Feb–1918 Jan, Piece description: Piece 2954: 168 Infantry Brigade (1915–1919), Piece number: 2954
- ³⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Cowley, E. E.
- ³⁹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Ernest Edwin Cowley
- ⁴⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2019), entry for Cowley, Ernest Edwin, Service number: 81303
- ⁴¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2019), entry for Ernest E. Cowley
- ⁴² "London, England, Electoral Registers, 1832–1965," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Lilian Alice Cowley

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- ⁴³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Lilian A. Cowley, Registration district: Edmonton, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 3a, Page: 1082
- ⁴⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Lilian A. Cowley, Schedule number: 86, Sub-schedule Number: 2, Enumeration district: BEDP, Registration district: 132-7
- ⁴⁵ "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 May 2019), entry for Kate Cowley, Official number: 120901
- ⁴⁶ "New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 October 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁴⁷ "U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁴⁸ "New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Kate Elizabeth Cowley
- ⁴⁹ "U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Kate Elizabeth Cowley
- ⁵⁰ "Border Crossings: From U.S. to Canada, 1908–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 May 2019), entry for Mrs. Beatrice Knight
- ⁵¹ "Connecticut, Military Census, 1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁵² "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁵³ "Winchester Repeating Arms Company," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester_Repeating_Arms_Company: accessed 10 May 2019)
- ⁵⁴ "1920 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁵⁵ "U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935–2014," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2019), entry for Norman Cowley
- ⁵⁶ "U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com: accessed 6 May 2019) entry for Kate Elizabeth Cowley
- ⁵⁷ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 May 2019), entry for Beatrice Knight, Province or territory: Saskatchewan, District: North Battleford, District number: 222, Sub-district number: 49
- ⁵⁸ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 May 2019), entry for Arthur James Cowley
- ⁵⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 May 2019), entry for Percy G. Cowley, Registration district: Chatham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 5f, Page: 244