

Harold Esmond Cooke
Captain, The King's (Liverpool Regiment).
Age: Unknown.

Birth unknown

Death 30/11/1917

Cambrai memorial, Louverval, Departement du Nord, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France. Panel 4

Mrs H E Cooke – widow – Hafod Cottage, Brookdale, Meliden, N. Wales.

Above from info on Findagrave and the address in Wales from the medal card record.

Below from liverpoolpals.com

Harold Esmond was born on 20th June 1889 in Bristol, Gloucestershire, the only son of Thomas Henry Cooke and his wife Mary Elizabeth (née Braithwaite). Both his parents were born in Liverpool, married in 1886 and soon after moved to the Bristol area, where their first child, Mary Braithwaite Cooke, was born in late 1887, followed by Harold in 1889. He was baptised on 21st September 1890 in St. Andrew's, Montpelier, Bristol, his parents' residence 58 Belmont Road, Bristol and his father's occupation tea agent.

In 1891 the family is still living at 58 Belmont Road, Bristol. His father is 38, is a tea agent, his mother is 27, Mary is 3, and Harold is 1. Also in the household are his mother's sister Isabella Braithwaite, 29, and a general servant.

His father died in 1897, at the age of 45, when Harold was 8. Probate in the amount of £2,895-2s-6d was granted to his widow Mary and to his brother Joseph Cooke, tea merchant.

Mary returned to Liverpool with the children and by 1901 Mary, 37, is head of household, living on her own means, at 23 Hawarden Avenue, Toxteth Park. Daughter Mary is 13, and Harold is 11. Also in the household is his maternal aunt, Isabella Braithwaite, 39, and a cousin Sarah Carson, 50, both also living on their own means, as well as a domestic servant.

Harold attended the Liverpool Institute School from 1901 until 1904 (however, his name does not appear on the school memorial).

In 1911 they are at 3 Greenhill Avenue, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, a seven-room house. His mother, 47, is living on private means. Mary, 23, is a school mistress for Liverpool Corporation Education Authority, Harold is 21, an insurance clerk. They also have a visitor, Margaret Grace Lawson, age 4 (possibly the daughter of Mary's married sister Isabella).

Harold married Emily Wood on Valentine's Day 1914 in Liverpool in a civil ceremony. Their daughter Margaret Joan Braithwaite Cooke was born in Wavertree on 16th September 1915.

Soon after war was declared, Harold enlisted as Private 16056, 17th Battalion of The King's Liverpool Regiment. He was billeted at Prescott Watch Factory from 14th September 1914, he trained there and also at Knowsley Hall. On 30th April 1915 the 17th Battalion alongside the other three Pals battalions left Liverpool via Prescott Station for further training at Belton Park, Grantham. He quickly attained the rank of Sergeant and was discharged to commission on 01/7/1915. He was Gazetted Temporary Second Lieutenant in the 17th Bn K.L.R., on 6th August 1915. The Pals remained at Grantham until September 1915 when they reached Larkhill Camp on Salisbury Plain.

Harold (Lieutenant Esmond Cooke) was a steward at his sister's wedding, announced in the Liverpool Daily Post on 23rd September 1915. Mary (May) married Capt. Walter Willmer, 19th Bn K.L.R.

Walter died at Guillemont on 30th July 1916. (Mary never remarried, taught for many years, and died in Sussex in 1950.)

After being commissioned, Harold apparently remained in the U.K. in the Training Reserve and arrived in France on 8/9/1917. By then serving with the 12th Bn K.L.R., Harold saw action at Polygon Wood during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele).

By the end of November 1917, the 12th battalion was in the front line at St. Waast, northeast of Cambrai near the Belgian border. The German surprise counterattack began on 30th November. The battalion War Diary for 30th November - 2nd December 1917 records:

"About 7:30 a.m. the enemy attacked in masses under cover of a heavy artillery barrage and heavy machine gun fire from a large number of low-flying aeroplanes. These aeroplanes also dropped a number of H.E. and smoke bombs. The enemy were seen to have penetrated the line on our Right, so that it became necessary for the Bn to retire in order to avoid being cut off. Owing to the heavy M.G. fire from hostile planes on the Battery Positions, the "S.O.S." signal was not responded to. A considerable amount of confusion was inevitable. Parties were organised from time to time to defend positions but they were continually outflanked. The remnants of the Bn were attached to other units of the 61st Bde as nearly all the officers had become casualties." The War Diary records Casualties for 30th November - 2nd December 1917:

Officers 9 Missing, 2 Wounded

O.R. 229 Missing, 55 Wounded

Harold was one of the officers Missing in action. His death was presumed for official purposes to have occurred on or since 30th November 1917. His body was never recovered from the battlefield, and he is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Nord.

Harold was posthumously awarded the Military Cross, noted in the Bn War Diary at the end of January in 'Decorations Awarded During the Month', and announced in the Supplement to the London Gazette on 18th February 1918:

"T./Capt. Harold Esmond Cooke, attd. L'Pool R. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He captured all his objectives in an attack in spite of strong resistance from the enemy. He showed great ability in handling his company and set his men a splendid example of courage and determination."

His daughter was two years old when he died. Probate was granted to his widow, Emily, address 13 Woodchurch Road, Stoneycroft, Liverpool, in the amount of £318-10s-1d. Emily received his Army effects, including a War Gratuity of £8. The medal card shows Emily living at Hafod Cottage, Brookdale, Meliden, North Wales.

His daughter Margaret married in 1934, lived in London, and died in Dorset in 1984. It is not known what became of his widow Emily.

Gods Acre: Plot Q10

Captain Harold COOKE is mentioned on a memorial stone for Emily Cooke. It mentions he was killed in action on 30 Nov 1917.