

**St. Oswald Churchyard,
Methley, West Yorkshire**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



5679 PRIVATE

J. COOPER

54TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

19TH MAY, 1918 Age 34

He Died For His Country

James COOPER

James Cooper was born at Foxholes Row, Methley, near Leeds, West Yorkshire in late 1883 to parents Thomas Richard & Mary Cooper.

The 1891 England Census recorded James Cooper as a 7 year old Scholar, living with his family at Foxholes, Methley, Yorkshire. His parents were listed as Thomas R. Cooper (Coal Miner, aged 37, born Dawley, Salop) & Mary Cooper (aged 33, born Eastwood, Notts). James was one of five children listed on this Census, all born at Methley, Yorkshire – John H. Cooper (Scholar, aged 11), Ann E. Cooper (Scholar, aged 13), Amy Cooper (Scholar, aged 9) then James and Edith (aged 3). Also listed was Mary Cooper (aged 73), widowed mother of Thomas R. Cooper.

James Cooper attended Scholey Hill Council School, Methley, West Yorkshire.

The 1901 England Census recorded James Cooper as a 17 year old Coal Miner, living with his family at Foxholes Row, Methley, Yorkshire. His parents were listed as Thos. R. Cooper (Engine Cleaner, aged 47) & Mary Cooper (aged 44). James was one of six children listed on this Census – John Hy. Cooper (Blacksmith, aged 21) then James, Edith Cooper (aged 18), Laura Cooper (aged 9), Florence Cooper (aged 6) & Edgar Cooper (aged 2).

James Cooper, Miner, aged 20 years & 10 months, from Methley, England, was a passenger on the S. S. *Celtic* which sailed from Liverpool, England on 19th August, 1904, arriving at the port of New York on 27th August, 1904. James Cooper's final destination was Los Angeles where he intended to join his brother Reverend J. H. Cooper at 919 Douglas Street, Los Angeles, California.

[The 1911 England Census recorded James' parents still living at Fox Holes, Methley in a 4 roomed dwelling. T. R. Cooper (Boat Repairer, aged 57) & Mary Cooper (aged 53). Thomas & Mary Cooper had been married for 34 years & 9 children, with 1 child deceased. Also living at home was E. M. Cooper (youngest son, at school, aged 12).]

According to information supplied by Thomas Richard Cooper (father) for the Roll of Honour, James Cooper came to Australia when he was 28

James Cooper stated he was a 31 year old, single, Painter & Decorator from 28 Harrington Street, Sydney, NSW when he enlisted on 7th February, 1916 with the 4th Infantry Battalion, 18th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 5679 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr T. R. Cooper, of Methley, near Leeds, England.

Private James Cooper was posted to "A" Company, 4th Battalion on 9th February, 1916. He was later transferred to 18th Reinforcements of 4th Infantry Battalion.

Private James Cooper embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Kyarra* (A55) on 3rd June, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 3rd August, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private James Cooper proceeded overseas to France from 1st Training Battalion in England on 30th September, 1916. He was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 1st October, 1916.

Private James Cooper was marched out from 1st A.D.B.D. on 12th October, 1916 to join 54th Battalion & joined 54th Battalion in France on 14th October, 1916.

Private James Cooper was wounded in action in France on 1st November, 1916. He was taken to 38th Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to left arm then transferred to No. 27 Ambulance Train on 3rd November, 1916. Pte Cooper was admitted to 1st Canadian General Hospital at Etaples & then embarked on Hospital Ship *Asturia* at Havre for England on 7th November, 1916 with gunshot wounds to left arm.

Private James Cooper was admitted to 1st Southern General Hospital at Edgbaston, Birmingham, England on 9th November, 1916 with gunshot wounds to left arm.

Private James Cooper was transferred to 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Southall on 5th January, 1917 & discharged to No. 4 Command Depot at Wareham, Dorset on 9th January, 1917. The Hospital report reads: *"Evacuated from Somme 2-11-16. Shrapnel wound of left upper arm, entry and exit, now quite healed. No disability. Wears spectacles for weak eyesight."*

Private James Cooper was transferred to 61st Battalion on 23rd March, 1917 while at Wareham, England.

Private James Cooper was transferred to 54th Battalion 12th September, 1917 & proceeded overseas to France via Southampton the same day to reinforce 54th Battalion.

Private James Cooper was marched in to 5th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 13th September, 1917.

Base queried Pte Cooper's movements on 21st September, 1917 & he was taken off strength from 61st Battalion on 23rd September, 1917.

Private James Cooper was wounded in action in France (2nd Occasion) on 9th April, 1918. He was taken to 55th Field Ambulance with shrapnel wounds to his left side then transferred to 55th Casualty Clearing Station. Pte Cooper was transferred to Ambulance Train on 11th April, 1918 & admitted to 5th General Hospital on 12th April, 1918. Pte Cooper was marked for embarkation to UK from 5th General Hospital at Rouen on 20th April, 1918. He was invalided to England on Hospital Ship *Tully Castle* on 21st April, 1918 with gunshot wounds to chest.

54th Infantry Battalion

With the collapse of Russia in October 1917, a major German offensive on the Western Front was expected in early 1918. This came in late March and the 5th Division moved to defend the sector around Corbie. The 14th Brigade took up positions to the north of Villers-Bretonneux and held these even when the village fell, threatening their flanks. *(Information from The Australian War Memorial)*

Private James Cooper was admitted to Bath War Hospital, Somerset, England on 22nd April, 1918 with gunshot wounds penetrating left side of his back – severe. The Hospital Report states that Pte Cooper developed tight Lobar Pneumonia on 15th May, 1918.

Private James Cooper died at 3.45 pm on 19th May, 1918 at Bath War Hospital, Somerset, England from pneumonia after wounds received in action in France - gunshot wounds penetrating back to chest. Pte Cooper's brother was present at the death.

A death for James Cooper, aged 34, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Bath, Somerset, England.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Pte James Cooper, 5679, 54th Battalion, contains a letter from Sister C. A. Hale from War Hospital, Bath concerning the death of Pte Cooper which reads: *"Pte Cooper was admitted to this Hospital suffering from a very large wound in his back. For a little time he appeared to be going on satisfactorily and then pneumonia set in – probably the result of septic absorption from his wound, His relatives in Leeds were informed of his condition and his brother came down and was with him until the end. According to his father's wish, the body was taken to Leeds for burial. I hope these particulars will be of some satisfaction to his people. The whole staff in this Ward were extremely grieved to lose Cooper as he was always a cheerful and good patient."*

Another letter from the Sydney Bureau in the Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Pte James Cooper contains information from informant Pte H. D. Barrett, 1625, 54th Battalion which reads: *"Informant described Cooper as about 5 feet 9 inches high, stout build, dark complexion, aged about 35. Was a painter by trade and believed to have come from Yorkshire. Informant states that they both belonged to the Battalion Pioneers. On 19/5/18 the Battalion was holding the line near Villers Bretonneux. About 6 am while the Battalion was waiting to advance, Cooper was lying in a dugout. Orders were received to move to a sunken road, and Cooper had no sooner left his dugout than he was hit by a shell. Informant was alongside Cooper at the time and saw him fall and also helped to carry him out after bandaging him. Cooper was taken in a semi-conscious condition to the Dressing Station at Aubigny and after*

leaving him there, Informant never heard any more of him and did not even know that Cooper was dead, until I told him so. Informant added that they were close mates and Cooper was well thought of by his other mates.

Private James Cooper's body was claimed by his relatives for burial at Methley near Leeds.

Private James Cooper was buried at 4 pm on 23rd May, 1918 in St. Oswald Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire – near the War Memorial and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Pte Cooper - *Coffin was good, polished Elm. The deceased soldier was interred privately at Methley Churchyard, the funeral procession of hearse and six mourning coaches starting from the house where the deceased was born and where his parents still reside. A Service was conducted in the United Free Church by Rev. H. W. B. Chapman, Barnes Road, Castleford.*

Father, brother and three sisters as well as numerous other relatives were present at the funeral. Wreaths were sent by the following persons:- "Parents and Family", Mr and Mrs J. H. Cooper, Mrs and Miss West, Members of the Scholey Hill Society and "Old Friends". An oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.

Pte James Cooper requested in his Will, dated 11th September, 1917, that all his money due to him from the A.I.F. & deferred pay etc to be given to his father – Thomas Richard Cooper whom he also appointed Executor of his Will.

A War Pension was granted to Thomas Richard Cooper, father of the late Pte James Cooper, in the sum of 7/6d per fortnight from 21st July, 1918. A War Pension was granted to Mary Cooper, mother of the late Pte James Cooper, for the same amount & from the same date.

Private James Cooper was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte Cooper's father – Mr T. R. Cooper, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll & Plaque both issued in London in November, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private James Cooper – service number 5679, aged 34, of 54th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Thomas Richard and Mary Cooper, of Foxholes, Methley.

Private J. Cooper is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 158.

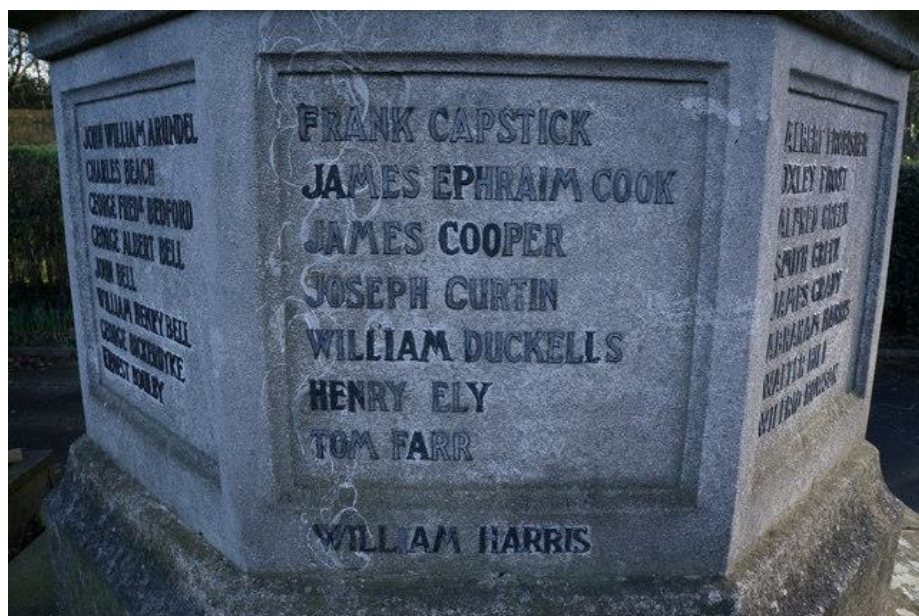


Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

James Cooper is remembered on the Methley War Memorial located in St. Oswald's Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire, England.

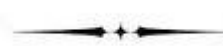


Methley War Memorial (Photos by Anne C. Brook)



(56 pages of Private James Cooper's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Pte J. Cooper does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

He Died For His Country

St. Oswald Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire, England

St. Oswald Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire contains 7 Commonwealth War Graves - 1 directly connected to World War 1 (2 others that died in 1921) & 4 relating to World War 2.



St. Oswald Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire *(Photo from CWGC)*

Photo of Pte J. Cooper's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Oswald Churchyard, Methley, West Yorkshire, England.



(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)