

**World war .....One War .....One family**

## **The Cooper Family of Chichester**



(Image from family collection)

By Sheila Glue

## World war .....One War .....One family

Reported on 27 March 1918 in 'The Chichester Observer'

### **ANOTHER CHICHESTER HERO---**

Another Cicestrian has "made good" on the battlefield. This is Lance-Sergeant A Cooper, who has just been awarded the Military Medal for gallantry at Cambria. He is now at a convalescent home in Newhaven. He joined up in August 1914 and has been through a tremendous number of engagements. Altogether he has been out in France for nearly three years. He is the son of Mr W K Cooper, builder, of Oving road who it will be recollected lost a younger son in the early part of last year. Mr Cooper is to be congratulated on the part his sons have played in this war, for apart from these two he has now a son in Mesopotamia, private A H Cooper of the Royal West Kents who will be readily remembered by football enthusiasts of Chichester and another son Gunner C Cooper in the RFA who has been in France considerably over two years, while yet another son Gunner S Cooper of the RGA, is at Ipswich in hospital suffering from the effects of gas and trench fever. Two sons in law have also seen service in France, Private J Ayling in the ASC and Private F Henshaw of the East Kents.

This Newspaper report refers to my own family and graphically displays how one family's lives were dominated by the war and the devastating effects it had on them all.

William K Cooper was a well respected Builder and Undertaker who lived and worked from his home and business premises in Oving Road Chichester, following on the family business from his father Henry Jackson Cooper of Aldingbourne and his grandfather Henry Cooper of Slindon.



Photo's from our family collection show Three elder Cooper sons on the roof, one on the ladder and the smallest in the garden below. The second shows the three youngest sons at about the same time.

William & his wife Mary had a total of eight children from 1882 to 1898. Between 1901 and 1911 William's business was doing well in Chichester and he and his family moved from a

small property in Oving Road to a larger one across the road which he extended to double the size. The picture above proudly shows his six sons at the topping out.

William was also able to build houses to leave for each of his children in the future.

The census of 1911 shows William & Mary living at 219 Oving Road with their children Edith 28 a drapers assistant, Sydney 24 a carpenter, Mabel 20 a draper's assistant, Archibald 17 an outfitters assistant, Charles 14 an ironmongers apprentice and Frederick 12 a scholar. The eldest son also William at 27 was living with his young family in Gosport trading as an ironmonger. Albert aged 22 was boarding in Reading Berkshire, a compositor for a printing firm.

The Cooper men & boys  
 In about 1911 with Henry J  
 Cooper, William's father.  
 (Image from family  
 collection)



William & Mary in 1914  
 (Image from family collection)

By 1914 Sydney and Albert were also married together with daughters Edith and Mabel.

Then in July 1914 a turn of events was to change all of their lives. During the next five years five of the Cooper sons joined the army together with two sons in law. Two sons were to die, the others returned, their lives changed forever.

## 1914

### August 1914

The first to heed the call to arms was **Archibald Cooper** by now a young man of 20 years old. He joined 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment service number G/218.

The 7th Battalion, Royal Sussex, was formed at Chichester on 12

August 1914 and allocated to 36 Brigade, 12th (Eastern) Division with which it served throughout the war. (where did you find this information? If it is from a website or book, add an endnote as shown in the style guide)

## 1915

### February 1915

Arch's younger brother **Charles Percy Cooper** born in 1896 joined The Royal Field Artillery aged 19 at Chichester and was assigned as a driver, Service no 93872, to D battery, 107 Brigade, 24<sup>th</sup> Division

### May 1915

The 7th Battalion was in training in a camp in England and **Arch** sent this photocard home to the family. He is the soldier ringed to the far left of the photo.



RSR/PH/7

/4 - West Sussex Record Office

### 1 June 1915

The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion including **Arch** landed in France and remained on the Western Front, distinguishing itself in many battles. Unfortunately Arch's service record is not available probably destroyed in a fire in London during World War Two

### Late June 1915

**Charles**, serving with 152 Brigade Royal Field Artillery, 24th Division moved to Aldershot for final training. The Division had been established in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Third New Army. The Division moved 19-23 June 1915 to Aldershot for final training. Lord Kitchener inspected the Division at Chobham ranges on 19 August and next day it was the turn of King George V.



### End of August 1915

**Charles** was posted overseas leaving Southampton for France. The Division's first experience was truly appalling. Having been in France for only a few days, lengthy forced marches brought it into the reserve for the British assault at Loos. General Headquarters planning left it too far behind to be a useful reinforcement on the first day, but it was sent into action on 26 September, where it suffered over 4178 casualties for very little gain.

The Division served on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, taking part in many of the significant actions.

### December 1915

**Jack Ayling**, husband of Edith Cooper, enlisted in Chichester aged 31 into Army Service Corps DM2/17892. Due to a previous injury to his arm he was only fit for Garrison Duties, he was a driver in mechanical transport.

## 1916

### Early in 1916

**Arch** returned home and he married his sweetheart Louisa Dean a daughter of Jimmy Dean, the diarist and well known chronicler of Slindon

Arch & Louie Cooper  
(Image from family collection)



### April 1916

**Charles** was admitted to the Field Hospital with an inguinal hernia and returned to England via hospital ship 'Dieppe'.

### 14-May1916

The youngest of William and Mary's children, **Frederick Cooper** born in 1898 joined The Royal Sussex Regiment service no G/11740 and was later transferred to the Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment Private TF.242659 1/5th Battalion.

### 23-May1916

**Jack** Ayling was in training on a home posting.

### 1 August 1916

**Charles** returned to his post in France as a gunner. The 24th Division had moved to The Somme seeing action at The Battle of Guillemont. He joined V5 Trench Mortar Battery and was granted 2<sup>nd</sup> class pay in November 1916

### 15 August 1916

**Jack** Ayling left Southampton on board SS Lydia to Base Mechanical Transport Depot in Rouen. Also at about the same time **Frank Henshaw**, husband of Mabel Cooper, enlisted as a private with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion East Kent Regiment 'The Buffs' service number G/17806. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion served in France throughout the war but again there is no service record available for him.

### 21 November 1916

**Jack** returned unfit on board Merchant Ship St George to UK. He served at Larkhill until his discharge on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1918

## 1917

### 11 January 1917

**Fred** left with his regiment for France

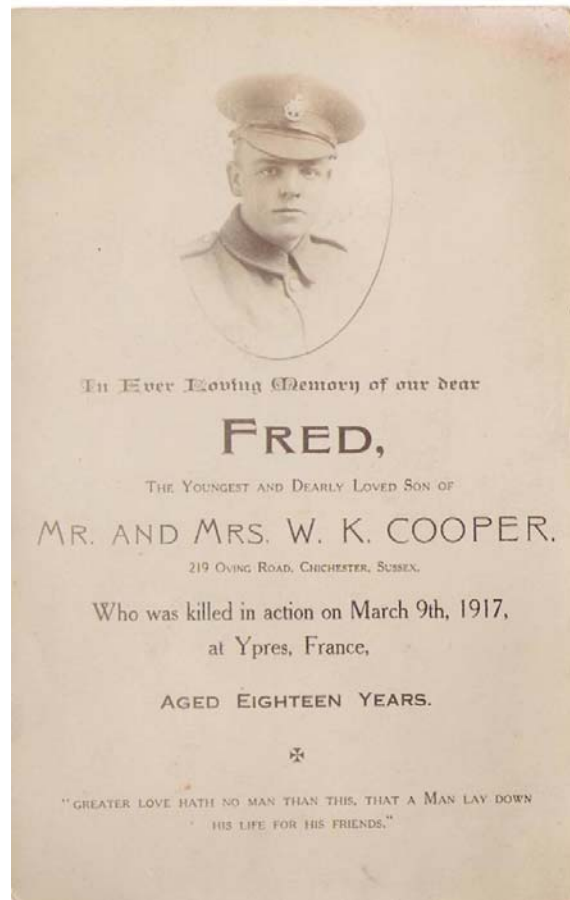
### 9 March 1917

**Fred** died in action at Ypres aged 18 less than two months after his arrival at the battlefield. He is remembered with Honour in the Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery.

### 4 April 1917

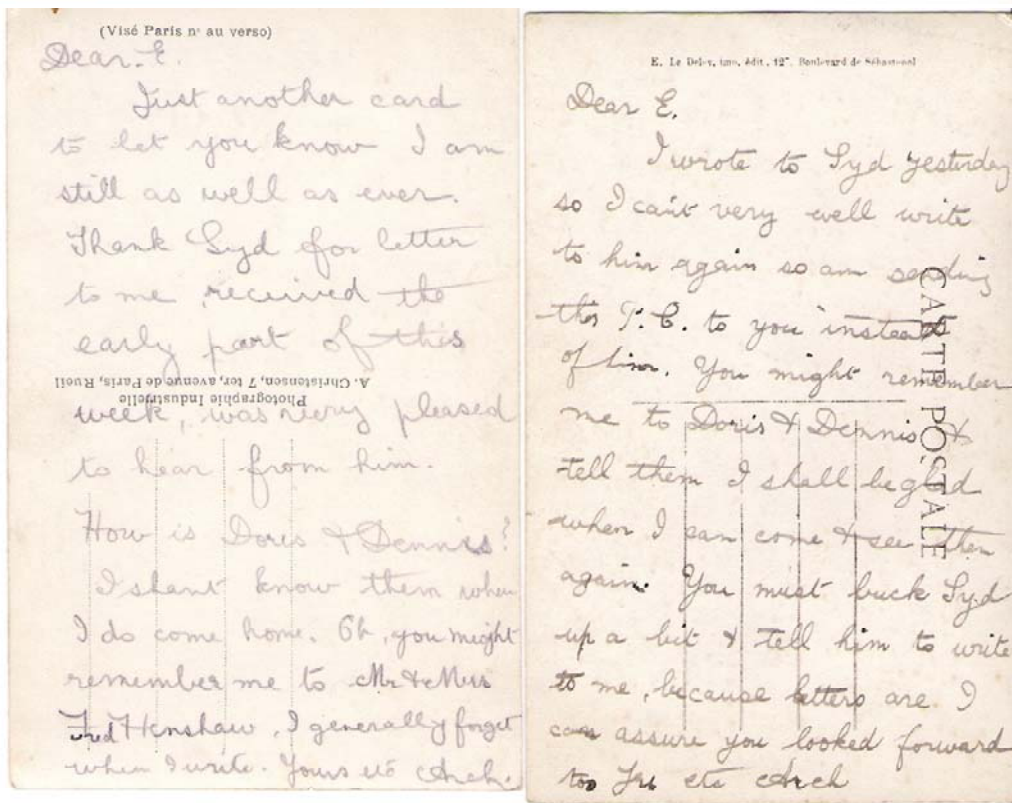
There is no service record for **Sydney Cooper** born in 1886 but his number 153717 would indicate that he was conscripted, mobilised and arrived at No. 1 Depot, Rugeley, Royal Garrison Artillery on or around the 4th April 1917 aged 31. Most of the Gunners at this time were being posted from Rugeley to Siege Artillery School at Prees Heath where they were to form a number of Batteries; **Syd** joined the 415th Siege Battery. He left for France leaving his wife and three young children the youngest having been born in March 1917.

It has not been possible to ascertain when **Albert Henry Cooper**, born 1888 joined the army just yet. There is no service record for him either.



(Image from family collection)

However he served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal West Kents service number G/1559 and went on to serve in Mesopotamia.



These Postcards sent from France by Arch to Emma Cooper who was Syd's wife are from our family collection.



28 April 1917

**Charles** was admitted to field hospital for 'shell shock head abrasion' and was hospitalized until August 1917.

August 1917.

**Charles** returned to the field and later that month reverted to Driver at his own request relinquishing his 2<sup>nd</sup> class gunner's pay. It is most probable that he was part of the Third Battle of Ypres in October before moving south for action during The Cambrai Operations.

26 August 1917.-

**Syd** and the personnel of 415th Siege Bty joined 163<sup>rd</sup> Siege Bty allowing them to operate as a 6 gun establishment, with mechanised armament of 6 inch Howitzers (26cwt). Between September and February 1918 163<sup>rd</sup> was in the Arras area. Billets east of Arras and guns in Athies. The Battery was certainly present for some of the heaviest fighting, particularly at Vimy, Ypres and Arras.

Siege Batteries in the Royal Garrison Artillery were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory plunging fire. The usual armaments were 6 inch, 8 inch and 9.2 inch howitzers. As British artillery tactics developed, the Siege Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralizing the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strong points, dumps, stores, roads and railways behind enemy lines.

November 1917

**Charles** was granted home leave whilst in Rouen until 4<sup>th</sup> December 1917

30 November 1917 The Battle of Cambrai

**Arch** was part of this action and was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry. He was badly wounded in the hand. His name is recorded in The London Gazette and mentioned in The Chichester Observer dated March 1918.

Image of a Military Medal from the Imperial war Museum ©IWM  
(OMD28)



**1918**

23 January 1918

Gunner **Syd Cooper** was transferred from the field to hospital in Ipswich suffering from the effects of gas and trench fever.

163 Battery War Diary notes the following entry: -

"Fired on working parties at I.4.C.5.6. observed by Wasp (Observation Post). Party dispersed. Wasp OP 2/Lt H. Humby.

To Hospital 153717 Gr. Cooper S."



The 163rd Sge Bty, which had been with the 81 Mixed Brigade since 11<sup>th</sup> October 1917, had its HQ in Tilloy Wood, just East of Arras.

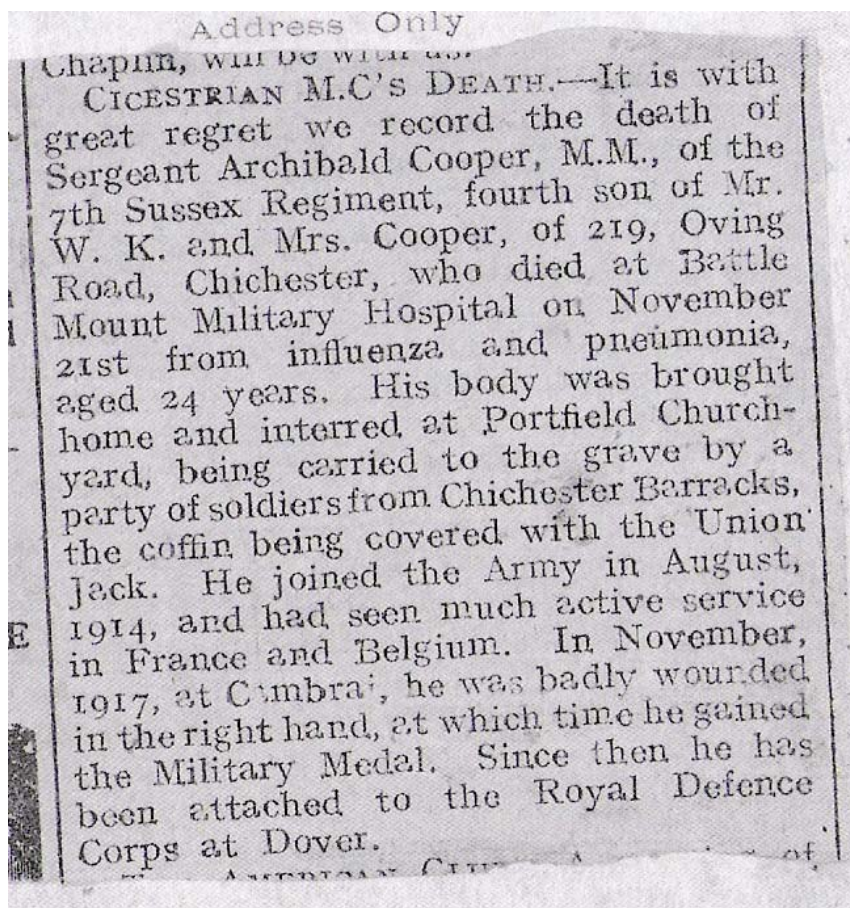
**Arch** arrived back in Dover and was transferred to the Royal Defence Corps as a lance/sergeant, service number 79705.

During this year **Charles** was in action again on the Somme and The Battle of Cambrai and the Final Advance in Picardy. At the Armistice the Division was in the line 1.5 miles east of the Maubeuge-Mons road. They moved back to the area between Denain and Douai at the end of November moved to St Amand-Orchies, then on the 18th of December the Division moved to Tournai for demobilization.  
([www.wartimememoriesproject.com](http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com))

### 21 November 1918

**Arch** died in the Castle Mount Hospital from Influenza and Pneumonia as reported here in the Local paper.

**Arch** wrote a journal of his time on the front which was kept with the family and only passed to his widow many years later in about 1975 when it was discovered on clearing the family home. Sadly we do not know where it is now.



## 1919

June 1919

**Charles** was discharged and transferred to The Army Reserve list in July.



Charles's medals and ID tags (family of Charles Cooper)

20 June 1919

**Syd** sent this photo card home to his baby daughter Joan. He was by now in Berg Gladbach on the Rhine, a sergeant, and he was apparently in a training post, possibly carpentry, as this was his trade.





**Syd** second from  
right back row  
(Images from  
family collection)



**Sydney, Albert and Charles** returned after the war, their lives changed forever. Albert went back to London and publishing and Syd and Charles returned to their family in Chichester. One can only imagine the anguish felt by William and Mary and the wives and families of their sons and their daughters left at home throughout this time.

All seven of the men from this family who served have received both the British and victory medals. Arch and Charles would have also received the 15 star as they enlisted and served 1914-1915. Arch also received the Military medal.

Fred and Arch are remembered on the roll of Honour for Sussex



## CHICHESTER CITY WAR MEMORIAL

### Frederick Cooper

Private TF.242650 1/5th Battalion, The Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. Killed in action 9.3.17. Aged 18 Son of William Knight & Mary Anne Cooper of 219, Oving Road, Chichester. Born and enlisted in Chichester. Formerly Royal Sussex. Included on [Portfield War Memorial](#) Buried in Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery, Belgium.

### Archibald Cooper

Lance Sergeant 79705, Royal Defence Corps. Fourth son of William Knight Cooper and Mary Ann Cooper of 219 Oving Road, Chichester. He originally enlisted as G/218, 7th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment in August 1914 serving in France and Belgium. He gained the Military Medal at Cambria in November 1917 where he was wounded. He died aged 24 on 21st November 1918 in Dover Military Hospital and is buried in All Saints Churchyard, Portfield. Included on Portfield War Memorial

This information is taken from [www.roll-of-honour.com](http://www.roll-of-honour.com)

Getting back to a life after the War must have been hard for all of the family. Two young sons would never come home and this surely must have been so difficult to bear for Mary. She will have suffered so much when they were all away whilst husband William tried to maintain his business without **Syd** and most probably many of his workmen who had also heeded the call to arms. Portfield would have been a sad and lonely place when most of the young men were away. The boys all wrote postcards home and their families sent letters back to them trying to keep spirits up, but time after time there were messages of injuries, deaths and broken men. Occasionally there were tales of victories and bravery as in the case of Arch only for him to return to Dover and to be struck down by the influenza epidemic and die.

Mary & William circa 1928  
(Image from family collection)



**Charles** was no doubt devastated when he returned to the family. His two siblings, one a year older than him and the other a year younger were now dead. He survived albeit shattered by the sights and sounds of the trenches having been invalided home and then to return as a gunner but unable to cope and revert to being a driver. He maybe felt that in some way he had failed and ashamed that he was not always able to cope, but who could blame him. When he came back his father wanted him to help with the family firm but he was unable to fit back in. He loved to sit at the piano and sing at family get togethers but he developed a drink problem and left the family business. He eventually set up a pet shop in The Hornet in Chichester. He married in 1936 and in 1940 his wife Edith (Seldon) died in childbirth and his baby son was brought up by the Seldon



family. We know that Charlie worked for the Toc H in Chichester for a time during WW2. By 1954 he was working at the Links hotel in Liphook as a gardener handyman but was later admitted to the workhouse in Midhurst a broken man. Charles died in 1973.

The Toc H was set up during World War One[WW1] their philosophy was as *a place "where friendships could be consecrated, and sad hearts renewed and cheered, a place of light and joy and brotherhood and peace"*. It was initiated in 1915 by army chaplain the Reverend Phillip Byard (Tubby) Clayton who was sent to France and then on to the town of Poperinge in Belgium situated a few miles back from the trenches around Ypres. Poperinge was a busy transfer station where troops on their way to and from the battlefields of Flanders were billeted. Clayton, universally known as Tubby, was instructed by his senior chaplain, Neville Talbot, to set up some sort of rest house for the troops. The house was open to men and officers alike. He created a library. There was a large kitchen where much tea was consumed, a beautiful walled garden where men could sit and forget about the war for a while, and eventually, in the attic hop loft, a chapel where regular services were held.

Following the war William, the eldest of the Cooper sons, remained living and working in Gosport as an ironmonger. **Albert** worked in London as a compositor for the Daily Express. Compositors assembled blocks of type for printing, a very skilled job made obsolete by computer typesetting at the end of the 1970s. The Daily Express was founded in 1900 it was bought in 1916 by the future Lord Beaverbrook. It was one of the first papers to carry gossip, sports, and women's features, and the first newspaper in Britain to have a crossword. Rupert Bear first appeared in 1920 and later his nieces and nephews in Chichester would always receive the 'annual' as a Christmas present. *[I am unable to locate source please delete picture*

**Frank** Henshaw and **Jack** Ayling returned to their wives in Chichester where they continued to raise their families.

**Syd Cooper**, despite his experiences of the war was reluctant to return home afterwards as he was offered a good teaching post with the British army on the Rhine following the hostilities. His family has always talked of him wanting to take them all to live there. However his father William needed him home to carry on in the family firm and his duty was to return. He found the responsibility somewhat daunting especially as Charles was not a great help. Following the death of their father William in 1933 Syd struggled to keep the business going but with the help of his two sons and youngest daughter it succeeded. It appears that Syd too may have had some very bad memories of his time with the heavy guns but none of his children were ever too aware of his feelings. He never spoke about it! He was a quiet gentle man with a roguish sense of humour. He and wife Emma went on to have a further two daughters after the war. Eventually their family grew and there were to be seven

grandchildren. When **Syd** and Emma celebrated 60 years of marriage in 1972 they had five great grandchildren. **Syd** died aged 88 in 1975.



A photo of Syd Cooper with his granddaughter Sheila the author of this piece in the early 1940's the other was taken a few years later. (Image from family collection)

Sheila and her Grandad often went into his vegetable garden where he kept rabbits. The only memory she has of him talking about his war days was one day whilst they were both alone in the garden and feeding the rabbits. He spoke of the plight of the poor horses and said that at night they would cry out in distress. Whether or not this was all he said will never be known. Just that small memory remains and was vividly brought to mind when she watched the movie 'War Horse' with her own granddaughter many years later.

This case study is dedicated to my Mum Joan Snelling nee Cooper conceived in March 1918 whilst her Father Syd was recuperating in Suffolk. Joan was born on 31 December 1918 in Chichester and died in Chichester on 21 October 2012 aged 93.

By Sheila Glue granddaughter of Sydney Cooper

Acknowledgements: -

With thanks to the The Cooper family archives for family photographs and memories.

## Appendix

Transcript of messages sent to Emma Cooper from Arch Cooper

*a*

*Just another card to let you know I am still as well as ever. Thank Syd for letter to me received the early part of this week, was very pleased to hear from him.*

*How is Doris and Dennis? I shan't know them when I do come home. Oh you might remember me to Mr & Mrs Fred Henshaw I generally forget when I write. Your etc Arch*

*b*

*Dear E,*

*I wrote to Syd yesterday so I can't very well write to him again so I am sending this PC to you instead of him. You might remember me to Doris and Dennis and tell them I shall be glad when I can come home and see them again. You must buck Syd up a bit and tell him to write to me, because letters are I assure you look forward too Yours etc Arch*

Sources: -

Army Service Records for Charles Percy Cooper from Ancestry

West Sussex Record Office:

Information regarding The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion RSR

Photograph of a group of men of the 7th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment, probably taken at a training camp in England prior to their departure for France in May 1915 **RSR/PH/7/4** c.1914

National Archives Kew – medal cards and rolls for all of the soldiers mentioned here WO/329

Catalogue ref WO/95/1856 war diary 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion n Royal Sussex

[www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk) – service record for Charles Cooper from British Army WW1 Service records

[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) service record for Jack Ayling

Great War Forum information regarding RGA and war diary for 163 battery giving details of Syd Coopers removal to hospital

[www.1914-1918.invisionzone.com](http://www.1914-1918.invisionzone.com) Questions relating to Royal Garrison Artillery Royal Field Artillery and East Kent Regiment

www.1914-1918.net

[information from The Long Long Trail History of 24<sup>th</sup> Division](http://www.1914-1918.net)

[www.genesreunited.co.uk](http://www.genesreunited.co.uk) contacts with others researching similar projects and people

[www.roll-of-honour.com](http://www.roll-of-honour.com) – for Frederick and Archibald Cooper

[www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/military](http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/military) medal\_

[www.toch-uk.org.uk/History](http://www.toch-uk.org.uk/History) for information on Toch H

<http://www.wartimemoriesproject.com/greatwar> for Frank Henshaw



Appendix

William K Cooper b 1860 married Mary A Lintott b 1857  
 in September 1881

Chart showing the members of the family who served during WW1 highlighted in red

	Edith Mary born 5 <sup>th</sup> July 1882	William Knight b 31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 1882	<b>Sydney Cooper</b> b 7 <sup>th</sup> July 1886-1975	<b>Albert Henry</b> b 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1889	Mabel b 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1890	<b>Archibald</b> b 22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb 1894	<b>Charles</b> b 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec 1896	<b>Frederick</b> b 14 <sup>th</sup> Dec 1899
	Sept 1911 m <b>Jack Ayling</b>	March 1907 m Florence	Oct 1911 M Eliza Emma Abbott	June 1914 m Ethel Barnet	Sept 1914 <b>Frank Henshaw</b>	March qtr 1916 Louie Dean	Dec qtr 1936 M Edith Seldon	
						Enlisted Aug		
1915	Enlisted Feb					Landed in France June	Enlisted Feb To France August	
1916	Posted to France August Returned unfit				Enlisted East Kents August	Returned and married in Spring	Returned home injured April	Enlisted May
1917			Enlisted April Joined 163 <sup>rd</sup> siege battery August	Enlisted Royal West Kents served in Mesopotamia		Received Military Medal for his part in action Cambria November	Admitted to field hospital April in hospital until August home on leave Nov until 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Left for France 11 <sup>th</sup> January  <b>Died 9<sup>th</sup> March</b>
1918	Discharged May		Transferred from action to Ipswich Jan 1918 returning in March			Transferred following injury to RDC in Dover <b>Died 21<sup>st</sup> November from Influenza</b>		
1919			In Berg Gladbach June part of Rhine army				Discharged June	



West Sussex & the Great War Project  
[www.westsussexpast.org.uk](http://www.westsussexpast.org.uk)



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**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
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