

Thomas Edward Cooper

Private 67745, 8th Battalion, 46th Company, Machine Gun Corps

Thomas Edward Cooper was born between October and December 1898 in Amersham, Buckinghamshire. Thomas was the third child of Thomas Henry and Gertrude Cooper. They had married in 1894 and had two other children, Gladys May, born c. 1895 and Alfred Henry born c.1896. Alfred was baptised on 11 October 1896, the only one of the children to be baptised at the Parish Church of St Mary's, Old Amersham. Dad, Thomas Henry, was a builder's labourer and died comparatively young in 1907, aged 43, when Thomas Edward was 9 years of age. According to the 1901 Census the family was living at 77, High Street, Amersham. Ten years later – the 1911 Census refers – mum, Gertrude, and her sons were shown as living at 'White House', High Street, Amersham.



*Number 139 High Street, Amersham,
known as 'The White House' in 1911.
(photographed in January 2014)*

The head of the household was Elizabeth Toovey, and Gertrude Cooper was the housekeeper. She lived here with her sons Alfred Henry (13) and Thomas Edward (11). The house had 9 rooms in addition to scullery and bathroom.

Enlistment:

On 24 November 1915, Thomas made the journey to Aylesbury and enlisted at the Central Recruiting Office. Fortunately, the Service Records of Thomas Edward Cooper have survived as some of the 'Burnt Records' and are available to view in the *British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920*.¹ The records have suffered from some water damage, but quite a lot of information is legible.

Attestation (Short Service) papers:

Thomas Edward, aged 18 years and 2 months, of High Street, Amersham gave his occupation as 'hairdresser'. His next of kin was recorded as Mrs Gertrude Cooper at the same address. Thomas signed his attestation papers with a neat signature (showing he had had some education) and they were countersigned by the magistrate Alfred Ellis. On his recruitment Medical Report, Thomas was described as being 5 ft 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches tall and weighing 142 lbs. He was in good shape, physically, but there was evidence of an old fracture of the left clavicle (collar-bone). Thomas was initially assigned to the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, with the service number 7386 and placed in reserve as a private.

¹ *The British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920* are available through Ancestry.co.uk.

Army Service:

It was not until 30 August 1916 when Thomas was eventually re-called and re-assigned to the **19th London Regiment** with a new service number, 67745. He was actually posted to that regiment as a private on 1 September 1916. The regiment was based at Alexandra Palace in London and on 14 November 1916, Thomas was again transferred, on this occasion, to the **8th Battalion Machine Gun Corps** based at the same site and immediately assigned to the 46th Company. The company was posted to France on 22 January 1917 and having embarked at Folkstone, Kent, it disembarked at Boulogne, France, on the same day. On the 23rd, the company joined the base at Carriers in France. In February the company was sent into the field. The records do not give any indication of where exactly Thomas Edward Cooper fought, except that he was in France and Flanders.

However, it is recorded that Thomas Edward was wounded in action on 4 August 1917, but then the records become very confusing. They state that on 10 September 1917 Thomas was wounded and declared missing, but strangely, on the 20 June 1918 (9 months later), an entry is recorded as; *"Regarded for official purposes as having died on or since 31/7/17"*. He was 19 years of age and his body was never found.

Thomas Edward Cooper is remembered with Honour
Menin Gate Memorial (panel 56), Ieper (Ypres), Belgium.

He was awarded The British War Medal, 1914-18 and the Allied Victory Medal.

Thomas's medals were received by his mother, Mrs Gertrude Cooper, on 10 May 1922. She had moved by then and was living at 19 Riverside Road, Norwich, Norfolk, the address of her daughter Gladys May Cooper. Gertrude received also the plaque (known as 'the dead man's penny') and the scroll that went with it. Other information given in the records is that Thomas's brother, Alfred Henry Cooper, was discharged from the Royal Horse Guards.