

SIDNEY FREDERICK HOOPER



12th March 1915

1890-1915 Age 24



Lieutenant, Wiltshire Regiment (attached Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry)

Sidney was born on 8th July 1890, the only son of Frederick and Ellen Hooper of 5, Mannville Terrace, in central Bradford. His father, a native of Bradford, was a secretary and typist at the Chamber of Commerce. His mother came from Crewe. Sidney attended BGS from 1899 until 1907, when he was 17. He was a talented linguist who won a Modern Languages Exhibition to London University and went up to University College in Autumn 1907. In June 1908 he took the French and German prizes in the Junior Class of Intermediate Arts. One of his tutors described him as "Not one to be satisfied with what he heard at lectures, or gathered from ordinary text-books ... he had developed ideas of his own" and described his "independence of mind as well as his straightforwardness" (perhaps a reference to Yorkshire bluntness). Sidney's father gained an appointment as a civil servant at the Board of Trade in London, so that the family were able to move to 24, Sutton Court Road, Chiswick in west London, where Sidney lived during his studies. He took his BA with German Honours in October 1911, and he spent the next three years at the universities of Munich and then Vienna, where he was Lektor and about to sit for the Ph.D. degree when war broke out.

Sidney had enrolled in the London University Officer Training Corps in January 1909, gaining promotion to Sergeant. This military experience meant that when he returned from Austria he was able to apply for a commission, and he was gazetted as Second Lieutenant in the Wiltshire Regiment on 15th August 1914. He joined the 1st Wiltshires in Flanders with a reinforcement draft on 28th October, as part of 7th Brigade, 3rd Division. They had been with the BEF since August and recent fighting in the Battle of La Bassée had reduced them to a mere 200 men. They spent the next three months in and out of the trenches near Kemmel, south of Ypres. It was wet and cold, and would have been a strain on a man used to a scholar's life. The routine of four days in the line, with one company in the front line, one in support

and a third in reserve, followed by four days in rest, limited the strain on the men. The sniper-fire was constant. December 25th was very foggy, which limited shelling and sniping, but still they lost 2 men killed, 1 wounded and 1 missing—there was no "Christmas truce" for them.

On 12th March the British attacked at Neuve Chapelle. To draw away German reserves, the 1st Wiltshires left their billets at 2.45 a.m. to attack Spanbroek Molen. They reached the partly dug and half-flooded assembly trenches at 5.30 a.m. They crouched in this inadequate shelter under increasingly accurate German shellfire until they attacked at 4.10 p.m. They had to cross their own front line by means of plank bridges, pass through gaps in their barbed wire and contend with "knee deep" mud. 'A' company advanced the 200 yards to the German wire but none got through. Two parties of the neighbouring 1st Worcesters entered the German front line but had to abandon their foothold. At 7 p.m. all were pulled back. The 1st Wiltshire lost 4 officers and 29 men killed, 3 officers and 45 men wounded, and 12 missing. Among those killed in action was Hooper who "fell at the head of his men, most gallantly leading them", according to his C.O. His body was recovered and buried at Kemmel Chateau.

Hooper's parents moved to Leeds, then Morecambe. His father died in 1919. Sidney's tombstone records: "Only son of Ellen Hooper, of Escolme House, St. Mary's Rd., Heysham, Morecambe, Lancs., and the late Frederick Hooper. Native of Bradford, Yorks." He did not marry.



Acknowledgements:

Sidney Hooper's family was reconstructed from census records on Ancestry. Information on his school career came from 'The Bradfordian'. His file at the Public Record Office consists of correspondence between his father and the War Office relating to his financial affairs. My thanks to Keith Roberts OB for copying this for me. The War Diary 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment was used (from <http://www.thewardrobe.org.uk/research/war-diaries/detail/9962>) to reconstruct the circumstances of Hooper's death, and I also drew on the War Diary of the 1st Battalion Worcestershire Regiment (http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/wr.php?main=inc/h_spanbroek_mill). His photo is in the album presented by the BGS Old Boys Association. I am very grateful to the Library Services of University College London for supplying me with the entry from the UCL Roll of the Fallen and the full photo reproduced below. The telegram reproduced below from his file was the second one sent to his father, correcting the date of his son's death given in error as 13th March.

Campaign: - B. E. F. 1914. (A) When decoration was earned. (B) Present situation.

079.	Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
a)	HOOPER. R.A.	3rd Wilt. R. D.C.L.I.	2/Lt.		1st Wilt. Regt. Off. 4/4
b)	S. F.	(B.A.)	lieut.		Killed in action. 12.3.15.

Sidney Frederick Hooper name placed on Roll 1st Wilt. R. Off. 7/4. Action taken. V. V. 200/m. 16.5.19. WS/3/592

MEDAL	ROLL	DATE
VICTORY	4/1/13	65
BRITISH	-	-
STAR	-	-

1st Wilt. R. 5624 dt. 12.11.11. Auth. WS/3/592.

Records. 6th. 1914. (W.S./3/592) Joined 13th 28-10-14

W6305-8867 20,000 9/16 HWV(P1716) H16/1434 Over

Correspondence

F. Hooper Reg applies for 1714 Star in respect of his late son.

4.12.17.

(address in 1914. 16 Thornbury Avenue, Isleworth, Midd. 'X.)

Records Hyde Park Villas
Escolme House, Headingley.
St. Mary's Road, Leeds.
Weysbam
Lancs.

1094
MC X



27.3.15 15549

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

Prefix Code (Inland Official) No. of Telegram

Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words Sent

O. H. M. S. At M. To By

I certify that this Telegram is sent on the service of the WAR OFFICE. (Signature) L. O. B. B. B.

Attention is called to the Regulations printed at the back hereof. Dated Stamp.

TO: F. Hooper 16 Thornbury Avenue, Isleworth

Regret	to	inform	you	that
was	late	2/16	S. F.	Hooper
as	killed	March 12th	1915	13th
	previously	reported		

FROM: Secretary, War Office.

The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the space provided at the Back of the Form.