

PRIVATE JOHN HENRY COOK

9352, 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

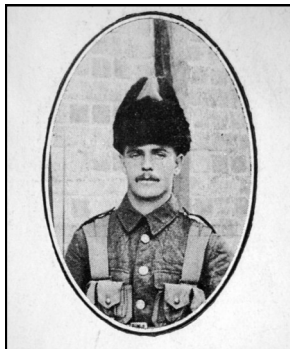
Died aged 22 on 11 May 1915

Buried with honour in *Boulogne Eastern Cemetery*; VIII C 17

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Boulogne Eastern Cemetery,
France*



*Pte. J. H. Cook
[Graphic 22/5/1915]*



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

JOHN HENRY COOK was born in Spring Gardens in 1893 to John Cook, a labourer, and Emily Ellen (formerly Mince). Both John and Emily were born in Tewkesbury and they married in 1887. In 1901 they were living in Bank Alley with six of their nine children. In 1911 they were living in Oldbury Road with four children but by 1915 they had moved again, to Charlwoods Alley. John Henry was a member of the Abbey Boys' Bible Class and, after leaving school, worked for Anderson and Pullin (butcher) and Thomas Walker (engineer).

John Henry left Tewkesbury to join the army, enlisting in Bristol as a regular soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1910, based on his service number. In the 1911 Census he was serving in the 1st Battalion at the Cambridge Barracks in Portsmouth. By the time war broke out, however, John had been posted to the 2nd Battalion which was then stationed at Tientsin in China; the Battalion was part of an international force that also included French and German troops. The Battalion returned to England on 8 November 1914 when it became part of the newly created 27th Division. John enjoyed a period of leave in Tewkesbury before he sailed with his Battalion to France, landing at Le Havre on 18 December 1914.

Initially, it was a period of trench warfare but the Battalion was then involved in the *Battle of Neuve Chapelle*, the first large-scale organised attack undertaken by the army during the war. On 7 April the 27th Division was then transferred near Ypres. On 22 April the Germans launched the first of four battles which constituted the *Second Battle of Ypres 1915*; this

offensive lasted from 22 April to 25 May and was used primarily as a means of diverting Allied attention from the Eastern Front and of testing the use of chlorine gas. In a tactical withdrawal, when they were pursued by the enemy, the 2nd Battalion held positions in 'Sanctuary Wood' for nearly four weeks. Throughout that time, the Battalion War Diary regularly reported instances of heavy shelling.

Private John Henry Cook died on 11 May 1915 in Boulogne Base of wounds, undoubtedly sustained during one of the bombardments. It is difficult to say exactly when but it would have been a few days before he died, allowing for the time it took to evacuate him to the coast and for the staff at the hospital to write to his parents. It is even possible that John was wounded during the same round of bombardments in which **Private Charles R. Wyse** [†], another Tewkesbury soldier, was killed on 5 May.

According to a letter from a nursing sister at the hospital received by his parents on 9 May, presumably written on 8 May, John was badly wounded in both shoulders; the letter gave his parents an optimistic view of his situation. However, the same nursing sister sent another letter the following day informing them of an amputation. Finally, on Wednesday 12 May a 'wire' (telegram) arrived announcing his death the previous day.

Private Cook was buried in the *Eastern Cemetery* at Boulogne. He was awarded the '1914-15 Star' medal.

John's younger brother, **George**, was killed in 1934 in a tragic accident at the Abbey Mill sluice gate.