

## PRIVATE ALBERT EDWARD HOOPER

29461, 13th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment (Labour Corps)

Died aged 30 on 16 March 1919

Buried with honour in *Tewkesbury Cemetery*; C-22

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Labour Corps*



*Tewkesbury Cemetery*



*Devonshire Regiment*

**ALBERT EDWARD HOOPER** was born at Kinsham in 1888 to James Hooper and Annie (formerly Tandy). James was born in Overbury and worked as a Cowman, and Annie came from Stoke Heath in Worcestershire. They had a total of eight children. In 1901 the family was living at Church Street, Bushley, with seven of the children still at home. Albert subsequently moved to Tewkesbury where he was employed as a Porter for Mrs. Saunders, Grocer, of the High Street. On 24 May 1915 he married Susan Annie Barnes; he was then a Labourer, living in Eagles Alley. They had two children, Edith (1915) and Rose Hannah (1918). Edith was not baptised until September 1917 at Holy Trinity Church; when Rose was baptised in December 1919 it was recorded that her father was *'deceased – killed on active service'* although he actually died of pneumonia in Dorset.

Albert joined the Army in June 1915, but was not listed as an Abbey volunteer; he may have been living in Bushley. He served initially in the Devonshire Regiment before being transferred to the Labour Corps. In early 1916 a number of battalions within infantry regiments, mainly composed of men medically rated below the 'A1' condition needed for front-line service, were formed into Labour Battalions. In the Devonshire Regiment there were three such battalions and it is likely that Albert joined one of them. Shortly afterwards, in April, the labour battalions were transferred to the Labour Corps, an organisation formed in January 1917 to merge labour resources into a single body. The infantry battalions became Companies within the Labour Corps, which suffered from being considered

something of a second-class organisation. Evidence suggests that casualties were commemorated under their parent regiment, hence Albert's headstone in Tewkesbury Cemetery shows the Devonshire Regiment badge. The apparent absence of any medal records suggests that Albert did not serve abroad. He probably served in the 13th Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, which remained in the UK for the duration of the war and became the 3rd Labour Battalion.

**Private Albert Edward Hooper** died on 16 March 1919, at the age of 30, from pneumonia; he had been a patient in the Blandford Camp Military Hospital. The *Register* reported his death on 22 March. He was said to be serving with the Army Service Corps (ASC), and was considered to be *'a steady, worthy young man'*. He was granted a military funeral and was buried in *Tewkesbury Cemetery*: *'the first part of the service was conducted in the Abbey, where the Vicar officiated. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack, and Mr. Percy Baker, the Abbey Organist, gave an impressive rendering of the Dead March in 'Saul'. A number of discharged and demobilised soldiers attended under Sergeant Major Curtis and, at the graveside, the "Last Post" was sounded by Bugler Crockett.'* As Albert had moved to Tewkesbury by the time of his death, the Abbey authorities added his name to its own memorial, and his name was commemorated on the Cross.

Mrs. Annie Hooper was living in Spring Gardens when Albert died. There is no evidence that Susan Hooper remarried in Gloucestershire after 1919; in fact she was living at 18 Oldbury in 1939-40.