

12/328 Private James Cooper



James was born in Bridge Street, Kirkwall on 6th October 1879, the son of Charles Cooper, a Master Mariner in merchant service, and Jane Cooper (née Bruce). James's father died in a fire on a schooner in Stromness harbour on 11th August 1905. James was then serving in the Royal Navy, but he purchased a discharge after six years service. James travelled out to Australia and worked there for a while as a cook, then moved to Thames, New Zealand.

James enlisted in the Auckland Regiment at Gaeroa on 13th August 1914 and left New Zealand on Transport No. 12 on 13th October.

James landed on 4th December in Egypt, where he spent several months training hard.

James was wounded in the left arm on the first day of the landings on Gallipoli. The Auckland Battalion was the first unit of the Anzac Division to begin landing on 25th April 1915, from 9 am immediately after the last of the Australian Division. The Auckland Battalion was ordered to reinforce the left of the Australians on Russell's Top, where Walker's Ridge joins it near The Nek. However, the route the New Zealanders were sent on, up Plugge's Plateau then along the supposed hill slope onto Russell's Top, was not passable as two steep slopes met in a sharp razor edge. The New Zealand troops were forced down the inland slope into the head of Shrapnel Gully while under continuous fire from the Turks, including artillery fire from Battleship Hill.

The Auckland Battalion files broke up under the heavy fire. The Waikato Company reached the lower slope of Baby 700 just beyond The Nek just after noon, but several other groups were diverted to join fire fights along the difficult route. It is therefore not possible to be sure where James was wounded; although he may have reached Russell's Top, he could have been wounded on his way there, or when drawn into fighting along either side of Monash Valley.

The arrangements for handling the wounded at Anzac were overwhelmed by the heavy casualties suffered on the first day, so it was probably some time later before James was evacuated to a hospital ship. His service records state that he was admitted to 15th General Hospital in Alexandria on 30th April, but do not give details on when he was sent by hospital ship to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital, or Netley Hospital, in Hampshire, England.



Soon after his arrival at Netley, James's left arm was amputated, probably because infection had set in. James died, aged 35, of complications to his wound on 24th June. His body was returned to Orkney, a journey the length of the U.K. His body was conveyed to his mother's home in School Place from Scapa pier on a gun carriage of the Orkney Royal Garrison Artillery. It provided the firing and following parties at his funeral, conducted by the Chaplain to the Forces, Rev. W.P. Craig, M.A. James was laid to rest on 30th June 1915 in St. Magnus Cathedral Churchyard, in the

family grave next to his father, sister Lizzie Jane and a younger brother who died as an infant. Jane Cooper joined her family there in 1926, when she died aged 83.