

Joseph Thomas Cooper

Private Joseph Thomas Cooper (SN 5067), born in Gerringong, was a labourer from Barney Street Kiama, who took part in the famous Waratah March of 1915. His parents, Thomas and Mary did not stop the 19 year old, who showed great patriotism and heart.



— Corner of Barney and Shoalhaven Streets, Kiama, at the time Joseph Cooper enlisted.

Cooper embarked at Sydney on SS Makarini on 1st April, 1916 as part of the 1st Australian Infantry Battalion.

Disembarking at Marseilles the day after his birthday, on 17th May 1916, Private Cooper reported to 1st Australian Division at Base Depot, Estaples.

Private Cooper was involved in the Battle of Pozzières, primarily remembered as an Australian battle. The cost had been enormous, and in the words of Australian official historian Charles Bean, the Poziers ridge

"is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth."

Here, Private Cooper was wounded somewhere between 22nd and 25th July 1916. He died of these wounds to his arm, face and leg, a few days later, on 29th July 1916, at No.1 Stationary Hospital. Thomas and Mary, like many at the time, found it difficult to obtain information regarding their son's death. This was until an Australian nurse, Sister Fairland, wrote to the family, informing them of the last days of their son.

PTE. JOSEPH THOMAS COOPER,

The following thoughtful letter has brought considerable comfort to Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, who until its receipt, knew nothing beyond the fact of their son's death and not even the date of that. The good that such noble hearted women do, is not confined to their ministrations to the wounded and dying, it reaches in comfort to the heart of those that mourn.

No. 1 Stationery Hospital,
Rouen, France, July 29, 1916.

Dear Mrs. Cooper—

I do not know if I am addressing the right person as I do not know any particulars about the private life of one Pte. Cooper. But Pte. Joseph Thomas Cooper was admitted to our hospital yesterday, and I am writing on chance that his relatives may get this letter, as I thought you might like to know about him. The injuries he

received were very severe and he passed away quietly this evening. It may comfort you to know, that he wished you all not to grieve—he had done his bit, and was proud of it.

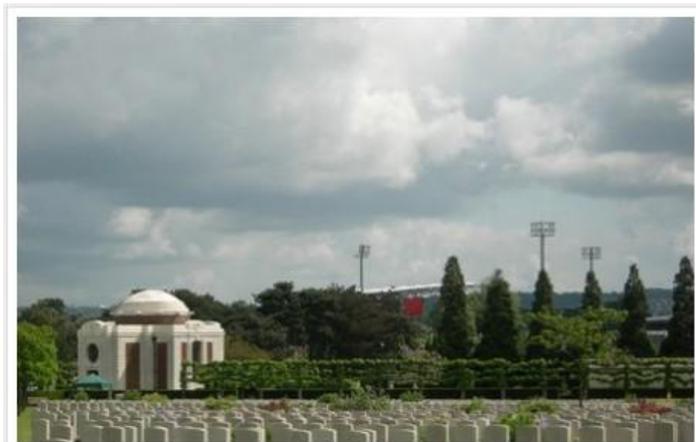
If he had lived he would have suffered very much for a long time, and his future life would have been ruined. He will be buried in a very pretty little cemetery we have for the Soldiers, and given a military funeral. The soldiers' cemeterys in France are well cared for, both by English and French people. I am an Australian nurse, helping in an English hospital, and that is why I am writing as I know it all seems so far away from you. Believe me, it is all for the best, these happenings, though hard to understand. Hoping this will reach some one interested in the boy,—I remain, yours sincerely,

(Sister) C. FAIRLAND.

P.S.—I myself, belong to Sydney.

Kiama Independent. 4th October 1916

According to the Kiama Independent at the time, Private Cooper was the first of the Waratahs to fall. Returned to his family were a cigarette case, testament, metal watch, wallet and cotton bag.



— St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen. Grave reference B. 34. 21. Courtesy CWGC.

Private Cooper is buried at [St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen.](#)

A touching poem dedicated to Private Cooper was published towards the end of the war in 1918.

Roll of Honour.

COOPER.--In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte. J. T. Cooper, died July 29th, 1918, of wounds received in the battle of Pozieres, one of the Waratahs; aged 19 years and 9 months.

He fell; a hero in the deadly strife,
For King and Country he laid down his life;

Fame was achieved, and he had done his share

To win those laurels, rich and rare,
Which now adorn Australia's loyal race
Not even time! Its glory can efface.

Inserted by his loving mother, father,
sisters and brothers,

Kiama Independent. 31 July 1918

