



COOPER, CHARLES ALFRED



Lance Corporal Suffolk Regiment 4th Battalion.

Age: 25 Date of Death: 12/09/1943

Service No: 6013469



Charles was the son of Mr. Arthur Cooper & and Mrs Martha Jessie Cooper, of Fingringhoe, Essex.

Charles Alfred Cooper and Frederick William were twins born 18 June 1917 at Wherstead, near Ipswich. Their younger brother Walter was born there 28th October 1918. They moved to Fingringhoe about 1926 and lived in Ballast Quay Cottage. They attended Fingringhoe School & then Wivenhoe School. Unable to find work when they left school, both Charles & Fred joined the Army. Charles in the Suffolk Regiment & Fred in the RAOC. Walter worked on the boats for Bert Prior at Ballast Quay Fingringhoe, taking sand & gravel up to London, which he continued to do during the War

His father with the pipe outside their home Ballast Quay Cottage, Fingringhoe



*His twin brother
Fred on the left*

*His youngest
brother, Walter*

The 4th and 5th Battalions of the Suffolk Regiment had a tragic time in the war. The 5th were recruited at the start of the war from the West Suffolk area. Destined for Egypt, they were diverted to Singapore in a vain attempt to keep the British colony out of Japanese hands. One must remember that these two Battalions were essentially Territorials and new recruits with no battle experience. They were caught up in the surrender of Singapore and their war was spent enduring the brutality of the Japanese and Korean prison guards, over 4 years of torture, humiliation, starvation and disease.

Lance Corporal Cooper 4th Battalion died at Tarsao Camp which is on the Mee Khlong river north of Kanchanburi where he is buried. The Burma Thailand railway was completed as far as Tarsao in April 1943, this had caused enormous casualties mainly malaria, dysentery and beri-beri. In May, the 4th Battalion departed from Canburi to fill the gaps caused by this depletion of labour. They travelled by train to the railhead at Tarsao, crossing the terrifying newly constructed viaducts through the gorge of Wun Yi and Wun Po. As each half of the train reached the centre of the viaduct, it was stopped and the men had to get out and push. There were only sleepers on the track to stand on and a drop of 70 foot to the river below. The Battalion then marched for four days to Martona. Lance Corporal Cooper must have died at the railhead before the battalion moved on. (a fuller account of this can be found in The History of the Suffolk Regiment 1918-1946 by W N Nicholson)



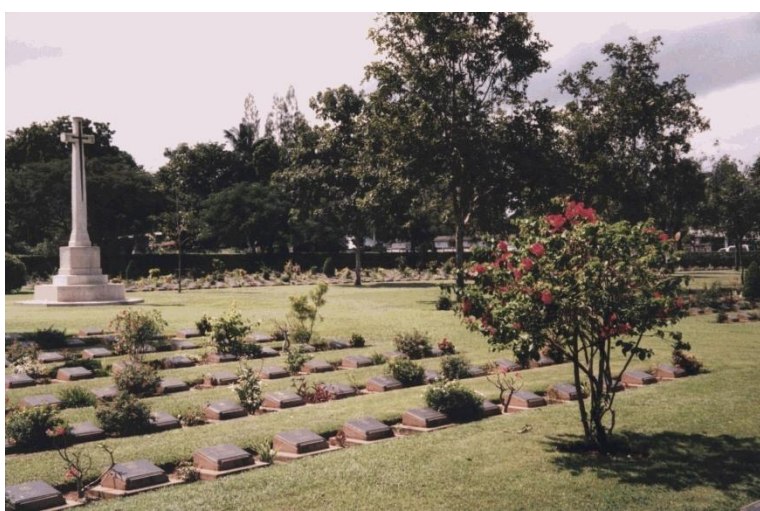
He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star & the War Medal 1939-45

Casualty Type: Commonwealth War Dead

Grave/Memorial Reference: 4. B. 46.

Cemetery: KANCHANABURI WAR
CEMETERY

© cwgc



The notorious Burma-Siam railway, built by Commonwealth, Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, approximately 13,000

prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar). Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre. The Japanese aimed at completing the railway in 14 months and work began in October 1942. The line, 424 kilometres long, was completed by December 1943. The graves of those who died during the construction and maintenance of the Burma-Siam railway (except for the Americans, whose remains were repatriated) were transferred from camp burial grounds and isolated sites along the railway into three cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar. KANCHANABURI WAR CEMETERY is only a short distance from the site of the former 'Kanburi', the prisoner of war base camp through which most of the prisoners passed on their way to other camps. It was created by the Army Graves Service who transferred to it all graves along the southern section of railway, from Bangkok to Nieke. Some 300 men who died during an epidemic at Nieke camp were cremated and their ashes now lie in two graves in the cemetery. The names of these men are inscribed on panels in the shelter pavilion. There are now 5,084 Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. There are also 1,896 Dutch war graves. Within the entrance building to the cemetery will be found the KANCHANABURI MEMORIAL, recording the names of 11 men of the army of undivided India buried in Muslim cemeteries in Thailand, where their graves could not be maintained. The cemetery was designed by Colin St Clair Oakes.



His final gravestone

Early marker on his grave

OTHER MEMORIAL Saint Andrew's Church Fingringhoe



THE UNITED BENEFICE OF ABBERTON, EAST DONYPOND, FINGRINGHOE, LANGENHOE