

Lt Gerald Charles Northcott "Ian" Cooke



DoB: 30th November 1887

Died: 28th July 1917

Age: 29

Buried: Botley Cemetery, Oxford

Family:

Born in Brighton to Charles Sidney and Emily. Educated in St Mary's College Harlow, Essex – a boysboarding school for sons of clergymen, missionaries and those in reduced circumstances. He emigrated to Sussex, New Brunswick, Canada. Married Jeanette Francis Mills and had had two children, Bernice and Gerald Charles, by 1910.

Military Career:

Enlisted in Alberta on 10th March 1916 giving his occupation as a farmer. He was commissioned Lieutenant in the 50th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, also known as the Alberta Regiment and served at Vimy Ridge. Just before his death he had been a patient in Somerville Hospital (Somerville College) on Woodstock Rd suffering from shell shock and trench fever. Gerald's younger brother Private Bernard Walter Northcott Cooke, who had been a chorister in Westminster Abbey, was killed in Ypres, Flanders on 15th June 1916 age 26.

Gerald had been taken up by 17 Training Squadron at Port Meadow on a "trial flight", with a view to seeing if he wanted to join the RFC.

Accident:

Cassington. Gerald was a passenger in Curtiss JN4 (an American aeroplane type) B1926 piloted by 2nd Lt R. Barnes who survived with serious injuries, to be treated at Somerville Hospital. Witnesses recalled the aeroplane flying low, its engine then stopped and it nosedived to the ground. The official cause of the accident was that it was likely the tail fin and rudder collapsed, possibly weakened after undertaking a "spin" manoeuvre, and the aeroplane immediately lost control as the pilot was trying to land in a nearby field. Gerald was the oldest casualty associated with Port Meadow aerodrome.

NB: JN3 of 17 TS pictured