



Charles Cook

21163 Lance Corporal, 9th Battalion Border Regiment

Formerly 19542, Norfolk Regiment

He died on 9th October 1918 in Salonika, aged 22

Charles is buried at Kirechkoi-Hortakoi Military Cemetery, Greece

Charles' father, Adolphus Cook, was the bricklaying son of a bricklaying father who went on to become a general builder. He was actually baptised Robert Adolphus, named for his father but, as was the custom at the time, went by his middle name Adolphus. The bricklayers and brickmakers of Harleston, (and there were a startling number of them) spent much of the 19th Century putting up new villas, railway buildings and brick facings on ancient buildings not to mention building mills and maltings. When Adolphus first appeared in the 1871 census the family were living on Broad Street, just a little to the east of Union Street. Six years later Adolphus married Eliza Keeley and by the next census, this 25-years old master bricklayer already had two young sons aged 2 and 1 years old. 10 years after that and Adolphus had moved to the Bullock Fair yard and had 7 children in the family – still no sign of Charles though. Rather wonderfully, in 1881, at the Harleston Fete and Gala, Adolphus won a leg of mutton in a competition to climb a greasy pole! The family remained up at the Bullock Fair (or 'Sale') yard and finally, in the 1901 census we find our hero, a proper tail end

Charley with 7 siblings in the house – some of the older ones having left home

PLASTERERS Wanted, at once.—Apply, A. Cook, Builder, Harleston, Norfolk.

to make their own way.

WANTED, Two BRICKLAYERS; constant work.—Apply, Mr. A. Cook, Bricklayer, Harleston.

Adolphus branched out from just bricklaying to building projects under his own control, advertising for bricklayers in 1888, 9 years later he was after plasterers too.

HARLESTON.

Near the Railway Station.

ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH

A RANGE of 3 Boarded and Tiled PIGGERIES, Corn Shed, and 2 Cucumber Houses, Chicken Run, Fowl Coops, Fattening Coop, Nesting Boxes, Pig and Chicken Troughs, Tubs, Pails, Wire Netting, &c.

80 Head of FOWLS, 20 DUCKS, and other Effects for Mr. Adolphus Cook, who is giving up the Parish Council Allotment.

Sale will commence at 12-30 o'clock punctually, to finish in time for Mr. Kerridge's Sale, School Lane, at Two o'clock in the Afternoon.

Not too surprisingly, Adolphus gave up the Parish Council Allotment in 1901 – I suspect he rather a lot on his plate at the time.

Eastern Daily Press
26 Sep 1901

I am afraid that in late 1903, Charles' older brother Ernest Cook slightly blotted his

copybook when, along with George, the older brother of Edward Dalliston, (also commemorated on the Harleston Monument) and two other builders, he raided the cellar of the uninhabited building he was working on. Stealing 54 bottles of fine vintage wines over a period of weeks from Haddiscoe Lodge, they had a fine old time swigging about £22 of vintage wine direct from the bottle. Ernest 'got off' due to testifying, George Dalliston and the other two inebriates got a month's hard labour each, a lenient sentence in light of their previous good characters.

Not a good time for the Cooks; in 1905 Adolphus went bankrupt after 30 years of running his business in the town, he blamed part of his problems on having kept pigs! Doubtless this was a source of some shame for the family although the debts were not huge and possibly the reason, he was fined 9s for being drunk in the street in Harleston in April of that year – unlike many of the bricklaying fraternity, this was not a regular feature of his life! It transpired that Sgt Parslee had met him near the Railway Tavern and suggested he should go home, Cook was determined to continue drowning his sorrows, swore at the policeman, swore at the landlord of the Railway when he was refused drink and wound up with a fine of 9s to add to his woes! The man obviously enjoyed a drink or two but unlike some generally knew when to stop – however back in 1892 when aiming for a quiet pint at the nearby Duke William he was thumped by a chap who reckoned he owed him for some potatoes – people were a lot freer with their fists in those days. His assailant was fined 13s in total. The only other entanglement Adolphus seems to have had with the courts was when a George Seaman, a notorious character from a notorious family, stole a lamp from him in 1888.

HARLESTON.

LOCAL BUILDER'S BANKRUPTCY.—At the Ipswich Bankruptcy Court on Friday Adolphus Cook, of the Sale Yard, Harleston, bricklayer and builder, underwent his public examination. By the statement of affairs, it appeared that £88 17 6 was due to 15 creditors, and that the estimated assets totalled £61 5 1; deficiency, £27 12 5. It appeared that the debtor had carried on a small business as a bricklayer at Harleston for nearly 30 years, but his effects were recently seized by the High Bailiff of the County Court, and the debtor filed his petition. The only assets disclosed in the statement of affairs were building plant and materials, which he estimated would produce about £25, and some book debts. There was a quantity of furniture in the house in which the debtor resided, but he stated that all belonged to his wife. The debtor attributed his insolvency to loss on building a chapel, by pig keeping, and being short of work. The Official Receiver pointed out that the Married Women's Property Act was not passed until 1889 and that it was consequently doubtful whether the furniture did belong to the wife, whether she purchased it originally or not. The Registrar said he believed there was a Married Women's Property Act as far back as 1870, or about that time; it was rather an unexpected point that he should have to look up. The debtor was advised to consult a solicitor with regard to his wife's claim on the furniture, and the examination stood adjourned.

Diss Express
25 Aug 1905

By 1911, although the family remained in the Sale (or Bullock Fair) Yard, Adolphus was no longer a contractor in his own right but was laying bricks for others, Charles would have been somewhat outnumbered by older sisters (in this census he was the only son left at home).

The sons, but none of the daughters, had scattered slightly. None of the girls had been sent out to service and were working at mostly modern jobs, yes the oldest was dressmaking, however 2 of the girls were working in the hosiery factory (along with the sisters of Frederick Bussey, another chap who appears on our war memorial), another was a cashier in a grocers whilst young Charles was working in

a butchers; there must have been a reasonable amount of money coming in. With the exception of Charles and Ernest, the lads had all left the district:-

George b. 1879, had left for Edmonton with his Suffolk wife appearing there as a plumber in 1901, by 1911 he was working for a gas company, one of his three children having died.

Ernest b. 1880 bricklayer, had married and moved to the Redenhall Road by 1901, much the same place in 1911, three children.

Frederick b. 1882, bricklayer, was married with three children and living in Thetford, not long in town, only his one-year old child had been born in Thetford.

3 Daughters, Eleanor, Edith and Lily all still at home in 1911.

Albert Edward b. 1890, drapers assistant, one of 12 men and 7 women drapers assistants boarding at Curl Brothers, Rampant Horse Street Norwich, maybe he had transferred up from the Branch in Harleston at Sight and Sound? This store was in the old Rampant Horse Inn, was bombed in the war, rebuilt in the 50's and finally absorbed into the Debenhams chain – check out this link for more info!



*Curl Brothers decorated for
Queen's Diamond Jubilee
1897*

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/features/heritage/the-norwich-department-store-that-rose-from-the-ashes-of-the-blitz-1-4443765>

Arthur Cook b. 1893 Farm worker, out in Thetford, only 18 he was still unmarried

Mabel and Charles, still at home.



The 1911 census reveals that the Cooks had in fact had 13 children in all, 10 of whom had survived – a large and vibrant family I should imagine. Adolphus died in 1912, aged only 55, before the outbreak of war and doubtless proud and glad that all his children were settled and employed in good and useful jobs.

It seems that L.Cpl Cook's movements may have very closely shadowed those of another Harleston lad, George Cooper. Both initially joined the Norfolk Regiment; I am assuming at about the same time since Cook's number was 19542 whilst Cooper's was 19422. They were also very much of an age, were

also both transferred to Battalion Border Rgts – this must also have been at the same time as Cook's new number was 21163, he was in the 9th, and Cooper's 21165, he was in the 6th. It was after this that their lives diverged, Cooper died of wounds on the 2nd of October 1916, aged 20, L.Cpl. Cook survived another 2 years and one week dying in far off Salonika on the 9th of October 1918 aged 22, barely a month before the war finally ended. It is very tempting to leap to conclusions, but I would not be surprised if the two lads had enlisted together, gone through training together and served together until the need to reinforce regiments decimated in previous engagements split the two men apart.