

Ronald Hooper
1878 - 1918



Methodist minister's son

Educated at Kingswood School, Bath, and Worcester College Oxford

Schoolmaster (Maths)

Died, probably near Bapaume, aged 40, on 21 March 1918

Family and Education

Ronald Morley Hooper was born in Dumbarton, Scotland, on 4 March 1878. His father Rev John H Hooper was a Wesleyan Methodist minister, born in Hinderwell, Yorkshire, who had the usual itinerant life of a minister of the time, and his mother was Jane (nee Morley) of Stratford-on-Avon. When Ronald was aged three the family were living in Stirling, and in 1891 he had two brothers and they were in Rochdale, Lancashire. All three boys attended Kingswood School in Bath, a Methodist foundation: Ronald started there in 1888 and soon showed a particular aptitude for Maths.

In December 1895 Ronald was awarded a Mathematical Scholarship at Worcester College Oxford, and the school celebrated with a half-day holiday. He gained 1st Class in his first university exams, and 2nd Class in Finals in 1900.

In 1901 he was boarding in Daventry and working as a schoolmaster, teaching Maths. In 1904 he began teaching Maths at the Royal Masonic School in Bushey, Hertfordshire, and remained there at the 1911 census. In 1913 John Henry Gare, also listed on the memorial, arrived at the school as a fresh graduate.

War Service: 3rd Field Survey Company, Royal Garrison Artillery

Ronald enlisted a fortnight after John, on 21 December 1915, but unlike him he joined the Royal Garrison Artillery. He must have been allocated to the 3rd Field Survey Company at some time after March 1916 when these units were formed: they became part of the Royal Engineers. Their role was mapping the ground and

identifying enemy positions: when the enemy could not be seen this was done from the sound of their gunfire, using equipment and mathematical techniques that developed greatly during the war, into a method known as sound-ranging. Presumably Ronald's role deployed his mathematical expertise. He was attached to the 11th (Siege) Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery as a Lieutenant, but it has not been possible to trace this unit's movements.

Ronald arrived at Le Havre on 30 July 1916. Almost exactly a year later he was gassed and slightly wounded. On 20 July 1917 he was hospitalised, and he was sent to England on the Hospital Ship 'St George'. It was a difficult time for his mother, as his father had died on 17 January 1917 (aged 72). Ronald returned to the front at the end of the year, but was killed by a shell, aged 40, on 21 March 1918. This was the first day of the German Spring Offensive when it is likely his unit was overwhelmed, as he is buried where the German line advanced significantly that day, near Bapaume, at Lebuquiere Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais. He left an estate of £1,168 7s 3d. His mother survived to the age of 91, and died in 1942.

Ronald is remembered at Bushey as an unconventional housemaster who was 'closer than a brother' to many of the boys. He had wide-ranging interests that he shared with them, including botany, music, and literature.

This is the story of one of the men who appear on a war memorial at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, UK. These stories were compiled in 2018-19 from a variety of family history and military sources. In particular, Chris Baker's site, 'The Long, Long Trail' has provided valuable details of the men's experience of battle:

<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>

Ronald Hooper's story incorporates details from Kingswood Magazine, kindly provided by the Kingswood School Archivist, and some additions from the Bushey Museum website, including Ronald's photo. Attempts to contact Bushey Museum have failed so the copyright ownership of the photo is unclear. We would welcome contact with the copyright owner.