

[Skip to main content](#)

University links

University links

For staff

- [For Staff](#)
- [Services A-Z](#)
- [Student Education Service](#)

For students

- [Minerva](#)
- [Mobile app](#)
- [For Students](#)

Faculties

- [Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures](#)
- [Faculty of Biological Sciences](#)
- [Faculty of Business](#)
- [Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences](#)
- [Faculty of Environment](#)
- [Faculty of Medicine and Health](#)
- [Faculty of Social Sciences](#)
- [Lifelong Learning Centre](#)
- [Language Centre](#)

Other

- [Staff A-Z](#)
- [Campus map](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Alumni](#)
- [Contacts](#)
- [Library](#)
- [IT](#)
- [VideoLeeds](#)
- [Leeds University Union](#)

Follow us

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Medium](#)
- [Weibo](#)
- [The Conversation](#)
- [RSS news feed](#)

Close quicklinks

Search Destination

[Living With Dying](#)

- [Home](#)
 - [Home](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Family Historians](#)
 - [Family Historians](#)
 - [Workshop: Family history and academic history](#)
- [Leeds General Cemetery](#)
- ['Remembrance' Exhibition](#)
 - ['Remembrance' Exhibition](#)
 - [Events Programme](#)
- [The Grief Series](#)

1. [Home](#)
2. [Blog](#)
3. Poor Harold

Poor Harold

Category

[Family Historians](#)
[Research](#)

Date

Monday 9 October 2017



A guest blog from Maureen Jessop

Harold Cooper was born in Leeds on 10 November 1920, the eldest child of Tom, a railway worker, and Mary, a machinist. He was baptised at St Saviour's Church, East Leeds on 20 November 1920 and subsequently attended St Saviour's School.

When Harold was little, Mary had a dream that she was nursing him when angels appeared from a white wall and were pulling him trying to take him away from her. She begged them not to take him. Then she saw a male figure walk down the two steps into the room. He was wearing sandals and clothing as the image usually portrayed as Jesus. Mary begged him not to let them take Harold and he put up his hand to the angels to indicate to them to stop and said 'No, not yet'. The angels and Jesus then disappeared.

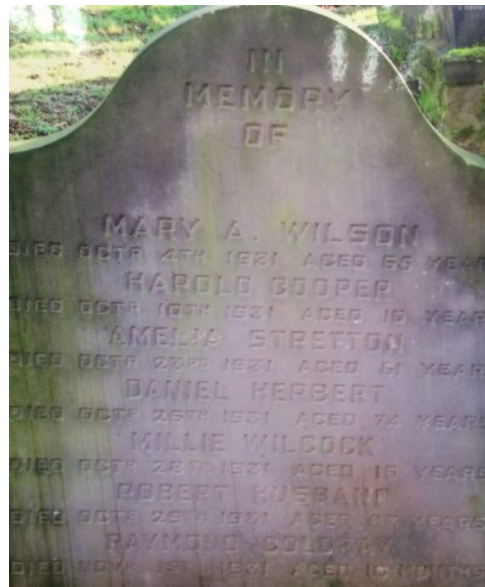
Mary said from then on she knew that she would not raise him, that he would die young.



When Harold was ten years old he got a pain in his abdomen, but because you had to pay for the doctor in those days and the family was poor, they waited to see if the pain would go away. They waited too long and when they did seek medical help it was too late as the pain was from appendicitis and peritonitis had taken hold.

Harold was taken to the Leeds General Infirmary. Mary was visiting him when he said that some children were asking him to go with them, saying 'come on Harold', and he asked his mother to tell them to go away. Mary couldn't see anything but turned and told the children to go away. Harold said 'they're very rude mam, they're not taking any notice of you'. Mary then had to go home as there were strict visiting hours in those days. When she returned Harold had died.

Harold was buried in a shared grave in Beckett Street Cemetery. The funeral director's costs were £12 7s 6d, and the cemetery costs were £2 5s. That was a lot of money for the family and it must have been a struggle to find it.

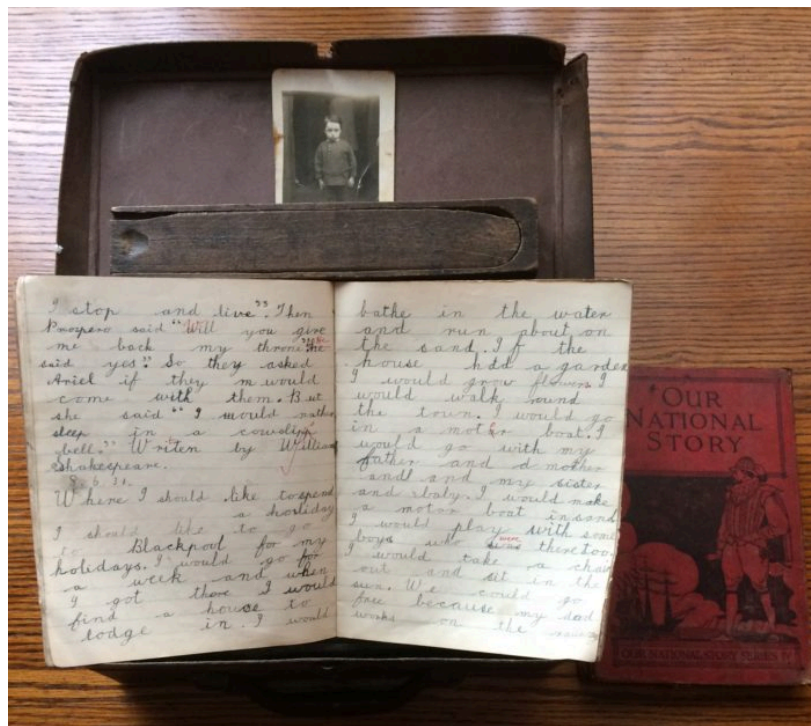


Harold's younger sister, my mother Mary, remembers my grandmother crying and telling them that he had died, and that he was brought home and the neighbours queued to see him in his coffin. She remembers her mother crying a lot whenever she thought about him.

My grandmother never got over Harold's death. Even into her old age she talked about him and told the family what a lovely, generous boy he was, that he was well liked and that he was good in school plays, so we all grew up knowing his story.

My mother has always had his photograph on the wall and I have taken my grandchildren to visit his grave. I have his school box with his pencil case and his exercise book from the year that he died, which gives an insight into his life and dreams.

He may have had a short life but the memory of 'Poor Harold' lives on.



Footer navigation

Site information

- © 2025 University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT
- [Terms and conditions](#)
- [Copyright](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Privacy](#)