

Cowley Family History - Research Detail

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Name:	Eric Thomas Cowley			Sex:	M
AKA:					
Birth Date:	28 Apr 1891	Place:	Brighton, East Sussex, England ^{1,2,3}		
Chr. Date:		Place:			
Death Date:	13 Jun 1917	Place:	London ⁴		
Burial Date:		Place:			
Cause of Death:	Shock, haemorrhage, severe injuries to the body by explosions of bombs dropped by enemy airmen.				

Events

1. Census 1911 -
Address: 78, Rosendale Road, West Dulwich, London.⁵
Living with mother, Charlotte Louise, and sister, Ellen Annie
2. Inquest: 15-18 Jun 1917. Coroner for London: F.J. Walds
3. Occupation: Electrician London.⁶
Occupation recorded on death certificate.

Father:	Francis Cowley (Abt 1837-1903) ⁷				
Mother:	Charlotte Louisa Woolley (Abt 1849-1930)				
Spouse:	*Catherine Spry (Abt 1893 -) ^{8,9}				
Marr. Date:	3 Apr 1915	Place:	St Lukes Church, West Norwood, London ¹⁰		

Death Notes:

I have long been fascinated by the tale that Grandpa Cowley's brother, Eric, was killed in an air raid on London during the first world war. I traced Eric on the Ancestry.com web site and sent for a copy of his death certificate. It makes very sad, but fascinating reading. He was "found dead on 13th June 1917 at Barretts Foundry, Beech Court" in London City. There was an inquest on 15th and 18th June and the cause of death was recorded as "Shock, haemorrhage, severe injuries to the body by explosions of bombs dropped by enemy airmen". He was just 26 years old.

A further search on the Internet showed that this was in fact the first large-scale daylight air raid on London during WW1 by aircraft, not Zeppelins. The Gotha bomber was produced in the autumn of 1916 when the limitations of the Zeppelin as a raider had become obvious. The German High Command ordered that 30 Gotha bombers were to be ready for a daylight raid on London on February 1, 1917, but the machines were not ready until May. The first daylight raid on London was carried out by 14 Gothas on June 13, 1917. 162 people were killed in the raid and 432 injured. These casualties represented nearly 20% of all those caused in Britain by aeroplanes between 1914 and 1918.

There was obviously much outrage about the number of casualties and the apparent lack of warning to the civilian population, and questions were asked in parliament. Click on the link below to read the Hansard report for 19 June 1917 -

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1917/jun/19/enemy-air-raids>

Research:

On the official marriage entry Eric's father is shown as 'Thomas Cowley'. This is incorrect - Eric was my grandfather's brother and their father was Francis Cowley. All other research indicates that the relationship shown is correct.

Source Citations

1. England and Wales, Civil Registration Index: 1837 - 1983, Brighton - Vol:2b / Page: 266.
2. 1901 Census (31 March 1901), RG13 / 926.
3. Baptism record, Sussex Family History Group records.
4. Death certificate, General Register Office 1917 - Vol:01c / Page:35.
5. 1911 census (2 April 1911), RG14PN2135 RG78PN73 RD25 SD5 ED36 SN16.
6. 1911 census (2 April 1911), Engineer fitter and electrical wireman (?).
7. From Baptism record via SFHG, Baptism record of son, Charles Leonard.

8. England and Wales, Civil Registration Index: 1837 - 1983, Camberwell - Vol: 1d / Page: 1014.
9. 1911 Census database.
10. England and Wales, Civil Registration Index: 1837 - 1983, Lambeth - Vol: 1d / Page: 843.