

*Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Oxford Gentleman*

*Mary Harriet Sparks*

*H. B. Moorhouse*

# TOWSEY TALES

**NAME:** Charles Augustus Cooper

**BIRTH DETAILS:** 18 January 1846 St. George, Surrey

**DEATH DETAILS:** 4 October 1936 Auckland

**CHART REF:** Towsey Chart B2

**MARRIAGE DETAILS:** 21 September 1880 Auckland

**SPOUSE:** Mary Josephine O'Connor

*Edward Towsey*

Charles Augustus Cooper, who was born in south London in 1846. We do not know a great deal about the Cooper family, firstly, because they came from that swirling mass of mobile humanity called London and secondly, because the name 'Cooper' is fairly common, therefore making it harder to trace family lines.

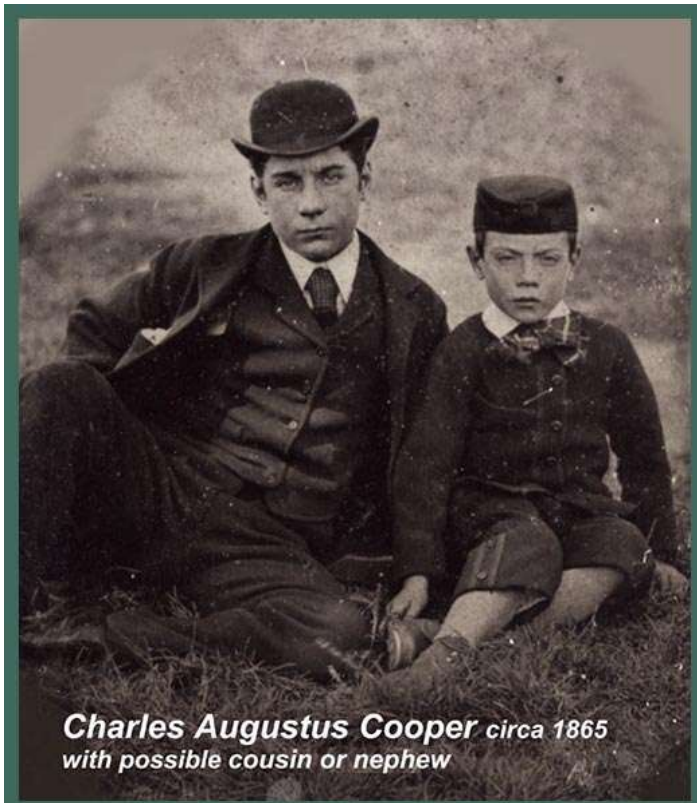
Charles Augustus Cooper's grandfather, William Cooper, was a publican in London. We see him as landlord of four different pubs about the West End between 1831 and 1854.

He and his wife Elizabeth, had a son, William Henry Cooper, in Lambeth, South London in 1810.

In 1832 at Shoreditch, William Henry married Maria Sarah Shepherd, born 1815 in London, the daughter of William



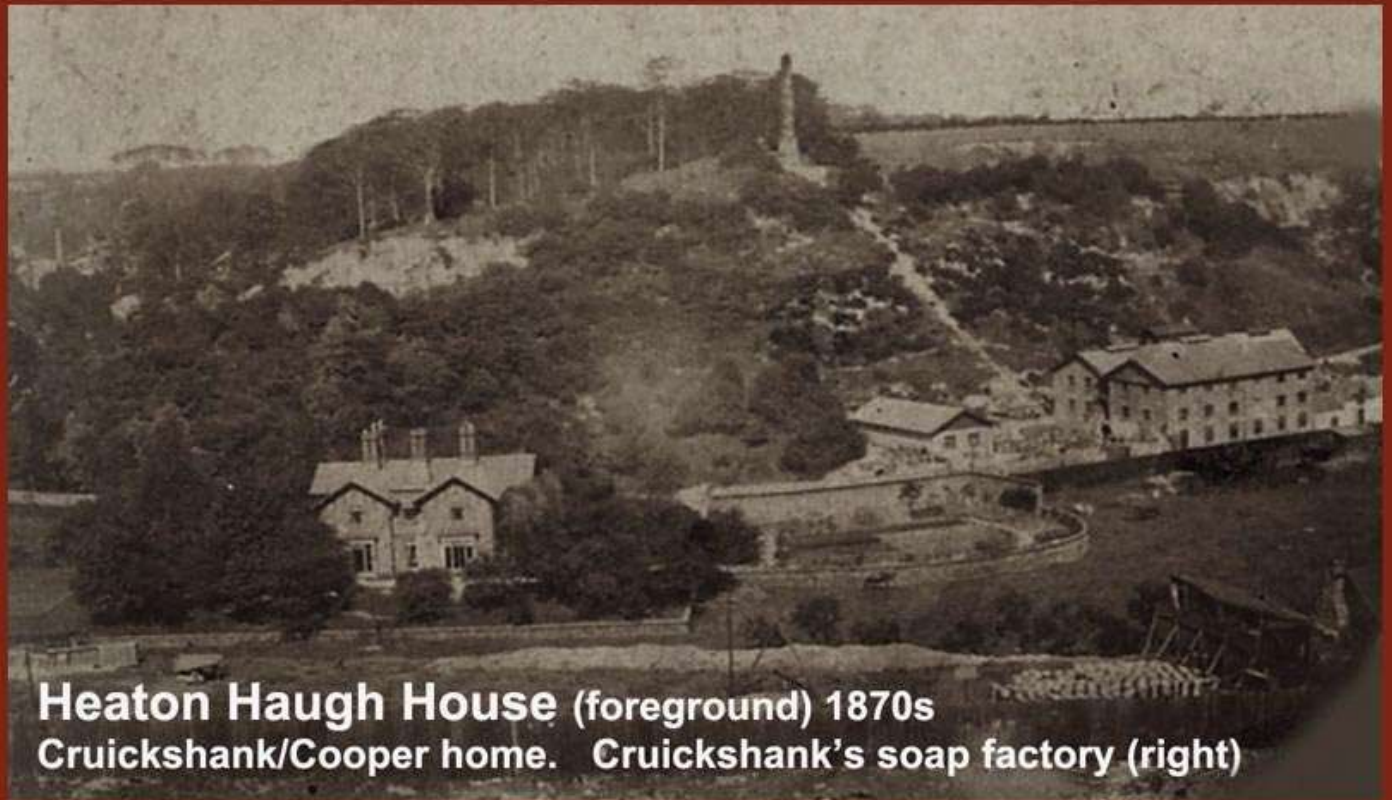
**Maria Sarah Cruickshank circa 1870s**  
*mother of Charles Augustus Cooper*  
*with possible niece or granddaughter*



**Charles Augustus Cooper circa 1865**  
*with possible cousin or nephew*

Shepherd, who had been born in Somersetshire in 1795.

In 1844 William Henry was a cabinetmaker in Spitalfields.



**Heaton Haugh House (foreground) 1870s  
Cruikshank/Cooper home. Cruickshank's soap factory (right)**

Between 1834 and 1850 William Henry and Maria Sarah had eight children, of whom Charles Augustus Cooper, born in 1846, was the sixth.

William Henry then died in 1852 from some sort of bladder disease.

In the meantime, Maria Sarah's younger brother, Charles Thomas Shepherd, had moved up to Gateshead, on Tyneside on the north-east coast of England, where he worked as a soap manufacturer.

Before moving north, he had been a druggist in East London, so there might have been some reason associated with the chemistry of soap making that induced him to move to Gateshead, between 1845 and 1847.

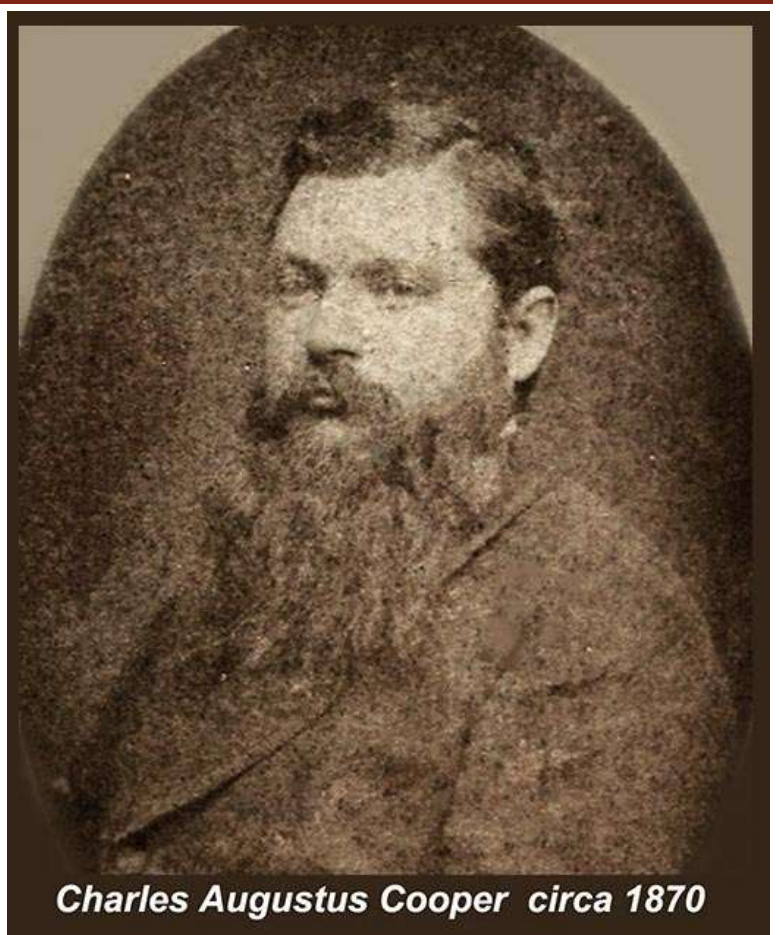
The lad in the photo with Charles, might well be Charles Shepherd's youngest son, William, born in 1858.

It would have been through her brother, that Maria met Alexander Cruickshank, another Tyneside soap manufacturer, married him in 1859 and moved the family up to Mr.Cruikshank's rather large house in Gateshead.

Alexander Cruickshank was not just boiling down the odd dead animal for their fat. He had a factory employing 38 workers by 1871.

Maria was already 44 years old when she married Cruickshank, who was, remarkably, 18 years her junior. She still though, managed to outlive her second husband, who died from liver disease at just 44 years of age, in 1877.

Maria had no children with Cruickshank and I have found no further records for her in England. Neither does she appear to have followed her son to New Zealand.



**Charles Augustus Cooper circa 1870**

When I asked my uncle Pat Towsey about his grandfather, he said that he was always telling stories about the adventures of his youth and would readily burst into song at any social gathering. To Uncle Pat though, Charles Cooper was just impossibly old. Later in life though, Pat regretted that he could not remember the adventures about which his grandfather had spoken.

One thing that we do know, is that probably in the early 1870s, Chas. Cooper went to Africa with the mounted police. I have not yet found anything more about this, but there is probably a record stored somewhere in London.

We do know that he arrived in New Zealand in July 1879 aboard the *Langstone* from London.

We do not have a great deal of information about Charles's movements, as with such a common surname, it is difficult to distinguish one Cooper from another, particularly as the newspapers still had the annoying habit of referring to someone as Mr.Cooper.

Charles seems to have immediately set up a soap factory in Auckland upon arrival in the colony. He also wasted no time in getting married, in September of 1880, to 27 year-old Mary Josephine O'Connor, at St.Francis De Sales Catholic church in Auckland.

Charles was not a Catholic and there was no restriction on Catholics marrying Protestants, as long as it was agreed that the children would be raised in the Catholic faith.

Mary Josephine O'Connor had been born in Tralee, Ireland in 1853 and was one of a dozen children of Daniel O'Connor and his wife, Mary Behane. You can read about the ancestry of Mary O'Connor on her Towsey Tale: 1853 Mary J Cooper.

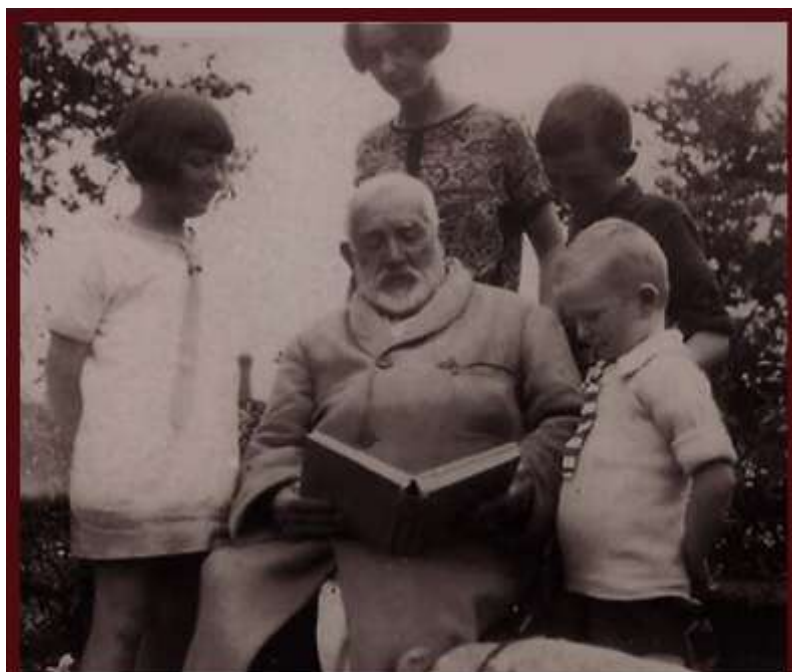
Charles and Mary Cooper had six children, all of whom survived into adulthood, except William Henry Cooper, their fourth child, seen in the photo as a baby, who died at four years of age.

It is ironic that they named their fourth child after Charles's father, William Henry Cooper, who had died young, only to watch that namesake die in childhood. Those of a superstitious disposition might think it better to thenceforth leave that name alone.

My grandmother, yet another Mary, but called Mamie, was their first child. She is not in the above family photograph, taken in Christchurch in



**Mary Josephine Cooper (nee O'Connor) Christchurch, May 1887**  
**Alice Maud Cooper (married Cunningham) B:5 Feb.1885 D:27 Feb.1958**  
**Daniel Joseph Cooper B:7 May 1883 D:5 Jan.1941**  
**William Henry Cooper B:10 Jan.1887 D:18 Feb.1891**



**1924 Charles A. Cooper with children of Dan J. Cooper**  
**(L to R): Helen (1916-1992), Kathleen (1910-1996)**  
**Patrick Emmett (1914-2002), Maurice Kelvin (1920-1995)**

1887, when she was nearly six years old. I am also not sure why the family was in Christchurch, but Mary's elder brother, Maurice O'Connor, was a Christchurch police detective at the time. He went on to be head of the detectives. It is possible that Mary's parents were also in the area.

Charles and Mary's second child, Daniel Joseph, looking quite angelic in the above photo, developed a gambling addiction in adulthood, which often saw his wife and children in dire financial straits. For this reason, his son Pat Cooper, the third of Daniel Joseph's six children, spent some of his childhood being looked after by my Mamie and Cyril Towsey.

Pat Cooper was thence, always close to his cousins, Arthur and Pat Towsey.

Charles Augustus Cooper was successful in life and, apart from his soap business, later became a publican and owned a farm, on which were taken these pictures of him in his later years, with various children and grandchildren.

He died in 1936 at 92 years of age.



**1924 Charles A Cooper on his farm with son, Daniel Joseph Cooper standing behind Hal and Laurence Cunningham, far right.**



**Charles Augustus Cooper 1924**



**1924 Ellen Cooper, Laurence Cunningham Mary J. & Charles A. Cooper**