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RAILWAYMAN'S RETIREMENT

Forty-seven years' service

Mr. A. J. Cooke's Record

After nearly years' 47 years' service on the railway, Mr Alexander John Cook, of 49 Avenue Approach, Bury St. Edmunds, has retired. Well-known in the town, he has been porter, shunter, van man and clerk during his time, and has witnessed many interesting changes.

In his interview, Mr. Cooke told a "Free Press" representative something of his career. He was born Mellis, being the son of the licensee of the Falcon (which is now closed) (see image below) and started at the age of 16 as a gate-lad in his native village, with the old Great Eastern Railway. Later Mr. Cooke, became gateman and then porter at Needham Market and subsequently went to Claydon as a porter. About 40 years ago (1892), he came to Bury St. Edmund's, where he was in charge one of the parcels delivery vans until he had the misfortune to lose leg in accident at the station. *<Margaret Richardson his daughter was 12 at the time and talks about sitting on his knee and being invited to stick needles into the wooden leg or that might have been Joan Fisher (nee Munday) his granddaughter much later on>* This was in 1912. when Mr. Cooke was relieving a horseman in the shunting yard. His leg was severely crushed and almost severed, and P.C Snell, of the Railway Police, who was then stationed at Bury, completed the separation of the limb while Mr. Cooke was awaiting his removal to Hospital. On his recovery, he was appointed parcels Clerk, and as such had charge of the receiving office at the Shambles until it was closed. Since 1914 until his retirement, Mr. Cooke has worked in the parcels office at the station.

As mentioned. Mr. Cooke has seen numerous changes at the Bury Station. When he first went to work there the top the station was covered in with glass, but that form of protection was dismantled some years ago. At that time horses played quite prominent part in transport. They were used for shunting purposes well as for the delivery vans; there being about 14 to 15 animals at the station. Mr. Cooke has worked under five stationmasters. Mr. Haywood, Mr. Kemp. Mr. Cook. *<no relation that I can identify>* Mr. Gibbs and the present stationmaster, Mr. L. Woolterton. It is interesting: to note that Mr. Cooke was one of three brothers to enter the railway service, his eldest brother (Mr. Harry Cooke *<probably Richard Hugh Cameron Cooke>*) recently retired at Woodbridge, while another brother (Mr. James Cooke) *<Philip James Grimwood Cooke known as Jim>* is stationmaster at Hackney Downs. His other brother is farmer at Whitton *<Kenneth Cooke>*. Two of Mr. Cooke's sons went through the war and the eldest is now an Inspector of the R.S.P.C.A. at Cambridge. Mr. Cooke, who is 63 years of age, has rather unusual hobby; that of ratting. He has performed good service on many farms in the neighbourhood, and on one farm alone killed some 500 rats in the course of two years

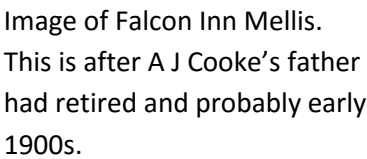
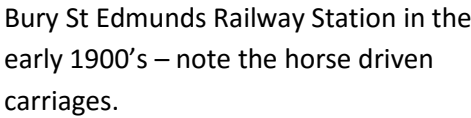
Ever since he entered the Railway service he has been a member of the Provident Society. Mr. Cooke is well-known in the town, and his many friends will wish him continued good health and happiness in his retirement.

The pictured couple below is of Alexander John Cooke and his first wife Emma Maria Froude who died 1908. He subsequently married Victoria Smith and had another set of children.

Bury Free Press 1945 RAILWAY OFFICIAL DEAD. -The death was reported last week of Mr. Alexander John Cooke, who died very suddenly at ins home. 49. Avenue Approach, at the age of 77 years. He was a native of Mellis, but had resided the town for many years, being employed by the L.N E.R. (late G.E.R) Company for over 40 years. He leaves a widow, two sons, seven daughters and several grandchildren to mourn their loss. The funeral took place at St. John's Church and afterwards the borough cemetery, and the service was conducted by the Rev. W. A. C. Ullathome. The mourners were: The widow, Mr. G. Cooke (son), Mesdames Martin. **Richardson**, (Daughter Margaret Richardson) Hay. Heald, Walkinshaw. Callaby and Miss P. Cooke (daughters). Messrs. K. and J. Cooke brothers i. Mesdames C. and O. Cooke (daughters-in-law», Mr. R. Hay. Mr. R. Walkinshaw, Mr. W, Cailaby < sons-in-law i. **Mrs. J. Munday** (granddaughter i, Mr. A. Smith and Mrs. F. Upson (brother-in-law and sister-inlaw). Also at the church and graveside were: Mrs. J. Norton, Miss W. Norton. Mesdames Avey, Lafin. Churchyard. Baldrey, Cross, Pavey, Miss Cooke, Mr. Clements, Mr. Fuller, Mrs. Winterbone. Mrs. Reeve and Mrs. Chappell. Mr. C. Cooke (son) was unable to attend owing to Naval duties. There were many beautiful floral tributes. Messrs. F. Clutterham and Son carried out the funeral arrangements.



Railway staff – Bury St Edmunds 1894 – A J Cooke is there somewhere !



A J Cooke outside his parcels office on the
RHS. Undated but between 1914 and 1932

