

= Ernest Brooks (photographer) =

Ernest Brooks (23 February 1878 ? after 1936) was a British photographer , best known for his war photography from the First World War . He was the first official photographer to be appointed by the British military , and produced several thousand images between 1915 and 1918 , more than a tenth of all British official photographs taken during the war . His work was often relatively posed and formal , but several of his less conventional images are marked by a distinctive use of silhouette . Before and immediately after the war he worked as an official photographer to the Royal Family , but was dismissed from this appointment and stripped of his official honours in 1925 .

= = Career = =

Born on 23 February 1878 , he grew up near Windsor , Berkshire , where his father worked in the Great Park , and as a child frequently encountered members of the Royal Family . After leaving school in 1890 , he worked as a boy on the estates , where one of his duties was to look after a mule given to Queen Victoria by Lord Kitchener . In 1892 he enlisted in the 3rd Dragoon Guards , and after leaving the army joined the Glamorganshire Yeomanry as a volunteer .

His first encounter with photography came after he took a position in the household of Lady Vivian , widow of Hussey Vivian , 3rd Baron Vivian ; Lady Vivian 's twin daughters each had a camera , and Brooks was entrusted with developing the films . He bought a camera himself , paying by weekly shilling instalments , which he used to take pictures of prominent people for publication ; his first portrait was sold to several newspapers through an agency , earning him the sum of seven guineas .

Realising that he could support himself comfortably on this income , Brooks left Lady Vivian 's employment , and returned to Windsor . Here , he worked as a freelance newspaper photographer , using his contacts within the royal household to arrange access to his subjects . After a short period , he became an official photographer to the Royal Family . By 1906 he was established enough to accompany Princess Ena to Spain for her marriage to King Alfonso XIII , where he took the first formal portrait of the couple before their wedding . Brooks ' photographs were published in a wide range of newspapers , including the Daily Mirror , and the Manchester Guardian ; his contract with the Royal Family prevented him from selling exclusive rights to any particular publication . Each photograph sold for around 10s 6d .

In late 1910 , he accompanied the Duke of Connaught to South Africa , and in 1911 accompanied King George V to India for the Delhi Durbar , where he had the opportunity to photograph the King on a tiger hunt as well as in more formal contexts . After returning from India he left the royal household to open a studio on Buckingham Palace Road in central London , though he continued to describe himself as the Official Photographer to the King and Queen .

After the outbreak of the First World War he served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve , enlisting on 25 January 1915 . When the Gallipoli landings were being prepared , Winston Churchill , who had himself been a war correspondent , arranged for there to be journalists and photographers accompanying the expeditionary force . Brooks , as a professional photographer already in uniform , was appointed as the Admiralty official photographer . In March 1916 , he was transferred from the Admiralty to the War Office , given the honorary rank of second lieutenant and appointed the official photographer for the Western Front . He was the only professional photographer to cover the Battle of the Somme , recording the attack on the first day from the front @-@ line trenches near Beaumont Hamel . In 1917 he was appointed a Chevalier of the Belgian Order of the Crown . In 1918 , he covered the Italian campaign and naval activity . The same year , he was awarded the French Croix de Guerre .

He later returned to royal service , accompanying the Prince of Wales on his tour of Canada and the United States in 1919 , and Australia in 1920 . The American tour posed some problems with people trying to capitalise on the Prince 's appearance for publicity purposes ; one prominent actress , Mildred Harris Chaplin , passed herself off as the niece of a local dignitary in order to be photographed , whilst another simply offered Brooks a bribe of a thousand dollars to arrange the

picture . He admitted that he " nearly gave in " , but backed out at the last minute for fear of offending the Prince . He was less successful in avoiding offence with another photograph , this time of the Prince in his bath during the voyage ; after it was published , George V strongly objected to it as inappropriate , and Brooks was reprimanded .

For reasons that were not publicly disclosed , his appointment as a royal photographer was cancelled in 1925 . His appointment as Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and his British Empire Medal (BEM) were also " cancelled and annulled " . A subsequent newspaper story suggested that his downfall was linked to another indiscreet photograph of the Prince of Wales , taken by Brooks and widely published , showing the Prince dressed in a woman 's kimono and wig after appearing in a play .

However , he continued to work as a photographer ; in 1928 , he was convicted of disorderly behaviour outside a ball in Grosvenor Square , after claiming that he was acquainted with the hostess and that had been invited there to take pictures . He continued in photojournalism at least as late as 1936 , when he is credited with taking two photographs of Jerome Brannigan being arrested , after Brannigan had attempted to assassinate King Edward VIII .

= = Photographic work = =

Much of his wartime work , though technically proficient and consistent , was rather conventional , often involving posed photographs rather than more candid impromptu shots of his subjects . His work was noted as being characterised by a " conscious seeking after a publishable photograph " , and it was recorded that he occasionally persuaded soldiers to pose for staged pictures of routine activity in the trenches . However , he was insistent that combat photographs were never faked ? " we have strict instructions not to do ? we have never done it " . He had a fondness for a dramatic use of silhouette , with images composed to show soldiers walking along a ridge against the light . These images , where individual men were not easily recognisable , often were used to illustrate the " anonymous heroes " of the war .

Brooks was the first and the longest @-@ serving of the British war photographers , and took more than 4 @,@ 400 images . This was the most of any individual photographer , and represented more than 10 % of all the official photographs . A large collection of his photographs is now held by the Imperial War Museum , and a second collection is held by the National Library of Scotland as part of Earl Haig 's papers ; both have been digitised .

A number of formal images from his pre @-@ war service with the Royal Family are held by the National Portrait Gallery , including several from the Delhi Durbar as well as a portrait of Prince Arthur of Connaught and Princess Alexandra , taken at their wedding . Two portraits of the young Prince John , both in 1913 .