



Alfred John Clarke

Alfred John Clarke was born in Far Cotton nr. Northampton on 22nd June 1879. He was baptised on 3rd August 1879. His parents were William and Sarah Clarke. William was employed as a labourer at a brewery.

In 1881 William and Mary were living in Far Cotton with their children Alfred and Margaret.

By 1891 Sarah was alone, possibly widowed, and looking after children Alfred, Margaret, William, Francis and Bessie. Sarah was a charwoman.

In 1901 Alfred was employed as a brewery drayman, William was a blacksmith's striker and Francis a general labourer.

Alfred John Clarke married Elizabeth Catherine Jarman on 31st March 1902.

By 1911 Alfred and Elizabeth were living in St. Peter's Avenue, Kettering with their children Gladys, John, Dorothy and Hilda. Alfred was a shunter at an iron works. Also resident was a boarder, Alma Harris (shoe machinist).

By 1915 when Alfred enlisted, Alfred and family were living at 2 Woodland View, Corby. Alfred's occupation was engine driver. Alfred and Elizabeth had another daughter Lilian in 1916.

Military Service

Alfred John Clarke enlisted in Kettering on 7th June 1915. With his enlistment papers was a note from the Recruiting Officer:-

"A J Clarke and A J S S Peerless would prefer to be transferred to the Horse Transport Branch of the Army Service Corps should they not be finally approved for the Royal Engineers."

Recruiting Officer – Kettering 7th June 1915

Alfred Clarke was accepted for the Royal Engineers (103411), as was Alfred Peerless. Both were to rise to the rank of Sergeant. Unfortunately, Alfred Clarke was not to return to Corby after the war.

Alfred Clarke served in the Mesopotamia.



Alfred Clarke was promoted to Acting/Sergeant in July 1916 serving in the 72nd Field Company, Royal Engineers.

It is recorded that he died on 26th July 1917 in the "Persian Gulf". He had been admitted into hospital on 21st July 1917.

His medical records within his service file record that he was suffering from malaria & heatstroke.

Sergeant Clarke is buried in the North Gate Cemetery, Baghdad.

In 1914, Baghdad was the headquarters of the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia. It was the ultimate objective of the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' and the goal of the force besieged and captured at Kut in 1916. The city finally fell in March 1917, but the position was not fully consolidated until the end of April. Nevertheless, it had by that time become the Expeditionary Force's advanced base, with two stationary hospitals and three casualty clearing stations.

The North Gate Cemetery was begun In April 1917 and has been greatly enlarged since the end of the First World War by graves brought in from other burial grounds in Baghdad and northern Iraq, and from battlefields and cemeteries in Anatolia where Commonwealth prisoners of war were buried by the Turks.

At present, 4,160 Commonwealth casualties of the First World War are commemorated by name in the cemetery, many of them on special memorials. Unidentified burials from this period number 2,729.

The cemetery also contains the grave of Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, Commander-in-Chief of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, who died at Baghdad in November 1917 and the memorial to the 13th Division which he commanded. A memorial to the 6th Battalion Loyal (North Lancashire) Regiment was brought into the cemetery from the banks of the Diyala River in 1947.

During the Second World War, Baghdad was again an objective of Commonwealth forces. The 20th Indian Infantry Brigade reached the city from Shaiba by the Euphrates route on 12 June 1941 and the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade, part of the 13th Duke of Connaught's Own Lancers, together with the 157th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, arrived on 19 June via the Tigris. An advanced base was established later near the city and remained in use until 1946.

Most of the 296 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried in the cemetery died of illness or by accident when serving with PAIFORCE. Again, a number of the graves were brought in from other burial grounds.



Within the cemetery is the Baghdad (North Gate) (Khanagin) Memorial, commemorating 104 Commonwealth servicemen, 437 Polish soldiers and 3 Arab Legionnaires of the Second World War buried in Khanagin War Cemetery which, owing to difficulty of access, could not be properly maintained.

The North Gate Cemetery also contains 127 war graves of other nationalities from both wars, 100 of them Turkish, and 41 non-war graves.

Alfred's friend Alfred Peerless was to return from the War, but his brother, James Peerless, who served in the Northamptonshire Regiment was killed in 1916 in France/Flanders.

Reference

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Lest We Forget

Alfred John Clarke
of the Corps of Royal Engineers.

d. 26th July 1917

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