

PRIVATE ALBERT CLARKE

325732 (3211), 1st/1st Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars (Worcester Yeomanry)

Died aged 27 on 24 December 1918

Buried with honour in *Beirut War Cemetery, Lebanon*; 171

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the Grammar School Memorial
and on the Overbury and Conderton War Memorial at St. Faiths Church, Overbury



*Beirut War Cemetery,
Lebanon*



*Pte. A. Clarke
[Kemerton H.S.]*



*Queen's Own Worcestershire
Hussars (Worcester Yeomanry)*

ALBERT CLARKE was born in 1891 in Aston Ingham, Herefordshire, to Henry Clarke and Elizabeth Ann (formerly Smith), both from Herefordshire. In 1901 Albert and eight of his siblings were living in Bredon where his parents ran the Royal Oak public house. Although Henry died in 1902 at the age of 40, in 1911 Albert was still living at the Royal Oak with his widowed mother and five of his siblings. Elizabeth's occupation was described as an Innkeeper and Butcher, and Albert's also that of Butcher. His connection to Tewkesbury was that he attended the Grammar School, when it was fee-paying.

Albert enlisted in 1915 in the Worcestershire Yeomanry, a pre-war Territorial Force cavalry regiment. He was posted to the 1st Queens Own Worcestershire Hussars, the unit in the regiment liable for overseas duty. These Hussars served in Gallipoli in 1915 in the 2nd Mounted Division, operating as dismounted infantry. On 31 October 1915 the regiment withdrew from Gallipoli, moving first to Greece and then to Egypt. In January 1916 the unit, reunited with its horses and armed with sabres, joined the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Albert did not serve in Gallipoli, but was part of the third replacement draft, which embarked on 22 January 1916 and disembarked in Alexandria on 31 January 1916.

In Egypt, the regiment's role was to help defend the Suez Canal against attack by Turkish forces. On 23 April 1916 squadrons of the

Worcestershire Hussars were defending the oasis of Katia (in conjunction with the 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars) when a strong enemy force, with artillery, attacked both positions, overwhelming the defenders. The survivors were marched into captivity. Many did not survive the journey, dying of maltreatment or disease. Albert was marched about 330 miles through Palestine to Syria.

The *Tewkesbury Register* reported on 8 July 1916 that 'Mrs. Clarke of Wayside, Conderton has received a card from her son of the Worcester Yeomanry ... that he is a POW in Damascus after being missing at the Battle of Katia: "We are treated alright by the Turks, who do their best to make us comfortable. It is a different way of living to ours; we have been told that parcels and letters will come alright".' From other evidence, his comments on his captivity need to be treated sceptically; the next news came some years later in a newspaper report on 4 January 1919 claiming that he had 'died in Egypt of Malaria'.

Private Albert Clarke died on 24 December 1918, as confirmed by the casualty records, and was buried in *Beirut War Cemetery*, Lebanon. His date of death suggests that he had been released from captivity and was being treated in one of the Combined Clearing Hospitals based in the town, which had been in Allied hands since October.