

PRIVATE REGINALD ROLAND CLARKE

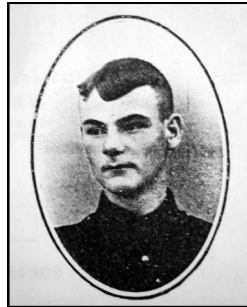
7677, 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars

Died aged 30 on 20 October 1914

Remembered with honour on *Ploegsteert Memorial*; Panel 1
Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Ploegsteert Memorial,
Belgium*



*Pte. Reginald Clarke
[Graphic 26/2/1916]*



*18th (Queen Mary's Own)
Hussars*

REGINALD ROLAND CLARKE (sometimes Clark) was born near Bidford, Worcestershire, in 1884 to Thomas Clark and Sarah (formerly Walker). In 1891 Thomas was living with his own mother, Elizabeth, and his three children, including Reginald, in nearby Marlcliff. The whereabouts of his wife, Sarah, is a mystery as she was absent from the census returns for 1891-1911, yet Thomas still declared his status as 'married'. By 1901 Thomas was working as a traction engine driver in Tewkesbury, living in Sweets Court with three further children (born 1893-1897 in various parts of Worcestershire) and a housekeeper, Eliza Smith aged 28.

In 1911 Reginald Clarke was serving as a regular soldier with the 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, based at the Cambridge Barracks in Portsmouth, with another Tewkesburian, Private W. J. Barnfield. However, all subsequent records indicate that he was serving in the 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars. His service number suggests that he enlisted in the Hussars in 1911-1912, perhaps after completing his time with the Colours in the Gloucestershire Regiment. The 18th Hussars were part of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, Cavalry Division, part of the original British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The Regiment landed at Boulogne on 16 August 1914. In September the Division was renamed 1st Cavalry Division.

The Regiment played an important part in providing a shield to the infantry in rear-guard actions during the retreat from Mons. In the *Battle of Le Cateau* (26 August) the Regiment provided flank protection to prevent the BEF being surrounded. The War Diary observed that,

after the BEF had stopped retreating on 5 September, 200 horses and 207 men were missing although many soon re-joined. Then, during the *Battle of the Marne*, the Regiment was commended by the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir John French. It participated in the pursuit of the German Army until the *Battle of the Aisne* (12-15 September).

At the end of the month the BEF moved north to Flanders to protect the Channel ports which were vital to its supply line and to take part in 'the Race to the Sea'. The *Battle of Messines* (12 October-2 November) was the last phase in that campaign and 1st Cavalry Division, though heavily outnumbered, was involved in defending the town. Eventually Messines had to be abandoned but the line held. The War Diary reports that, on 20 October, the Regiment was holding an outpost when the Germans launched an attack; casualties were 13 men wounded and 20 missing, including Reginald. In July 1915 the *Record* reported that 'Mr. Thomas Clarke has received notification from the War Office that his son ... reported as missing in October last, is a Prisoner of War in Germany'. According to the *Graphic* in 1916, the 'War Office could still only assume that he had been killed in action on 30 October 1914'.

As the War Diary for 30 October mentions no casualties, it is most likely that **Private Reginald Roland Clarke's** death did occur on 20 October 1914, perhaps in German captivity as one of the missing. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the *Ploegsteert Memorial* in Belgium. He was awarded the '1914 (Mons) Star and Clasp'.