

**25172, Private WILLIAM THOMAS CLARKE
1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment**

This note documents the military service of Private William Thomas Clarke and considers the issue of commemoration. The amount of information about his military service is restricted as his army service record is not available; evidently it was one of the 70/80% or so files destroyed during the London Blitz in 1940 when German bombs hit the warehouse in which the files were stored. However, other sources have provided some items of information from which a basic picture of William's time in the British Army can be constructed.

Although William was born in Tewkesbury in 1895 the family moved to Leicestershire around 1903 and settled in South Wigston. William enlisted at Glen Parva in Leicestershire, undoubtedly at the Glen Parva Barracks which was the depot of the *Leicestershire Regiment*. William would have undertaken his training at the Barracks before being posted to an active service unit. There is no record of when William actually enlisted nor when he first went overseas. **As he did not qualify for the 1914-15 Star medal, which was awarded to men who had served in a theatre of war before 31 December 1915, he must have been posted overseas in 1916.**

William was entitled to the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and the Medal Roll (see image attached) identifies that he was **allocated initially to the 8th (Service) Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment.** The *8th/Leicesters* were one of the battalions of the New Armies raised as a result of the recruitment drive mounted by Lord Kitchener. The *8th/Leicesters* were formed at Leicester in September 1914 as part of K3 (the third wave of Kitchener's recruitment campaign). The battalion landed in France on 29 July 1915, one of 12 infantry battalions in the 37th Division. As William was not entitled to the 1914-15 Star medal, he would not have been with the battalion at this time but would have joined them in 1916.

Along with two other battalions from the same regiment the *8th/Leicesters* were transferred from the 37th Division to the 21st Division on 7 July 1916 at which point William would have been part of the battalion. The joint Anglo-French campaign on the Somme (the *Battles of the Somme 1916*) had just started on 1 July and the 21st Division was involved from the outset. The Somme campaign actually comprised a series of 12 separate battles and, within days of transferring to the 21st Division, the battalion took part in the ***Battle of Bazentin (or the Bazentin Ridge)*** which lasted from 14 July to 17 July 1916. This was the second battle of the campaign and a well planned and novel night attack on 14 July took British troops through the second German defensive system in the area of Bazentin.

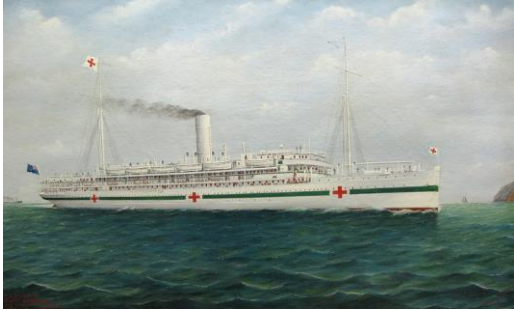
It seems that William was wounded during the course of this battle as he is listed in two Admissions and Discharge books (see attached images). The books record that his right

| ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE BOOK | | | | | | | | | | | | | | FIELD SERVICE | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|-----|-------|---------|----------------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|----------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--|
| 34 C C S HOSPITAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Index number of admission. Transfers are not to be numbered consecutively with the admission, but should be so numbered in red ink as a separate series. | Regiment, Battalion, Coy. or other Unit | Squadron, Battery or Company | No. | Rank | Surname | Christian name | Completed years of | | Completed months with Field Force | DISEASES (Wounds and injuries in action to be entered according to classification on fly leaf) | Date of Admission | | Date of Discharge | | Date of Transfer | | | | Number of days under treatment | Number of days under treatment or absent in which treated | Regiment | OBSERVATIONS | | | |
| | | | | | | | Age | Service | | | For original disease | By new disease | To super-vening | By new disease | To super-vening | By Death | Sick Convoy | Other Hospitals | | | | | Sick Convoy | Other Hospitals | |
| 70 | 21 | 8 Leicestershire | A | 25849 | - | Evans, H. | 29 | 1/2 | 10 | Leg (R) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 71 | 21 | 8 Leicestershire | E | 28172 | - | Clarke, W. T. | 20 | 1/2 | 2 | Foot (R) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 72 | 21 | 8 Leicestershire | E | 10172 | - | Mills, J. | 25 | 1/2 | 11 | Leg (L) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE BOOK | | | | | | | | | | | | | | FIELD SERVICE | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|-------|------|---------|----------------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|----------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--|
| No. 2 General Hospital HOSPITAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Index number of admission. Transfers are not to be numbered consecutively with the admission, but should be so numbered in red ink as a separate series. | Regiment, Battalion, Coy. or other Unit | Squadron, Battery or Company | No. | Rank | Surname | Christian name | Completed years of | | Completed months with Field Force | DISEASES (Wounds and injuries in action to be entered according to classification on fly leaf) | Date of Admission | | Date of Discharge | | Date of Transfer | | | | Number of days under treatment | Number of days under treatment or absent in which treated | Regiment | OBSERVATIONS | | | |
| | | | | | | | Age | Service | | | For original disease | By new disease | To super-vening | By new disease | To super-vening | By Death | Sick Convoy | Other Hospitals | | | | | Sick Convoy | Other Hospitals | |
| 9 | 8 Leicestershire | | 10224 | Pvt | Evans | A | 21 | 1 | 10 | Back | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15974 | 8 Leicestershire | | 23112 | Pvt | Clarke | W. T. | 20 | 1/2 | 2 | Foot | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 8 Leicestershire | | 14766 | Pvt | Platts | G. | 31 | 1 | 11 | Foot | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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foot was injured or wounded. The first entry appears in the book for *34 Casualty Clearing Station* which was located at Tincourt, near Peronne (*Casualty Clearing Stations* were part of the casualty evacuation chain, further back from the front line than the First Aid Posts and Field Ambulances). On 15 July 1916 William was evacuated by Ambulance Train to a Base



Hospital, the next part of the casualty evacuation chain. **In this case he was admitted to No 2 General Hospital which was located at Le Havre.** The entry for William in the Discharge Book for the hospital indicates that **he was evacuated back to the UK on 17 July 1916, probably to Netley Hospital near Southampton, aboard the Hospital Ship 'SS Marama'** (see attached image). This was an ocean liner built in 1907 at Greenock, near Glasgow for the Union Company of New

Zealand. It was used as a hospital ship during the First World War under the designation '*His Majesty's New Zealand Hospital Ship No 2*'.

There is no further information to explain how long it took William to recover from his wound or injury. However, it seems reasonable to assume that, once he was declared fit to return to the front, **he was posted to the 1st/Leicesters rather than returning to his original battalion. This would account for the fact William is linked to the 1st/Leicesters rather than the 8th/Leicesters in the later casualty records.**

The next reference to William relates to the time when he was killed. **In October 1917 the 1st/Leicesters were stationed in Northern France in the vicinity of Noeux les Mine, one of the many mining villages in the coalfields south of Bethune.** This would probably have been a relatively quiet sector, the main action at that time was the Battles of Ypres 1917 (often known as the *Third Battle of Ypres or Passchendaele*) which was taking place further north in Belgium. The events that unfolded suggest that William was very unlucky.

William was killed in action on 13 October 1917 at the age of 22. The Battalion War Diary for that day notes that the **battalion was in the Support Line**, Emile Sector and sums up 13 October as: '*Uneventful day. Relieved 9th Suffolks in Right Sub Section AUGUSTE sector. Support Company moved at 3.00pm. Front line Companies moved 6.00pm. Midnight, relief complete. Disposition:- A and B Companies in front line. C Company in support in COB TRENCH. D Company in reserve in CATAPULT Trench. Battalion HQ in CONGRESS TRENCH. Casualties during relief, A Company 1 killed and 3 wounded*'.

There was only one soldier killed on 13 October during the relief and that must have been William. **He was evidently serving in A Company in the front line and was probably killed by random sniper or machine gun fire intended to disrupt the relief activity; there is no reference in the War Diary to German artillery or mortar fire.**

William was buried originally in Corkscrew British Cemetery in Loos but his body was exhumed after the war and re-buried in Loos British Cemetery which was a larger concentration cemetery.

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| REGIMENT OR CORPS. | | LEICESTERSHIRE | | 301 and 286 | | of 1919. | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----|----------|----|------|----|------|----|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the Victory Medal and/or British War Medal granted under Army Orders | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regtl. No. | Rank | NAME | Regiment | Theatres of war in which served | | | | | | | | Clasps awarded (to be left blank) | Record of disposal of decorations (a) Presented (b) Despatched by Post (c) Taken into Stock | |
| | | | | From | To | From | To | From | To | From | To | | | |
| 25167 | L/Cpl | GILLAM Sidney | 25167. 6/Leic.R. Pte. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25170 | L/Cpl | DARE John | 25170. 6/Leic.R. Pte. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25172 | Pte. | CLARKE William Thomas | 25172. 8/Leic.R. Pte. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | 25172. 1/Leic.R. | | | | | | | | | | | |

William's mother, Mary Ann Clarke, was granted two pensions, one in May 1918 and another in November 1918.

In terms of commemoration William is remembered in a number of places, including:

- On the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database. Details are held on the War Memorials Register maintained by the Imperial War Museum (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/37743>).
- On the Lives of the First World War database created by the Imperial War Museum (<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/843785>). However, the detail for William's entry is limited and further updates can no longer be input.

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On the South Wigston and Glen Parva Memorial at the front of St. Thomas' Church, St Thomas Road, South Wigston, Oadby and Wigston, Leicestershire, LE18 4TA. The memorial is in the form of a Cenotaph and was unveiled on 11 November 1923



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Leicestershire War Memorials

leicestershirowar Memorials.co.uk/war/memorials/view/1072/3/C/casualty_listing

CASUALTIES LISTING

No. of Records All Conflicts

ALL A B C D E F G H K M N P B S T U W

Search results are sorted by closest match to your search terms, use the column headers for other sort options.

| NAME | RANK | UNIT | BATT | DIED |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------|------|
| Church - GH | Flight Lieutenant | Royal Air Force | | |
| Clare - Cyril | Private | Leicestershire Regiment | | |
| Clare - LG | Sergeant | Leicestershire Regiment | | |
| Clarke - William Thomas | Private | Leicestershire Regiment | | |
| Clarke - H | PO | Royal Air Force | | |

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Malcolm Waldron