

Cyril Edwin Clarke.

Sapper, No.126782, 48th Signals Co., Royal Engineers.

Cyril Edwin Clarke was born on 21st February 1889 in Wellesbourne, Warwickshire, the last of ten children born to Arthur Clarke and his wife Jane. He was baptised in the village church of St. Peter on 8th September of the same year.

Cyril's father Arthur, came from the nearby village of Barford. In his youth he initially worked as a House Painter but by the time of Cyril's birth had taken up his father's profession, that of a Boot and Shoemaker, running his own business from a shop in Warwick Road, Wellesbourne. He returned to his previous occupation in the twilight of his years.

Cyril attended the village schoolⁱ, moving from the infants to the junior department on the same day in July 1895 as William Hopkins who was also to lose his life in the Great War.

The February 2nd 1909 edition of the London Gazette records that Cyril had the previous month been appointed as a Sorting Clerk and Telegraphist for the Post Office's South Midland District. He continued to live with his mother, widowed in 1902, at her home in Warwick Road, Wellesbourne, until he married Dorothy Ellen Brookes on 29th October 1912 in Harbury, Warwickshire.

By 1915 Cyril and his wife had left Wellesbourne and were now living at 'Ellesmere', No. 3, Blowhorne St. Marlborough, Wiltshire where their daughter Margaret Joan was born on 7th April.

In December of that year, and with conscription into the Army only a month away, he signed the documents, at the recruiting office in Marlborough, to join the army for the duration of the war. Working as a Telegraphist it was therefore only natural that he should join the Royal Engineers who were, prior to the formation of the Royal Signals in 1920, responsible for all forms of the British Army's communications. He was myopic but this would not detract him from front line service. His allocated service number was recorded as No. 126782, Sapper Cyril Edwin Clarke of the Royal Engineers Signal Services (RESS).

In September 1916 he attended the Wireless school at Fenny Stratford, Bucks where he passed as a 'proficient' Telegraphist. His status being subsequently upgraded in August 1918 to 'skilled'.

On the 16th July 1917 Cyril left the Royal Signals Depot in Hitchin, Herts for Southampton where he boarded a ship bound for Mesopotamia, (Iraq) arriving in Basra, on the 18th August. This was at a time when 5 months earlier Baghdad had fallen to British forces and the British and Russians were now closing in on the Turks.

In October 1918 Cyril was absorbed into the 48th Signals Company and in April 1919, after the defeat of the Otterman Empire, the company was transported to Kasvin (Qazvin), Persia (Iran).

Cyril's service record indicates that on the 24th June 1919 he boarded the S.S. Kaka at Enzeli bound for England for de-mob. However, the entries between the 25th October and the 22nd November state that he was admitted on no less than three occasions to Kasvin Military Hospital before being discharged on the 23rd. He had previously spent brief periods in hospital whilst in Baghdad during September 1917 but no reason for his admission was ever recorded.

On 27th Dec 1919, he was again admitted to the Military Hospital in Kasvin (Qazvin), Persia (Iran) and specifically diagnosed as being seriously ill with pneumonia. The following day this was upgraded to dangerously ill and on 2nd Jan 1920 the record states that Sapper Cyril Edwin Clarke had "died of disease" (Broncho pneumonia).

As the result of his death Mrs. Clarke was granted a weekly pension of 30 shillings and eight pence and his British and Victory medals were forwarded to her. Three years later she wrote from her home, Ivy Cottage, London Rd, Marlborough, to the Record Office of the Royal Engineers enquiring as to whether her late husband was entitled to an additional medal for his service in Persia. She was initially advised that she would receive the General Service Medal – North West Persia, "for his gallant service with the 48th Divisional Service Company", only to receive further correspondence advising her that operations relating to this award did not commence until August 1920, i.e. after his death. He therefore did not qualify for this decoration.

Cyril is buried in the Tehran War Cemetery now situated within the British residential compound at Gulhek, Iran, (Grave 111.G.6), 13 kilometres from Tehran. He is also commemorated on the Wellesbourne Roll of the Dead, St. Peter's Church, Wellesbourne and on the village War Memorial.



Tehran War Cemetery

Researched by Grev Hudson April 2016. (grev.hudson@tinyworld.co.uk)

¹ *Wellesbourne School Records CR371/1, CR371/2, CR371/3, CR371/4. (Warwick Record Office)
Source; Service record British World War 1 Service Records – National Archives Cyril Edwin Clarke. (via Ancestry.com or Find My Past)*