

Henry Bertram CLARKE

Henry Bertram was born in Hunston in the third quarter of 1889 and was the third of three sons of William CLARKE of Hunston (abt 1865 to abt Jul 1940) who worked as a horseman on a farm and Margaretta PARR of Norton (abt Jul 1861 to abt Apr 1941). His brothers were Frederick George and William Victor, who also is named on the Memorial at Hunston.

In 1891 Henry was nearly two and the family was living in Buckles Yard, Hunston. By 1901 Henry, aged 11, was working as a farm boy. They were living in The Street close to William Treherne HEIGHAM, the son of Clement John Henry HEIGHAM the Chief Constable of Suffolk. William Heigham was living in The Cottage and is shown as a farmer. It is probable that Henry Clarke, his brother William and his father were employed by William Heigham as these locations apparently refer to The Yard which is next door to Hunston House (Cottage). By 1911 Henry was employed as an under gardener at Stowlangtoft Hall.

Henry enlisted as Private 24761 in the 8th (Service) Battalion Suffolk Regiment which was formed at Bury St. Edmunds in September 1914 and came under the command of 53rd Brigade in 18th (Eastern) Division as part of Kitchener's Second New Army.

According to The Long, Long Trail <http://www.1914-1918.net/18div.htm> accessed 18th November 2014:

“Early days were somewhat chaotic, the new volunteers having very few trained officers and NCOs to command them, no organised billets or equipment. The units of the Division initially concentrated in the Colchester area but moved in May 1915 to Salisbury Plain. King George V inspected the Division on 24 June.

Embarkation for France began on 24 July and units moved to assemble near Flesselles, completing concentration there five days later.

The Division served on the Western Front for the remainder of the war, taking part in many of the significant actions:

1916

The Battle of Albert in which the Division captured its objectives near Montauban*

The Battle of Bazentin Ridge in which the Division captured Trones Wood*

*The Battle of Delville Wood**

*The Battle of Thiepval Ridge**

The Battle of the Ancre Heights in which the Division played a part in the capture of the Schwaben Redoubt and in the capture of Regina Trench*

*The Battle of the Ancre**

*The battles marked * are phases of the Battles of the Somme 1916”*

The 53rd Brigade 18th (Eastern) Division became involved in the Battle of Delville Wood which lasted from 15th July to 3rd September 1916. A description of the action at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Delville_Wood#17.E2.80.9319_July accessed 18th November 2014 includes the following:

“By the afternoon of 18 July, the fresh Branderberger Regiment had also engaged. A German officer wrote

‘... Delville Wood had disintegrated into a shattered wasteland of shattered trees, charred and burning stumps, craters thick with mud and blood, and corpses, corpses everywhere. In places they were piled four deep. Worst of all

was the lowing of the wounded. It sounded like a cattle ring at the spring fair...'

and by 19 July, the South African survivors were shelled and sniped from extremely close range.

In the early morning, Reserve Infantry Regiment 153 and two companies of Infantry Regiment 52, entered the wood from the north and wheeled to attack the 3rd South African Battalion from behind, capturing six officers and 185 men from the Transvaal Battalion; the rest were killed. By mid-morning, Black Watch, Seaforth and Cameron Highlanders in Longueval tried to charge into the wood but were repulsed by German small-arms fire from the north-west corner of the wood. The brigade was short of water, without food and unable to evacuate wounded; many isolated groups surrendered, after they ran out of ammunition. In the afternoon, the 53rd Brigade advanced from the base of the salient to reach Thackeray at the South African headquarters but were unable to reach the forward elements of the South African brigade. This situation prevailed through the night of 19–20 July."

Documents available on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) web site show that Henry died on 19th July 1916 and he is named on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, Pier and Face 1 C and 2 A. The description of Thiepval Memorial on the CWGC site at <http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/80800/THIEPVAL%20MEMORIAL> illustrates that Henry is one of the 72,194 men *"of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916."*

Henry is remembered on the War Memorial at St Michael's Church, Hunston, Suffolk.