

ARTHUR AUBREY CLARKE



1st/2nd October 1917

1894-1917 Aged 23

**Captain, M.C., attached 7th (Service)
Battalion Leicestershire Regiment.**

A.A. Clarke was known as Aubrey to distinguish him from his father Dr. Arthur Clarke who for many years was a G.P. in Morley. The family home and surgery were at a house on the High Street named 'Brean Down' after a headland in Somerset where Clarke practiced before moving to Morley. Arthur Clarke was born in Scotland, during one of the widely spread postings held by his father Paul, a Wesleyan Minister. The Reverend Paul Clarke settled in Brill in Buckinghamshire where at Hampden House he established a school which would later feature in Aubrey's life. Arthur Clarke was 41 when in 1891 he married Georgina Hector, daughter of a Scottish provisions merchant, in Morley. Their first child, Alice Mary Angela, was born the next year, and Aubrey followed on 8th August 1894. However, their mother died in 1899 and the children were sent to school in Brill, now run by their aunts, the Misses Clarke. Aubrey had returned to Morley by 1904 when he started at Bradford Grammar School at the age of ten. He would remain there until 1913, despite the death of his father in London in 1909 which meant that during term-time he had to board in Bradford. Aubrey followed the Classical side through to the Sixth Form, where he showed talent in English, Ancient History, Latin and Greek. In 1913 he won a place at St. John's College Oxford, although for which subject is not known. He was a rugby player who, at 6 feet in height, was a useful forward who was converted to a three-quarter. In his final year he was Captain of Football and he was also Secretary of the Debating Society and House Captain.

At Oxford Aubrey was a member of the O.T.C., so it is little surprise to find that he cut short his studies to apply for a commission in the Leicestershire Regiment within a fortnight of the outbreak of hostilities. He was commissioned on 3rd September. He was an effective officer, gaining promotion to full Lieutenant in December and to temporary Captain in February 1915. At the end of the year his application for a commission in the Regular Army was approved by the commander of the B.E.F., Sir Douglas Haig. Aubrey landed in France with the 7th Battalion Leicester Regiment (7/Leicester) in July 1915. A year later he was wounded on 14th July 1916 during



an attack on Bazentin-le-Petit Wood and village during the Somme Offensive. With most of the officers out of action, Clarke took command of consolidating the second objective and was struck in the shoulder, abdomen and leg by shrapnel while he led his men towards the third objective. For his actions he was awarded the Military Cross.

Aubrey was evacuated to Boulogne and then London for treatment, but his wounds were slow to heal. Although passed fit for General Service at the end of January 1917, another operation was required to remove a piece of shrapnel from his leg, and it was not until July that he joined his battalion near Arras. In late September the 7/Leicester moved into the battle zone near Ypres to relieve the Australians in the recently-captured Polygon Wood. On 1st October, the official date of his death, the battalion held a support position with Clarke commanding 'D' Company. The night was described as 'quiet', until a heavy German barrage commenced at 04.45 on the morning of the 2nd, followed by a strong counter-attack. Clarke was killed as he moved his company forward to escape the shellfire. He was buried in the cemetery near the dressing station at Hooze Crater.

He is remembered on the War Memorial at Brill, as was his sister Angela's husband Charles S. Macdonald. Aubrey had attended their wedding while on sick leave. He was killed with the Canadian forces in August six months after he married Angela, who lost her husband and brother within weeks of each other.



Acknowledgements:

Aubrey Clarke's photo is from the School memorial book, courtesy of B.G.S. and the O.B.A. The family was researched using Ancestry.com. There are partial accounts at <http://buckinghamshireremembers.org.uk/php_scripts/bksidget.php?id=596> and <<https://www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk/entity/80220-clarke-arthur-aubrey-mc?q>> accessed 1-9-2017. I am grateful to Clive McManus of Morley Local History Society for sharing information about Dr. Arthur Clarke. Aubrey's school record is from the B.G.S Annual Reports 1905-1913 and from The Bradfordians 1911-1913. The 1911 Census shows he lodged with J.G. Williams, of the Bradford Christian Institute. There are several newspaper references to him available through findmypast.co.uk: in December 1911 (Yorkshire Post) he scored a try in a heavy defeat the school sustained against the Yorkshire Wanderers, a team composed mainly of former pupils. In November 1913 he seems to have played for Oxford against Blackheath (The Globe). The same resource was used to identify his promotions and the citation for the Military Cross (Edinburgh Gazette 28-9-1916). The corrected date for his appointment as Second Lieutenant is given in the *Leicester Chronicle* 6-2-1915

Unfortunately St. John's College have very little regarding Clarke (my thanks to the Archivist, Michael Riordan). Clarke's Officer Personal Record (The National Archives WO339-12649) contains the records of his medical boards. His death date was originally—and correctly— reported as 2nd October in the telegram to his sister. The War Diary for the 7/Leicester is available at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/60779/43849_2164_2-00000?pid=734960&backurl=http://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DKih1537%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26indiv%3D1%26db%3DUKWarDiariesWWI%26gss%3Dangs-d%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26_F0007CF4%3DLeicestershire%2520Regiment%26_F00088EF%3D7th%2520Battalion%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D6n6%26pcat%3D39%26fh%3D0%26h%3D734960%26recoff%3D%26ml_rpos%3D1&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Kih1537&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true#?imageld=43849_2164_2-00011>. Clarke is referred to in the entries for 14-7-1916, 9-7-1917 and 1/2-10-1917. His death was reported in the *Morley Observer* 12-10-1917 (my thanks to Clive McManus for this reference).

Charles Sumerled Macdonald was from Rosshire, although he served with 13th Battalion Canadian Infantry and he is remembered on the Vimy Memorial as he has no known grave.



<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=12533423&PIpi=16206083>