

Name, Rank & Regiment of Soldier:

**Clayton, George Henry**

Corporal 1<sup>st</sup> (Notts & Derby)  
Sherwood Foresters

Service Number: 269228 / 2058  
(Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry)



Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
8 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1890	27 May 1918	27

### Background: George H Clayton

George Henry Clayton was the son of Henry Clayton (born Welton, Lincs., 1868 died 1941) and Esther (née Porter 1863-1931) who lived at Willow Farm, Cottage Lane, South Collingham. George's grandfather, William Clayton (1830-1897), had lived on Cottage Lane since about 1880 & ran 26 acres of land. It is thought Henry and Esther and family moved to Collingham to join him in around 1890. Henry and Esther had 5 children:

Frank Clayton<sup>1</sup> born 1889 Newark (married Eva Bocock in 1923) d 1967

**George Henry born 1890 Collingham**

Edith Mary Clayton baptised 1893 Collingham (married Walter Guy in 1922)  
d. 1939

Louisa b. 1896 baptised 1896<sup>2</sup> Collingham (married Percy H Bocock in 1921)  
d. 1981

Edward Porter Clayton baptised Collingham 1901 died 1904

George, a farmer, married Lizzie (née Sumner 1891 -1971) a maid/cook to Canon & Mrs Gould<sup>3</sup> in Oundle in 1914. Lizzie is thought to have moved from her native Cambridgeshire with the Goulds around 1906. The couple lived at Brickyard Cottages, Brough and had two children, Gladys (1915-1985) & Thomas (1917 – 2002).

<sup>1</sup> Frank Clayton (1889-1967) also enlisted as a volunteer in the army during World War One.

<sup>2</sup> See East Trent Genealogy website

<sup>3</sup> Canon Gould, vicar of All Saints 1906 to 1930s. It is likely Lizzie moved with them from Peterborough when the Goulds came to Collingham in 1906. Lizzie's father was a shepherd.



*Above: Willow Farm, Cottage Lane, South Collingham where George Clayton grew up.*



Left: Brickyard Cottages, Brough, where George Clayton lived with his wife Lizzie and two young children. The cottage was then owned by the Curtis family (of Langford Hall and later Mayfield House).

Photos HP 2016



## Military History: Corporal G H Clayton

*'George H Clayton - Son of Henry and Hester Clayton, of Cottage Lane, South Collingham; husband of Lizzie Maria Clayton, of Brickyard Cottages, Brough Rd., South Collingham. Missing nr. Pontavert, France.'*<sup>4</sup>

George Clayton volunteered in 1915 and was sent to the front in January 1916. He was initially with the 1/7<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters (Robin Hoods) formed from a militia (Volunteer) regiment. At some stage he was transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion Sherwood Foresters, attached to the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade/8<sup>th</sup> Division. This battalion's colours reflect their involvement in some of the heaviest fighting on both the Somme and Ypres-Salient. The regimental history adds: 'These (battles) were made no less tiresome by gas-attacks, 'trench feet' and the limitless vistas of mud.'

The battle in which Clayton was killed was the **3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of the Aisne / Chemin des Dames 27th May - 6th June 1918 (Operation Blücher- Yorke)**.

### Operation Blücher-Yorck

This was the third phase of the German 1918 offensive as an attack on the French forces in the Aisne sector. The aim of this offensive was to focus French attention in this region and stop them from moving reserves further north to support the British defence in the Flanders-Lys battle sector.

The **Third Battle of the Aisne** (27 May - 2 June 1918) was launched with an artillery bombardment by over 4,500 German guns. 17 infantry divisions attacked the Allied Front Line. The Allies comprised four French divisions and three British divisions in the Front Line, with 9 divisions in the rear as support. The Foresters had been in a much-needed rest area but were called in to hold the poor defensive position of Chemin des Dames Ridge.

The opening day of this battle was savage. Scrolling through the list of casualties on the Soissons Memorial<sup>5</sup> where George Clayton is honoured, it is heart rending to see the same date – 27<sup>th</sup> May – recurring time and time again. Many battalions were completely wiped out during the German bombardment and subsequent gas attack. The bridges over the Aisne river were captured and the Germans advanced approximately ten miles by the end of the first day.

*'By the end of the battle on 31 May, the battalion had all but ceased to exist, with 680 all ranks either casualties or captured. George was one of many who died in those dark days for the 1st Battalion. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Soissons Memorial.'*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Trevor Frecknall 'Collingham and District in the Great War'

<sup>5</sup> Each War memorial has its own list of casualties on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website ([www.CWGC.org](http://www.CWGC.org))

<sup>6</sup> Nottinghamshire County Council Roll of Honour website



**George H Clayton is remembered on the Soissons Memorial, Aisne, France (Stone no 21 B) and the St John Baptist Church Parishioners' Plaque and Roll of Honour, Collingham.**

#### Other war time references to Claytons:

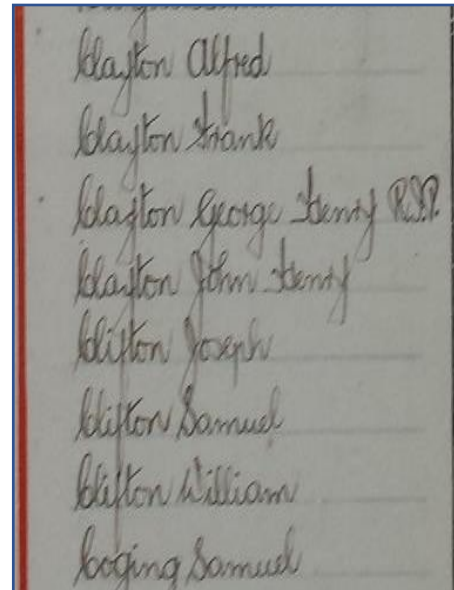
**There are four Claytons are listed on the South Collingham Roll of Honour in St John Baptist Church (extract right) :**

George Henry Clayton (RIP)

Alfred Clayton<sup>7</sup> (George's cousin)

Frank Clayton (George's brother)

John Henry Clayton 1894 - 1944 (son of William and Mary Clayton. William was Henry Clayton's brother and George, Alfred and Frank's cousin).



#### Newark Rural Tribunals

Being farmers, their occupations gave the Claytons exemption from military service. This did not prevent the Newark Rural Tribunals from demanding they sent all available men to enlist:

**16 March 1916:** '... Collingham farmer Henry Clayton, who already had a son (George) serving, was told to send the other, Frank, 26, to enlist on 1 April – leaving him with no help ...'

**7 June 1916:** 'Henry Clayton, Collingham, is told he could not appeal to this Tribunal for his son Frank, 26, to avoid military service because he had already been refused by the Nottingham Tribunal ...'

**15<sup>th</sup> August 1916:** 'As for the cases ... farmer's son Frank Clayton of Collingham was ordered to enlist immediately ...'

**Tuesday 18 December 1917:** Newark Rural Tribunal heard that five Collingham men – W Pridmore, J H Taylor, A Millns, H Carter and **J H Clayton** – plus A C Brown of Danethorpe, had been too busy to join the Volunteer Regiment as instructed. All are told that if they do not find the time, they would be sent to fight in the War. The clerk was asked to write to all exempted men in Collingham district, asking them to join the Volunteers or to attend before the Tribunal to explain why they had not done so.'

Extracted from Trevor Frecknall's book 'Collingham and district during the Great War' published 2015



<sup>7</sup> Please note T Frecknall's references to Alfred Clayton on p28 of his book are incorrect. He has given Alfred the wrong mother/family until 1911. It is correct Alfred worked on Turf Moor Farm in 1911.

## Alfred Clayton (1897-1982)



Above: Alfred Clayton in his 70s outside Brickyard Cottages c 1975

Alfred Clayton was the son of George Clayton (1856-1941) and Rose Clayton (1872-1949). He was one of 9 children. Although born in Collingham, his early childhood was spent in Fairfax Street, Bracebridge Heath, near Lincoln, where his father was a gasworks labourer for a time. The family moved back to Collingham around 1907 and rented part of Brickyard Cottages on Brough Lane from Charles Constable Curtis of Langford Hall. The dates of tenancy tie in with when the Hickman family (see John Thomas Hickman's KIA 1918 profile) vacated Brickyard Cottages to emigrate to Canada. By 1911, Alfred, aged 13, was already at work as an agricultural labourer on Turf Moor Farm near Danethorpe along with his older brother, Walter (born 1892). It is likely they still lived at home and walked the couple of miles there and back.

### War Service: Pte. A Clayton

At the time of writing, Alfred Clayton's war record is proving a puzzle. His son, John, has always understood that his father was in the Sherwood Foresters. This was borne out by Trevor Frecknall's research which states Alfred began with the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry (SRY) and later transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion Sherwood Foresters. The medal index card shown here (right) would seem to be his:

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
CLAYTON	Notts SRYeo * Sher Rang C of Hrs	Pte -1-	2282 -1- 275586
Alfred			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	* CY/105B	453	Dis 25.6.19
BRITISH	-1-	-1-	
15 STAR	6Y/11/32	109	
S. H. J. List CY/534			
Theatre of War first served in		3/ Egypt	
Date of entry therein		27-4-15	

This Alfred Clayton joined up early in the war – 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1914 and was posted to Egypt on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1915. From there the SRY were sent to Gallipoli, Turkey, as dismounted infantry. The Rangers served the rest of the campaign in Egypt and Palestine under General Allenby.



Above: Private A Clayton's medals. Left to right: 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal (reverse side) and the Victory Medal  
 Photo with kind permission of John Clayton (Alfred's son)



However, Alfred's medals (above and left) indicate that John's father served from 1914/15 with the Northamptonshire Regiment. This Pte Clayton was in 'Class Z' at the end of the war – meaning he was held in reserve in case the Armistice failed. Amazingly, there are over 40 Alfred Claytons listed as having served in WW1!

Left: the reverse of Alfred Clayton's star reads No 19496 North'n R  
 This is at odds with the service number on his medal index card and regiment

What is certain is that Alfred Clayton of Brickyard Cottages, Brough, was wounded twice, once in his arm and later a more severe shrapnel wound to the abdomen. His family believe he was transferred across the channel to a military hospital on the Kent coast, although the family don't know exactly when or which one.

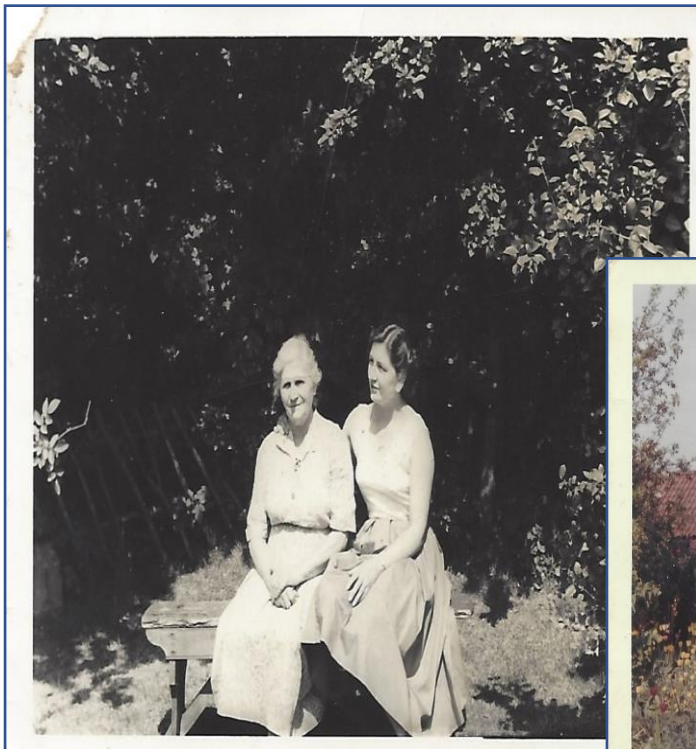
## After the War

After being discharged in June 1919, 22-year-old Alfred returned home wounded and most likely traumatised from the events he had seen. His son, John, says he never talked about the war.



He came home to Brickyard Cottages and initially took up agricultural labouring work again. In the early 1920s his brother Walter, who had emigrated to Canada, persuaded him to start afresh over there but Alfred returned to Brough after a year, finding it too cold and unable to settle. He initially went back to being an agricultural labourer and later worked for the county council, maintaining a stretch of road between Brough, Langford and Swinderby.

At some stage in the mid-1920s, he began a courtship with Lizzie, his cousin George's widow who lived in the adjoining cottage. They married in 1927 and had four children in addition to Lizzie's two, Gladys and Tom, from her marriage to George. Betty, Margaret, Annie Rose and John Alfred Clayton were all raised in Brickyard Cottages. Alfred and Lizzie lived there all their lives. Alfred worked as a foreman for Notts County Council from the 1930s until retirement. Lizzie died in 1971 and Alfred in 1982. They are buried in St John the Baptist Churchyard.



*Above: Lizzie Clayton with her daughter Betty*



*Above: Alfred (right) in his garden with his son-in-law Robert and daughter Betty in 1960*

HP 28/3/2018