

IN MEMORY OF CYRIL EDWIN CLARKE

DIED IN ACTION 2 JANUARY 1920

Unknown Harbury address

NO PLAQUE

Cyril was born in 1889, near the Boot and Shoe shop, Warwick Road, Wellesbourne Hastings, Stratford-Upon-Avon, to be more exact. Though his mother probably delivered her baby in a more peaceful room than the shop floor, there's a certain charm to think of an infant squalling into the world to be met by rows and stacks of leather and laces.

Yet though this would seem a premonition of a life spent stitching soles together, patterning leather and toughening boots, by 1911 Cyril was a Post Office Sorting Clerk and Telegraphist, now living at Wellesborne, Warwick.

His vocation, though a far cry from his initial origins, set him on the road to love. His wife, Dorothy Brooks, who he married in 1912, was a Post Office assistant. It was Dorothy who linked Cyril to Harbury. She was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Brooks, who lived in Highfield Cottages, Harbury, with John a Railway Signaller at Harbury Station, and a long standing bell ringer in Harbury church.

The couple were living in Marlborough, Wiltshire, when Dorothy gave birth to their daughter Margaret Joan in 1915. But Cyril was not able to spend much time with his infant daughter, joining the Royal Engineers on 10 December.

Whilst most of the other Harbury men fought in France, Cyril was stationed with the 48th Signal Company in Mesopotamia, a region today comprised of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait. This rich stretch of river-land is considered one of the cradles of civilisation, seat and burial ground of ancient empires. It was here that Cyril fought a bloody, painfully modern war.

Cyril also fought several times in North Persia (Iran), where he contracted, and survived, three bouts of Malaria. This war, the Middle Eastern theatre of the First World War, lasted beyond the armistice of Europe. When his friends were returning home from service, Cyril and his company fought on.

He died from pneumonia, in Basra on 2 January 1920. He is buried in the Tehran War cemetery and commemorated on their roll of honour, the clerk turned soldier.

Dorothy was living in Ivy Cottage, Marlborough, when she heard of her husband's death. He had been scheduled to return home to her at the end of February.

There is no evidence that Cyril ever lived in Harbury, so his place on the war memorial is most likely explained by him being the Brooks' son-in-law.



Harbury World War 1 Memorial Trail

Remembering the men of Harbury parish who fell during the first world war in service of their country.

