

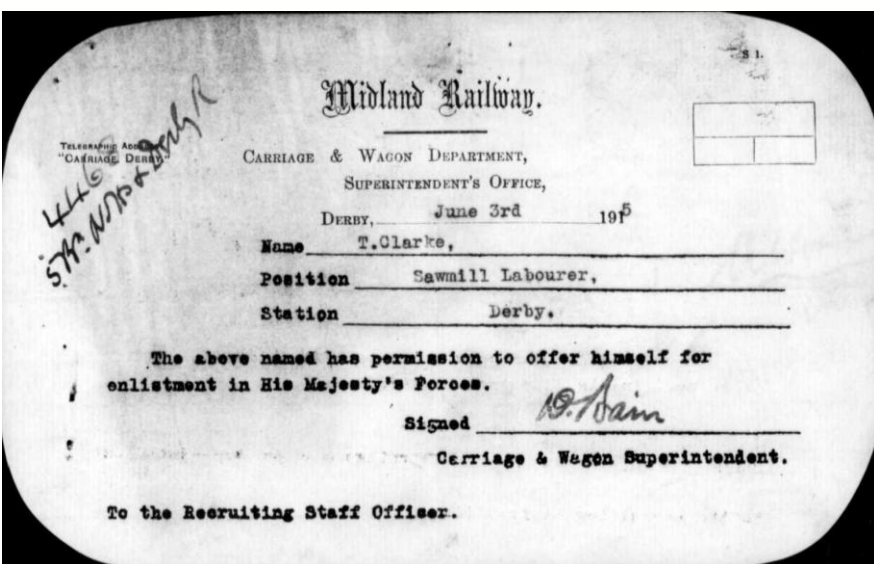


Thomas George Clarke

54 Statham Street

Thomas Clarke's address when he volunteered on 4 June 1915 was 55 Quarn Street (just off Kedleston Road near the Horse & Groom PH). At the time he was living with his parents – Samuel and Elizabeth Clarke – he was one of five surviving children.

He was aged 23 on enlistment and had to get special permission from his employer in order to be released from his job as a Labourer at the Sawmill with the Midland Railway Carriage and Wagon Department.



Thomas' release letter from the Midland Railway
(© The National Archives)

Assigned to the 5th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters he began his training, which was to last nine months. In March 1916 he set off for France with the British Expeditionary Force, bound for the trenches.

It has to be said his active service in France in March 1916 not get off to a heroic start!

Thomas recorded what happened in his own words on the medical form he had to complete:

"I sprained my ankle coming off the boat on Saturday evening March 4th 1916 by putting my foot in a hole...I remain yours truly...Pte T G Clarke".



Thomas Clarke in his Sherwood Foresters' uniform. Photograph kindly provided by Peter Clarke, his youngest son. Probably taken in 1915 or early 1916 before he left for the front it is hard to believe that Thomas was 23 when this photograph was taken.

Unfortunately Thomas went on to develop a heart problem (a Valvular Heart Disorder) whilst serving and his family believe he may also have inhaled gas which affected his breathing for the rest of his life.



Thomas George Clarke

continued

In September 1916 he was transferred to the Sherwood Foresters' Reserve battalion and then in February 1917 to the Royal Engineers, Railway Operating Division. He served with them as a "Sapper", based in Britain, until he was discharged in August 1918 as no longer fit for military duty. He returned to work for the Midland Railway as a Foreman.

In April 1917, whilst on leave, he married Hannah Sherwin who was a resident of the Railway Servant Orphanage on Ashbourne Road. When Thomas was first discharged he and Hannah lived at 41 Statham Street with Horace and Sarah Cockayne – Mr Cockayne was a witness at their marriage.

Thomas and Hannah subsequently lived on Brook Street where their eldest children were born and the family retained its association with the West End for many years. In 1938 Thomas, Hannah and their young family moved from Brook Street to 54 Statham Street, along with Henry Hunt who lived with them as a lodger for many years. It was the youngest of these nine children, Peter, who contacted us in June 2015. Peter tells us that he was born in the cellar of 54 Statham Street in 1944 during an air raid warning.

Peter was able to tell us some more about his father: *"Dad was a very good leather worker repairing all our boots and shoes, he had all the tools required to do so. His other hobby was watch repairs, it was not unusual*

for Dad to pull his watch apart, clean it and put it all back together, his watch always kept perfect time. My nephew in London now has Dad's watch as well as our old mantle clock".

In 1959 Thomas (now widowed) and Peter moved from Statham Street to a smaller house in Hawke Street.



Thomas with his son Peter at 4 Hawke Street in 1960, by kind permission of Peter Clarke.

In 1961 Peter left for Australia emigrating under the Big Brother Movement – a scheme that sponsored young men from Britain to work on farms or in the Australian outback. Thomas died 2 years later in 1963, aged seventy-one.