

**The life and times  
of  
David Clare**



**1870 – 1932**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was prepared with the sole purpose of providing my father, Ronald Clare with some background information on the life and times of his father, David Clare. It is written from that perspective and does not attempt to trace the lives of David's children or other relatives.

It is for private family use only with no intention to publish. Some information has been obtained from the internet and extracted from the work of others.

I commenced researching the family history in 1999-2000 and soon hit a brick wall. However I did post a message on a genealogy forum on the internet with limited success.

While on holidays in July 2010, my wife, Leanne and I joined the local library, which had access to Ancestry.com. The range of records available included the British Army WW1 Pension Records. We had a suspicion that David Clare had been in the Army Veterinary Corps. A search of his name in the pension records revealed five documents, one of which gave the names of his wife and four children at the time of his enlistment in 1914. This was the start of further research, which I thought had concluded on 27 July 2010 and I was ready to finalise this document for presentation to Ronald.

Incredibly, I received a telephone call from Mrs Jean Brown on 28 July 2010. Jean was trying to contact an Oliver Clare who lives in Brisbane based on advice she had received from Sarah Harper who had responded to the genealogy forum ten years ago.

Jean is the daughter of Gladys (Mary) Clare, who is the daughter of David Clare and his second wife Jessie Clarke. This makes Gladys known as Mary, Ronald's half-sister.

Jean provided me with her research and some family photographs. I have incorporated these in the document and included Jean's research in its entirety in the attachments. We are very grateful to Jean for this information as my original work had some big gaps in it.

The story is by no means complete and may be subject to further update and correction.

Oliver Clare  
15 August 2010.

## EARLY YEARS

David Clare was born on 10 January 1870 at 185 King Edward's Road, Ladywood, Birmingham, Warwickshire, England.

His father was George Clare (1831-1890), a well-known artist who specialised in still-life and landscape painting and his mother was Maria Elizabeth Bowen who went by the name of Elizabeth. They were married in the Aston District, Warwickshire in 1852 and were both aged 39 in 1870.

At the time, David was the youngest of seven children and his siblings were:

- Oliver                17
- Mary                 16
- George              14
- Walter               11
- Alice                 9
- Anne                 4

George and Elizabeth had another son named Arthur in 1875.

In the 1870s the centre of Birmingham was surrounded by working-class housing in municipalities such as Ladywood. Houses were built of local brick and roofed with slate however, much was quickly and poorly built in cramped estates. Many dwellings were back-to-back, two-up-two-down or even one-up-one-down, with shared outside toilets and washing facilities in a communal courtyard. Poverty was rife and living conditions were grim.

The 1871 Census indicates that Oliver was a soldier in the 4<sup>th</sup> Kings Own Regiment, Mary was a mothers' assistant and young Alice was a nursemaid. Both Oliver and George (junior) followed in their father's footsteps and became still-life artists, with George painting under the name of Vincent Clare to avoid confusion with George (senior). Mary may have also been a fine artist.

The 1881 Census (when David was 11) shows that he was still a scholar and the family was living in Court Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon.

When he was old enough, David went on to work with animals, initially in domestic servant positions (*groom and coachman*) and later, on farms (*herdsman, farm stockman, cowman and farm labourer*).

David's father, George died on 10 November 1890 aged 59 and his mother, Elizabeth died on 27 May 1898 aged 68. They both died in New Barnet, Hertfordshire and were buried at New Southgate, London.

## FIRST MARRIAGE

David married Alice Maria Hedges on 24 September 1888 at Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire when he was 18 years old and she was 20. Alice was born on 22 September 1868 in Cheddington, Buckinghamshire. The marriage was registered in Leighton Buzzard (July-Sept 1888 Vol. 3b Page 663).

The 1891 Census records David as living in Mill Road, Leighton Buzzard. His age is stated as 26, although David would have been 21 at the time and his occupation was *Groom*.

The job of the groom was to feed, groom and exercise horses, and if there was no separate coachman, to drive and maintain the carriage. The groom was expected to know all about the care of horses, from grooming and training to basic veterinary medicine.

David and Alice had eight children (or perhaps nine):

Sidney	born 5 March 1889 in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire
Nellie Elizabeth	born 19 March 1890 in Cheddington, Buckinghamshire
Alice Maude	born 12 Sept 1892 in Cropwell Butler, Nottinghamshire
David George	born 12 July 1894 in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire
Donald	born 28 Jan 1896 in Chesthall, Staffordshire
Frederick	born 24 April 1898 in Castle Bromwich, Warwickshire
Adelaide Beatrice	born 5 April 1900 in Castle Bromwich, Warwickshire
Arthur Edward	born 4 Sept 1902 in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

There may have been another son named Arthur born circa 1904.

The 1901 Census records David and family living in the Cottage on Hodge Hill Common, Castle Bromwich. His occupation had progressed from *Groom* to *Coachman (Domestic)*. Other people at the same address included the families of the *Gamekeeper*, *Assistant Gamekeeper* and an *Ordinary Agricultural Labourer*.

Alice died at the age of 41 on 17 October 1909 at Copt Heath, Knowle, Warwickshire. The death was registered at Solihull (Oct-Dec 1909 Vol. 6d Page 323). She was buried on 21 October 1909 at Solihull, Warwickshire.

## SECOND MARRIAGE

David wasted no time and married Jessie Clarke on 9 February 1910 at Sparkhill, Birmingham, when he was 40 and she was 21. Jessie was born on 24 September 1888 in Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull. The marriage was registered at Solihull (Jan-March 1910 Vol. 6d Page 914).

It is fascinating that Jessie Clarke was born on the same date that David married his first wife, Alice. They had four children:

Walter                      born 14 Sept 1912 in Kirkby Muxloe, Leicestershire

Gladys (Mary)            born 1 Aug 1914 in Great Bowden, Leicestershire

David                        born 11 April 1917 in Kinver, Staffordshire

Jessie                        born 8 July 1919 in Kinver, Staffordshire

David may also have had a child named Elsie with another woman.

When David enlisted in the army, Jessie and four of his children [Adelaide, Arthur, Walter and Gladys (Mary)] were living at 34 Main Street, Great Bowden, Market Harborough, Leicestershire.



David (aged 45) and his wife Jessie (nee Clarke)



Jessie died on 11 December 1925 at the age of 37 in Catherine-De-Barnes, Solihull.

The death was registered in Solihull (Oct-Dec 1925 Vol. 6d Page 828).

She was buried on 16 December 1925 in a Clarke family plot at Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull.

## **ARMY SERVICE WORLD WAR 1**

David joined the British Army on 6 November 1914 at the age of 44 years 10 months, although the age quoted on his enlistment papers (Short Service Attestation – Army Form B2065) was 40 years 10 months. The term of his enlistment was three years unless the war lasted longer, then it was until the end of the war. Form B2065 shows that David was a good citizen, having never been sentenced to imprisonment by the civil power. It also shows that David had not served in the military prior to this.

David's physical examination reveals that he was 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighed 141 pounds (64 kg) and had blue eyes and a fresh complexion. At nearly 45 years old his hair was *'getting grey'*. His chest was 36 inches when fully expanded with a range of expansion of 2½ inches. David's religion was Church of England.

David was considered fit for service because he could see the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs were healthy; he had free use of his joints and limbs, and he had declared that he was not subject to fits of any description.

David was approved for enlistment on 10 November 1914 and appointed to the Army Veterinary Corps. His service number was SE/911 and his army rank was Horse Keeper (equivalent to Private).

The SE prefix to his regimental number was used to indicate special enlistment for war service only, for a minimum of three years or the duration of the war, to distinguish from the normal 12 years regular enlistment. Special enlistment could also refer to a man who had been recruited because he possessed specialist civilian trade or professional qualifications.

The uniform for the Army Veterinary Corps was:



And the badge was:



## ***Horse Keeper***

The role of Horse Keeper was crucial in WW1 and David would have taken care of three types of horses:

- draft animals for field artillery and general transportation purposes
- cavalry mounts and
- mounts for officers' use and other general duties - many army officers had at least one mount at their disposal; some had several.

The rate of injury and death of these animals was high and the AVC had the unpleasant task of fixing them up or putting them out of their misery.

## ***Service***

David's Military History Sheet indicates that his service at home and abroad totalled 524 days:

<b>Country</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Days</b>
Home	06.11.14	20.03.15	-	135
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force	21.03.15	27.01.16	-	313
Home	28.01.16	12.04.16	-	76

## ***Service Abroad***

David embarked from England on 21 March 1915 and disembarked at Alexandria, Egypt on 2 April 1915. He was with the 18<sup>th</sup> Mobile Vet Section, which was attached to the 29<sup>th</sup> Division. Mobile Veterinary Sections were allotted to each Cavalry Brigade and Infantry Division. It was their duty to collect all sick or wounded animals within the formation and to clear them from the fighting zone as quickly as possible and to evacuate them to the veterinary hospitals where they could be treated. Most animals suffered from battle injuries, debility, exhaustion, mange and for the first time, gas attacks.

The 29<sup>th</sup> Division was formed in the Stratford-Warwick-Leamington-Rugby-Nuneaton area in January-March 1915. Originally intended for France, pressure on Lord Kitchener to launch a ground attack at Gallipoli forced him to deploy the Division there. The Division embarked at Avonmouth on 16-22 March 1915 and went via Malta to Alexandria. On 7 April re-embarkation began for the first units to have arrived at Egypt for the move to Mudros. The Division landed at Cape Helles on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915.



In David's case, he embarked from Alexandria on 12 April 1915 and disembarked at Gallipoli on 2 May 1915.

### ***Gallipoli Campaign***

The Gallipoli campaign is widely regarded as a disaster. It is generally assumed that one major failing of the Allied forces in the Dardanelles was that they underestimated the ability of the Turks. In fact, the Turkish Army was weak in the region and was poorly led. On 24 March 1915 the command of the Turks was passed to General Liman von Sanders (a German). He had to defend a coastline of 240 km with just 84,000 men. However, its fighting capacity was 62,000 men. The troops that were there were poorly equipped and supplies were poor. Sanders could not call on one plane to assist him. He placed his men away from the beaches much to the consternation of the Turkish officers. They argued that there were so few beaches that the Allies could land on, that Turkish troops were better being placed on the beaches or immediately above them.

The landings started on 25 April. The British landed unopposed on three beaches at Cape Helles. Another landing was resisted but the Turks were defeated. But the landing at Sedd-el-Bahr was a disaster. The British were caught in the fire of well dug-in Turkish machine gunners. Many British troops could not get ashore and were killed at sea.

By May 1915 in Helles, the British had lost 20,000 men out of 70,000. Six thousand had been killed. The medical facilities were completely overwhelmed by the casualties. Trench warfare occurred along with the fear of dysentery and the impact of the heat. One British soldier wrote that Helles '*looked like a midden and smelt like an open cemetery*'.

Flies were a major problem, which worsened as the weather became warmer, and they were a prime cause of the stomach complaints that were universal. Virtually all personal accounts of the Gallipoli campaign mention the difficulty of eating food before the flies swarmed all over it. The relatively small areas of land occupied by the soldiers were heavily contaminated, with poor latrine facilities and dead bodies (both human and animal) providing plenty of opportunities for flies to pick up germs and infect the men.

The climate caused suffering to the men with extremes of heat and cold. The plight of the wounded waiting to be evacuated from the trenches, battlefields or beaches meant they suffered the discomfort of being burned during the day and being bitterly cold at night. During the summer months intestinal complaints flourished, while from September respiratory complaints increased dramatically. Fierce winds were also liable to blow up. The great blizzard that raged between 26 and 29 November 1915 led to 16,000 admissions for frostbite and exposure. One officer found 30 Worcesters frozen to death in a single trench.

The shortage of water was a major problem, with large quantities having to be shipped all the way from Egypt. The men were often dehydrated and the water shortage had important hygiene implications. It was difficult to wash up mess tins effectively, and this combined with the crowded conditions led to rapid cross-infection.

Another problem was the monotonous diet that was unsuited to the warm climate and lacking in vitamins. The Frey Bentos meat (which usually disintegrated into an unappetising runny, greasy mess in the heat) was described in the *Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission* as being 'very, very salty and very stringy bully'. Bread was often in short supply and the universal hard biscuits exacerbated and caused dental problems that the medical services were ill-equipped to deal with as dentists were in very short supply. Dental health was not regarded as an important consideration by the British Army and many men were ground down by their inability to consume the rations provided.

All of these elements contributed to the wearing down of the men and as the campaign progressed, disease became a greater problem than wounds, although nowhere on the peninsula was safe from shell and gun fire.

David endured these horrible conditions from May 1915 to January 1916.

On the nights of 7-8 January 1916, the Division was evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt. As well as the thousands of men involved, 3,689 horses and mules were taken off, although many more were shot and left behind. Orders were received on 25 February for a move to France and the Division remained on the Western Front for the remainder of the war.

David's Casualty Form (Army Form B.108) indicates that he did not follow the 29<sup>th</sup> Division to France because he was admitted to the 15<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital in Mudros with rheumatism on 16 January 1916.

## **Mudros**

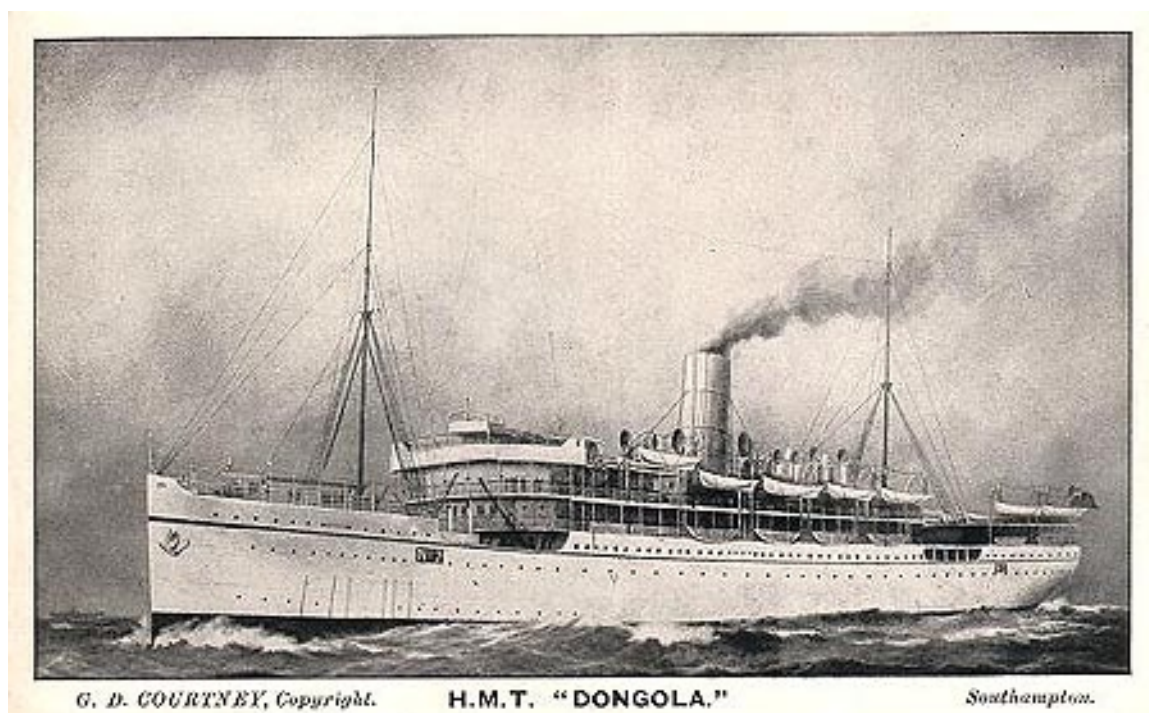
Mudros comprised a small Greek port on the Mediterranean island of Lemnos. It gained wartime significance with the determination of the Allies - chiefly the British and largely through the enthusiasm of [Winston Churchill](#) in the early part of 1915 to attempt to seize control of the Dardanelles Straits, some 50km away.

The harbour at Lemnos was broad enough to sustain British and French warships, although it was recognised at an early stage that there was a potentially troublesome absence of suitable military facilities. Troops intended for Gallipoli were required to train in Egypt; similarly the port found it difficult to cope with casualties incurred during the ill-starred Gallipoli campaign.

Once the campaign was called off in evident failure at the close of 1915 Mudros' importance receded, although it remained the Allied base for the blockade of the Dardanelles for the duration of the war.

### ***Invalided to England***

David was invalided to England on 18 January 1916 at the age of 46 and embarked from Mudros on HM Transport 'Dongola'.



The 'Dongola' was owned by the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O Shipping Co.). It was built in 1905 by Barclay Curle, Whiteinch in Glasgow. Some history of the ship follows:

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1905 | registered and used for India trooping.                     |
| 1911 | attended Coronation Naval Review.                           |
| 1915 | used as hospital ship in the Dardanelles campaign.          |
| 1920 | beached in River Thames after colliding with the Wimbledon. |
| 1923 | undertook relief work after Yokohama earthquake.            |
| 1926 | sold and was broken up.                                     |

## ***Discharge and Pension***

An Army Medical Board report dated 7 April 1916 indicated that David should be discharged, the cause of which was '*Chronic Rheumatism*'. The date and place of origin of the affliction was uncertain but it was '*Not result of nor aggravated by Military Service*'.

This was despite the 16,000 cases of frostbite and exposure on the Gallipoli peninsula. Rheumatism can be caused by cold injury, which does not have to be severe. It is also interesting that on enlistment, his medical examination indicated that David had free use of his joints and limbs.

David was admitted to pension on 1 June 1916. He was given credit for 1 year 145 days service for pension purposes, although his total service was 1 year 159 days. David's Statement of the Services of No. SE/911 shows that on 27 March 1916 he was awarded 14 days detention and this time was deducted from his pension entitlement.

The Pension Card (Chelsea Number 85452) shows that the rheumatism '*Prevents ¼ permanently.*'

The board's decision was that David receive 4 shillings and 8 pence per week pension. [As a comparison, in 1914 the average wage for a basic 58 hours working week was 16 shillings and 9 pence. By 1918 the working week was 52 hours and the average weekly wage was 1 pound 10 shillings and 6 pence].

The Pension Card also shows that he was of good character, had four children and resided at Packington Lane, Coleshill, Birmingham.

## ***Medals***

David was awarded three medals for his service:

- Victory medal
- British War medal
- 1914-15 Star medal

He qualified for the 1914-15 Star for service abroad before 31 December 1915. According to the following Medal Index Card, David entered the *Theatre of War II* on 3 April 1915. Theatres of war were usually numbered in Arabic numerals, not Roman numerals. The number II (2) referred to the Balkans, including the Dardanelles and Macedonia.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
CLARE David	AVC	Pte	SE/911
Medal.	Roll	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	RAVC/101 B19/1001		
BRITISH	do	do	
15 STAR	RAVC/60 4410		
emp list AVC/24			
Theatre of War first served in IV			
Date of entry therein 3-4-15			

K 1330.

Medal Index Card

When a World War 1 medal was issued, it was issued with a Service Number, Rank, Name and Regiment.

The medals look like this:



From Left 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

### ***The 1914-15 Star***

Sanctioned in 1918, this star is very similar to the 1914 star except it carries the '1914-1915' date across its centre. The 1914-15 Star was awarded to British and imperial forces for service in any theatre of war up to 31 December 1915. No clasp was associated with this award.

### ***The British War Medal 1914-1920***

The standard silver war medal for The First World War, the British War Medal was awarded to all forces of the Empire and given to everyone who had served in uniform or had rendered 'approved' service. Unlike the previous stars it could be awarded singly.

### ***The Victory Medal***

This is specifically the British version of the Allied Victory Medal as all members of the Allies agreed to issue a similar medal – thus the Victory Medal of Britain, France, Belgium, Japan, USA and other Allies such as the Czech Republic all bear the same symbolic figure of Victory and the same rainbow-coloured ribbon. The reverse dates on this medal are '1914-1919' to include the Russian Civil War.

## **AFTER THE WAR**

Following David's discharge from the army, the family moved to Kinver, Staffordshire. Kinver forms a southern outpost of Staffordshire, bordering on Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester. It has an industrial past, the demise of which started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The final collapse, in 1882, caused a large reduction in population, leaving something of a 'ghost town'.

The building of an electric tramway in 1901 connected Kinver with the West Midlands network, producing cheap transport which opened up the area to tourism and commuting. Investment in property began on a new scale. Thousands of visitors went to Kinver as a '*green lung*', and the promotional literature for the tramway christened the area '*The Switzerland of the Midlands*'.

Jessie (wife) was a milliner and together with David ran five shops in Kinver that were thought to be owned by her (the Clarke) family. Along with millinery, they sold food and other household items. They had a pony and trap on which there were advertising signs to say that the Clares sold ice-cream. The businesses must have been successful because they lived a privileged life. They had domestic help, owned the first motor car in the district and the children had horses.



The Clare shops were in High Street, Kinver:



David owned a Trojan Utility Car, which was available in only one body style, a two door tourer, with a choice of three colours. The non-removable wheels were steel pressings with solid tyres. It cost £230 when announced in 1922 (£5 more than the Austin Seven), but by 1924 the Utility Car cost £157 (£8 less than the Austin). Advertising slogans at the time included '*The car for the man who can't afford a car!*' and '*Can you afford to walk?*'



Jessie used to nurse sick neighbours and it is believed that she contracted tuberculosis from which she died in 1925.

After her death, life became very hard for all concerned, not least because David '*went to pieces*'. This is understandable given that he survived the horrors of Gallipoli, suffered chronic rheumatism, had just buried his second wife and was taking care of four young children. These days it would be called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The privileged life quickly became a thing of the past and later on David seems to have returned to working with animals on various farms. Not much information is available about him until 1927.

### THIRD MARRIAGE

David married Eliza Copson on 7 September 1927 at Meridan, Warwickshire.



David and his wife Eliza (nee Copson) on their wedding day

They had two children:

Ronald                      born 11 January 1928 at 'Yew Tree Cottage' in  
Kingswood, Lapworth, Warwickshire

Frank                        born 30 September 1930 in Kingswood, Lapworth

At the time of his marriage David was 57 and Eliza was 26 years old, even though the Marriage Certificate states that he was 50. Eliza was born on 21 June 1901 in Bell Green, Coventry. They were both working at Dale Farm, Fillongley, Warwickshire – she was a housekeeper and David was a *cowman*.



## FINAL CURTAIN

David died on 5 January 1932 (5 days before his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday) at Dudley Road Hospital, Birmingham. At the time of his death, he was living at 30 School Lane, Castle Bromwich.

The cause of death was '*bronchial pneumonia*' and '*chronic bronchitis*'. David was buried at the Parish Church of St Mary and St Margaret, Castle Bromwich.

After David died, Eliza took her own and various step-children to live in Coventry where she had to get a job. Life was very hard for her and the children. She later remarried and had three more children. She lived to the age of 91 and died in 1992 at Yarmouth, Norfolk.

## SUMMARY

During his time on Earth, David had three wives:

Name	Married	David's Age	Wife's Age
Alice Hedges	1888-1909	18	20
Jessie Clarke	1910-1925	40	21
Eliza Copson	1927-1932	57	26

fathered at least 14 children:

- Sidney 1889-1918
- Nellie (Elizabeth) 1890-1961
- Alice (Maude) 1892-1966
- David George 1894-19??
- Donald 1896-1974
- Frederick 1898-1980
- Adelaide Beatrice 1900-1986
- Arthur Edward 1902-1973
- Walter 1912-1989
- Gladys (Mary) 1914-2012
- David (known as Dick) 1917-1990
- Jessie 1919-1942
- Ronald 1928-
- Frank 1930-1990

served in the Army Veterinary Corps and was awarded three medals for his service in Gallipoli during the period May 1915 to January 1916.