

ARTHUR CLARKE

Arthur Clarke was born in Hammeringham in 1879. His father Joseph was an agricultural labourer, born in Partney.

In 1881 the family lived in Hammeringham with Arthur's aunt and cousin.

By 1891 the family had moved to Partney and Arthur lived there with his brothers Albert and Frank. In 1901, aged 22, he was still living with his family in Partney and working as an agricultural labourer. He was still living at home in Partney in 1911, aged 33, still employed as a farm labourer.

His brother Albert enlisted in the Royal Navy and his brother Herbert served in the army and they are also recorded on the memorial in St Nicholas Church.

Arthur enlisted in Spilsby in the Durham Light Infantry on 23rd March 1916, aged 37 years and 10 months. He was 5' 3½" tall with a 38" chest and weighed 125 lbs. His number was 45541.

He was sent to France on 29th July 1916 and attached to the 14th Durham Light Infantry on 24th August 1916.

On 18th September 1916 he was killed in action on the Somme at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette.

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette was notable for the introduction of the tank in warfare. These early tanks proved notoriously unreliable during testing and application. Weighing approximately 28 tons, they could only move forward at a snails pace, a half-mile per hour. They were impervious to small arms fire, and to a lesser extent machine gun fire (metal chips would fly inside the tank, resulting in the issue of chain-mail visors to the operators, uncomfortable and seldom worn). However shell-fire could (and did) easily destroy a tank.

The tank attack was preceded by an artillery-bombardment designed to leave unshelled lanes open for the advance of the new mobile weapon.

On 11 September 1916, 49 tanks began to move slowly into position in the line. As a measure of their fundamental unreliability, 27 tanks were unable to make it as far as the front line. Of the 22 that did, a further 7 failed to work at zero hour. Thus 15 of the 49 tanks rolled slowly into No Man's Land with the start of the attack on 15 September.

Despite this, the British Expeditionary Force, together with the Canadian Corps, made initial gains of some 2 km within the first three days, something of an achievement at the time, and particularly during the Battle of the Somme. Led by

tanks the villages of Martinpuich, Flers and Courcellette fell to the Allies, as did the much sought-after High Wood.

Nevertheless, a combination of poor weather and extensive German reinforcements halted the British and Canadian advance on 17 September and the Allies again suffered heavy casualties, including Raymond Asquith, the son of the British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. The attack was called off on 22 September.

Arthur was awarded both the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial.



The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916.

The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on 1 August 1932.