

Waylen: How did he arrive in Salonika?

by Malcolm Waldron

Just to remind you that, amongst all the people you met on Wednesday, I was the one that gave you a lift back to the Tudor! I thought I'd drop you a line as I assumed that you would be able to pick up your messages in the UK since you've got a Google account. The reason I'm writing is to provide you with some clarification on something which you said puzzled you and which I promised to check out, namely how Henry ended up in Salonika. I'm happy to say that I've done a bit of digging around and I now have an answer!

When I was conscripted (actually I volunteered!) by John Dixon in the summer of 2013 to help draft biographies for the book of the Tewkesbury war dead the natural source of information at that time, especially of military records, was the Ancestry web site. Nothing else provided the same amount of information as Ancestry. When researching the background of soldiers the Holy Grail is to find a copy of their army service record (dead easy in Australia, their archives in Canberra are first class). As you may be aware, however, something like 70% to 80% (estimates vary) of the files of First World War soldiers from the UK were destroyed when a German incendiary bomb hit the warehouse where they were stored in Southwark during the Blitz in 1940. So to find any surviving pages of a service record is a major achievement.

When I researched Henry at the beginning of 2015 I checked Ancestry for his service record but found nothing, although other documents did come to light which were very useful (the first thing I did when I got home on Wednesday was to double check Ancestry for Henry's service record, but again without any success). However, I then decided to look at another web site (Findmypast.co.uk) which has developed rapidly of late but not timely enough to have been a source of biographical military research for John's book. However, I thought I would, nevertheless, check Findmypast and, somewhat to my surprise, I managed to find just a few pages of Henry's army service record, enough I think to provide the answer to your question. It's curious that there's a difference between the two web sites, especially as they were presumably working from the same source documents at the National Archives; it looks as though the transcription work by Findmypast was more rigorous and accurate than Ancestry.

Anyway let's try and clear up the question of Henry and Salonika. At the time of writing Henry's biography the surviving bits of his pension record on Ancestry indicated that he was transferred to Salonika at the beginning of 1916 although there was no mention of him being posted to another unit (the *1st/5th Glosters*, his parent battalion, was operating around Hebuterne in the Somme sector at that time). Hence I speculated in his biography that he might ultimately have been destined for one of the other Gloster battalions who had been sent to Salonika towards the end of 1915: the *2nd Glosters* (a regular battalion) or the *9th Glosters* (a Kitchener battalion).

However, the few pages of his service record that survived (**and can be found on Findmypast but not Ancestry**) tell quite a different story. It turns out that Henry was actually sent to Salonika with Lieutenant Colonel Clarke, GSO2 (General Staff Officer) **of 27th Division** (a completely different division, the *1st/5th Glosters* were in 48th Division). He embarked at Marseilles on 1st January 1916 on SS *Shropshire* (a troop ship that looks to have been used mainly by Australian units in the Mediterranean theatre judging by a handful of photos on the internet) and disembarked at Salonika on 8th January 1916. **His role was described as 'Servant' to Lieutenant Colonel A L C Clarke DSO** who was one of the General Staff Officers (there were normally three) in the Divisional HQ which, in total, typically comprised 15 officers and 67 men. **So Henry was serving in a fairly rarefied environment in the area that controlled and administered a division of some 18,000 to 20,000 men!** Henry must, therefore, have been considered a reliable and trustworthy soldier to have served in the HQ function although it's difficult to know how he was selected for the job or if he was somehow known previously to Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Lionel Crisp Clarke; ALCC had started his military career with the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders in the 1880s but seems to have spent the whole of the war on the General Staff in France and Macedonia (i.e. Salonika).

Whilst serving at Divisional HQ, Henry was admitted to hospital on 29th May 1916 with a diagnosis of 'Sick'. On 31st May he was admitted to the 21st Stationary Hospital in Salonika with 'Tubercle of lung'. Henry was then diagnosed with

Tuberculosis and sent on 12th June to Malta on the Hospital Ship *DunluceCastle*. On 3rd July Henry was transferred to England on another hospital ship, the name of which is not entirely clear on his service record. This links with his pension record which confirmed the original diagnosis when he got back to the UK and assessed that he **was no longer fit for active service, resulting in his discharge from the Army on 7th August 1916.**

Hopefully this has now tidied up most of the loose ends and that you have a clearer picture of what happened to Henry. I must admit I wasn't that hopeful on Wednesday but we struck lucky! I'm not sure what documentation you have, probably very little. Given the effort you've made to travel this far I'd be happy to let you have copies (electronic or hard copy – or both!) of the source documents that back up the research into Henry if that's something you'd like, let me know if you do.