

## Allan Alexander Clarke

Allan Alexander Clarke was born in Geelong in 1896, the son of John and Mary Isabella Clarke (nee Hales). John worked for the Railways and his family had lived in Charlton, Geelong and then Kilmore East. After schooling at the State School, Kilmore East, he joined the Railways as a Clerk. On October 6, 1914 Victorian Railways advised Allan, working at North Fitzroy, they had no objections to him volunteering to serve overseas.

Allan must have looked more mature for his age, as when he enlisted at Melbourne on October 8, 1914, he gave his age as 23 years and 9 months; five years more than his actual age. He was attached to the 1st Divisional Signals Company as Sapper Number 176, and embarked at Melbourne on December 22, bound for Egypt.

After further training, Allan landed at Gallipoli on Anzac Day, April 25, 1915, and served there until the evacuation in December, except for six weeks at Alexandra during August and September. During this period Allan was promoted to 2nd Corporal on August 24 1915 while attached to the 49th Battalion.

Back in Egypt in January 1916, Allan transferred to the 4th Signals Company and was promoted to Corporal on March 3, and to Sergeant on April 1, 1916. In June 1916, he was transferred to the Western Front where he served until February 1917.

The following report describes what it was like serving in the Signals Company, when Allan was awarded the Military Medal.

For constant devotion to duty between 14th November and 7th December 1916. Sergeant Clarke was in charge of a forward Test Dug-out on the route between York Trench and Brigade HQ at Flers. His section was, day and night, being continually destroyed by shell fire, but by his sense of duty coupled with determination and disregard for shell fire he was able to secure the routes and thus keep established the cables between Brigade HQ and York Trench.

Due to sickness, Allan spent time in hospital at Bulford Army Camp in Wiltshire from early February 1917, and returned to the Western Front in early July 1917

where he again joined the 49th Battalion. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on July 14 and undertook training at the 4th Divisional Signals School.

Allan was promoted to Lieutenant on January 11, 1918. During 1918 while serving at the Front he had several short periods of leave and sickness. He was wounded in action on August 13, 1918 but remained in the field. He spent a week in hospital at Rouen in September. For “conspicuous services rendered” Allan was mentioned in despatches in November 1918.

Allan returned from France to the Australian Headquarters in London on January 15, 1919, From late April he served at Sutton Veny in Wiltshire and was on leave in London in July to September 1919. He attended the British School of Telegraphy in London in October and returned to Melbourne on the Aeneas, arriving on January 9, for discharge on March 9, 1920.

It was likely that his older brother Percy was serving with him during 1918. Both attended the School of Telegraphy, returned to Melbourne on the same voyage, and were discharged on the same day. Their brother John Bernard Clarke also served overseas.

In addition to his Military Medal, Allan was awarded the British War Medal, Victory Medal and 1914/15 Star. His name is recorded on the Kilmore Shire Honour Roll at the Memorial Hall.

Allan took up a soldier settlement block at Red Cliffs in the early 1920s to grow fruit. He married Minnie Frances Cullen in 1925 and sold the farm in 1931. He then lived in Melbourne working as a salesman, and was living in Moorabbbin in 1967 when he received the Gallipoli Veterans Commemorative Medallion. Allan died at Heidelberg in 1972 aged 76 years.