

## Cyril Wilberforce St John CLARKE

Cyril Clarke was born on 24th February 1876. He studied Melbourne University in the late 1890s. Clarke served in the Boer War with the 4th Battalion Australian Commonwealth Horse as a lieutenant. He returned from this conflict in July 1902 and was admitted to practice on 7 December 1903.

He continued to serve in local militia, in both the 11<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse regiment from 1904-1913, and 20<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment from 1913-1914. Clarke married Elsie Vagg in 1912 and they lived at 'Werlong' in Cobden, where Clarke maintained a law practice, Backhouse and Clarke.

He enlisted for the First World War on 18th August 1914, aged 38 years, as a major in the 4th Light Horse, embarking on the *SS Wiltshire* in October 1914. Clarke's war service was dogged by poor health. He contracted paratyphoid in the Dardanelles at the end of April 1915, suffered enteric fever, and was hospitalised between June 1915 and August 1915 in both Alexandria and England. He returned to duty in Egypt at the end of March 1916. Between May 1916 and November 1916, he was placed at the 2nd Training Battalion in England. Several attempts were made to place him in command of the 29th Battalion but he was struck down by influenza, bronchitis and tonsillitis between November 1916 and March 1917. He was placed on the supernumerary list in June 1917, although he was delayed in appearing at a medical board hearing due to being detained by court martial work.

Clarke departed for Australia, at his own expense, on *SS Ionic* in July 1917, and arrived back in Melbourne in September 1917. He was discharged as medically unfit at a board proceeding in October 1917, and his appointment to the AIF terminated on 6th November 1917.

Clarke returned to practice as a solicitor in Colac both under the business name of St John Clarke & Eva, Murray street Colac, and also as C.W. St John Clarke, throughout the mid-1920s, 1930s and 1940s. He was the recipient of a Coronation Medal in 1937.

Clarke died on 8th December 1965 in Geelong, aged 89 years, and was buried in the Boroondara Cemetery in Kew.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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