

**A FINE AND VERY SCARCE QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA 1899 TO 1ST  
BATTALION IMPERIAL YEOMANRY CAPTAIN AND COMPANY  
COMMANDER WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION AT BRANDWATER BASIN  
ON 24 AUGUST 1900**



**QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1902, 2 CLASPS, CAPE COLONY,  
WITTEBERGEN 'CAPT. STANLEY-CLARKE. 2/CO 1/IMP. YEO.'**

William Willoughby Stanley-Clarke, 2nd Company, 1st Battalion Imperial Yeomanry, was killed in action at Brandwater Basin on 26 August 1900. Born in 1868, and educated at Cheltenham, he was the eldest son of the late Colonel Stanley Clarke, 21st Hussars. At the outbreak of the war Captain Clarke was engaged in tea planting in Ceylon; but volunteered for active service. His services were accepted and he was granted the rank of Captain in the army from 10<sup>th</sup> March 1900, when he joined the Imperial Yeomanry from the 6th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, in which he had served as a Captain from August 1894.

Captain Stanley-Clarke commanded number 2 company 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of imperial yeomanry from the forming of the battalion.

**1ST BATTALION IMPERIAL YEOMANRY**

- 1st (Wiltshire) Company
- 2nd (Wiltshire) Company – commanded by Captain Stanley Clarke
- 3rd (Gloucestershire) Company
- 4th (Glamorganshire) Company
- 63rd (Wiltshire) Company

The Battalion arrived at Cape Town on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March 1900 and were immediately sent up to the Imperial Yeomanry Base Camp at McKenzie Farm. On the 16<sup>th</sup> April orders were given for the battalions move 'up country' with Captain Stanley Clarke's no 2 company being ordered to Springfontien. They were joined several days later by HQ and the balance of the Wiltshire's.

For the next few weeks, the Yeomanry were employed on escort and patrol duties, before joining General Rundles 8<sup>th</sup> Division on 4<sup>th</sup> May. At this time General Rundle was involved in preliminary movements by which he intended to surround Boer forces operating in the Eastern corner of the Free State, driving them briefly into the Brandwater Basin. On the 5<sup>th</sup> May, no 4 and no 2 Company went into action for the first time, luckily having no casualties. Patrols etc continued for the next few weeks but on the 25<sup>th</sup> May, elements of no 2 Company were involved in an action at Senekal in which Major Dalbiac and a number of men from the Middlesex Yeomanry were killed and wounded. Men of no 2 Company captured a Boer flag.



OFFICERS OF NO 1 & 2 COMPANIES THE WILTSHIRE IMPERIAL YEOMANRY

By June, operations commenced to surround the Boer forces of 10,000 men under Generals De Wet, Prinsloo and Olivier. The 1<sup>st</sup> Imperial Yeomanry being part of General Rundles own force which occupied a line between Ficksburg and Sekekal. According to the regimental history;

*'from this date until 25<sup>th</sup> July, the 1<sup>st</sup> Imperial Yeomanry was employed in escort and reconnaissance duty with the 8<sup>th</sup> Division, being daily under enemy fire, for the whole country was alive with scattered bands of the enemy'*

Small actions were taking place all along the lines and during the months of June and July the Boers were being pushed back, though De Wet and his force managed to slip through the cordon. However on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1900, General Martinus Prinsloo Surrendered at Surrender Hill in the Brandwater Basin and for the yeomanry, the next month consisted of mopping up patrols and expeditions.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1900 Captain Clarke, with part of his company were out on patrol, into the Brandwater Basin, here many of the Boers that escaped The Surrender of



Prinsloo, were hiding out. The company formed part of a larger force of Leicester Imperial Yeomanry and Port Elizabeth Guards, under Captain Harrison of the Leicester's (all told around 200 men). Captain Clarke was sent off with a detachment to try and capture a force of Boers who had been reported to be at a farm in the mountains. At daybreak on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the farm was surrounded but it was discovered that several more Boers were held up in a nearby cave. Captain Clarke and Lieutenant Barclay with a number of men attempted to enter the cave but Captain Clarke was shot and killed and Lieutenant Barclay and a Private were wounded. On hearing the firing, Captain Harrison came up with the Leicester's but in the confusion of the loss of the two Officers, most of the Boers managed to escape, leaving 1 dead and 17 captured.

'The Last Post' states Stanley Clarke was killed at Harrismith, which was under British control at the time but the regimental history make it clear it was during the search for Boer stragglers (which 1<sup>st</sup> IY were heavy involved) in the Brandwater Basin that the action took place. Captain Stanley Clarke's name is inscribed on the Eleanor Cross War Memorial at Cheltenham College.

'The Annals of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Wiltshire' Vol 2 1893 – 1908, gives a detailed account of the formation of the raising of the Wiltshire companies, Imperial Yeomanry for service in the Boer War and their service during the War itself.

Regarding information on the formation of the Imperial Yeomanry, the following link is of great interest:

<https://www.angloboerwar.com/unit-information/imperial-yeomanry-by-company/1946-imperial-yeomanry?showall=1&limitstart=>

A Short excerpt is as follows:

### **THE IMPERIAL YEOMANRY**

First Contingent. Companies of volunteers (10,242 men) formed from across the UK. They signed-up for 12 months service. Some of the companies were newly raised, and others (one third) were sponsored by part-time Yeomanry Cavalry regiments which were not liable for overseas service.

The Imperial Yeomanry were born out of the disasters that became known as 'Black Week' in December 1899, after these set-backs it became obvious to all that mounted infantry were needed in large numbers to counter the fast moving, hard hitting Boers. At the start of the war there had been many offers from the Colonels of existing county yeomanry regiments to provide forces for South Africa, some at no cost to the Government, all were politely but firmly rejected.

The Yeomanry were a volunteer organization that had been in existence for over a hundred years, the Pembroke Yeomanry having the distinction of being the only unit to have a battle honour on British soil for their defeat of the small French invasion force at Fishguard in 1797. A decision was taken by at the War Office on the 13th of December 1899 to allow a contingent of volunteer forces based on the standing yeomanry regiments, this was a watershed decision in the war. The acceptance that

the conflict was not going to be a swift and painless operation and that every man, whether standing army or volunteer, would be needed to defeat this desperate enemy. The birth of the Imperial Yeomanry was through a Royal Warrant dated the 24th of December 1899 and from this warrant the standing Yeomanry regiments were asked to provide service companies of around 115 men each. The new Imperial Yeomanry were to be raised on a county basis with the core being the men of the existing volunteer units, the remainder of the numbers being recruited from individuals that met the strict criteria laid down.



The original contingents of the I.Y. were an amazing collection of individuals who were generally socially superior to the men of the regular army they were meant to serve alongside. The 47th Company (Duke of Cambridge's Own) consisted almost totally of gentlemen from the City of London who not only gave their wages over to the Imperial War Fund but were willing to pay for a horse, their equipment and passage to South Africa. Apart from the 47th there was also Paget's Horse (19th Bn.) which was recruited through gentleman's clubs, in total over 50% of the original contingent were of middle and upper classes. This figure included many troopers who had resigned a county Yeomanry Commission, they were so desperate to get involved in the conflict.



Condition EF, officially engraved naming with original ribbon. Initials never added to naming though unique surname for unit so not an issue. A superb a scarce Boer War Officer casualty medal