

Albert Edwin Moore died in the second Boer War

By Richard Thomas

The gravestone on the south side of the church is in the shape of a cross with a “swag” around it which consists of one side of flowers and on the other of fruit and something resembling a scarf. Or is it a military sash?

There are three names on the base of the memorial. George Moore died 1895 aged 40, Harry John Moore, died 1899 aged 5 months, and Albert Edwin Moore, died at Wakkerstrom, South Africa, February the 28th 1902, aged 22 years.

George Moore was the father. And head of the household in the 1881 census. He was married to Elizabeth. They were aged 26 and 25 and Albert was one year old. There were also two daughters aged 2 and a few months. George was a Blacksmith and employed one man. They lived in Lenham, but the Census gives the address only as town¹. The 1891 Census gives their address as Church Square. By that time Albert has another brother and another sister and in the house are a 3-year-old girl described as a “nurse child”, and a teenage lodger, Charles Bolton, who is a Blacksmith. He was born in Harrietsham.

The memorial to the young man who died at Wakkerstrom during the Second Boer War. is very intriguing.



In 1900 the Second Boer War was underway, and Albert signed up to the Imperial Yeomanry. The Imperial Yeomanry was a new style of regiment for the British Army. It was found that in South Africa the traditional style British Army was too slow and lumbering to fight effectively against the Boers, who operated in small, mobile, commando units using horses to get around. The Imperial Yeomanry was created as a volunteer force hoping to create units of mounted infantry that could better deal with the Boers. Albert signed up on 22 January 1900. The terms of signing up for the Imperial Yeomanry were that the recruit served for one year or until the war in South Africa was over, if that was less than a year. Albert gave his trade as being a smith. It is hardly surprising that when he started in the 33 (East Kent) Company 11 Battalion Imperial Yeomanry, he was ranked as a Shoeing-Smith. He went on to serve with the Johannesburg Mounted Rifles, as a Farrier Sergeant which indicates that he had quite a

¹ The Parish of Lenham had for administrative purposes 4 divisions: Town, Heath (or Royton), Hill and Liverton.

successful career. It was a short career however as, sadly he died from disease, rather than as a result of battle only a couple of months before the war came to an end.

Wikipedia reports the numbers of casualties among the Imperial Yeomanry as:

7,894 killed as a result of action,
13,250 died of disease.

There are differing reports of the exact split of casualties, but all agree that disease was the main cause of death. 300,000 Horses also died in this conflict.

The Boer War also had other significance. The Army Medical Corps discovered that 40–60% of men presenting for service were physically unfit to fight. This was the first time in which the government was forced to take notice of how unhealthy the British population was.

Albert Edwin Moore, like the others who died in South Africa was buried there. And his name was added to the gravestone in Lenham as an act of remembrance.

Albert's father had died in 1895 and his mother remarried in 1899. Her new husband was Archibald Christopher Joy². He was a blacksmith too, and the 1901 Census gives the address as them living at The Forge in Church Square in Lenham. By the 1911 Census the address is given as 'Forge House.' This opens the question whether there were two forges in close proximity or whether the wording of the same address just changed.

Research is ongoing into the history of Forge House...watch that space.

² Archibald also served as the parish clerk. Elizabeth died in 1936 and Archibald died in 1938.