

Albert A NICHOLLS

Born Exeter, 1899
Sergeant 0337

Died Egypt 25 October 1919, aged 20
Somerset Light Infantry, 2nd Battalion

There is some speculation about the family of **Albert Nicholls** as the surname is so common in the West Country that reliance must be placed on census and other data, but much is missing. The 1911 census might be expected to show the family living in Dawlish, when Albert would have been 11. His name is inscribed on Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour. The Obituary notice in the *Dawlish Gazette* (q.v.) refers to the parents as Mr & Mrs F. Nicholls, living at 37 Old Town Street.

The following is offered for others to pursue.

In 1901 Frederick Nicholls and his wife Sarah were living in Teignmouth at 2 Bitton Estate and he was 33 and working on his own account as a grocer.

The census tells that Frederick was born in Gunnislake and they had a child, 1 year old, called **Bertie**, born in Exeter. No reference has been found to a birth registration for this boy.

Sarah Ann Avery was born in North Tawton in 1873 (GRO ref 1873, July-Sept, Okehampton, vol 5b, p 384) and the daughter of William (1824-1873) and Eliza (1819-1878) Avery of North Tawton.

Sarah married Frederick Nicholls in 1896 (GRO ref 1896, Jan-Mar, Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 212).

By 1911 the same Frederick (b. Gunnislake, 1868) and Sarah (b. North Tawton) have moved to 2 Heathfield Terrace, Bovey Tracey where he worked as an agent for the Prudential Assurance Company. Their only child, now aged 11 is shown as **Albert James Knowles Nicholls** and having been born in Hornsey, London. Another son may have been born subsequently (Death notice).

Sarah A Nicholls was a widow living at 44 Warbro Road, Torquay in 1939, and shown as being born on 4 July 1873.

Nothing has been found to indicate when they may have moved to Dawlish for **Albert** to attend the Dawlish Boys' School and the family to reside at 37 Old Town Street.

The newspaper report gives us the information that **Albert** worked as a clerk for the solicitor, Mr F S Cole in Dawlish until he joined up at the age of 18 (1917?).

Francis Simcoe Cole was in practice at Albert House and lived at West mead, Barton Crescent (Kelly's Directory 1914 and 1923). He was Clerk to Dawlish Urban District Council and held meetings at the Vestry Hall (now the Baptist Chapel in Park Road).

From the reports in the *Dawlish Gazette* it seems that **Albert Nicholls** joined the local army volunteers ca 1916 and was enlisted with the Somerset Light Infantry ca 1917. He saw some active service at the front and was wounded before being sent to the 2nd Battalion in Alexandria where he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and posted as Orderly Room Clerk to the Deputy Adjutant General's Office.

There are no surviving military service records that match his service number, quoted on the Commonwealth War Graves website.

Dawlish World War One Project

Albert A Nicholls married Frances Ethel Lilian Lang in the later part of 1919 (GRO ref 1919, July-Sept, Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 296), possibly shortly before sailing for Alexandria? Frances had been born in 1899 in Westminster, London. They lived at Eglantine, Caterham, Surrey, possibly close to the Army barracks. She married again on 22 February 1922 to James Chatterton, also a soldier.

Albert A Nicholls died of dysentery in hospital in Alexandria, Egypt on 25 October 1919, aged 20.

He does not appear on the main panel of the Dawlish War memorial 1914-1919 but is on the supplementary panel on the west face of the Memorial as:

NICHOLLS A. SGT. SOMERSET LT. INF

He is not included in the Devon Roll of Honour but does appear on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Commonwealth War Graves entry: Serjeant NICHOLLS, ALBERT Service Number 0337
Died 25/10/1919, Aged 20, 2nd Bn. Somerset Light Infantry
Son of Fredrick Nicholls, of Dawlish, Devon; husband of Frances E. L. Nicholls, of Eglantine, Caterham, Surrey.

Last known address: Eglantine, Caterham, Surrey.

Next of kin: Frances Ethel Lilian Nicholls, wife

References:

Free BMD refs

Kelly's Directory 1914 and 1923 for Dawlish

Refs via subscription website, Ancestry:

Census data

Birth, Marriage and Death refs

Forces War Records

UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects

1939 Register