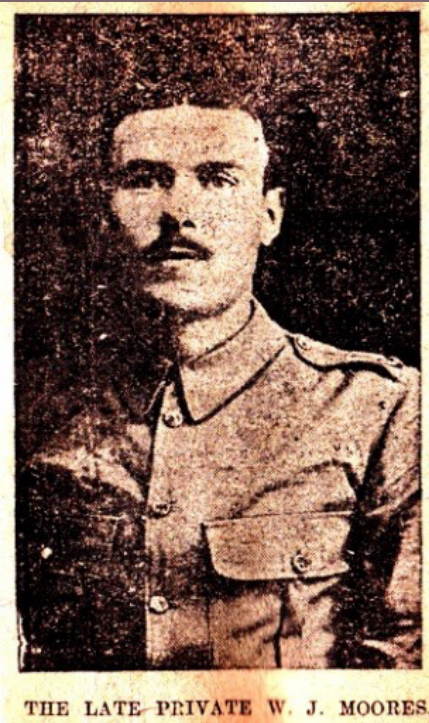


Trapped in Kut

FEBRUARY 2016 - APRIL 2016



The late Private W J Moores who died as a POW in Kut-Al-Amara

Many men from Marlow took part in the Mesopotamia Campaign against the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. One of the military disasters of the campaign was the siege of Kut which involved many men from the town.

The Mesopotamia Campaign

Britain relied heavily on oil to keep the Royal Navy at sea. When war broke out in summer 1914, it sent a force of British and Indian soldiers to occupy the oil-fields and pipeline near Basra in Mesopotamia, which was then part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. In November 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined in the War against Britain and its Allies.

In 1915, Britain decided to push further from Basra into Mesopotamia as part of its plan to knock the Ottoman Empire out of the War. The British got to within 30 miles of their goal of Baghdad, but in November were pushed back and besieged by the Turks in the city of Kut.



Map of the Mesopotamia campaign



Aerial reconisence over Kut-al-Amara during WW1

The Siege of Kut-al-Amara

The British Army tried unsuccessfully on a number of occasions during early 1916 to relieve the forces trapped in Kut. They even sent a team to agree a secret deal with the Ottomans, offering £2 million and promising to stop the fighting if the trapped forces were released. The offer was rejected.

Eventually, the trapped British and Indian troops surrendered on 29 April 1916 after a siege of 147 days. Around 13,000 Allied soldiers survived to be made prisoners. Kut was a humiliating defeat for the British, particularly coming so soon after the failed Gallipoli campaign. It was not until March 1917 that the British finally captured Baghdad.

70% of the British and 50% of the Indian troops captured at Kut died of disease or at the hands of their Ottoman guards during captivity. Among those was William Moores who died in May 1916. His brother Edward was killed in France in March that year and in the same month his other brother George was conscripted into the Army. George died in France in 1918.