

**Henry Grace DCM**  
**Sergeant 6830, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion**  
**Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.**



**Henry Grace** was born in 1885 and baptised on 21 July in Amersham. He was the eldest son of Thomas and Frances Fanny Grace, formerly Eggleton, living at Washington Row, Amersham. Thomas was a general farm labourer but had previously served in the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars during the Afghan and Egyptian Campaigns 1878 – 1880. His five sons all served in H.M.Forces during the 1914-18 war.

Henry enlisted as a private in the regular army of the 1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (OBLI) in 1901, in High Wycombe. His occupation was recorded as gardener's labourer. At the time of the 1911 Census he was a Lance Corporal serving with the military in India. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion OBLI was part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 6<sup>th</sup> Poona Division, and left India for Mesopotamia (now Iraq) in November 1914. There, the Battalion took part in the campaign against the Ottoman forces that ruled the country. Henry's Medal Roll Index card showed that he entered the Asiatic theatre of war on 5 December 1914. In December Henry was mentioned in dispatches and nine months later, after promotion to a sergeant, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry at Kut-al-Amara (Mesopotamia).

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1915, he sent messages to the artillery by heliograph under heavy fire, although he had to stand in full view of the enemy's redoubts to do so.

The British had taken Kut and advanced towards Baghdad but were stopped at Ctesiphon and forced to retreat. They were pursued by large Turkish forces and fell back on Kut where they defended it from December 1915 awaiting relief from troops at Basra. Food became scarce and the men suffered from malnutrition and dysentery. By the beginning of April they were near starvation and many of the men were dying daily. A total of 721 of the garrison died of disease in the 143-day siege. Another attempt to break through to relieve them failed at the battle of Sannaiyat. Sadly Henry died from disease on the 21 April 1916 at the surrender of Kut. He was 33 years old.

Henry Grace is remembered with Honour and buried in the  
Kut War Cemetery, Iraq. (Grave ref J1)

In addition to The Distinguished Conduct Medal, Henry Grace received The Allied Victory Medal, The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The 1914-15 Star.



### The Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)

The DCM was an extremely high level award for bravery and was instituted by Royal Warrant in 1854 for the Crimean War. It was awarded to Other Ranks of the Army and Imperial forces, but not to Indian soldiers. The DCM was second only to the Victoria Cross as a reward for gallantry in action and was always greatly prized.

Sources:

- Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust, [www.sofo.org.uk](http://www.sofo.org.uk)
- Bucks Examiner*, 29 Dec.1916
- Bucks Advertiser & Aylesbury News*, 15 Dec.1917