

JOSEPH W. ALDERSON, Sapper 200643, Royal Engineers, 14th May 1943

Joseph William Alderson, was born on the 7th April 1916, in Auckland, Durham.

The 1939 Registers show Joseph living in Brompton-on-Swale (aged 23) in one of the dwellings between Village Farm and Ivy Cottage, working as a Builder's labourer possibly for Ernest Heseltine. He was single at that time and I am not aware of any marriage record at the time of writing. I cannot find any other connection with the village, so I'm guessing he came for work.

Village Farm	121	5	Rhodes Mary K	F	9 Apr 56	W	Old age Pension
		1	Barr William	M	10 Oct 14	M	Tractor driver agricultural
		2	Barr Helen M	F	23 May 11	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Barr William K	M	1 Oct 33	S	at school
This record is officially closed.							
Brompton on Swale	122	1	Heseltine Ernest	M	7 Sep 97	M	Builder Labourer
		2	Heseltine Harriette	F	13 Dec 96	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Alderson Joseph W	M	7 Apr 16	S	Builder Labourer
		4	CHAMBERS	F	7 June 21	S	asenting Mother
		5	Heseltine Isabel	F	7 Nov 33	M	at school
Brompton on Swale	123	1	Richardson Thomas W	M	13 June 83	M	Tanner + Cartman
		2	Richardson Louisa	F	25 Feb 87	M	unpaid domestic duties
		3	Day Richard	M	10 Dec 55	W	Incapacitated
Ivy Cottage	124	1	Hurwood Elizabeth M	F	7 June 77	M	unpaid domestic duties
		2	Terry Ernest P S	M	9 Dec 79	S	Iron & Metalwork

According to the CWGC Joseph served with the 1st Field Park Squadron.

In February 1940 1st Field Squadron was deployed to France (with 1st Armoured Division). Whilst attached to 51st Highland Division the majority of the Squadron were taken prisoner at [St Valery](#). The 51st were serving with the French Army and were not part of the Dunkirk evacuation. Only 4 officers and 65 men made it back to England. At the moment, I do not know if Joseph was one of them or if he joined later.

In September 1941, a reformed 1st Field Squadron sailed for the Middle East where it was immediately committed to action in the western desert. It took part in the [Battle of Gazala](#) and in the more famous defence of [Tobruk](#) in 1942. Once again, the Squadron suffered from large-scale capture whilst attached to the 2nd South African Division.

Again 1st Field Squadron was reformed, in time to play its part in the battles of Alam Halfa (September 1942) and [El Alamein](#) (Oct/Nov 1942) and accompanied the 8th Army advance along the whole of the North African shore to the Cap Bon Peninsula in Tunisia.

Joseph died on 14th May 1943 (he would have been 27).

This is a rather tragic date because officially the North African campaign ended the day before, 13th May 1943 when the commanding British Field Marshal, Sir Harold Alexander, sent word to Prime Minister Churchill, saying "it is my duty to report that the Tunis campaign is over. All enemy

resistance has ceased." During the week, 150,000 Germans and Italians became prisoners of war of the Allies.

Joseph is buried in grave 1.G.24 of [OUED ZARGA WAR CEMETERY](#), in Tunisia, about 30km from Tunis



Oued Zarga Cemetery Tunisia

Sources:

(1) CWGC

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2822612>

<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2087301>

(2) 51st Highland Division at St Valery

https://51hd.co.uk/history/valery_1940

(3) 1 Field Engineer Squadron

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1_Field_Engineer_Squadron

(4) WW2 Battles in North Africa

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Tobruk

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Gazala

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Alam_el_Halfa

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_El_Alamein