

DRIVER HAROLD JACK WAGSTAFF

86911, Royal Horse Artillery

Died aged 32 in March 1925

Buried without Military Honour in *Tewkesbury Cemetery*; B-609a

Commemorated in Tewkesbury on the War Memorial at the Cross



Silver War Badge



1914-15 Star Medal



Royal Horse Artillery

HAROLD JACK WAGSTAFF was born in 1893 in Tewkesbury, one of seven children of Alfred Wagstaff and Annie (formerly Bishop). The family's surname is sometimes spelt with an 'e' at the end, sometimes without; Alfred's birth was registered in 1871 as Wagstaff. Harold also preferred to be known as Jack, hence 'J. Wagstaff' on the Memorial rather than 'H.J.'. In 1901 the family was living in Wright's Court, East Street, and Alfred was a General Labourer. In 1905 Alfred died aged 34; in 1911 Annie was working as a Collar Cutter and Jack was a Labourer.

Jack signed up as a regular in the Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own) on 11 January 1909; at the time he was working as a Gardener and was already serving in the 5th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, a Territorial Force battalion. He was discharged from the Army the following year on 10 October 1910, although no further information was noted.

In 1915 Jack volunteered for military service again and enlisted in the Royal Horse Artillery on 7 March. Although there is no information about which unit he joined, his medal records confirm that he served in Gallipoli where he arrived on 23 July 1915.

On 10 December 1915 Jack was discharged from the Army, the reason given as 'Sickness' (a feature of the Gallipoli campaign). He was awarded a *Silver War Badge* to signify that he had undertaken military service and had been discharged due to wounds or illness. He was also entitled to the '*1914-15 Star*' medal.

On returning home, Jack spent some time living in Birmingham. There is a record from Evesham Police Court on 11 November 1916

which states: '*Harold Jack Wagstaff, Tewkesburian, now of 51 Carlton Road, Small Heath, Birmingham: stealing a hare and 6 books - fined £1 in each case*'. It could be that poverty drove him to committing what was then regarded as a serious crime.

Jack settled down and married Rose Rogers from Birmingham at Aston in June 1917. They remained in Birmingham where their first child, Olive K., was born in 1918. Sometime within the next eighteen months the family moved to Tewkesbury where two further children were born: Elsie J. in 1920 and Harold J. in 1921.

A further encounter with the forces of law occurred when the local Police Court recorded on 12 February 1921 that Harold Jack Wagstaff and five other men were '*all charged with obstruction by loitering on the footpath near Messrs. Frisby's Shop. Cases dismissed with warning that future offences would press for a fine*'. In the context of the times, it is reasonable to assume this ex-serviceman was experiencing unemployment and hardship common to so many after their war service.

Harold Jack Wagstaff was buried on 9 March 1925 in *Tewkesbury Cemetery* but in a non-military plot. In the same plot both his mother, Annie, and his widow, Rose, were subsequently interred when they died in 1938 and 1941 respectively. At the time she died, aged 50, Rose was living at 35 East Street and was a former Caretaker at the Junior Council School.

Jack's brother, **Private Cecil W. Wagstaff(e)** [†], served with the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and was killed in action on 25 September 1915 at the *Battle of Loos*.