

PRIVATE CECIL WILLIAM WAGSTAFFE*
 17754, 2nd Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry
 Died aged 21 on 25 September 1915
 Remembered with honour on *Loos Memorial, France*; Panel 83-85
 Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey,
 and at Christ Church, Oxford



*Loos Memorial,
France*



Pte. C.W. Wagstaffe
[Graphic 23/10/1915]



*Oxford & Buckinghamshire
Light Infantry*

CECIL WILLIAM WAGSTAFF was born in 1894 to Alfred Wagstaff and Annie (formerly Bishop), who married in 1892. The family surname appears as 'Wagstaff' in all official records, but the CWGC listing is 'Wagstaffe'.* Both Alfred and Annie were from Tewkesbury and in 1901 were living with their five children at 1 Wrights Court (then located between 18 & 19 East Street, running towards Barton Street). Alfred worked as a general labourer but died in December 1905 at the age of only 34. In 1911 Cecil was living as a boarder with a baker from Tewkesbury, Jesse Hurcombe, in 96 Ryland Street, Birmingham, and was working as a labourer.

Cecil volunteered for military service on 1 February 1915, enlisting in Tewkesbury. He was assigned to the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and, at some stage, was posted to 'A' Company of the regiment's 2nd Battalion, a regular unit. The battalion was part of the 2nd Division and landed originally on 14 August 1914 at Boulogne. Cecil arrived in France on 27 June 1915 to join his battalion, no doubt as part of a batch of reinforcements to replace losses suffered at the *Battle of Festubert* in May. Three months later the battalion was involved in the *Battle of Loos* (25 September-18 October 1915), the largest British offensive mounted in 1915, undertaken in support of major French offensives. The *Register* reported that *'the battle took place on ground ... in an area utterly*

unsuited to an attack ... before stocks of ammunition and heavy artillery were sufficient; the battle was noteworthy for the first use of poison gas by the British Army. Despite heavy casualties, there was considerable success on the first day ... but the opportunities could not be exploited, resulting in a costly stalemate.'

At the start of the battle, the 2nd Division was on the extreme northern part of the British line. The 2nd Battalion was one of three battalions used to launch a diversionary attack: *'At first, the advancing battalions moved easily past well-cut wire and into the German front trench, which they found evacuated. Approaching the second line they were assailed by machine-gun fire and forced to take cover. Shortly after, the Germans counter-attacked as usual and, making use of their superior hand grenades, bombed and gunned the British back to their original front line'*. In this action the 2nd Battalion, Oxford, suffered 278 casualties.

Private Cecil William Wagstaffe was listed as having died or been killed in action on 25 September 1915, the opening day of the battle. Four other men from Tewkesbury were also killed. Cecil's body was never recovered or identified and he is commemorated instead on the *Loos Memorial*. Cecil was awarded the *'1914-15 Star'* medal.

His brother, **Harold Jack Wagstaff** [†], died aged 32 in 1925 after a Military Discharge.