

CORPORAL JOSEPH WALKER

13775, 8th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment

Died aged 32 on 30 July 1916

Remembered with honour on *Thiepval Memorial*; Pier and Face 5A and 5B

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



*Thiepval Memorial,
France*



*Cpl. Joseph Walker with
Harold Walker [C. Burd]*



*Gloucestershire
Regiment*

JOSEPH WALKER was born in 1884 to Joseph Walker, a waterman from Tipton, Staffordshire. Joseph (senior) married a local girl, Mary Ann Day, in Tewkesbury in 1883 and they had ten children, eight of whom were still alive in 1911. In 1891 the family was living in Mann's Court, High Street, but by 1901 they had moved to Aston in Warwickshire where father and son were both working as general labourers. Joseph (senior) died in February 1904 in Aston where Joseph (junior) married Jane Murphy in November. The family subsequently returned to Tewkesbury; Joseph lived initially in Eagles Alley, working firstly as an under-gardener to the Town Clerk, before returning to the family trade as a hand on the Barge 'Dora', which delivered grain to Healings Mill. In 1911 he was living with his widowed mother and five siblings in Warder's Alley, although his wife was not listed on the Census as she was visiting her family in Ireland in Newbridge, Co. Kildare. By 1914 the couple had four children.

Joseph volunteered soon after the outbreak of war and enlisted in Tewkesbury in September 1914 in the Gloucestershire Regiment. He was allocated to the 8th Battalion, formed at Bristol in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Army and part of the 19th (Western) Division. Joseph landed with the battalion in France on 18 July 1915. His family believe that he had been a member of the Territorial Force before the war and such experience may well account for his promotion to Corporal by 1915.

The first campaign in which the 8th (Service) Battalion took part was the *Battles of the Somme 1916*. It did not participate in the disastrous first

day but was involved in the capture of La Boiselle on 3 July, part of the wider *Battle of Albert*. Nearly three weeks later the battalion was in the front line at Bazentin-le-Petit and took part in the unsuccessful attacks on the key defensive position of *High Wood*. The battalion returned to Bazentin-le-Petit in order to attack another part of the German trench system during the *Battle of Pozières*. The War Diary for 30 July noted: '6.30pm – *Attacked the German intermediate line ... our attack was held up by enfilade Machine Gun fire and concealed snipers from the right ... our men returned to their original front line at 9.30pm ... Casualties were 14 officers killed, wounded and missing; 160 other ranks*'.

Corporal Joseph Walker was killed in action on 30 July 1916 during this unsuccessful assault. Judging by his obituary, which carried the headline '*Tewkesbury Sgt. Killed in Action*', he was serving as a temporary Sergeant, although he was commemorated as a Corporal. His body was never recovered nor identified and he is commemorated on the *Thiepval Memorial* to the Missing of the Somme. He was awarded the '*1914-1915 Star*' medal. Joseph left a widow, Jane, also known as '*Irish Jinny*', and three children living in Spring Gardens.

Three of Joseph's brothers also volunteered: both **Albert James** and **Harold Alfred** served as gunners in the Royal Field Artillery, whilst **William** joined the South Lancashire Regiment.

[Joseph's grand-daughter is Mrs. Cliff Burd, whose mother was Mary Jean Walker; her information about the family has been most valuable.]