

Private C/12183 Henry Walker (1882- c. 1954)

4th Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Corps: 1899 - 1906
1ST or 2nd Battalion Kings Royal Rifle Corps: 1914 - 1919

My Grandad, Henry Walker, was born in 1882 at Butt Lane, Warsop where he lived with his parents Henry Walker (b 1843 in Hamilton, Scotland) and Anne Walker née Wardley (b,

1847 in Warsop, Notts.).

On 27th December 1899, Grandad joined the King's Royal Rifles on a Short Service Enlistment, having given a false birth date as he was still only 17 years of age (See attached enlistment document left). This meant serving 7 years with the Colours followed by 5 years in the reserve.

100,000,4-96 Form B. 265. *Duplicate* 12823/F

SHORT SERVICE.

(7 years with the Colours, and 5 years in the Reserve, or, if the man completes his 7 years' service with the Colours while beyond the seas, then for a further period, not exceeding one year, with the Colours, and the remainder of the 12 years in the Reserve.)

ATTESTATION OF

No. 243 / Name *Henry Walker* Corps *Kings Royal Rifle Corps*

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. What is your Name? *Henry Walker*
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? *Warsop, Nottinghamshire*
3. Are you a British Subject? *Yes*
4. What is your Age? *17*
5. What is your Trade or Calling? *Labourer*
6. Have you resided out of your Father's house for three years continuously in the same place, or occupied a house or land of the yearly value of £10 for one year, and, in either case, in the County of *Nottinghamshire*?
7. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? if so, where? *No*
8. Are you Married? *No*
9. Have you ever been sentenced to Imprisonment by the Civil Power? *No*
10. Do you now belong to Her Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Royal Navy, the Volunteers, the Yeomanry, the Army Reserve, or the Naval Reserve? If so, to what Corps? *No*
11. Have you ever served in Her Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, or the Royal Navy? If so, state which and cause of discharge? *No*
12. Have you truly stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? *Yes*
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for Her Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? *No*
14. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? *Yes*
15. For what Corps are you willing to be enlisted, or are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? *Kings Royal Rifle Corps*
16. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you? *Yes*
17. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions provided Her Majesty should so long require your services:
 - (a) For the term of twelve years, for the first seven years in Army Service and for the remaining five years in the First Class of the Army Reserve, or if at the termination of such period of Army Service, you are serving beyond the seas, then for a further period not exceeding one year in Army Service and for the remaining portion of such period of 12 years in the First Class of the Army Reserve.
 - (b) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service a state of War exists, then, if so directed by the Competent Military Authority, to serve in Army Service for a further period not exceeding 12 months.
 - (c) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service, you are so required by a Proclamation from Her Majesty in case of imminent national danger or great emergency, then to serve in Army Service to so to complete your term of 12 years, and for a further period not exceeding 12 months.
 - (d) If the above-mentioned term of 12 years expires while you are on service with the Regular Forces beyond the seas, or while a state of war exists with a Foreign Power, or while Service in the Reserve is required by proclamation to continue in or re-enter upon Army Service, then to serve for a further period not exceeding 12 months.

I, *Henry Walker* do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Henry Walker SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
James Worthley Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Henry Walker* do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, Her Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.
The above questions were then read to the recruit in my presence.
I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at *Mansfield* on this *27* day of *December* 1899.

W. H. M. Thomas Signature of the Justice.

If any attention is required on this page of the Attestation, a Justice of the Peace should be requested to make it and initial the alteration.
The Recruit should, if he require it, receive a copy of the Declaration on Army Form B. 205.

After training he was immediately sent to South Africa where he served with the 4th Battalion in the Boer War and was at Ladysmith immediately after the siege was relieved.

On leaving the colours he returned to Warsop where he met and married my Grandma, Jesse Lacey, who was born in Wellow, Notts., the daughter of Joseph and Ann Lacey.

They moved to 25 Derby Road, Ilkeston, Notts., where he worked as a coal miner and where my Aunt Norah was born in 1909 followed by my father in January 1912.



Dad and Aunt Norah (a copy of this photo was carried by my Grandad when he went to war) c. 1914

They then moved to 111 Gladstone Street, Mansfield, Notts., where my Uncle Reg was born before the start of the First World War.

World War 1: The 'Old Contemptibles'

As war approached, my Grandad was recalled to the Colours with the King's Royal Rifles and was quickly sent to Belgium as one of the "Old Contemptibles" either with the 1st or 2nd Battalions, I can't be sure which, leaving my Grandma pregnant with my Aunt Jesse. She also, of course, had sole responsibility for caring for her three other young children under very difficult circumstances.

They were immediately in action at the first battle of Mons and the retreat to the Marne during which my Grandad was wounded and taken prisoner.

Prisoner of War

Prisoners were treated very badly, and my Grandad was forced to work in the coalmines, effectively as slave labour. They received pitiful amounts of very poor food and in later years he recalled to my older cousin that they were beaten badly if they tried to steal apples from trees overhanging the road when they were marched to and from work.

After the war ended, he returned home around the time of my Father's 7th birthday in January 1919. He was in extremely poor health and spent the next ten years in and out of Military Hospital.



Grandad in Military Hospital (at the left on the back row)

On his return, the residents of Gladstone Street hung banners across the street and turned out in force to give him a big welcome.

Dad was only two when Grandad went to war and only knew him as a man badly damaged by his terrible experiences. Being the oldest boy, he was required to take on responsibilities way beyond his years.

Between the Wars: Recovery

They had one more child, my Uncle Fred, who was born in 1922 and my Grandmother, typical of so many amazing women at that time, bore the responsibility of raising five children whilst supporting my Grandfather in his long and difficult recovery.

My Grandfather was, inherently, a strong resilient man and by the end of the 1920's had recovered well enough to take a full-time job with Mansfield & District Co-operative Society. He was given a house with his job and they lived at Westgate House in Westgate, Mansfield.



Right: Henry Walker (Grandad) in his Corps of Commissionaires' uniform at Westgate House in the 1930s

World War Two

At the start of the Second World War, determined to serve his country once more, he joined the Home Guard and having already served both Queen Victoria and King George V in uniform, he now served King George VI.



The Mansfield Home Guard: Harry Walker is in the middle of the back row, with medal ribbons

All three of their sons served in the armed forces during the 2nd World War but thankfully all three returned safe and well at the war's end.

Tragically, on Christmas Eve 1947, my Grandmother, Jesse, was hit and killed by a lorry in Mansfield. I was only four and have only very vague memories of her but do know that she was a remarkable woman devoted to her family.



Grandma and Grandad in Skegness

By then Grandad was 65 years old and he went to live with his eldest daughter, my Aunty Norah, in Beeston, Nottingham. None of our family had cars in those days and consequently, we didn't see him very often before he died c1954. Again, I don't have any clear memories of him but do recall a tall impressive figure of a man.

John Walker, The Green, Collingham
28th September 2018

