

Lance-Cpl. John “Jack” Kings (Storekeeper) 1874 - 1915

lickeyrailgroup.org have a long term project to make a record of staff from the Aston Fields Wagon Works who served in the great war 1914 - 1918.

Quite a number served in the Royal Engineers, Railway Operating Division where their skills and experience were essential to keep supplies moving to troops at the front. The majority were younger men, conscripted after 1916.

When the war began in August 1914, the government relied on voluntary enlistment. Promoted by the famous Lord Kitchener "Your Country Needs You" poster, the campaign encouraged over 1.1 million men to enlist in the first year. However, that was not enough to keep up with mounting casualties. In January 1916 the Military Service Act was passed. This imposed conscription on all single men aged between 18 and 41. There were exemptions for the medically unfit, clergymen, teachers & certain classes of industrial worker. Conscientious Objectors were excluded - though they were, in most cases, given civilian jobs or non-fighting roles at the front.

A second Act in May 1916 extended conscription to married men. In 1918 the age limit rose to 51.

Several men from the Wagon Works volunteered during the first year. John Kings was one of them. It may seem unexpected for a married man, age 41 with 3 young children to volunteer. But Jack was clearly a very socially engaged person.

From 1890 he served 5 years in the 2nd Volunteer Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. He volunteered with St. John Ambulance Association at the Wagon Works, he was a member of a local Oddfellows lodge, an assistant scoutmaster with Bromsgrove St. John's Troop and a committee member of the Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club. Jack had been a member of the National Reserve since 1912 and trained locally before leaving the Wagon Works to go to France.

Jack's parents Noah Kings and Emma Hobbes were both Bromsgrove nailmakers. They were married December 23rd 1855 at St Martin in the Bull Ring, Birmingham. (Q4 6d 145).

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=17.7&lat=52.47718&lon=-1.89356&layers=168&b=1&marker=52.477378,-1.893597>

Jack was born July 16th 1874 in Bromsgrove. (Q3 6c 390)

The 1881 Census Shows the family at Upper Norton, Bromsgrove. Head of the family Noah Kings 49 Nailmaker, Wife Emma 44 Nailmaker, Sarah 22 Nailmaker, Harry 18 Nailmaker, Mary Ann 11, John, 7 and Thomas 9. There was an elder son, William, age 24, who was living separately at that time.

The 1891 census finds the family still at Upper Norton. Noah 59 Labourer, Emma 55 Nailer, Thomas 18 Wagon repairer and John 16 Driller - Rwy Co.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15.7&lat=52.34606&lon=-2.05444&layers=6&b=1&marker=52.346944,-2.053199>

April 29th 1899 John Kings was married to Elizabeth Kendall at All saints Church, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove. John's occupation was then recorded as a Shunter. Elizabeth was also a child of Bromsgrove Nailmakers. The 1891 census shows her living and working as a servant to an elderly lady in Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15.7&lat=52.34142&lon=-2.05518&layers=6&b=1&marker=52.342243,-2.051222>

The 1901 census finds them living at 28 Stoney Hill, Bromsgrove John 26 Railway Storeman & Lizzie 24.

February 15th 1900 a son Walter Horace is born. November 4th 1901 a son George Leslie Maurice is born. March 6th 1904 a daughter Cicely Evelyn is born.

The 1911 Census finds them still at 28 Stoney Hill. John 27 Store Keeper (Rwy wagon Works) Lizzie 34, son Walter 11, son Leslie 9 and daughter Jessie 7.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15.7&lat=52.33680&lon=-2.05658&layers=6&b=1&marker=52.333378,-2.053392>

The Wagon works employment records show that Jack started work there, age 14, on March 23rd 1889. His starting wage as a Machine Boy was 7 shillings per week. He was made a Wagon Labourer on May 17th 1895 at 13/- per week, Assistant Storeman on June 15th 1900 at 20/- and Storeman on December 8th 1905 at 23/- per week. Jack's weekly wage increased to 31/- on February 12th 1915. He must have left for France shortly after that date and was sadly killed in action just 3 months later on May 31st 1915.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=16.8&lat=52.32258&lon=-2.04727&layers=6&b=1&marker=52.322210,-2.045823>



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The Oddfellows Memorial plaque in High Street, Jack's name appears first on the list.

Jack's family continued living in Bromsgrove. The 1939 finds widow Elizabeth living with daughter Cicely and son in law George Price at Walton Road, Bromsgrove. Elizabeth Passed away in Bromsgrove in 1951. Cicely had married George at All Saints Church in 1934. She passed away in Bromsgrove in 1965.

The eldest child, Walter, attended Bromsgrove National infants school from 1904 to 1906. At that time the family were living at 28 Stoney Hill Bromsgrove. He married Nelly White in Bromsgrove in 1924. The 1939 register finds the couple working Headley Heath Farm near Wythall, Worcestershire.

The second son George Leslie M was baptised at All Saints Church, Bromsgrove on 16-Mar-1902 The family was Stoney Hill and John and John was then working as a Shunter. George L worked as a carpenter. He was married at All Saints Church in 1927 to Mabel Gibbs. The 1953 Electoral Roll finds them living in Ednall Lane, Bromsgrove with an adult son, Ronald. George Leslie passed away at Bromsgrove Cottage Hospital 27/08/1966.

Bromsgrove and Droitwich Messenger. Saturday 5 June 1915.

BROMSGROVE ODDFELLOWS ROLL OF HONOUR.

An interesting ceremony took place at the meeting of the "British Queen" Lodge of Oddfellows (Manchester Unity), held at the Oddfellows' Hall, Bromsgrove, on Saturday night when the ordinary business was suspended for half an hour for the purpose of the unveiling of a framed engraved roll of honour, comprising the names of sixty members of the Lodge who are on service with the forces. The names on the roll:-

John Kings (killed in action May 31st), William Perrygrove, F. C. Biddle, W. A. Wheeler, R. Love, W. H. Griffin, Joseph Edwards, Hubert Byng, Leonard Crane, Harold Gower, Albert Wanklin, H. Ashforth, T. H. Turner, Fred White, Harry Nowell, E. George Binks, W. Turner, Sydney Bastin, V. Turner, Angelo Giles, R. E. Adams, E. Simmonds, Luke Peplow, Fred Stokes, and C. Faulkner, and J. A. Knight, 8th Worcesters; Herbert Davis, 3rd N.M.F.A., R.A.M.C. ; Samuel Calvey, 12th Worcesters; A. Stanton, Royal Anglesey R.E.S.B.; Wm. Peplow, 11th Royal Warwicks, A. E. Morris; A. Mole, 16th Cheshires; George Turner, 1st South Midland Mounted Brigade, T. and S. Column (Reserve); H. Payne Royal Anglesey R.E.S.R.; G. S. Roper, 12th S.Hampshire; Ernest Rutter, Oxford and Bucks L.1.; W. C. Lindon, Oxford and Bucks L.I. ; E. Stokes; J. Waldron, R.E.: H. Penny, 6th Worcesters: A. Giles, 6th Worcesters: William Ingram. Oxford and Bucks L.I.; A. C. Rudge, J. F. Humphries, G. Wall, G. Ingram; E. G. P. Bott, Oxford and Bucks L.I.; James Giles, J. Leeke, Wm. Sanders, W. J. Corbett, A. Birtley, F. T. Prangnell, Wm. Wallace, H. G. Field; E. G. Ward, Royal Engineers: Wm. Hubble, Wm. Smith, G. Perrins; A. Turner. 8th Worcesters.

Noble Grand J. Lammas was in the chair, and Vice-Grand R. Hedges in the vice-chair. The unveiling ceremony was performed by Brother G. H. Strain, Past Grand, one of the oldest members of the Lodge, and the lifting of the Union Jack, which had covered the roll, was received with the singing of a verse of the National Anthem. Brother Strain referred to the large number of men who had volunteered, and expressed the sympathy of all the members with the wife and family of Brother Jack Kings who had been the first on the roll to lose his life.

The Treasurer of the Lodge (Brother W. Hedges) said that was one of the proudest moments of his life, to attend there and show honour for those who had gone to fight, and, if necessary, give their lives for the defence of their King and country. They all felt the loss of Brother Kings, who was one who commanded the respect and esteem of all the members. He had been killed in action, and he feared they must expect more casualties. It was a proud thing to know that they had a brother who had died for the honour of his country, He need hardly say that the Lodge had paid over the money to the widow of Brother Kings which was due to her from the Lodge. It was their hope that the other brothers who had gone would return in good health, and in the meantime he was sure that the members who were left. at home would readily pay the levies towards paying the contributions of those who were serving their country.

There were two lodges of Oddfellows in the country the members of which had volunteered to a man, and it was important that the other lodges should help lodges like those.

The usual short war service, in which the hymns, "God bless our native land" and "Eternal Father, strong to save" were sung.

A few words were also spoken by Mr. W. H. Scott (honorary member), who remarked the present war brought home the society's motto, "Unity is strength." If the nation could keep that motto before them in those terrible times, and stick together on the principle that unity was strength, no other powers combined could beat old England. (Applause.)

Brother A. Kimberley also spoke of the levy upon members for the payment of the contributions of the soldiers on service, saying the A.M.C. had fixed upon a sum of 2d. per month.

A musical programme included contributions by Brothers R. Hedges, C. Hedges, H. Humphries

Bromsgrove and Droitwich Messenger. Saturday 12 June 1915.

MRS. JOHN KINGS AND FAMILY

Wish to express their grateful THANKS for
all kind sympathy shown to them in their
recent sad bereavement,

28 Stoney Hill,
Bromsgrove.



Bromsgrove and Droitwich Messenger. Saturday 26 June 1915.

BROMSGROVE TERRITORIAL KILLED IN ACTION. LANCE-CORPORAL J. KINGS.

A painful sensation was caused in Bromsgrove yesterday (Friday), when the news spread that a well-known townsman, Lance-Corporal John Kings! of the 8th Worcesters, had been killed in action. The intelligence was conveyed in letters from the front. The particulars of the sad event are given in the following communication which Mrs. Kings has received from Captain L. Kerwood, the officer commanding "C" Company: British Expeditionary Force:

Ist June, 1915.

Dear Mrs. Kings:

I wish to express to you my great grief at the death of your husband, Lance-Corporal Kings. and the deep sympathy which I and all his comrades feel for you in your great loss. He was shot in the head yesterday mid-day, and death was practically instantaneous and quite painless.

As a soldier and a non-commissioned officer your husband was a man in whom I had the greatest trust and confidence. He was conscientious, capable, and full of pluck and cheeriness under all circumstances. The funeral took place last night in the regimental cemetery behind the trenches, and was attended by the section he commanded and also by others of his comrades. Your loss is great, but you must try to find consolation in some measure in the thought that he died in doing his duty, and doing it right well.

Yours sincerely,

LIONEL KERWOOD, Capt.,
O.C. " C " Company, 8th Batt. Worcestershire Reg.

The deceased soldier, who would have been 41 years of age in July, joined the Bromsgrove Company of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion Worcestershire Regiment in 1890, and retired alter serving five years. He was one of the first in Bromsgrove to become a member of the National Reserve, in 1912, and upon the outbreak of war he drilled with the local company.

When a call was made for recruits he enlisted in the 8th Worcesters, and after undergoing a period of training at Worcester he joined the battalion at Maldon, and went out to France with them.

Lance-Corpl. Kings was engaged as a storekeeper at the Midland Railway Wagon Works, Bromsgrove Station, and lived at Stoney Hill.

He was prominently connected with many local movements. He was a very efficient member of the St. John Ambulance Association, and showed rare aptitude for the work. In February, 1902, he was presented at Derby with the certificate of the Midland Railway Ambulance Committee for rendering first aid, and again in May, 1906, he received a medal for similar service. The deceased had been a member of All Saints' Choir from boy-hood, and his work for the church was recognised by his appointment as sidesman. - *Contd.*:-

He was possessed of a fine bass voice, and his assistance was frequently sought, and invariably cheerfully given, at concerts on behalf of any deserving object. He was keenly interested in the Boy Scout movement, and was assistant scoutmaster of the Bromsgrove St. John's Troop. He acted at one time as a member of the committee of the Bromsgrove Rovers Football Club. He was highly esteemed by a large, circle of friends, among whom he was affectionately known as "Jack Kings." Lance-Corporal Kings was a married man, and leaves a widow and three children, two boys and a girl.

