

Frank Wagstaff

By Alan McKenzie

Henry Wagstaff married Beatrice Bing Smith in 1894.

Their son Frank Wagstaff was born in Christchurch in 1897. He attended school in Christchurch before his family moved to Timaru in about 1915. They lived at 13 Seaview Terrace in Timaru. Henry was the Cashier for J R Ballantynes Department store in Timaru.

Frank joined the New Zealand Railways and was recorded as a Railway Cadet working in Wanganui at the time of his enlistment.

Emulating all those other young men who were keen to serve their country he enlisted in the army in 1917. He left New Zealand on the *Willoochra* for active service and landed at Liverpool, England in 1918. However his service for his country was to be short. In training in England for preparation to move to the front lines he became ill. His records note that he had suffered from rheumatic fever when he was eleven years of age and the medical officer recorded that because of the intense army training he was suffering from “attacks of depression and weakness”. He died from suspected meningitis on the 5th of February 1918 without seeing any active service. He is buried in Tidworth Military Cemetery in England. Clarence made his will at Featherstone Camp before he left New Zealand. He left his estate to his mother Beatrice.

The Wagstaff family was to face further sadness later, when Frank’s younger brother Clarence was murdered in the grounds of their home in 1920.

Clarence was buried in the Timaru Cemetery. His stone records the words, “he lived nobly and died bravely”. Also remembered on the stone is Frank, buried so far away, “he too lived nobly and died bravely”.

