

In Memory of
Jessie Emily Wakefield

Territorial Force Nursing Service
Died 7 February 1919 age 39.



Remembered with honour:
The Diocese of Norwich & the Great War 1914-1918 Book of Remembrance
The Women's National Memorial Screen in York Minster
Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Story of Jessie Emily Wakefield

Jessie Emily Wakefield was born in 1879 to Richard and Emily Wakefield. The family lived in Maidstone where her father was a corn and coal merchant. Jessie had eight siblings; no evidence has been found that any served in the war.

By 1891 Jessie had left Maidstone and was living with her sister and brother-in-law in Gravesend where she worked as a governess.

Jessie came to Norfolk in 1908. She trained at the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital between March 1908 and March 1911. One of her nursing examiners was Dr Burton-Fanning whose daughter worked for the Red Cross and also died in the war. Jessie's report in the nursing register for the time states she was an excellent nurse.

Jessie would have been eligible for the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) when she joined on 11 August 1914 having had three years nursing experience and being over the age of 23. She worked as a Nursing Sister at the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge before going to France.

Following her excellent report as a student nurse, further reports continued to praise her abilities. Her annual reports at Cambridge described her as "*conscientious, methodical and sympathetic.*"

On 24 October 1917 Jessie was awarded the Award of Royal Red Cross (ARCC). She asked if she could be given the award before leaving for France. She was decorated with the ARCC on 20 April 1918 then left for France on 25 May 1918.

Jessie was so highly thought of that, when she left for France, she was put in charge of the group of nurses leaving with her. A memo stated that Jessie "*is available and most suitable to take charge of your large party for going abroad. She is very steady and dependable.*" Jessie was a nursing sister at the 56th General Hospital at Etaples.

In July 1918 Jessie was ill with bronchitis and returned to England for 2 months sick leave. She returned to France in October, but her health did not recover. Jessie died of septicaemia complicated by meningitis on 7 February 1919 in the same hospital where she had worked as a nurse. She was buried in Etaples military cemetery.

Jessie made a will before leaving. This would have been a sensible thing for anyone serving abroad to do, although not everyone did. However it still took some time for her ailing father to wind up her estate.

