

## ***Herbert William Tyrwhitt-Drake***

***Private No. 16578, 19<sup>th</sup> (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars***



*A Son of Shardeloes, 2008, Lorraine Bateman*

**Herbert William (Jack) Tyrwhitt-Drake** was born on 10 October 1885 at Thornton Hall, Buckingham, the first child of William Wykeham and Augusta (née Peel) Tyrwhitt-Drake.

William, his father, was the second son of Thomas Tyrwhitt-Drake, who resided at Shardeloes and was Lord of the Manor of Amersham. He owned much of the town, its surrounding area and neighbouring estates. William inherited this title in 1900 following the death of his elder brother, also named Thomas. The family wealth had been built up over many generations through the ownership and management of land with tenant farmers. In addition to land in Buckinghamshire, the family owned land and properties in Oxfordshire, Lincolnshire and Cheshire. William enjoyed outdoor activities and sports, and as an occupation broke-in and trained horses for hunting and other pursuits.

William and Augusta had four children: Herbert William (known throughout his life as Jack), Edward Thomas b.1887 and daughters, Dorothy Mary b.1889 and Heather Augusta b.1896. Early family history shows them living at Thornton Hall and also at Hethe House, Hethe, Southmoor House, Kingston Bagpuize, and Woodlands near Stowe, where Dorothy and Heather were born. During this time Jack and the family would have made frequent visits to stay with his grandfather at Shardeloes, and it was there, as records show, that Jack was first introduced to horses and riding. It is said he was often seated on one of his grandfather's ponies. Jack was only three years old when his grandfather died in 1888, but these early encounters, together with his father's occupation, started his love for outdoor life and country sports.

Jack's schooling began when he was enrolled at Hinwick House Preparatory School, near Wellingborough, on the Bedfordshire/Northamptonshire border. He was educated there until September 1899, when he entered Eton, aged 14. Jack found the schooling and life at Eton difficult and after only one year, in September 1900, he was transferred to Uppingham.

It was during this year, 1900, that Jack's father, William, inherited Shardeloes and the Tyrwhitt-Drake estates, following the death of his elder brother, Thomas. Jack was 15 at the time. Through the years and in school breaks Jack continued to show his love for hunting and riding, taking every opportunity to ride out and hunt with his father, who was now Master of Hounds of the Old Berkeley Hunt West. He took part in point-to-point racing, becoming a very proficient rider. It was reported in the local paper at that time, that at the age of 16 he won a four-mile point-to-point race against gentlemen riders.

In April 1903, aged 17½, Jack left Uppingham and did not continue further education or go on to university. Details of what he did are not known, but it can be assumed that his activities involved looking after the Shardeloes estate as well as working with horses, hunting and taking part in point-to-point and local steeplechase races. It was from this time that Jack started to train horses and by the age of 19 he had entered the ranks as an amateur jockey, competing throughout the country, initially on the flat, but later, and more successfully, as a steeplechaser. His best season was in 1911 when he topped the list of amateur riders. In the following year he was fourth in the Grand National on a horse called Carsey; and he bettered this in 1913 when he was third, on the same horse. Renowned and with a growing reputation as a rider and trainer, Jack continued to race successfully before his troop's deployment to France in January 1915.

Following the outbreak of war in August 1914, Jack went, in the same month, to London to sign up and was, through his skills in horsemanship, directed to Hounslow Barracks, home at that time of the 19<sup>th</sup> (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars, where he enlisted as a trooper. Although through his family's status, Jack could have been a candidate for a commission, he refused this possibility in order to remain in the ranks. This was perhaps because he did not want to undertake further training and thus delay his entry to the war, which was thought likely to be over in six months.

Following enlistment, his troop was transferred to Longmoor Military Camp in Aldershot, Hampshire, for training and preparation for battle. Although undergoing training for war, Jack was on ten occasions between October 1914 and January 1915 given leave of absence to fulfil his racing commitments. The last of these leaves took him to Gatwick on 19 January, seven days before the troop sailed for France.

By late January 1915 the troop had completed training, and moved with horses to Southampton from where they sailed to Le Havre and Rouen, landing on 26 January. There they were to reinforce B Squadron of the 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars based in Nieppe (north-west of Armentières and south-west of Ploegsteert). The *War Diaries* do not give much detail, other than that the weather when they landed was very cold, alternating between freezing and thawing, and snowfalls. In February the *War Diaries* make no mention of weather, but there was probably little change from that experienced in January.

The squadron was not in action at the front line, but was ordered to provide working parties to assist the Royal Engineers to construct support and reserve trenches near Le Touquet north-east of Nieppe. During this time they came under enemy shellfire.

While there, Jack was taken ill with a heavy cold and transferred to the General Hospital in Boulogne, though this is not recorded in the *War Diaries*. Newspaper reports state that his parents received a telegram informing them of his death. As his father was unwell, his mother, Augusta, made arrangements to travel to France without him. However, due to problems caused by the requisition of transport by the military, she did not arrive until after he had passed away.

Herbert William (Jack) Tyrwhitt-Drake died of pneumonia on 11 March 1915, aged 29.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal, The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The 1914-15 Star.

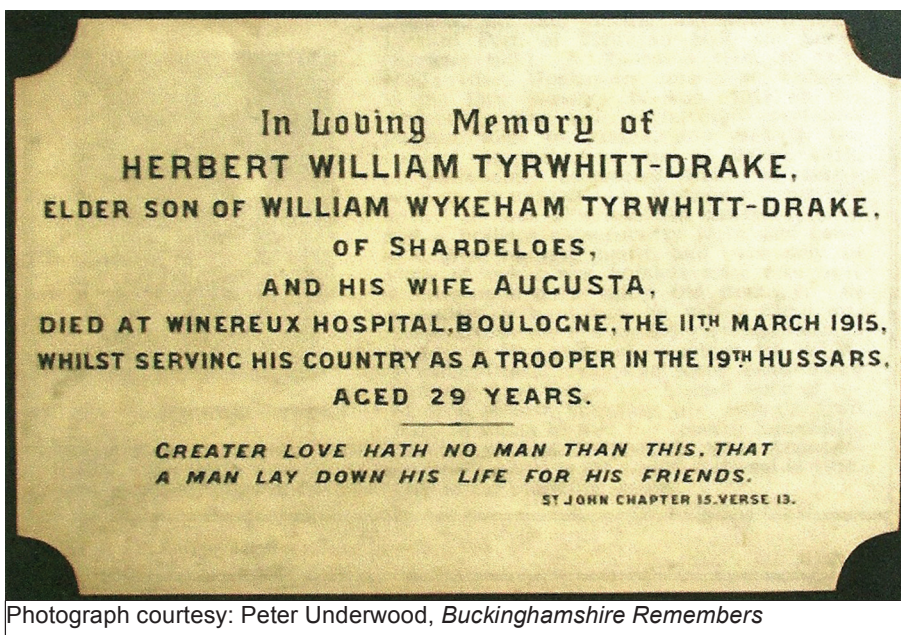
After the war, in 1921, his regiment was renamed 19<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars (Queen Alexandra's Own).





Photograph courtesy: Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Herbert William (Jack) Tyrwhitt-Drake is remembered with Honour  
and is buried in Wimereux Communal Cemetery, Boulogne, Pas-de-Calais  
(grave reference I.D.)



Herbert William (Jack) is also remembered on the Memorial in the Church of St John the Baptist, Little Missenden.

Photograph courtesy: Peter Underwood, *Buckinghamshire Remembers*

Sources:

1. Bateman, Lorraine *A Son of Shardeloes*. Author, 2008
2. The National Archives - War Office Records  
WO 95/1466 - *War Diary - 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars*  
WO 372/6 - *British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914 - 1920*.
3. Ancestry.co.uk
4. *Bucks Examiner* Archive Records
5. *Bucks Herald* Archive Records March 1915
6. The Long, Long Trail ([www.1914-1918.net](http://www.1914-1918.net))