

## William Lewes Wakeham



West Sussex Record Office RSR MS 1/127

By Lesley Card

## William Lewes Wakeham 1882 – 1961

William Lewes Wakeham was born in 1882 at Patching, West Sussex, christened on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1882, son of William and Mary Wakeham (nee Burcher), who married on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1879. He was their only son and second of three children having two sisters, Mary Jane and Norah Elizabeth. They were a local family, his father originating in Amberley and later living and working as an agricultural labourer and carter on a farm, living in a three roomed dwelling at Patching, West Sussex (1). Mary Wakeham died age 36 years old in 1890 when her son would have been of school age. Following her death the 1901 census records Mary Hosier, a widow moving into the family home as a lodger.

William Lewes Wakeham worked as a hurdle maker of wood before joining the army (1).

On 4<sup>th</sup> February 1902 he gave notice offering to join the militia and joined on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1902 (2) aged 19 years 11 months.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1902 the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion sailed from Cape Town to India.

Medical fitness papers describe him as five feet four inches tall with grey eyes and brown hair, weighing 111 pounds, chest measurement 33 inches expanding to 35 inches (3). His number was 8786 and Corps 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Sussex Regiment.

He served in the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion Royal Sussex Regiment L/6814 No. 6390260. The 1911 census shows him as single and serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment.

In 1914 the Battalion was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> (Peshawar) Infantry Brigade 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Indian Army and in December 1917 moved to the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Rawalpindi) Division.

Both Divisions remained in India throughout the war (4 & 5), but mobilised on several occasions for action on the northern front.

Regimental diaries state on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February 1914 the battalion marched to Jologai in heavy rain to take part in training, leaving again on 15<sup>th</sup> October. On 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March 1914 the Annual Regimental Sports took place on the football ground at Khaiber barracks with "conditions were good with splendid weather," (6).

On 27<sup>th</sup> April the battalion marched from Peshawar to summer quarters at Cherat arriving on 29<sup>th</sup> April. An open air concert was performed on the parade ground on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Sporting events were many, including hockey, cricket, boxing, bayonet fighting, machine gun competitions, 110 and 130 stone tug of wars and marathon racing, a dance club was also formed.

The Battalion was mobilised for service on the Northwest Front on 17<sup>th</sup> August in severe heat. During the Great War weather varied from extreme heat of 112 F in the shade, causing cases of heatstroke and cholera

epidemics, to extreme cold, where four blankets were needed to keep warm at night and incessant rain when a tent with charcoal braziers was used as a drying tent for uniforms (Battalion Diaries).

The Battalion was withdrawn from the line on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1919 and embarked for England on 27<sup>th</sup> December escorting POW's returning to Germany.

Sergeant William Wakeham's certificate of character on discharge states, "During this period he has been in the Drum and Fife Band. Good disciplinarian, honest and trustworthy not having a case of drunkenness during the whole of his 21 years service". He was discharged as a consequence of the termination of his second period of engagement on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1923.(2)



1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Band, Ambala, Punjab, India, 1905  
[http://www.royalsussex.org.uk/RSLHG\\_main\\_index.html](http://www.royalsussex.org.uk/RSLHG_main_index.html)



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Medals awarded were 1914 -1915 Star, British War and Victory medals, Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1921 in Hounslow L. Cpl. Wakeham was presented with the India General Service Medal 1908 with a clasp inscribed "Afghanistan, North West Frontier 1919.

The Roussillon Gazette, Drummers Notes (Vol.12, No2, P.12) state "Sgt. Wakeham has joined the ranks of civilians after 21years service, nearly all of which he has served with the Drums. Good luck to him and we hope he will get a really good start in his new venture."

William Lewes Wakeham died aged 79 years old from broncho pneumonia on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1961 at Southlands Hospital in Shoreham, the balance of his pension being sent to an address in Stanley Road in Worthing.



## Endnotes and Bibliography

1. <http://www.Ancestry.co.uk> 1901 England Census. 1911 England Census.
2. A Short History of the RSR 35<sup>th</sup> Foot – 107<sup>th</sup> Foot 1701 1926. Published 1927 printed Gale and Polden Ltd. Historical records of 1st Battalion 1914-1920. RSR MS 1/127
3. Find My Past website. Military Records. [www.findmypast.co.uk/](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/)
4. Long Long Trail – The British Army in the Great War  
<http://www.1914-1918.net>
5. ([http://www.ask.com/wiki/1st \(Peshwar\) Division?o=2802&qsrc=999](http://www.ask.com/wiki/1st_(Peshwar)_Division?o=2802&qsrc=999))
6. Roussillon Gazette Vol. 5 No1 p 51.

England and Wales Christening Records 1530-1906.

Record of Services of 35<sup>th</sup> Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1931.

A Short History of the RSR 35<sup>th</sup> Foot – 107<sup>th</sup> Foot 1701 1926. Published 1927 printed Gale and Polden Ltd. Historical records of 1st Battalion 1914-1920 - RSR MS 1/1; 1/127; 1/71; 1/111; 1/138; 1/145; 1/146-150. Unit War Diaries.

<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/Library/Search>

Records of individuals who served in the Great War. [http://www.forces-warrecords.co.uk/records.asp?SC=HJ&SL=5A&KW=ARMY&gclid=CK\\_Wmcvk8LgCFWOWtAodchgAaQ](http://www.forces-warrecords.co.uk/records.asp?SC=HJ&SL=5A&KW=ARMY&gclid=CK_Wmcvk8LgCFWOWtAodchgAaQ)

<https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records#service-records-of-deceased-service-personne>

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[www.findmypast.co.uk/](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/) Find My Past website, birth, marriage and death records, military records, 1891, 1901 and 1911 census records.

[www.Familysearch.org](http://www.Familysearch.org).

Ministry of Defence Records.

Enlistment Registers – Army Book 358 (William Wakeham not registered in this record).

Roussillon Gazette Volumes 5 – 12.

Worthing Voters List – 1957/58; 1960/61.

Marriage Licences –microfilm

Electoral Registers.

Parish Registers.

County Directories – Patching and Chapel Road Worthing

School Records.