

Name, Rank & Regiment of Soldier:

Hill, Walter,

Sergeant

Royal Field Artillery 'B' Battalion

No: 45311



Right: Walter Hill in uniform prior to becoming a sergeant (2 stripes = corporal). Image c/o Heather Wilkinson

Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
June 23 rd 1884	August 11, 1917	32

Background: **Walter Hill**

Walter Hill was born in 1884 in Hadstock near Linton, Cambridgeshire to Josiah and Abigail Hill. In 1891 the family lived in Linton where Josiah was a brewer's labourer. Before marriage Josiah had served in the army for 7 years, including a stint in India. The children were Walter (7) Alfred (4) Josiah (3) and Percy (1). The children had a settled, happy childhood:

*'When they visited Snettisham and Dersingham, Norfolk, where their maternal grandparents lived, the older brothers used to go out in punts, wildfowling on the marshes and the children collected cockles and mussels for tea from the beach.'*¹

In 1901 the Hills were living in Little Oxcombe, Louth, Lincolnshire. Josiah and his three eldest sons (including 17-year old Walter) were farm labourers. There were 3 further siblings for Walter: Rowena, born in 1893, Florence (born 1897) and Enoch (1899). Percy died aged 4 in 1894. In 1910, Walter married Mabel Squires (1888-1971²) of Coleby, who already had a daughter, Mabel, who was one year old (b. Sleaford 1909).

In the census of 1911 they are living on Low Street, Collingham (near 'The Old Bakery') in a 4-roomed house so probably moved to the village around 1910. As well as Mabel (2) they have a boy, Walter Jr, 9 months, baptised on 4th Sept 1910 in All Saints' church. Walter was a farm labourer.

¹ Information from Heather Wilkinson, grand-daughter of Enoch Hill

² Date of death from Kirk Family Tree on Ancestry.co.uk: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/68688014/person/340080538451/facts>

There is another son, Henry (baptised in All Saints 3rd March 1912³). According to the Kirk Family research on Ancestry.co.uk, Mabel went on to have 5 more children with another partner after Walter was killed: (Herbert born 1921) (Stanley 1923), Leslie (1925) Melvi (1927-1929) and Vera (1930), all with surname Hill. Mabel remarried in 1941 (aged 57) to Navenby native Herbert Bellamy, born 1893 & likely to be the father of Mabel's subsequent children. Mabel is buried in Navenby. One of Walter's sisters, Florence, lived in Walesby, Notts.

Military History: Sgt. Walter Hill

In WW1 Walter Hill served in the Royal Field Artillery which provided firepower in support of the cavalry. His medal index card indicates he enlisted (at Newark⁴) early in the war as he was awarded the 1914-15 Star.

Campaign :—				(A) Where decoration was earned.		
		1914-15		(B) Present situation.		
Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)		
(A) HILL	RFA	A/Bmt	45811	MEDAL	* ROLL	PAGE
(B) Walker	"	Sgt.	"	VICTORY	RFA/14B	14760
				BRITISH	do	do
				15 STAR	RFA/3/ALB	3717
Action taken				Lead		
THEATRE OF WAR (1) France						
QUALIFYING DATE 26.9.15						
(6 34 46) W231-HP5590 500,000 4/19 HWV(P240) K608				[OVER]		

Above: Image of Walter Hill's medal index roll card (Kirk research via Ancestry.co.uk)

The Royal Regiment of Artillery (RRA)

At the time of the Great War the RRA had three elements:

- The *Royal Horse Artillery*: armed with light, mobile, horse-drawn guns that in theory provided firepower in support of the cavalry and in practice supplemented the Royal Field Artillery.
- The *Royal Field Artillery*: the most numerous arm of the artillery, the horse-drawn RFA was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line and was reasonably mobile. It was organised into brigades.
- The *Royal Garrison Artillery*: developed from fortress-based artillery located on British coasts. From 1914 when the army possessed very little heavy artillery it grew into a very large component of the British forces. It was armed with heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power.'

³ East Trent Genealogy database – Baptisms, Hill.

⁴ See Ancestry.co.uk service history for details

- extract from 'The Long, Long Trail'⁵:

The RFA (Royal Field Artillery) was in 'B' battery of the 110th Brigade, part of the 25th Division (under General Gough's 5th Army). Each battery consisted of six 13 pounder field guns, 228 horses, 5 officers and 200 men.

'The Capture of Westhoek.' (part of the 3rd Battle of Ypres)

'On 8 July 1917, Divisional HQ was established at Busseboom and came under orders of II Corps for the opening of the Third Ypres offensive. When the attack began on 31 July, 25th Division was in Corps Reserve, behind 24th, 30th and 8th Divisions which were in the front line. On 10 August, 74th Brigade took part in the renewal of the attack. In a successful action, Westhoek was captured, although at a severe cost: 47 officers and 1244 men killed, wounded or missing. This was mainly due to German aircraft sniping from overhead.'⁶

Sgt Walter Hill was one of the 1,244 casualties. He is buried in the Belgian Battery Corner Cemetery which is 2 km south of Ypres. His headstone is inscribed 'Gone but not forgotten'. Plot I.J.10

Mabel Hill's address at the time was given as Navenby, Lincs.

Sgt Walter Hill is also remembered on the North Collingham War Memorials at All Saints Church.



Above: Photo of Walter Hill's war grave in Ypres by Murray Biddle. With kind permissions from Nottinghamshire County Council Roll of Honour

⁵ <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>

⁶ Source: The Long, Long Trail website

With thanks to Charlie Stothard for his initial research into Walter Hill in 2014 and Heather Wilkinson for her additional information about the Hill family in 2018.

Website Sources:

- 🕒 East Trent Genealogy
- 🕒 Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- 🕒 Nottinghamshire County Council Roll of Honour
- 🕒 The Long, Long Trail
- 🕒 Ancestry.co.uk especially the Kirk Family Tree & Jim Squires

