

Private Roland Walker

(8th June 1894 - 9th December 1915)



Private Roland Walker is remembered on the headstone to plot J11 in St Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe where a young brother and his parents are also buried. He was a first cousin of the Sucksmith WW1 soldiers. This is his family's story.

Father Donald Walker had married Annie Sucksmith in 1885. Annie was the daughter of James Sucksmith of Yew Tree Farm and so the sister of the Sucksmith soldiers' father William Sucksmith. Grandfather James Sucksmith had a sister Frances who married Jonathan Smallwood, a farmer at Roydlands Farm, Lightcliffe. Private James Smallwood, who also perished in WW1 was thus a first cousin once removed of Private Roland Walker as well as the Sucksmith brothers.

Annie Sucksmith was born in 1863 the eldest child of farmer James Sucksmith and his first wife Elizabeth Sucksmith nee Bentley. Annie was not baptised until 25th May 1873 at the parish church in Halifax. In the 1871 census she was a nine-year-old "Scholar" living with her parents and siblings at Yew Tree Farm, Lightcliffe. Her mother passed away on 19th October 1876 and was buried on 24th October in plot C11 at St Matthew's Churchyard. Then in 1879 her father remarried. Nineteen-year-old Annie was at home, Yew Tree Farm, with her father, step mother Esther nee Smith, siblings and half siblings on 3rd April 1881.

Donald Walker was born in 1858 the son of Jabez and Marion Walker nee Ellis. In 1869, after Marion had been made a young widow on 18th May 1861, she married Christopher Holgate. On census night 1871 the Holgate / Walker family was headed by farm bailiff Christopher and his children, wife Marion and her Walker children and then their children. Twelve-year-old Donald Walker was recorded as a "Half timer in Mill" presumably he was at school the other half time. By 1881 22-year-old "Step Son" Donald Walker was a "Clerk" living with his family at Hoyles House, Lightcliffe.

By the 1891 census Donald was married to Annie Sucksmith and they had two small children, Raymond born 1887 and Edith born 1889. By then Donald was "Manager of Carpet Factory" and lived with his family at 2 Grange Terrace, Lightcliffe. Ida Marion Walker was born in 1892 followed by twin boys Arthur and Roland Walker in 1894, most probably on 8th June 1894. But in between these births Donald and Annie lost their six-year-old eldest son Raymond on 6th May 1893. He was buried in St Matthew's Churchyard on 9th May 1893. His is the first name on the headstone above for plot J11.

As the family home would remain 2 Grange Terrace all the children probably attended Lightcliffe National School with the boys going on to Hipperholme Grammar School. Arthur was still a "Student" on 2nd April 1911 but by then his twin Roland was a "Warehouseman". Father Donald Walker was a "Manager Tapestry Carpet Factory" in 1901 and then simply a "Mill Manager" in 1911 for Messrs T.F.Firth & Sons.

In September 1914 Roland Walker enlisted with the 1st/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment). No evidence has been found to suggest that his twin brother Arthur also enlisted but he may have served and survived.

And then on 17th December 1915 the Brighouse Echo reported: -



Local War News

DEATH OF PRIVATE ROLAND WALKER, OF LIGHTCLIFFE KILLED IN ACTION

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Walker, of Grange Terrace, Lightcliffe, received three communications on Wednesday morning from Flanders informing them of the death, killed in action, of their youngest son Pte. Roland Walker, who has been serving since last April in France and Flanders with the First 4th Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment, 6th Platoon, Company.

Second Lieut. T.W. Berry, who belongs to "B" Company wrote:-

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Walker, -- It is with extreme regret that I write to inform you that your son Private Roland Walker, was killed last night by a bullet entering his chest whilst he was with a working party in the trenches. His loss will be most deeply felt by all

the men, and particularly those of our section. I know what it must mean to you and I can only say that you have my very deepest sympathy and trust that it may perhaps be some consolation that he has died the noblest of deaths, giving his life for his country. Will you please convey to your family my most sincere sympathy and condolence in the terrible loss you have sustained.

Lance Corporal J. Whitehead, of "B" Company, wrote as follows: --

Dear Mrs Walker and family, -- Just a line to inform you that your son Private Roland Walker, who was one of the men in the construction party of which I was section commander, was killed last night whilst repairing the trenches. He was hit in the chest by a stray bullet. His death was instantaneous so he did not suffer any pain. I offered [a] short prayer for him as he passed away. He was a favourite amongst the company and all who knew him. He was a good and willing worker, one who never grumbled nor complained at anything. He realised the duty he was doing, and did it with a good will. There is one consolation to you, and that is he died doing his duty for King and country. All the boys send their deepest sympathy to the members of the family in their darkest hour.

The following is a copy of one received from one of Pte. Walker's personal friends, Pts. Stanley Jessop: --

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Walker, -- It is my painful duty as a pal to notify you of the death of your son Roland, who was

killed last night, the 9th inst., by a bullet whilst with a working party. The bullet entered his chest whilst he was engaged repairing the top of the trench, and death was instantaneous. He was well liked by all who knew him, and all send their deepest sympathy. It is a sad blow to us to lose so good a chum. He has done some good work whilst out here with the battalion, and it may be some consolation to you to know that he died doing his duty. I (as his chum) offer you my most heartfelt sympathy, and I hope you will take it in the best way possible.

Private Walker was 21 years of age. Previous to joining the colours he was

employed in the cloth warehouse of Messrs. Wayman & Co., Haley Hill, Halifax. He joined the army in September of last year and went to the front with the Regiment in April. When a boy, Pte. Walker went to the Lightcliffe National School and afterwards to Hipperholme Grammar School. He was a member of the Lightcliffe Liberal Club. He was also a member of Lightcliffe Cricket Club and has played several times with the second team. He was a regular attender at the Young Men's Class at Bramley Lane Congregational Church. He was well liked and highly respected by all with whom he came in contact and much sympathy is extended to the bereaved family.

Then just two weeks later the Brighthouse Echo of 31st December 1915 had the following obituary. Unfortunately, the pdf file on page 8 of this issue is not easy to read but hopefully the majority of this transcription is correct.

The Obituary

MR. DONALD WALKER OF
LIGHTCLIFFE

LARGE AND REPRESENTATIVE

ATTENDANCE AT THE FUNERAL

Very much sympathy was extended to the family of Mr. Donald Walker, of Grange Terrace, Lightcliffe, last weekend, when it became known that he had passed away. On Wednesday last week Mr. Walker, who was mill manager at Messrs. T.F. Firth and Sons Ltd., Bailiffe Bridge, was taken suddenly ill whilst at his work, and was

conveyed home. He immediately lapsed into unconsciousness. Dr Campbell, of Bradford, was called, in addition to Dr. Davidson of Hipperholme, but despite all their efforts Mr Walker succumbed on Thursday night.

The deceased gentleman, who was 57 years of age, was a well-known and highly respected resident of the district. He has been a faithful servant at Clifton Mills, Bailiffe Bridge, for 13 years. It was in the year 1872 that Mr Walker commenced his work at Messrs. Firth's in the spinning department. He was afterwards given a position in the office and gradually worked his way by sheer merit until he was appointed to the position of mill manager, which he has faithfully discharged for a

long number of years. Mr Walker married Miss Sucksmith, the only daughter of Mr. James Sucksmith, of Yew Tree Farm, Lightcliffe, and he leaves a widow and three children, two daughters and one son. It is only about three weeks ago that the family were bereaved of a son, who was killed in Flanders while doing his duty with the First 4th Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment. The deceased has also taken a deep interest in the Hipperholme Urban District Old Folk's Committee. He was appointed on that basis in ??? and in ??? was given the post of secretary, a position he held up to the time of his death. He was a regular attender of the congregation of the Lightcliffe Congregational Church and was also a member of the Lightcliffe Cricket Club having been a vice-president of the latter organisation. Mr Walker was an active member of the Hipperholme Bowling Club and took much interest in its

formation. He took an active interest in politics or public affairs.

The funeral took place last Monday morning at Lightcliffe Old Church and the large number of people who attended afforded abundant evidence as to the respect and esteem in which the deceased was held in the district of Hipperholme, Lightcliffe and Bailiffe Bridge. Services were conducted at the house, at the church and at the grave side by the Rev. H. L. Taylor, vicar of Lightcliffe. The coffin was of wainscot oak with heavy brass mountings and bore the following inscription: -

DONALD WALKER
Died December 23rd 1917
Aged 57 years

Mrs. Walker, wife of the deceased, was too ill to attend the funeral and the chief mourners were Misses Edith and Ida Walker, daughters, and Mr Arthur Walker son.

Much of the rest of the mourners' names are unreadable as are some of the floral tributes and who they were from but the following selection have been picked out.

"In memory of my dear husband" from his sorrowing wife

"In loving memory of the best of fathers."
From his dear children.

"In loving memory of a dear brother" from Mr Wm Sucksmith and family

"With deepest sympathy" from Mr Smallwood and family

"With deepest sympathy" from Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Ackroyd, Cliffe Hall

"In memory of a very faithful friend and with deep regret" from Sir Algernon and Lady Firth

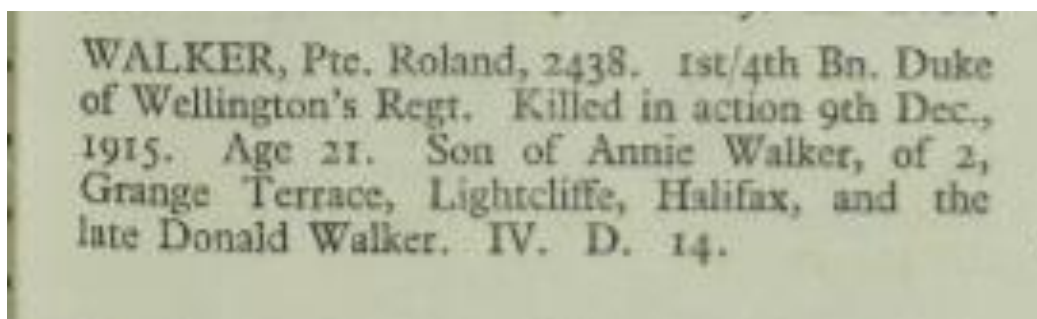
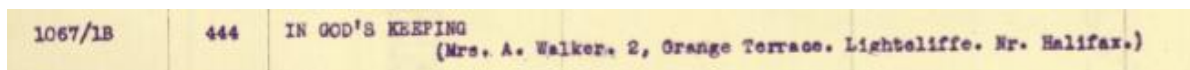
"With heartfelt sympathy" from Mrs Brownrigg and family

"With deepest sympathy" from Mr A. Aspinall

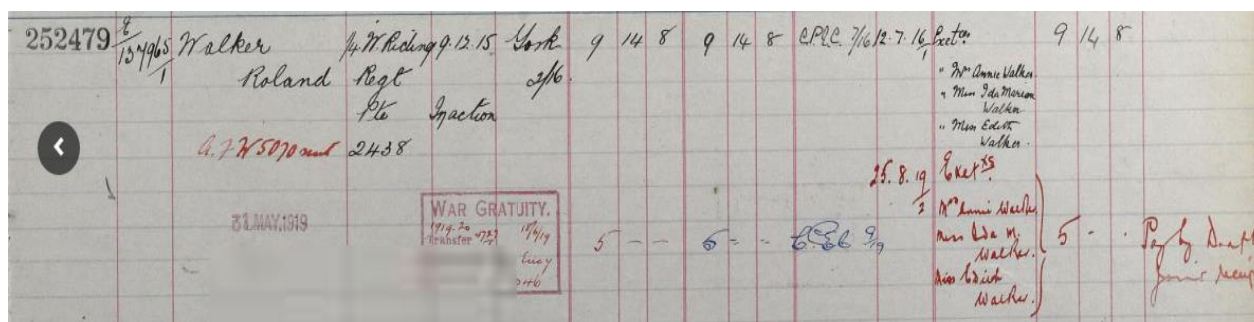
Donald Walker was buried on 27th December 1915 in plot J11 of St Matthew's Churchyard alongside his young son Raymond. His probate reads as follows: -

Walker Donald of Grange Terrace Lightcliffe Halifax died 23 December 1915 Probate London 24 February [1916] to Annie Walker widow and Edith Walker and Ida Marion Walker spinsters. Effects £4548 6s 6d

This explains the reference to the late Donald Walker on the army records below. Private Roland Walker was buried in the Talana Farm Cemetery in plot IV. D. 14 with the inscription: -



His mother and sisters were the beneficiaries of his war gratuity.



No further information has been found about these sisters but Roland's twin Arthur Walker married Dorothy Smith in 1924. By the time of the 1939 register they were living at 140 Wakefield Rd., Brighouse. His date of birth, from which Roland's is deduced, was 8th June 1894 and he was a "Mill Manager Carpet and Khaki webbing". Dorothy born 1st November 1897 was doing the usual "Unpaid D/D" – domestic duties.

Before the 1939 register was taken mother Annie Walker nee Sucksmith had died on 28th January 1930 aged 67 years of age. Hers is the last name on the headstone of plot J11 where she was buried on 30th January 1930.



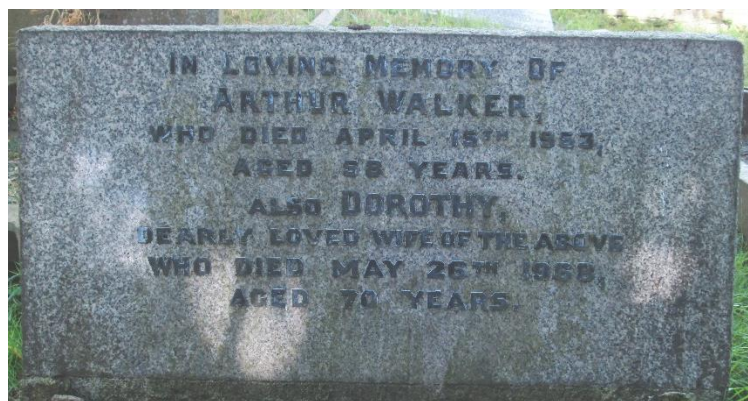
The Walker headstone on plot J11

Arthur and Dorothy Walker were also buried in St Matthew's Churchyard but in the new section in plot NY S2, Arthur on 18th April 1953 and Dorothy on 31st May 1968.

They each have probate records.

Walker Arthur of 514 Bradford-road Bailiffe Bridge near Brighouse Yorkshire died 15 April 1953 Probate Wakefield 26 May to Dorothy Walker widow. Effects £1136 16s 1d

Walker Dorothy of 37 Wyke Old Lane Bailiff Bridge Brighouse Yorkshire died 26 May 1968 Probate Wakefield 5 July. £9679



The Walker headstone on NY S2

D.M.Barker
July 2016