

The Walkers - A Remarkable Military Family

By Tim Bauckham

Clive Gilbert's display marking the end of WW1 attracted numerous visitors and many favourable comments. It also encouraged several members of the public to bring in stories and memorabilia about their own families. Although there is no connection with Epsom & Ewell, the story of the Walker family is so remarkable that it clearly deserves being more widely known. At one time they set a record of three brothers serving as commissioned officers at the same time, all three of them having originally joined the Army as boy soldiers.

Their father, Thomas Walker, took up service with the Honourable East India Company, joining the Bengal Horse Artillery in 1838. He was at Cawnpore when the Indian Mutiny broke out and served in all the engagements that led to the relief of Lucknow and the re-establishment of British rule in India. On his return to England he served in the Royal Horse Guards for 21 years, attaining the rank of Corporal-Major. He was subsequently appointed to the Yeomen of the Guard. He died in 1912.

Whilst serving in the Royal Horse Guards, Thomas Walker married the daughter of a Farrier-Major in the Royal Horse Guards and the couple had four sons who served in the Royal Horse Artillery.

The eldest son, William Thomas Walker, served in India and South Africa. The three younger brothers all served in WW1. Robert, the second son, won the Military Cross and attained the rank of Major but was killed in action in 1917 near Arras. The third and fourth sons both survived the war. Richard, the youngest of the brothers joined the Army as a boy

bugler at the age of 17 and served in South Africa. At the outbreak of WW1 he was a Battery Sergeant Major and was subsequently commissioned, reaching the rank of Major.

The third son, Robert Young Knightsbridge Walker had a particularly distinguished career, starting on the day he was born in 1880. On that day Queen Victoria was visiting the newly completed Knightsbridge Barracks and learning of the birth of the first male child born there insisted that he was given the names 'Young Knightsbridge'.

In 1894 Robert enlisted as a boy soldier in the Royal Horse Artillery and served for three years in South Africa during the Boer War. In this time he was severely wounded but was mentioned in despatches and gained two medals, the South Africa Medal with six clasps for the particular campaigns he took part in, including the relief's of Ladysmith and Mafeking and the King's Medal with clasps for 1901 and 1902.

He subsequently served in India for four years and in August 1914 went to France as a Battery Sergeant Major and was awarded the Medaille Militaire, the French equivalent of the Victoria Cross, for gallantry during the retreat from Mons. He was mentioned in despatches in October 1914 and commissioned in November of that year. In the 1915 New Year Honours he was awarded the Military Cross and subsequently attained the rank of Major. Robert Young Knightsbridge Walker retired from the Army in 1920 and died in 1970, aged 90.

It's like an email version of '84 Charing Cross Road'

With Helen Smith as Helen Hanff and Clive Gilbert as Frank Doel

An enquirer named Helen Smith recently emailed stating that she had just discovered that her great-uncle, John Tester, who died of wounds in 1915 has his grave pictured on our website along with relevant information about him. She had no idea that he was commemorated in Ewell and wanted to thank those

responsible. Clive replied that we were trying to gather information about all the people on the memorials, and asked if she might have some more information or pictures. Helen Smith replied with the following:

“
Dear Clive (I hope I might use your first name?)

How incredibly kind of you to do this research! This may be a particularly stupid question but is my great uncle commemorated on a war memorial in Ewell? Because if he is, we did not know!

I knew very little about him, until a chance comment by my husband when we first met and he visited my parent's house for the first time in 2001. My parents have a picture of my grandfather, George Tester, John's younger brother, who was also 20th Hussars (later MGC) pictured during WWI, astride his horse and with his medals mounted underneath the picture. Along with the requisite Pip, Squeak & Wilfred, there is a Croix de Guerre and a DCM. My husband, a serving Army Officer said 'how fascinating what was the DCM for?' which drew blank looks, and so he set about finding the DCM citation for my father, and that set off discussions about my Grandfather's family.

John (only ever known as 'Jack' in the family) had barely been mentioned to my father as my grandfather could not speak of him without weeping, and the existence of Jane, his eldest sister, was completely unknown by my dad. It took some persuading to convince him that she had ever existed! We later discovered that she had gone into Service in London and worked for an Army Colonel...oh the irony! My Father was not born until 1941 (he is also John Tester) but I remember meeting my Grandfather's other siblings, Bob, Rose and Tom.

My Grandfather always claimed to have come from Dorking and I suppose that John (Jack) married a Northern girl in Elsie but then returned back to the area of Surrey, which he knew. George was certainly a career Soldier and was already serving before the war and continued to do so for a long time afterward. I would not be faintly surprised if John had joined up first and George followed him in but I have not been able to prove that. I also have not been able to find any descendants of John & Elsie. Elsie simply disappeared into the ether, probably due to a re-marriage, which I have not been able to find. I have never seen a photograph of Jack. I suppose it is possible that there is one amongst my late grandfather's possessions, which my father has, and you have spurred me to ask the question!

I am sorry for the rambling! I am so very grateful to you for your interest and if I can uncover anything about Jack, which would be of interest to you, I will most certainly be in touch.

“
Kind regards Helen Smith

Then came her next email:

“
Dear Clive

You cannot possibly know the impact that your research and information has had on my family. Why it didn't occur to us that Uncle Jack would be commemorated on a war memorial escapes me, but that he is, is the most extraordinarily moving news. We are planning to bring my father, his namesake, from his home in Devon to the Remembrance Day service at St. Mary's later this year. I don't know if you attend that particular service but I would be honoured to shake your hand.

I am afraid I don't know if my Grandfather ever lived in Ewell or Epsom, although when I was a little girl I used to accompany him to the races at Epsom, he was an expert on 'form' and backed a lot of winners! I am going to ask my dad to share the family photographs with me in the hope that we may find one of Jack, and see if I can uncover my Grandfather's whereabouts before the War, in the hope he lived in Ewell!

“
Many and heartfelt thanks Helen

And then came another:

“
Dear Clive

I have THE most fascinating thing to tell you. Forgive my excited tone but this has only just come to light....

I noticed that there was a William Godden commemorated on the same Memorial as my Uncle Jack. We have a photograph of my husband's great Uncle during WWI hanging in our sitting room. When I saw the name William Godden something in my head said 'that's Uncle Billy!' I thought it too great a coincidence

to be possible and that perhaps the thrill of finding Uncle Jack's memorial had caused me to go off in to flights of fantasy, so I very tentatively mentioned it to my husband in the car this morning, and he said; 'That's possible, Uncle Billy was from Kent but he was 8th R Fusiliers and they were recruited from around Epsom. He was 24 when he was killed. It is worth seeing if all that matches what Mr. Gilbert has uncovered'...and Clive...it DOES! We have TWO relatives commemorated on the same memorial!! AND we have photographs and Press cuttings about Uncle Billy, which, if you would like, can be added to the site.

It seems impossible. My Great Uncle who was born in Wales and my husband's Great Uncle who was from Kent together on the same Memorial in Ewell and without you Clive we would never have known.

*“
Kind regards Helen*

We are delighted to reproduce this correspondence in full because it's a great job by Clive resulting in a very pleased couple who not only have discovered ancestor on the Ewell memorials but are also delighted with our Local History website.

More Good News on the Website ...

From Hazel Ballan

Bob, my husband, has been in contacted Julian, the curator at Brooklands, to discuss the possibility of displaying his Concorde model there during some forthcoming functions. I asked Bob if he would pass a letter onto Julian to see if he could confirm the claim that Victor Yarsley, who lived in Ewell, was the inventor of the glue used for sticking together the Mosquito de Havilland aeroplanes – Julian is going to get back to me on this.

As it happens, I actually went with Bob and briefly met Julian who, to my delight, said that he was “very much aware of our web site” and praised it “very highly”, and that ‘they’ [Brooklands] have used it several times.

So, “Well Done” all those who have contributed to www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk especially the articles regarding WW1+2 including the reports of the aeroplane crashes etc in the area. I also think a special mention should be made of our web master Peter, without whom we would not have this much praised web site at all.

... and Even More

From Liz Manterfield

Clive and I were at the Surrey History Centre talks on WW1 and the first speaker gave our web-site, and the War Memorial section in particular, glowing praise without any prompting and before I revealed that Clive was ‘Mr. War Memorial’. Even when he left he called over to say keep up the good work.

Then someone else in the audience came over to say that they had been looking at Corner Reynard in Guildford. We remembered him well because of his Harry Potter address 112 1/2 High St or something similar. Again he had used the web site to assist with his research.

I could hardly get Clive's head through the door.

... and Finally.

From Bert Barnhurst

When I recently visited The National Archives I introduced them to our web-site and showed them our publicity leaflet. Both met with their enthusiastic approval, which is most encouraging from such a prestigious organisation

Doesn't all this make you feel good? Thanks to all concerned - ED

‘Ding Dong’ replied Winston Churchill

It’s all in the Parliamentary Archives

Eight volunteers recently visited the Palace of Westminster for a guided tour of the Houses of Lords and Commons. This was followed by a visit to the Parliamentary Archives for a fascinating tour and a presentation by Archivist Mari Takayanagi on the records they hold and the work of the archivists.

The oldest part of the Palace is Westminster Hall, one of the few parts to survive the fire of 1834. The present palace was built over the next 30 years by architect Sir Charles Barry and his assistant Augustus Pugin. Incidentally, Pugin’s father was French and Pugin himself died of a mental illness when he was only 40 years old. His gothic décor has to be seen to be believed – truly amazing - and leaves you thinking what would he have achieved if he had not died so young.



Westminster Hall

One of the noticeable things about the Palace is the colour coding. You know where you are because the Monarch’s Robing Room and the Royal Gallery have blue furnishings, carpets and seating whereas the benches and other furnishings in the Lords’ side of the Palace, are coloured red and those in the Commons side are green – and I’m not going to make any kindergarten jokes on why this is so. Just so as you know, we member of the public are not allowed to sit on any of the seats and neither can you take any photographs of the interior of the Palace except of Westminster Hall, which is now used for ceremonial occasions.

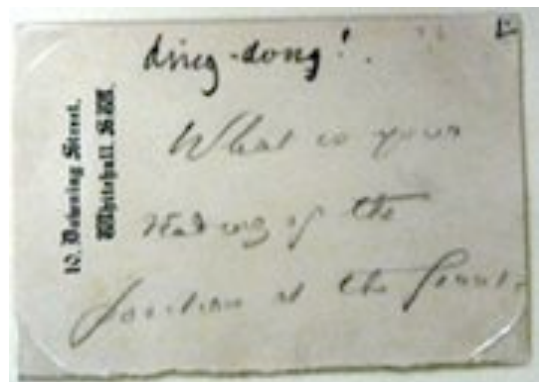


The group inside the store room with the rolls of Acts and Bills on vellum

The Parliamentary Archives are stored in Victoria Tower at the west end of the Palace over the Sovereign’s entrance. Our visit included the climate-controlled archives’ storeroom with its rolls of vellum Bills and Acts dating back to 1497. You can access these, on request, by searching for the reference on the Parliamentary Archives website – www.parliament.uk/archives and then making an appointment to visit the Reading Room to see the relevant document.

So how does ‘Ding Dong’ and Churchill come into this. As part of her presentation, Mari, the archivist, had pulled out a number of interesting documents for us to look at. Two of these were private notes written during cabinet meetings by David Lloyd George, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer (in 1914), to Winston Churchill.

In one (not dated, except it is 1914) Lloyd George asks, “What is your reading of the front?” Churchill replied, “Ding Dong”, which is probably an accurate assessment of what was happening at the time and is seemingly typical of Churchill’s terse comments.

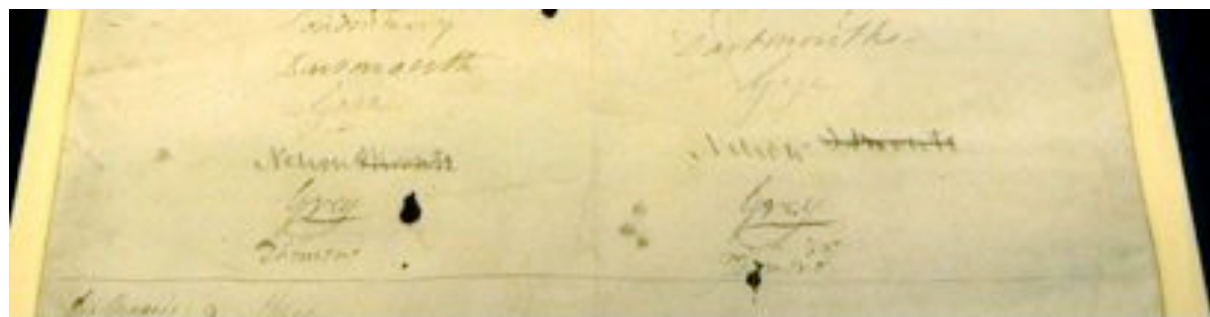


In another dated August 1st 1914 Lloyd George asks “Would you commit yourself in public now (Monday) to war if Belgium is invaded whether Belgium asks for our protection or not?” Churchill replied simply “No”.

Other documents we saw included the second oldest Original Act vellum in the Parliamentary Archives dated 1497 (pictured below) and signed by Henry VII in the top left corner. It is for the “Confirmation of divers statutes formerly made against Riots, Perjury and Offences Public Act” (sic). It is only seven lines long with about 250 words – some chance for that today for such an Act.



We were also shown a Test Roll with Horatio Nelson's signature, 'Nelson Brontë' (partially crossed out, twice). At the opening of each Parliament, members of both Houses take oaths of loyalty to the Crown. In 1801, two oaths were taken, one against transubstantiation (the transformation of the bread and wine offered at the communion service to that of the body, blood and soul of Jesus Christ – yes, I looked it up), the other to George III and against all Jacobite pretenders. In January 1801, King Ferdinand, who owed his restoration to the throne to Nelson's campaigns, made Vice Admiral Nelson Duke of Bronte, in Sicily. In the Test Roll, Lord Nelson is one of the subscribers to the oaths. He was clearly told to delete his foreign title of 'Brontë' which he had written as part of his signature, and possibly made the inkblots doing so. And yet 40 years later, the Brontë sisters were best selling authors. Just shows how things change.



Nelson's signature with the Brontë crossed out twice, as it seemed 'too foreign' in 1801.

We also saw a copy of a more recent, but vital Act, the 2000 Freedom of Information Act; these are still produced on vellum but are now printed on sheets rather than hand written on long continuous rolls of vellum. Also laid out for us to look at were an Act with the ornate signature of Queen Elizabeth I, a private Act for a stepson to marry his stepmother, and the 19th century Epsom & Ewell Gas Act. Incidentally, Acts are still signed by the Queen (not personally) in French with 'La Reine le veut', The Queen wishes it.

It was a most fascinating visit and we'd like to thank Joanna Grant for organizing it. If you haven't yet done this tour, I urge you to try and do so. If nothing else have a look at the Parliamentary Archives website: www.parliament.uk/archives it's full of wonderful history.

Crossed Relationships

A Postscript on Nigel Hockly and his father, Rev Edward J Hockly

By Hazel Ballan

For the last few weeks I have been helping Clive research the names on the Epsom and Ewell Borough's WW1 Memorials. Over my morning coffee one Sunday I was idly read through the other 'H's online at www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WarMemorialsSurnamesH.html that I had not helped with and started reading about Nigel Hockly.

Clive had found Nigel in the 1901 census and had put this and what else he had found regarding Nigel's short time in WW1 on our website but had added that he had not found the link between Nigel and Epsom. Never one to sit in front of my computer without something or someone to search for, I started to look to see if I could find the link.

If you have read the article, you will know the link was found but not without 'one-of-those-moments' for me. As I read Clive's bit about the family in 1901 it struck me, somewhere at the back of my mind, that in the last five years of doing my own family searches that I'd only once before come across the name 'Minette'. The thought came and went for the rest of the day until I suddenly realised where I had seen the name before. Tugging out one of my Family Tree folders I delved in and, low and behold, the answer was there before me. Appearing in the Ballan file on the 1901 Streatham census in was not only the Hockly family but also pupil Theodora Ballan from Liverpool. Once the goose bumps had gone down I worked out that Theodora was my husband Bob's first cousin twice removed, or in other words, Theodora was Bob's grandfather's cousin and had been taught by the Rev. Edward and Ada Hockly at the school when Nigel had been born.

This is not the first time though, that something like this has happened to me. Finding Bob's great-great grandfather, John Ballan from Durham, working, as butler for Lord Byng in London in the 1841 census was, in itself, exciting, as all other family members seemed to have had occupations as 'ag labs'. What really freaked me was that on the other page, working next door, as a butler as well, was James Coppin from Addington, Surrey my first cousin 6 times removed.

The second time this happen was when visiting my mother's uncle earlier this year. I was shown a postcard that his father (my mother's grandfather) had sent to the family in Chesham Bucks from Oxted, Surrey where he was convalescing from appendicitis. Nothing strange in that but the card had been bought from the only stationers in Oxted, which just happened to be next door to my father's grandparent's ironmonger's shop. Wonder if they passed the time of day together. Both sets of my grandparents were still unmarried at this time and of course neither of my parents were born at this time.

Makes you wonder that *maybe* your families have been criss-crossing forever, wherever, for generations.

New Additions to the Website

<http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk>

Webmaster, Peter Reed, has added a wealth of new information and pages to the website. A full list of the additions can be found at

www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WhatsNew.html

Here's a taster of some of the items for you.

New pages:

[Phyllis Dixey](#)

[Albert Edward Harry Meyer Archibald Primrose, 6th Earl of Rosebery](#)

[Lady Sybil Myra Caroline Grant \(nee Primrose\)](#)

[Marie Lloyd](#)

[Tenant's Cooperative Cottages or Neale Terrace](#)

[How much is that worth today?](#)

[Long Grove Great War Memorial](#)

[Eden's - The State of the Poor](#)

[Epsom Workhouse](#) – with additional Statistics & Accounts also

Cheam Paupers (1850) plus block plans, accommodation tables, additional stats and other enhancements

[Bank Robbery](#)

[Officers and Gentlemen](#)

[Rev. EJ Hockly](#)

[The Pre Raphaelites](#)

[The Old House, Ewell](#)

[Horrid Murder and Highway Robbery](#)

[Atrocious Murder of a Gamekeeper](#)

[British Army Medical Categories 1914](#)

[Glyns' Connection with Ewell](#)

[Horton Cemetery](#)

Revised pages:

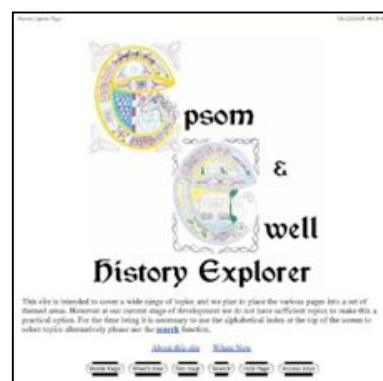
[Toland](#)

[Sir Frederick Morton Eden](#)

[Home Guard](#)

[Brief History of Epsom and Ewell](#)

[Tragedy on the Home Front.](#)



Peter has started to indicate on Site Map if an item is new or updated. And on the various War Memorials-Surnames pages which items are new or updated.

Go on, have a look. It's amazing how much work has gone into building a first class website and a remarkable new resource for local and family historians from anywhere in the world.

Some Forthcoming Events

Don't forget the 8th Annual General Meeting

The Epsom and Ewell Local and Family History Centre AGM will be held on **Wednesday, 22nd April 2009 starting at 6.30 pm at Bourne Hall Library**. As usual, there will be a talk after the AGM, which will also be open to the public. It has the intriguing title:

Peewits, Pickles and Providence - What Place-Names Reveal About Epsom & Ewell's History **After the AGM on 22nd April**

Whose bones rest at Bonesgate, and were there beggars at Beggars Hill? Are Gibraltar, New Zealand and the World's End as far away as they seem? Jeremy Harte looks into the curious lore of local place-names in a talk which covers fifteen centuries of popular idiom. Whether they come from a medieval peasant cursing the laborious field, or from a modern developer flattering the property market, place-names are more than they seem and tell us about the societies which created them.



The old wooden signpost that used to be at the Chessington Road/ Hook Road junction

Who Do You Think You Are? Day at Bourne Hall Library

I know it's a way ahead but the make a note in your diary, the next 'Who Do You Think You Are Day?' that we are holding at the library will be on **Saturday, 31st October 2009 from 10.00am to 4.00pm**.

Nonsuch Gold - the 50th Anniversary of the Nonsuch Palace Dig

This anniversary will take place over the **18th/19th July 2009**. Arrangements are on going but plans include the showing of a film of 1959 dig and there will be various eminent speakers. We'll keep you informed as plans develop.

Activities at the Surrey History Centre

• **Easter Holiday Family Activities: 6th-18 April 2009**

Pop into the Surrey History Centre and learn about Henry VIII and his six wives, his Woking Home and what he did for fun and get creative with some of the things to make and take home. It's free and available during normal opening hours. Jus drop in, there's no need to book. Parents/Guardians are responsible for supervising their children.

• **Historical Perspectives on Down's Syndrome: 21 May 2009. 7.30pm**

Surrey's Unique Contribution to Mental Health History

An evening talk at the Surrey History Centre by Professor David Wright, McMaster University, Canada. His talk will explore the achievement of Dr John Langdon Down at Earlswood Hospital, Redhill 1858-1865, who pioneered the use of photography to study the connection between physical characteristics and mental disorder. Tickets £3. There are a limited number of places. To book telephone 01483 518 737.



Have You got News for Me?

We hope you've enjoyed reading this newsletter. Thanks to all those who provided information and stories. But to keep the momentum going we need more, so I make no apologies in repeating this message. If you have any

- reports on visits to various sites or centres
- interesting facts about local history or genealogy
- intriguing Information Requests
- new research documents the LFHC has received
- forthcoming projects or events
- or just strange tales to tell

please let Ian know - supporting photographs and pictures, if available, would be most welcome. It will help make the newsletter more interesting for us all. The next publication date will probably be in Autumn 2009, so you have plenty of time to think of something.

IRP. 10th April 2009