

## James Henry Hill

Born Dawlish, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1891  
Private 10014

Died April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1917, aged 26  
Royal Army Medical Corps

**James Henry Hill** was the great grandson of John and Ann Heel/Hill. The surname appears spelled Heel in 1851, but later census entries adopt the spelling Hill.

John, a farm labourer, was born ca 1808 in Moreton, Devon and his wife in 1818 in Dawlish. They appear in the 1851 census living in Merrifuls(?) Row, Dawlish. There were five children:

Samuel (1842- ),  
Mary (1844- ),  
Henry (1845- )  
William (1848-1924 )  
Emily Sarah (1850- )

The children were born in Dawlish.

In 1861 the census showed three more children:

Thomas (1852- )  
Sarah Jane (1855- )  
William (1859- )

The older children were not at home and Henry (1845- ) was a farm servant, aged 15, at Southwood Farm, Dawlish for Henry W Holman.

Henry Hill (1845- ) married Elizabeth Cox in 1870. Both Henry and Elizabeth were born in Dawlish.

Elizabeth was a widow, born to James and Eliza Coombe in Dawlish ca 1846. James Coombe was a farm labourer and in 1861 the family were living in Chapel Street, Dawlish.

Elizabeth first married Charles Cox in East Stonehouse in 1868 (GRO ref Oct-Dec, vol 5b, p 131), but the marriage was short-lived as he died in Apr-June 1869 aged 24 (GRO ref, Newton Abbot, vol 5b, p 92). Charles Cox is possibly the agricultural labourer working for James Carpenter at Higher Rixdale Farm in 1861 and is shown as being born in Dawlish which would explain the link to Elizabeth Coombe.

Henry Hill and Elizabeth Cox were married in the Zion Chapel, East Teignmouth on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1870 and his profession is shown as 'Marine', but he was unable to sign his name, leaving his mark 'X' only. The witnesses were Thomas Stoyale and Mary Hill.

In 1871 they are living at 41 St Paul's Street, East Stonehouse, Plymouth and Henry was a Private in the Royal Marines. They had two children at the census, Henry John Hill and William T Hill.

Henry and Elizabeth Hill had a total of nine children all of which survived to the 1911 census, by which time they had been married 41 years. The children were all born in Dawlish and were:

Henry John 1867-1921	married Bessie Dawe (see below)
William T 1870-	became an Ostler (1891)
Charles Henry 1873-	married Amy Nixon and they had six children
Frederick J 1876-	became a Telegraph Messenger, G.P.O.
Thomas 1878-	moved to London, Shoreditch, (see above)
Albert J 1880-	became a butcher's assistant (1901)
Lily 1882-	became a laundress (1901)
Ethel 1885-	" "
Arthur 1887-	

## Dawlish World War One Project

By 1881 Henry (1845- ) must have completed his time as a Marine because he appears as a mason's labourer in Dawlish with his wife and three of the children, William, Frederick and Albert and living in Stockton Road. Henry took work as a Water Bailiff (1901).

Henry, 66, and Elizabeth, 65, appear again in the 1911 census living at Queen House, Old Town Street, where they had been for 20 years. Only their daughter Ethel, 26, and a grandson, Cyril (1903- ) who had been born on St Mary's, Scilly Isles, were living with them. The three adults were engaged in laundry work.

Their eldest son, Henry John Hill (1867-1921) married Bessie Dawe (1860-1953) on 30 August 1890 in the parish Church, Dawlish. Bessie was the sister of Clara Kate Blackmore, nee Dawe (1863-1932), and who was the mother of Charles Henry Blackmore (1890-1917) q.v..

They lived at 7 Badlake Hill and Henry John Hill was a house painter and Bessie a dressmaker. **James Henry Hill** was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1891 at Badlake Hill. An aunt, Clara Blackmore, was present at the birth. There were four further children but only three in all survived to the 1911 census:

**James Henry, 1891-1917**, subject of this profile  
Frances Edward (1894-1970) and  
Russell (1897-1920), who was also to appear on Dawlish War Memorial.

In 1901 Henry John and Bessie Hill were living at 8 Hatcher Street and ten years later were at Stuart House, 31 Strand, with Frances Edward Hill, now a plumber, and Russell, still at school.

**James Henry Hill** enlisted at Leicester and the Medal Roll Index Card shows that he first served in H.S. on 31-10-14. The 'H.S.' may refer to Hospital Ship because a report in the Dawlish Gazette of 2 January 1915 shows that he contributed to an entertainment for men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Devons, based in the town.

"Others contributing were Pte Jim Hill, (Son of Mr H Hill, Dawlish, who belongs to the R.A.M.C. of the Regular Army, and is now attached to No 1 Base, 'Carisbrook Castle', hospital ship)".

The ferrying of wounded men from France to Britain was carried out by marked Hospital Ships, a number of which ran between Le Havre and Southampton, from where men would be taken by train to other larger hospitals including Netley, overlooking Southampton Water. It is quite likely that R.A.M.C. personnel would be allocated to a number of different ships according to need.

Later in 1915, on the 19<sup>th</sup> June, **James Henry Hill** married Ethel Flora Grumbridge (1891-1943?) in the Parish Church, Dawlish. (GRO ref 1915 April-June, Newton Abbot Vol 5b, p 301). It is not known if there were children of this marriage.

In 1917 **Private James Henry Hill**, R.A.M.C. was serving aboard the Hospital Ship SALTA which struck a mine and sank off Le Havre. The following account is recorded in [www.wrecksite.eu](http://www.wrecksite.eu)

'In 1915 SS SALTA was requisitioned by the Admiralty as a hospital ship. On April 10th, 1917, while in convoy with 3 other hospital ships in front of Le Havre, the pilot didn't follow the 'follow me' sign from HMS Diamond and pulled to port to let the other ships pass first. This proved fatal as she immediately struck a mine laid by the German submarine UC-26 (Matthias

Graf von Schmettow) and sank in 9 minutes, 1/2 mile North of the Whistle Buoy.

Despite the rescue effort of 2 destroyers, 4 trawlers and a pilot vessel, only 74 from the 250 on board are saved. P-26 in an attempt to help, also struck a mine and was broken in two pieces. 40 of the crew of 59 from P-26 were rescued by P-19.

*ref. used: Hocking C., Dictionary of Disasters at Sea during the age of Steam.*

Commonwealth War Graves entry: HILL, JAMES HENRY Private 10014 10/04/1917  
Age: 26 Royal Army Medical Corps, attd. H.M.H.S. "Salta." Grave Ref: "Salta" Memorial.  
[Ste. Marie Cemetery, Le Havre.](#)

A memorial in Plot 62 marks the graves of 24 casualties from the hospital ship 'Salta' and her patrol boat, sunk by a mine on 10 April 1917. The memorial also commemorates by name the soldiers, nurses and merchant seamen lost from the 'Salta' whose bodies were not recovered. Son of Henry John and Bessie Hill, of Stuart House, Strand, Dawlish, Devon.

A headstone in Dawlish cemetery was erected to his wife:

In loving memory of  
ETHEL (F GRUMBRIDGE)  
who died Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1943 ( ? inscription eroded)  
Aged (?)  
Also of J H Hill  
Her devoted husband  
who lost his life in the sinking  
of H.M.Hospital Ship 'SALTA'  
April 10<sup>th</sup> 1917  
Aged 26

He is recorded on the Devon Roll of Honour, but no date or place of death are shown

Dawlish War memorial inscription: HILL JAMES Pte. R.A.M.C.

Devon Heritage site info:

10014 Private James Henry Hill of the Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to H M Hospital Ship *Salta*. Son of Henry John and Bessie Hill, of Stuart House, Strand, Dawlish. Born in Dawlish in the September quarter of 1893 (*incorrect-ed*). Died 10 April 1917 aged 26.

Next of kin: Widow, Ethel Hill

References:

Free Birth Marriage Death index

GRO Birth and Marriage Certificates

wrecksite.eu

Way family tree by June Snell

via subscription website (Ancestry):

UK, Soldiers died in the Great War

UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects

Medal Roll Index Cards

UK, WW1 Service Medal & Award Rolls

Adams family tree