

## Russell Hill

Born Dawlish, Q1 1897  
Lieutenant

Died Dawlish, 24 November 1920, aged 23  
Gloucestershire Regiment

**Russell Hill** was the younger brother of **James Henry Hill (1891-1917)(q.v.)**. They were the great grandchildren of John and Ann Heel/Hill. The surname appears spelled Heel in 1851, but later census entries adopt the spelling Hill.

John Heel/Hill, a farm labourer, was born ca 1808 in Moreton, Devon and his wife in 1818 in Dawlish.

The 1841 census return shows John and Ann Hill, living at Heavy Gate, Dawlish, with their first child Elizabeth, 2, and her younger brother John (1840- ).

The 1851 census shows the family as living in Merrifuls(?) Row, Dawlish. The entry showed five children, all born in Dawlish:

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

The 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- ) and Elizabeth Cox (nee Coombes) married in the Zion Chapel, East Teignmouth on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1870. Both Henry and Elizabeth were born in Dawlish. Elizabeth was then a widow, born to James and Eliza Coombes in Dawlish ca 1846.

The Coombes surname is spelled variously Coomb/Coombe/Coombes in different documents. The Coombes family lived in Old Town Street, Dawlish (1851 census) and comprised:

|                    |             |    |                            |      |            |
|--------------------|-------------|----|----------------------------|------|------------|
| James Coombes      | Head, marr, | 37 | Labourer                   | born | Newton     |
| Eliza "            | wife,       | 36 |                            |      | Alphington |
| Joshua "           | son         | 13 |                            |      | Dawlish    |
| Henry (1840-1866)  | son         | 11 | (to marry Elizabeth Hill ) |      | Dawlish    |
| Eliza              | dau         | 8  |                            |      | Newton     |
| Elizabeth (1846- ) | dau         | 6  | (to marry Henry Hill)      |      | Dawlish    |
| John               | son         | 2  |                            |      | "          |

Elizabeth Coombes first married Charles Cox in East Stonehouse on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1868 (GRO ref Oct-Dec, vol 5b, p 131), but the marriage was short-lived as he died and was buried on 17<sup>th</sup> May 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 Coombes. He later joined the Royal Marines and was a Private based in East Stonehouse (Plymouth).

There is another link between the two families when Henry Coombes (1840-66 ) married Elizabeth Hill (1839- ), child of John and Ann Hill in 1863. Henry Coombes died in 1866 and Elizabeth Coombes then married Thomas Stoye in 1869 (q.v. Walter Stoye in Dawlish WW1)

When Henry Hill and Elizabeth Cox married his profession is shown as 'Marine', but he was unable to sign his name, leaving his mark 'X' only. The witnesses were Thomas Stoye 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.

By 1881 Henry 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.

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:

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

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), who was the mother of Charles Henry Blackmore (1890-1917) q.v..

Henry and Bessie lived at 7 Badlake Hill and Henry John Hill was a house painter and Bessie a dressmaker. **Russell Hill** was born in the first quarter of 1897 at Badlake Hill. They had five children but only three in all survived to the 1911 census:

James Henry Hill, 1891-1917, (q.v.)  
Frances Edward Hill (1894-1970) and  
**Russell Hill (1897-1920).**

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.

**Russell Hill** can be traced in the Officer records at Kew which show that he joined the Territorial Force for four years' service at Camden Town, London on 19 January 1915 at the age of 18 and was attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment. He was promoted from Private to Lance Corporal on 27 March 1915 but reverted to Private on 27 July 1916. He was appointed to the Somerset Light Infantry on 15 August 1917 as a Lance Corporal.

He had applied for a Commission on 29 March 1917 when he showed his previous occupation to have been a clerk and his present address to be Hut G2 M Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Somerset Light Infantry, Crownhill huts, Plymouth. He gave his previous Territorial service as 8 months as a Private and 1 ½ years as a Lance Corporal Motor Cyclist with the 7<sup>th</sup> (Cyclist) Reserve Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment.

He was posted to No XII Officers' Cadet Battalion on 7 September 1917. He was discharged from the Territorial Force to a Commission as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Gloucestershire Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup>

Battalion, on 18 December 1917. The report in the *Dawlish Gazette* of 27 November 1920 shows that he was gassed at the Front at some point, and from this developed tuberculosis.

He relinquished his Commission on completion of Service on 19 October 1920 but to retain the rank of Lieutenant and this was posted to the London Gazette on 1 February 1921. It appears that he was receiving treatment for tuberculosis during the period August 1920 to his death, partly while in Army Service. (GRO death ref 1920,Decc, N.A.,vol 5b, p 122)

His father submitted a Certificate to the War Office on 14 January 1921 that his son, **Russell Hill**, had died on 24 November 1920 and gave the closest relatives as Henry John Hill, father, 55, Bessie Hill, mother, 59 and Francis Hill, 26, brother. (His oldest brother James Henry Hill had been killed earlier in the war and Francis Hill served in the Royal Navy.) He stated that his son had not left a Will. The record in Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects has no entry for the beneficiary of Death Grant or War Gratuity.

A Minute Sheet from the Ministry of Pensions dated 17 September 1925 gives a record of correspondence between the Solicitor, Charles.M.Scott at 20 Queen Street, Dawlish, and the Ministry over a claim for £12. 17s. 4d. (Monetary equivalent in 2018, £695) from Bessie Hill who had been widowed in 1921.

The claim was for 'certain treatment expenses incurred, including Board and Lodging' that arose when **Russell Hill** was being treated in a sanatorium for tuberculosis.

The Ministry replied that sanction for the Officer's discharge from the sanatorium was given on 27 March 1920, prior to his demobilization (on 19 October 1920), and any expenses incurred prior to that date should be submitted to the War Office.

The Ministry of Pensions rejected any claim for 'Board and Lodging' since he was living at the family home.

Charles M Scott, Solicitor, wrote once again to the War Office on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1921, after the death of Henry John Hill. He applied for burial expenses and sanatorium allowance 'due to Mrs Hill'.

The claim rolled on for a further four years. A letter was received by the War Office date stamped 18 August 1925;

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to say the government owe me £12.17s.4d. It would be a greater help to me than a medal being left a widow and deprived of two sons in the war.

Yours Truly, (sd). B. Hill

On 24 August 1925 the War Office sent a request for "details of the sum of £12. 17s. 4d. Which you claim is due to you from the Government".

Bessie Hill (now aged 65) replied:

Dear Sir,

for 3 or four months before my Son passed away he was allowed home for home treatment & each month he sent the bills for payment and always received the money but the last month I sent in bill & can never understand I could not get the money £12. 17s. 4d. I always felt it owed to me.

The War Office closed the matter, regretting that "no further grant can be made from Army funds." on 30 September 1925. ( to Mrs.B.Hill, 8 Regent Avenue, Dawlish)

Dawlish World War One Project

**Russell Hill** does not appear on the Devon Roll of Honour, possibly prepared before his death, but is inscribed on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour.

Dawlish War memorial supplementary panel: HILL R. LT. GLOUCESTER REGT

Commonwealth War Graves entry: Lieutenant HILL, R Died 24/11/1920  
Gloucestershire Regiment

Last known address: Stuart House, 31 Strand

Next of kin: Henry John Hill, father

References:

Officer record at National Archives, Kew

Dawlish Gazette extracts (see Documents)

Free BMD refs

James Henry Hill (1891-1917)(q.v.)

Refs from subscription websites:

Census data

Birth, marriage, death refs