

Company Quartermaster Sergeant Walter Ernest Martin[©]

Regimental number: 14931

"A" Company, 7th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment

born: 1882 - died: 1 June 1918

Company Quartermaster Sergeant Walter Ernest Martin was the youngest of 13 children born to George and Jane Martin. George (born in 1838)¹ had married the former Jane Mennell (born in 1840)² in Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire on 22 May 1862. Their first child was born the following year. In total, they had nine daughters and four sons: Mary Ann (born in 1863),³ Sarah Jane (born in 1865),⁴ Emma Cecelia Susan (born in 1867),⁵ Thomas Lee Mennell (born in 1868),⁶ Emily Louisa (born in 1869),⁷ Harriett Ann (born in 1871),⁸ George Francis (born in 1872),⁹ Elizabeth Hobson (born in 1874),¹⁰ Anne (born in 1876),¹¹ Edith Florence (born in 1878),¹² John William (born in 1880),¹³ Alice Maud (born in 1881)¹⁴ and finally Walter (born in 1882¹⁵ and baptized on 13 August 1882 at St Matthew's church in Sutton Bridge.)¹⁶ Sadly, three of their daughters died in childhood. Sarah Jane died at the age of about 3,¹⁷ Harriett Ann died at the age of 1¹⁸ and Emma Cecelia Susan died at the age of 10, at Guy's Hospital in London.¹⁹ What illness did she have that required her to be treated in London when the family was living in Sutton Bridge?

In 1871, George, Jane and five children were living on Bridge Road in Sutton Bridge, where George was a grocer and news vendor.²⁰ The family lived on Bridge Road for at least 40 years. By 1891, Walter had joined the family. Ten years later, the family was at 200 Bridge Road and George was described as a shopkeeper, grocer and baker. Three daughters were living at home—Edith, Alice and Annie.²¹ No evidence was found as to where Walter was living.

In 1911, George and Jane were living at 192 Bridge Road and George, at the age of 70, was now a gas collector for a local gas company.²² All the children had left home:

- Mary Ann had married John William Dickerson in 1896²³ and, in 1911, was living with her husband and children in Bingley, Yorkshire;²⁴
- Thomas, a compositor, had married Ellen Maria Gribble in London, also in 1896,²⁵ and, in 1911, was still living in London with his wife and two children.²⁶ He died in 1930;²⁷
- George married Edith Hunt in 1908²⁸ and in 1911 was living in Grantham, Lincolnshire. His sister Edith Florence was living with them;²⁹
- Elizabeth may have been a matron with the Salvation Army in Cardiff, Wales in 1901;³⁰
- Annie had probably married and she and her two sons—George and James Troy—were living with her parents in 1901;³¹
- Alice was probably a bookkeeper, working for, and living in the home of, a dairy manager in Market Harborough, Leicestershire, in 1911; and
- Walter may have been a clerk, working in a grocery store, boarding with Bertha Emily Plevy at 19 Midgate Road in Peterborough.³²

No evidence was found of Walter's siblings, Emily and John, after they left home. Shortly after the census was taken in 1911, Walter's father died.³³



Troops of the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment drawing rations from the Quartermaster's stores in a camp near Dickebusch, 9 August 1917

Source: *The Long, Long Trail* (Imperial War Museum image Q5849)

Walter enlisted to serve at the very beginning of the war. He enlisted in Peterborough in about October 1914³⁴ and was a company quartermaster sergeant (CQMS) in the Northamptonshire Regiment.³⁵ A CQMS was a non-commissioned officer in charge of documentation and supplies for the company. Walter would, among other things, have maintained a nominal roll for his company and records of company property and would have been responsible for the distribution of arms, equipment, clothing, necessaries and accommodation.³⁶

The 7th Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment was a service battalion raised at the beginning of the war at the prompting of Lord Kitchener. It was known as "The Mobbs' own" because one of the first men to volunteer was Edgar Mobbs, a well-known rugby player.³⁷

After training in England, the battalion received the order to go to France in August 1915. It left Folkestone for Boulogne on the 2 September 1915.³⁸ Walter joined the Western Front in France in September 1915³⁹—probably at the same time as the rest of the battalion.

At the end of May 1918, the 7th Battalion was stationed in the Hill 70 Sector, near Lens, in northern France. On 24 May, the battalion had been relieved by the 9th Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment and the men were billeted in Les Brebis until 30 May, when they once again went into the trenches to relieve the 13th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. The first night was quiet but on the first full day in the trenches, the battalion was subject to enemy gas shells and artillery. Twelve Other Ranks (non-officers) were wounded—one died. On 1 June, the enemy was again active and three Other Ranks were affected by the gas. Walter may have been on one of these because on 1 June he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, having been gassed.⁴⁰ He died the same day and was buried in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row E, Grave 34) on 2 June with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.

In June 1918, over 4,000 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS.⁴¹ There were 82 deaths that month. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCS came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.⁴²

Walter's mother was his next of kin and was notified of his death.⁴³ She had the following inscription included on his gravestone:

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE
WE ARE IN DEATH

Walter is also commemorated on the Sutton Bridge War Memorial, which stands in the churchyard of St Matthew's Church, where his parents were married and he and his siblings were baptized.⁴⁴

Walter was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).⁴⁵

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War memorial, St Matthew's church, Sutton Bridge
Source: *Roll of Honour* (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Lincolnshire/SuttonBridge.html>)

¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 October 2017), entry for George Martin, Registration district: Kettering, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 15, Page: 288

² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 October 2017), entry for Jane Mennell, Registration district: Holbeach, Inferred county: Lincolnshire, Volume: 14, Page: 384

³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Mary Ann, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 319

⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Sarah Jane, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 350

⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Emma Cecelia Susan, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 355

⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Thomas Lee Mennell, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 370

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Emily Louisa, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 358

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Harriet Ann, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 371

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, George Francis, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 367

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Elizabeth Hobson, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 393

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- ¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Alice Maud, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 411
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 October 2017) entry for Martin, Walter Ernest, Registration district: Holbeach, Volume 07A, Page 404
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- ¹⁷ "Lincolnshire Burials," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 26 October 2017), entry for Sarah Jane Martin, Page: 6, Archive: Lincolnshire Archives, Record set: Lincolnshire Burials
- ¹⁸ "England & Wales Deaths 1837–2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2017), entry for Harriet Ann Martin, District: Holbeach, County: Lincolnshire, Volume: 7A, Page: 241
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