

## Biography – John Willie Walmsley (Bill)



*Bill's grandson, Geoff Marston writes:* John Willie Walmsley (known as Bill) was born in Bingley 28 February 1897 to Louisa Walmsley, with father unknown.

Louisa married James William Hird 1 April 1899 at Holy Trinity Church, Bingley. In the 1901 census Louisa was living with her married sister, Charlotte Furniss at Laisterdyke in Bradford. Bill was with her, but her husband was not. Louisa and James had four children before James died around 1909.

In the 1911 census Bill was a doffer living with his widowed mother and her four young children, living at 36 Regent St in Bingley.

On the outbreak of WW1 on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, Bill appears to have been a 'Goods Worker' (Which appears to have been Railway connected.) On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1915, aged 18, he signed up with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment

and left for France in February 1916. He then became a machine gunner with the 62<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Machine Gun Corps for the rest of his service.



He took an active part in the Somme offensive and was severely wounded by shrapnel in his left calf and treated in the Military hospital at Le Treport (Picture right) and later at Stretford Hospital near Manchester. On recovery, he was in action at Arras, Messines, Lens and Passchendaele. Thereafter, was involved in the retreat and allied advance of 1918. Having suffered with 'Trench feet' he, was first

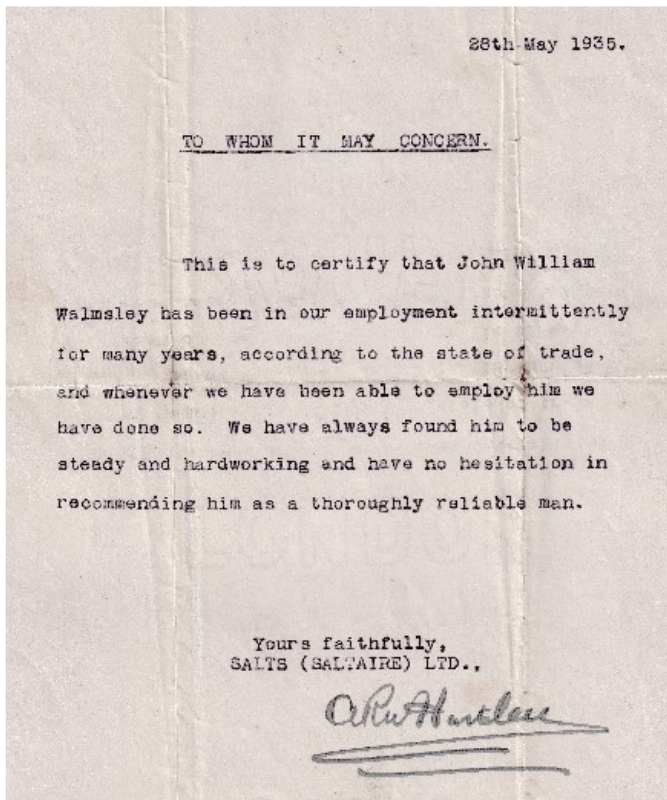


treated at Napsbury, then at Highfield Military Hospital, Liverpool. He remained with the Corps until his demob in September 1919. His home residence at this time was at 19 Thomas St in Shipley.

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1921, aged (23) he married Christian McRae Horner (25) at Hallfield Chapel, Manningham Lane in Bradford. Both were then living at 29 Beanland Square in Bradford. Christian was known to everyone as "Teeny".

By 1926, he had attained employment as a Dyer at the Dying House at the Salts, resulting in them taking tenancy of 1, William Henry St, Saltaire. At this time, they had two daughters; Joan born in 1922 and Gladys in 1925. Sadly Joan died that December.





Bill's employment appears to have gone splendidly until the early 1930's, when the state of trade dictated times of being 'laid off'. I recall him telling me he often did home shoe repairs to help to make ends meet. At one stage in 1934, he worked, (as references show), intermittently for a few months with Mortimer Peel and Co, Castle Dyeworks at Bradford.

However, he was certainly back in the Dye House at Salts by October 1937 (as you see by the photo below) Bill is centre front.

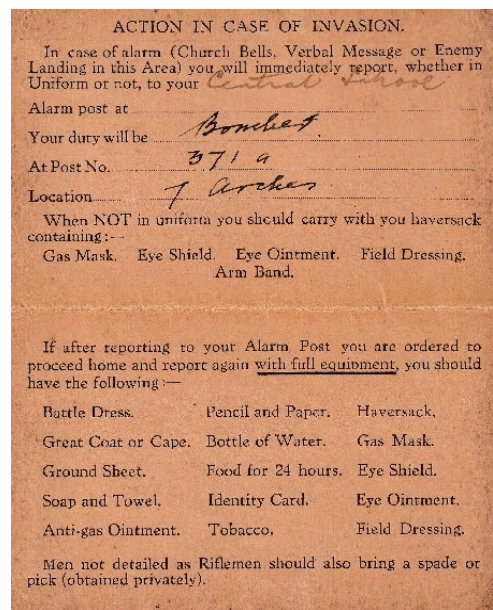
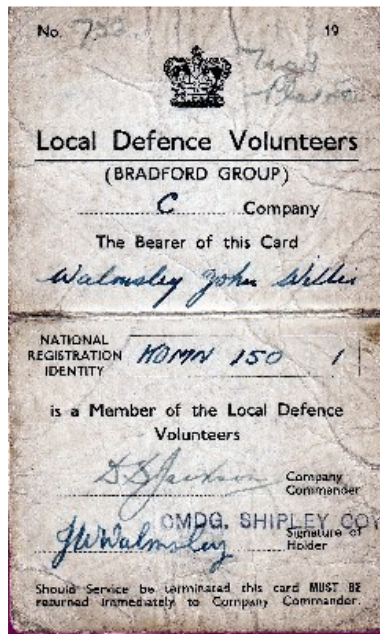
Sad one cannot fill in gaps, because events of the time (later considered irrelevant) were never mentioned. I can now however, pick up at the start of WW2, when back at Salts, he became a member of the renowned 'Dad's Army'

or known then as the Local Defence Volunteers. ('Look Duck and Vanish') Bradford Group. 'C' or Shipley Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> WR Volunteers, and eventually made Lance Corporal.



I believe it was about 1941, he actually sought a new job with 'Windhill Co-operative Society' as a Delivery Coalman. Coal then was loaded from the old Railway Goods/Coal Yard, which stretched parallel to Otley Road near to its junction with Valley Road.) Manually filling sacks with coal, stacking them up on the flatbed lorry, for each round of deliveries to shops and houses. Once finished and home, he had his daily clean up in a tin bath in the kitchen.





After the war, Bill had an allotment adjacent to Hirst Lane, opposite Glyn Thomas's Mill. With their closure in the 1960's he moved to the allotment area below the railway lines. In 1955, it was reported him being elected to the committee of the Saltaire and District Allotments Holder's Association.

From the later 1920's he had also been a member of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows at Bingley and made District Master in 1936. Additionally he was a great Regimental Duke of Wellington man, who would never miss any of the meetings/Reunions in the 1960's.

By 1950, wanting to attain a cleaner outlook on life, (and still working for the Co-op) got a job as Warehouseman at their main office at Windhill. Mainly to organise the grocery supplies for both the shop delivery Lorries and their Travelling Shops. Unless the weather was particularly bad, he always walked from home to work and back. From the age of 9, (until he retired) I used to meet him in the warehouse midday most Saturdays, on finishing work and walk back home with him for a 'Sunday' style lunch. (Photo taken late 1950's outside Caroline Street Co-op shop with a work colleague)



In 1962, he retired, but continued to work from the Saltaire Road shop to keep the area travelling shops stocked up for the next two or three years. After that the allotment became his major hobby.



From 1940, he was also a member of the Shipley and District Working Men's' Club in Saltaire Road, visited on Friday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes. Which at that time was in club terms, his local. There still being no club or pub in the Saltaire bounds until the 1970's



Bill lost his wife Teeny in 1974, which after 53 years of marriage and 48 years together at No 1, must really have been an ordeal to conquer. However, knowing he was always open to a bit of adventure, managed to encourage him to visit my wife and I, whilst serving with the Military in Holland in 1975 and later in 1978 when residing in Aberdeen. Bill passed away within St Luke's hospital September 1979.

(photo: of Bill and Selwyn Hird)

As most people would say when relating to their Grandparent, "They were the best." Bill and Teeny were certainly no exception, both had their outstanding qualities that reflected so very much on

my younger years. Looking back, (through circumstances of working parents) I was indeed honoured to have been able to spend so much time in their company. Bill of course was known throughout the area as a 'Topper' of a man with a generous character and always prepared to render any assistance he was able to give. Bill and Teeny were indeed a flames that will never be extinguished as long as our family exists.

**Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Act, 1920.**

To Mr. J. W. Walmsley,  
 Tenant of No. 1, William Henry Street.

I HEREBY GIVE YOU NOTICE that as from the 7th day of May 1927  
 being at least one clear week from the date hereof, the rent of the above premises will be 6/9  
 per week calculated as follows:-

Standard Rent as at March 31st, 1927 6/8 per week.

	£	s.	d.
Amount of Rates and Water chargeable for the year ending March 31st next	6.	1.	2
Deduct amount of Rates and Water chargeable for the year ending March 31st, 1927	5.	15.	6
<b>Total Increase of Rates</b>	<b>5.</b>	<b>8</b>	

This amount is added to the "Standard Rent" at the rate of 1d. per week making together the increased rent stated above.

Dated this 30th day of April, 1927

**SALTS (SALTAIRE) LTD.**  
 Landlord of the said premises.

*Saltaire.*



No 1, William Henry Street, Saltaire - 1972

Written by Bill's grandson, Geoff Marston. 2023.