# Percy Walker





**Rank: -** Private

**Number: -** 37048

**Regiment: -** Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 11th Battalion (formerly 71526 R.A.M.C.)

**Killed in Action: -** 19th September 1918 aged 25

**Cemetery: -** Dorian Military Cemetery, Greece. 111.D.14

**Family Details:**

Percy Walker was born in Batley Carr in 1894 to Hopton born Frederick Benjamin Walker, and his wife Henrietta (Nee Sharp) who came from the West End of London.

His younger siblings were Hilda (1897) and Lilian (1899) and another child who had died before 1911.

In 1901 the family were living at Court 4, No2 Dale Street Batley Carr Benjamin was described as a cloth fuller but in 1911 he was at Woolley Colliery described as brother-in –law to Newsome Stead.

As a boy Percy attended Warwick Road School and Batley Parish Church Lads' Brigade. He worked as a dyer's labourer at Messrs. Wormald and Walker, Dewsbury.

On Boxing Day 1914 Percy married Harriett Micklethwaite at St. Andrews' Church and Phyllis was born in 1915 but sadly died the same year. Renee was born the following year and the family lived at Court 2, Taylor Street, Batley.

**Service Details:**

He enrolled in Batley in October 1915 and was in the Royal Army Medical Corps no.71526. He disembarked for Salonika in March 1916, serving there for almost two and a half years.

In October 1915 a combined Franco-British force of some two large brigades was landed at Salonika (today called Thessalonika) at the request of the Greek Prime Minister. The objective was to help the Serbs in their fight against Bulgarian aggression. But the expedition arrived too late, the Serbs having been beaten before they landed. It was decided to keep the force in place for future operations, even against Greek opposition. The Greek Chief of the General Staff in Athens had told them "You will be driven into the sea, and you will not have time even to cry for mercy" (Some Greek factions, including King Constantine, were pro-German). The outcome of the Gallipoli campaign was in the balance and most shipping in the area was involved so they really had no choice. In December 1915 the British element fought a battle at Kosturino, north of Lake Doiran, after withdrawing from Serbia. After this there was little action except for occasional air-raids on Salonika.

During the first four months of 1916 the British Salonika Force had enough spadework to last it for the rest of its life. Large amounts of barbed wire were used and a bastion about eight miles north of the city was created connecting with the Vardar marshes to the west, and the lake defences of Langaza and Beshik to the east, and so to the Gulf of Orfano and the Aegean Sea. This area was known as the 'Birdcage' on account of the quantity of wire used. The Bulgarians and Austrians also fortified the heights of the hills surrounding Salonika during the same time which had dire consequences later on. The original two Brigades eventually were reinforced by larger units until 22nd, 26th, 27th and 28th Divisions were there. If the Bulgarians had descended from their Doiran and Struma heights it would have been very difficult to ' push us into the sea', for the force was deployed to fortify an advanced defensive line.

The Salonika Force dug-in until the summer of 1916, by which time the international force had been reinforced and joined by Serbian, Russian and Italian units. The Bulgarian attempt at invasion of Greece in July was repulsed near Lake Doiran. At the beginning of Oct 1916, the British in co-operation with her allies on other parts of the front began operations on the River Struma towards Serres. The campaign was successful with the capture of the Rupell Pass and advances to within a few miles of Serres.

In 1916 Percy would have seen action at the Occupation of Mazirko (2 October), the capture of Karajakois (30 September - 2 October), the capture of Yenikoi (3-4 October) and the battle of Tumbitza Farm (17 November - 7 December).

During 1917 there was comparatively little activity on the British part of the front in Macedonia, due in part to complex political changes in Greece throughout the year. The main fighting took place around Lake Doiran, where the line was adjusted several times by each side early in the year. In April 1917, the British attacked, gained a considerable amount of ground and resisted strong counter-attacks. In May, the Bulgarians attacked the British positions, but were firmly repulsed. The British action in May triggered a series of attacks elsewhere on the front by the other Allies, known as the Battle of Vardar.

In 1917 there was action at the First Battle of Doiran (22$^{nd}$ April – 8$^{th}$ May), the Capture of Ferdie and Essex Trenches (near Bairakli Jum'a) (15$^{th}$ May), the Capture of Bairakli and Kumli (16$^{th}$ May), the Capture of Homonodos (14$^{th}$ October) and the battle of Tumbitza Farm (17$^{th}$ November – 7$^{th}$ December).

In 1918 there was the Capture of the Roche Noir Salient (1st – 2nd September) and the Second Battle of Doiran (18th -19th September).

The final assault began along the whole front on 15th September 1918; the British being engaged in the Lake Doiran area. This battle was really on the 18th and 19th September 1918 and was a disaster for the British Divisions. They had to frontally assault 'Pip Ridge' which was a 2000-foot-high heavily defended mountain ridge with fortresses built on some of the higher mountains, notably Grand Couronne. They sustained very heavy casualties.

It was reported in the Batley News of 26th October 1918 that Percy had been reported missing on 19th September in Salonika but his body had since been found.

Doiran Military Cemetery is situated in northern Greece near Macedonia Pip Ridge and Les Grand –Couronne on 18th and 19th September 1918

On the 17th September 8 soldiers were buried at Doiran Military Cemetery on the 18th 188 soldiers, and on the 19th 166, followed by only 1 the next day

Percy is remembered with Honour at Doiran Military Cemetery, Batley War Memorial and Batley Parish Church. There were 166 soldiers buried at Doiran who were killed on the same day.

He was awarded the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group