

JOHN WEST WALKER

John West Walker was born at Partney Rectory on 20th May 1897, the eldest son of Reverend Gilbert George Walker and Margaret Walker. Reverend Walker was Rector of Partney from 1894 to 1904 and wrote the book Historical Notes on the Parish of Partney.

By 1911 the family had moved to Barkston near Grantham where the Reverend Walker was Rector. John was educated at the King's School, Grantham. At the outbreak of war he was on the staff of Barclays Bank in Oakham, Leicestershire. He immediately volunteered for service and obtained his commission in September 1914.

John was a Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment and served in a number of places in England and Ireland, where he took part in the repression of the rebellion in 1916.

The battalion was sent to the front in February 1917. He was killed in action, aged 19, on 11th April 1917 near Hargicourt in France. Hargicourt was a very heavily defended village, being on the left flank of the German line of defences, which became known as the Hindenburg Line. It was the chalk quarries there, with the waste heaps and higher ground, which gave to whoever held them the advantage of observation, and being able to call on artillery fire to check any movement of opposing troops.

The 2/5th Lincs launched an attack at the Quarries and Cologne Farm just east of Hargicourt. At first John was reported missing and there was some hope that he had been taken as a prisoner of war. Information from German prisoner of war camps revealed that as he lay on the ground wounded, the area came under artillery fire. One informant reported, "I saw him lying behind the wire severely wounded. This spot was bombarded very heavily afterwards." Another said, "The last that was seen of him was that he was hung up across some German wire, and wounded in both legs. He was then still issuing orders to his men."

John was awarded the British and Victory Medals. He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial in France.

In 1919 the Reverend Gilbert George Walker applied for a faculty (Church Planning Permission) to erect a memorial to his son in St Nicholas Church, Partney. The memorial is in the form of a white marble oval tablet, the full cost met by Revd Walker. The Bishop of Lincoln granted permission on 28th July 1919. For this reason John West Walker's name does not appear on the main memorial for which permission was granted on 9th September 1921.

John West Walker's name is also included on the memorial in his old school, Kings School, Grantham.



World War I memorial in Library
By King's School Library