



Alvin Holman Hill

Alvin Holman Hill was born in Corby in 1895. His father William John Hill was from Blackbrook, Leicestershire. His mother, Virtue Selina Hill (nee Holman) was from Corby. The couple married in Leicester in October 1890.

The Family

William John Hill was a blacksmith. In the 1901 Census the family were living in Hinckley. With William and Virtue were children, Alvin, Richard and Olive. William's father John Hill, a retired quarry labourer, was living with the family.

It is recorded that Virtue Hill died in 1910; Alvin would have been 15 years old at the time.

In the 1911 Census, William with his children, Alvin, Richard, Henry, Joseph and William jnr. were still in Sapcote, Hinckley. William was still working as a blacksmith in a granite quarry. Alvin was working in the same quarry as a blacksmith striker. Richard was employed as a farm labourer.

Military Service

There is some confusion on Alvin Hill's enlistment papers, where he is referred to as "Elvin".

Alvin Hill enlisted in the 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment (9918) in August 1914. The 1st Battalion had landed at Saint-Nazaire as part of the 16th Infantry Brigade in the 6th Division in September 1914 for service on the Western Front.

Private Hill first served in with the Battalion in France between 4th January – 3rd February 1915.

Whilst at home, Private Hill married Kate Elizabeth Fothergill in Leicester on 9th April 1915.

His second spell in France commenced from 1st September 1915, joining the Battalion in the field on 9th September 1915.

In November 1915, the 1st Battalion was assigned to the 71st Infantry Brigade, still within the 6th Division. The Battalion was to fight on the Somme and suffered heavy casualties.



Alvin Hill was appointed unpaid Lance Corporal on 13th July 1916.

It is recorded that Lance Corporal Hill was killed in action on 15th September 1916. He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial and the Sapcote War Memorial.

On 1 July 1916, supported by a French attack to the south, thirteen divisions of Commonwealth forces launched an offensive on a line from north of Gommecourt to Maricourt. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met unexpectedly fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic and with only minimal advances on the southern flank, the initial attack was a failure. In the following weeks, huge resources of manpower and equipment were deployed in an attempt to exploit the modest successes of the first day. However, the German Army resisted tenaciously and repeated attacks and counter attacks meant a major battle for every village, copse and farmhouse gained. At the end of September, Thiepval was finally captured. The village had been an original objective of 1 July. Attacks north and east continued throughout October and into November in increasingly difficult weather conditions. The Battle of the Somme finally ended on 18 November with the onset of winter.

In the spring of 1917, the German forces fell back to their newly prepared defences, the Hindenburg Line, and there were no further significant engagements in the Somme sector until the Germans mounted their major offensive in March 1918.

The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916. The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial.

The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932 and unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the President of France, on 1 August 1932.



Reference

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Lest We Forget

Alvin Holman Hill
of the Leicestershire Regiment

d. 15th September 1916

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