

# WW2 REMEMBERED

## LANCE BOMBARDIER WALTER DOUGLAS PEACOCK

Walter was born in Dunkirk, near Little Downham, Cambridgeshire on the 17 April 1916, the 6<sup>th</sup> of 7 children of farmer Jacob and Louisa Ann. Electoral rolls show his parents, presumably with Walter, living at Willow Farm, Haslingfield from 1920-1926, then Barrington in 1927, before Park Farm, Great Chesterford in 1928-1929, followed by Field Farm in 1930-1931 then Whiteways (west of the railway station) by 1939. Farming was difficult after wartime subsidies were removed in 1921, causing families to move often to seek better earnings.

At the time of the 1939 register, Walter was working as a tractor driver in Horningsea, Cambs. In that same year he married Ruby Payne, but she died in the following year aged just twenty one.



Walter was called-up in 1942 as Gunner 11430406 and posted to 1 Field Regiment Royal Artillery, presumably because of his driving capability. We do not have details of Walter's wartime service, but given the requirement for basic and specialised training, it is probable that he joined the regiment in North Africa in 1943. His was one of three Field Regiments attached to the 4th Indian Division. At this time each regiment had twenty four 25 pounder howitzers and a compliment of around 670 officers and men that directly supported the infantry - they

went wherever the Division was fighting and also provided Forward Observation Officers located alongside the infantry battalions, who directed supporting fire by radio.



25 Pounder Howitzer, limber and tractor  
as used in 1 Field Regiment

The 4<sup>th</sup> Indian had fought in many of the campaigns in East Africa, Syria, Egypt and North Africa right through to the fall of Tunis in May 1943, which brought an end to the war in North Africa. The 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division was then transferred to Italy in January 1944 and probably Walter fought at the Second and Third Battles of Monte Cassino in February-March 1944 and at the Battle of the Gothic Line from August 1944.

In October 1944 following the withdrawal of German forces a civil war erupted in Greece fought between the Greek government army and the Democratic Army of Greece, the military branch of the Communist Party of Greece. From November British and Indian troops were sent to support the Greek Government forces. 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division with 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment arrived in Greece on board MV Eastern Prince and LST 36 (Landing Ship, Tank) on 11 December 1944 and the artillery was soon involved supporting Government troops around Athens. British troops were to remain in Greece until early 1947.

Walter died on 27 February 1946 in a road accident near Athens, Greece and is buried at Phaleron war cemetery. His headstone has the words "God knows best and we must submit".



Walter is also commemorated on Ickleton's war memorial. It is likely that he returned to his parents' home at Whiteways after his wife's early death and before he enlisted. At that time the address was part of Ickleton parish, until boundary changes in 1965, when areas west of the Granta were transferred to Great Chesterford.