



**Private Mortimer Leopold Hawker (Regimental Number 2292) is interred in St. James' Anglican Church Cemetery in Carbonear.**

**His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a scholar having just left school, and now awaiting employment as a clerk expecting to earn an annual two hundred dollars, Mortimer Hawker was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, he also enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on March 24, 1916, and attested on that same day.**

**(continued)**

Private Hawker sailed from St. John's on July 19 on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian*\* (right). The ship - refitted some ten years previously to carry well over one thousand passengers - had left the Canadian port of Montreal on July 16, carrying Canadian military personnel.



It is likely that the troops disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool; however, it is *certain* that upon disembarkation the contingent journeyed north by train to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.

*\*Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been billeted at Newton Park School and either in the grandstand or in a tented camp at the racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: *the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)

There seem to be no further records of Private Hawker's activities until January 29 of the New Year, 1917. On that date he was admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scottish General Hospital in Glasgow complaining of a sprained wrist. The problem had occurred the previous October during a signalling exercise, but the subsequent treatment of massage and iodine had proved to be of no avail.

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After another period of treatment in hospital showing little or no results, on or about March 24 he was x-rayed, the four plates showing *degeneration very marked of all the bones in left*. It was eventually determined that the problem was tuberculosis. On June 3, his hand was amputated above the wrist.

Some five months later, on November 14, Private Hawker was fitted with an artificial limb at St. Leonard's Hospital at Dumfermline. Some five weeks later again he was discharged from hospital and ordered to report to the Newfoundland *Pay & Record Office* on Victoria Street, London.

Apparently, from there he was sent north again, to face a medical board on January 25 at the Edinburgh War Hospital. There it was decided that Private Hawker was *...no longer physically fit for War Service*. It was thereupon recommended that he be discharged from the Army.

During the some four weeks that followed, Private Hawker was granted an extended furlough in the English coastal town of Bournemouth where his address was *Kingsbere* on Myrick Park Crescent, to where his orders for repatriation were sent. The records show his stay there to have eventually terminated at ten o'clock in the morning of February 19 at which point he began his long journey homewards, having been ordered to report to the *Pay & Record Office* in London on that date.

The 57<sup>th</sup> Repatriation Draft embarked in Liverpool on or about February 25 of 1918. The name of the vessel seems not to have been recorded - several sailed on or about that date - nor its destination, but it was likely Halifax - most of the returning troops on board were Canadian, the ship did not stop in Newfoundland, and the majority of the ships of that time were destined for that port.

It was however, apparently not until March 25 that Private Hawker arrived in St. John's and reported to the local Regimental Depot *to duty*.

Only three days later again, on March 28, it was recommended that he be treated at the *Jensen Camp*, a newly-established centre on Blackmarsh Road for tubercular patients. He was admitted there on April 9.

The son of Manoah James Hawker, general agent, and Clara Mortimer Hawker - to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Carbonear, he was also brother to Walter (see below\*) as well as to Frederick, Ernest and to Beatrice.

Private Hawker was reported to have *died of sickness* - official cause tuberculosis - at the *Jensen Camp* on April 29, 1918.

Mortimer Leopold Hawker had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and eight months (date of birth July 22, 1897).

(Right above: *The sacrifice of Private Hawker is honoured on the Carbonear Cenotaph. - photograph from 2010*)



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***The Commonwealth War Grave headstone for Private Hawker was sent to Carbonear in June of 1923.***

**\*2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Walter Hawker, Regimental Number 1843, survived the conflict.**

**Private Mortimer Leopold Hawker was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.**

