



**Private George Hawkins (Regimental Number 1606) lies in Ancre British Cemetery – Grave reference II. F. 34.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a river-driver (guiding the cut logs downstream to the mill) and earning a daily \$2.25, George Hawkins was a recruit of the Fifth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on June 7, 1915, then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on that same day. He attested three days following, on June 10.**



***\*A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.***

**(continued)**

Private Hawkins embarked on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (previous page – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*) on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sailed (*almost\**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

*\*Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



(Right above: *the Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background. – from a vintage postcard*)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company marched from the railway station and reported *to duty* at Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel, was now at fighting strength and could be posted on *active service*.

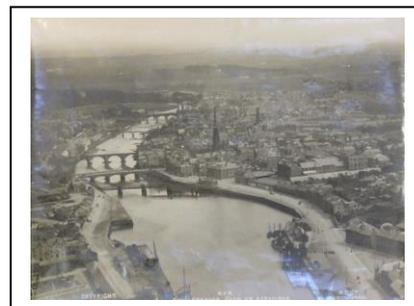


(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

From Stobs, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies, having now become 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

'E' and 'F' Companies – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were to form the nucleus of the newly-formed 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. The Depot was to become home to Private Hawkins for the next eight months.

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

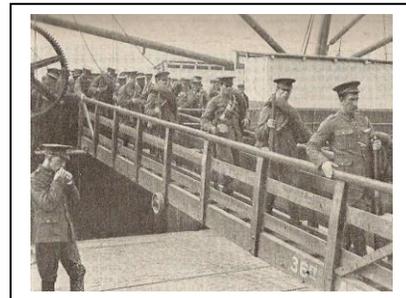


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was while at Ayr, on April 5 of 1916, and only three days before his departure to join 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on *active service*, that Private Hawkins was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion *for the duration of the war*\*.

*\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*

On April 8, Private Hawkins, as a soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to report to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on that same day, the 8<sup>th</sup>, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the Draft was posted there for several days of final training and organization\*.



(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A draft of a single officer and forty-one *other ranks* from Rouen, Private Hawkins among that number, joined the parent unit on April 26. At the time all four companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were in the throes of a first tour of the front-line trenches, not far from the village of Englebelmer.



(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.

The son of John Hawkins (deceased June 10, 1893) and Matilda Hawkins (née *Burton*, in 1897 married Henry Warford) of Durrell's Arm, Twillingate, he was also nephew to Fanny (Frances) Hawkins, also of Twillingate (Crow's Head) - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay.



(continued)

Private Hawkins was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting of the first day of *The Somme*. On the last day of 1916, December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.



However, a subsequent report dated February 8, 1918, and submitted by the Officer Commanding 6 Corps Graves Registration Unit, documented the burial of Private Hawkins on December 12, 1917. His dossier was thereupon amended so as to read *killed in action or died of wounds on or after 1/7/16*.

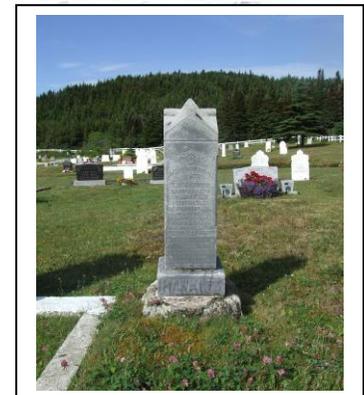
George Hawkins had enlisted at twenty-three years and four months of age.

(Previous page: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph from 2009*)



(Right above black & white: *a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...*)

(Right: *The sacrifice of George Hawkins in honoured on a plaque affixed to the outer wall of the United Church in Twillingate... – photograph from 2013*)



(Right: *...and also on a family memorial to be found in the United Church Cemetery in the same town. – photograph from 2013*)

Private George Hawkins was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

