

PRIVATE FREDERICK WILLIAM HAWKER

266938, 1st/7th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Died aged 22 on 16 August 1917

Remembered with honour at *Tyne Cot Memorial, Ypres*; Panel 23-28 and 163A

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross, in the Abbey and in the Methodist Church



Tyne Cot Memorial, Ypres, Belgium



Royal Warwickshire Regiment

FREDERICK WILLIAM HAWKER was born in Ashchurch in 1895, the firstborn of George Ernest, a Midland Railway Drayman (horse-drawn carts) of Hartbury, who married Fanny Andrews of Winchcombe in 1894. By 1901 the family comprised five children and was living in Orchard Court, Barton Street; at least three more children subsequently died in infancy. Frederick worked as a baker's apprentice for Messrs. Willis & Son of 102 Church Street (in 2014 Abbey Carpets) and was not married when he first attested in December 1915.

Frederick's service record, albeit charred, is one of the 40% which survived the Blitz and states that he was 5'7" (1.7m) tall. Unlike his younger brother, he was not a volunteer and probably enlisted under the 'Derby Scheme'. He remained on the reserve in the 3rd/7th Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment until he was finally called up in April 1916.

Posted in August 1916, he was invalided home in December with severe frostbite ('Trench Foot') and spent nineteen weeks in an Aberdeen Hospital. He returned to France in June 1917.

His service record reveals that he was posted to three different battalions that summer: his final posting was to the 1st/7th on 1 July. This battalion was part of the 143rd Infantry Brigade in the 48th (South Midland) Division which had originally been sent to France in March 1915.

In the late summer and autumn of 1917, the Division was part of the Fifth Army and was

involved in the *Battle of Langemarck* (16-18 August); this was the second phase of the overall *Third Battle of Ypres* (31 July-10 November) and ended indecisively although the operations of the 48th Division were successful.

Private Frederick William Hawker was reported missing on 16 August 1917. His record indicates that he died of wounds although his burial was only reported to his mother on 21 January 1918. His body was not recovered after the war and his name only is commemorated on the new *Tyne Cot Memorial*. This suggests that his grave was destroyed in subsequent fighting.

Teacher **Private William Bastable** [†], who was one of the last to be commemorated on nearby *Ypres Menin Gate*, had been killed six days before whilst fighting in the same battalion. The weather had deteriorated with heavy rain which transformed the battlefield into a sea of mud, and it is said that there were '*many failures in attack due to poor planning and preparation*'. Little is known precisely of the battalion's exploits in August, but it must be assumed that Private Hawker also lost his life during aggressive trench warfare.

Frederick's younger brother was **Corporal Saddler William George E. Hawker**, a volunteer with the Royal Field Artillery, who survived the war. His father accepted Frederick's medals in 1921. Because he is also commemorated in the Methodist Church, it is likely that Frederick and his family were members.