

Thomas Richard Hawkins

Lieutenant

Royal Field Artillery



Thomas Richard Hawkins was born in late 1884, the third child and first son born to Thomas Richard Hawkins Sr. and Sarah Ann Hawkins. Thomas senior was a road surveyor from Eardisland who in 1880 married a girl from Old Radnor, Sarah Ann Lloyd. The marriage took place in Kington parish church, St. Mary's, after which the couple settled in Dilwyn where they lived in Plateau Cottage. It was here their first child was born, Elizabeth Mary, in 1881. For an unknown reason Elizabeth went to live with her grandparents, John and Sarah Hawkins who also lived in Dilwyn. Elizabeth does not appear in any census return as living with her parents and subsequent siblings. Elizabeth was shortly followed by Gertrude (1883) and in late 1884 the focus of this biography, Thomas Richard Hawkins, his father's namesake. Robert Hawkins was born 1887 followed by Marguerite (1888), Frederick (1890), Henry (1893) and finally Annie born 5th August 1898. All were born in Dilwyn except Annie who made her appearance at No.1 Castle Hill, Kington, where the family had moved to from Dilwyn. While Annie's birth was undoubtedly a happy event, it was overshadowed by the tragic death of the family patriarch, Thomas senior. Thomas died on 10th November 1897 having suffered from influenza, tonsillitis and general debility. The details of his passing paint an horrific picture. Thomas bled to death following a quinsy, an abscess on the tonsils, being lanced. Unbelievable sad as this clearly was, Thomas had provided well for his family and from probate details we discover he left Sarah the not inconsiderable sum of £3395 in his will, which roughly equates to £250,000 today. By 2nd April 1911, the date of that year's census, Sarah had moved the family to Fairview, Woodbrook, a very pleasant house just off Spond Lane above Kington. Thomas Richard junior attended Lady Hawkins' Grammar School in the town and his name is proudly displayed on their World War One, Roll of Honour, located in the entrance foyer of the current school.

With formal education complete Thomas attained a job working as a clerk for the Old Radnor Trading Company (ORTC). He worked from their head office located on the corner of Bridge Street and Duke Street, currently Kington Library. This is a truly unusual and interesting building. Built in 1904-5 as the headquarters of the ORTC it is made from precast concrete blocks, one of the many products made by the company.



Head office of the Old Radnor Trading Company

Yeomanry, a mounted regiment of the British Army. While in the regiment, this respected Kington man, attained the rank of Sergeant, but was destined for greater things. In December 1916 Thomas Richard Hawkins was commissioned into the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) with the rank of Lieutenant. From the 17th March 1917 edition of the Kington Times, we discover Thomas was home on leave in December 1916 and we can imagine his mother would have been so proud of her son's achievements. The RFA worked closely with infantry units of the army during World War One. Horse drawn; medium calibre guns were the most numerous types of artillery used during the conflict. Their mobility made them ideal for taking the battle to the enemy by destroying strongpoints, enemy trenches and barbed wire defensive installations prior to infantry advances. Operating in batteries, typically consisting of up to twelve ordnance pieces, which were sub-divided into

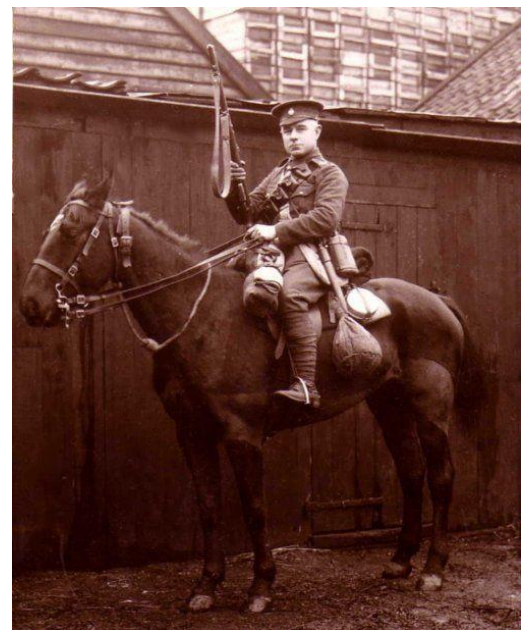


Silver War Badge

sections of two artillery pieces. Each section was under the command of a lieutenant and it is highly likely Thomas commanded one such section. The next information pertaining to Thomas, in a later edition of the newspaper, reports that while in France, he suffered badly from a gas attack. Injuries sustained in the attack were so debilitating they ultimately led to his discharge from active service. On 9th September 1918 Thomas was placed on the Retired List and issued with the Silver War Badge (B13251). Service personnel no longer fit for war service, who had been honourably discharged due to wounds received or sickness contracted

This building therefore not only provided a head office but also the ideal means of showcasing and promoting one of the products the company traded.

Sadly, none of Thomas's service records are readily available for research purposes, a trip to the National Archives at Kew necessary in order to read them. However, contemporary editions of The Kington Times have proven invaluable in piecing together what happened to Thomas, during and after the war. We know that by 1915 Thomas had joined the Shropshire



Contemporary image of a Shropshire Yeoman C.1914

as a result of military service, were issued with the Silver War Badge. The badge was intended as a sign of recognition and respect toward those who had served and suffered due to the war and to deflect any criticism of the individual for not playing an active role in the war effort. The sterling silver lapel badge was intended to be worn on civilian clothes and Thomas was forbidden from wearing it with any form of military uniform.

Shortly after his discharge the war in France came to an end and Thomas set about forging a new post-war career.




Thomas was 34 years of age and clearly a capable and intelligent man. The next document we find him in is the 1920 Electoral Register for the Midland Region. This register reveals Thomas was living at 48 Prospect Road in Moseley, Birmingham and was employed as a Savings Bank Manager. However, while he may have been living and working in Birmingham, he did not totally break his ties with Kington. On 14th February 1921 Thomas, aged thirty-six and respectfully employed as a Bank Manager, was initiated into Kington's Arrow Lodge branch of Freemasons. Ironically the Lodge met on the top floor of the very building he had worked in for fourteen years prior to the war; the Old Radnor Trading Companies headquarters on the

corner of Bridge and Duke Streets. However, Thomas's health must have been deteriorating and saw him return to Kington on a permanent basis. Initially spending time with his mother at Fairview he eventually settling at Oaklands, his sister's house on the Kington/Eardisley road at Lilwall. It was here that Thomas Richard Hawkins died on **28th June 1925**. The funeral was a private ceremony attended by those family and friends most dear to him. He is buried in Kington Cemetery, plot 2023, where an impressive granite memorial records his passing.

At 3.30pm, on a cold and rainy 23rd April 1921, Martin Linton Smith, The Right Reverend the Bishop of Hereford, dedicated Kington War Memorial. The names of those who did not return were read out, Thomas Richard Hawkins was not among them, his

name being added at a later date. Thomas is also remembered on the Old Radnor Trading Company, Roll of Honour. This beautiful document was produced as a mark of respect for those men who worked for the company and served during the conflict, some destined never to return. Thomas did not die during the war but he did die of injuries sustained during it. May he rest in peace and his name be remembered forever.

	
OLD RADNOR	ROLL OF HONOUR
TRADING Co. LTD.	
Allen B	Herefordshire Regiment
Abberley J	Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
Allen A	"
Canwin A	"
Chambers G. J. <i>apt. C.A.M.S.</i>	Army Service Corps
<i>James W. Clarke J. Clarke H. J.</i>	<i>R.F.A. S.O.S.B. Cheshire Regiment</i>
Clarke E. J.	Herefordshire Regiment
Evans E. B.	Herefordshire Regiment
<i>Evans H. J. Jones P. Edwards W.</i>	<i>Kings Shropshire Light Infantry</i>
Giffiths E. Cpt	Herefordshire Regiment
Giffiths E.	Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
<i>Giffiths W.R. Giffiths E. B.</i>	<i>Herefordshire Regiment 7th Australians</i>
Hopton H.	
Haynes W.	
Hawkins J. R. <i>Lieut.</i>	Royal Field Artillery
Hadley J.	33rd London Regt
Jones E. <i>A.D.</i>	H. M. S. Lion
* Jones J.	Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
Jones G.	"
Lewis X.	
Lewis J. <i>A.P.O.</i>	Royal Flying Corps
Parker J.	A.S.C.
Rance C.E.	R.E.
Richards A.	Lancashire Fusiliers
Robinson, S. <i>Major</i>	Herefordshire Regt.
* Stokes J.	Herefordshire Regiment
Stokes J.	"
Turner W.	R.E.
Traylor J.	Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
Thomas E.	"
Lewis S.	Army Service Corps
* Tunley J.	
Williams	

Thomas C. K.S.L.I.
Turner Williams W.A. Walters J. Welsh Guards
Walding J. Walters R. K.S.L.I.

1st Special Service Co. Herefordshire Regt
James G. Sgt. Jones W. Evans E.B.

* Killed in Action * Died