

Sapper Frederick George Hankins[©]

Regimental number: 495192

1st Siege Company, Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers

born: 1889–died: 22 October 1918

Frederick George Hankins (b. 1889)¹ was the third child of Frederick Hankins and Martha Johns, who were married at Christ Church in Crookham, Hampshire, on 26 March 1883.² Both were from nearby Ewshott.^{3, 4} The couple's first child, Alfred James (b. 1883)⁵ died just shy of his fourteenth birthday; he was buried on 7 July 1897 in Crookham,⁶ where he had been born.⁷ Their second child was daughter Edith Maud (b. 1885)⁸ and after Frederick George came Mabel Agnes (b. 1895),⁹ Mary (b. 1897),¹⁰ Norah May (b. 1902)¹¹ and Albert Edward (b. 1905).¹²

The family was still living in Crookham in 1901.¹³ However, by 1911 Frederick, aged 22, was working as a carter in Fleet, a town a short distance away, boarding with the Allen family of Middle Street.¹⁴ His sister Edith, who had married Sinclair Hyde in 1907,¹⁵ was working as a domestic servant in London,¹⁶ while her two young sons, James and Alfred, lived with her parents in Crookham. All of Frederick's younger siblings were also living at home.¹⁷

Unfortunately, Frederick's service record seems to be one of the many destroyed by bombing in World War II. Nevertheless, based on the amount of the war gratuity paid to his family on his death, it appears that Frederick enlisted virtually as soon as war was declared in August 1914.¹⁸ Though at the time of his death he was a sapper with the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, there is evidence that he may have been initially assigned to the Royal Engineers, then transferred to the Hampshire Regiment before being transferred to the Royal Monmouthshire regiment, perhaps for the second time.¹⁹

The Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers is an unusual unit: tracing its continuous history back to 1539, it is recognized as the oldest still-surviving regiment in the British Army; and, with the Royal Anglesey Royal Engineers, it shares the distinction of twice having the word "royal" in its formal title.²⁰ The work of Royal Engineers during World War I included maintaining transportation links (rail and road), water supplies (sinking wells, laying and repairing pipes), communications, and fortifications (building and repairing dugouts, trenches, observation posts and gun emplacements).²¹

Though it is not known exactly when Frederick joined the regiment's 1st Siege Company, the company had been on the Continent since 1914.²² The company was at Vlamertinghe, near Ypres in Belgium, in October 1915²³ and remained there until the following August, when it moved 126 km south to Contay, France. From that point on, the company's base of operations moved frequently, often every month or two, as individuals or groups of men were deployed to different but nearby locations on a daily or nightly basis as necessary.

The company generally didn't suffer a lot of casualties, as it was not part of a frontline regiment. Nevertheless, on 20 October 1918, it experienced its worst incident of the entire war when an enemy mine with gas shells, described in the casualty report as a booby trap, blew up in one of the billets at Pont-a-Sault. Three other ranks, or ORs (i.e. personnel who are not commissioned officers) died, 10 ORs were wounded, and one officer and 32 ORs were gassed, leaving only six of the detachment unscathed. Frederick was one of the three who died.

Frederick died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (No. 1 CCCS) on 22 October 1918.²⁴ A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not soon die or could not be adequately treated in the clearing station were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.²⁵

Frederick was buried the next day²⁶ in Plot VIII. B. 21 of the Duisan British Cemetery²⁷ at Étrun, about 9 km west of Arras. The inscription chosen by his family for the cross that marks his grave reads "Thou Shalt Keep Them O God."²⁸

The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.²⁹ No. 1 CCCS arrived at the beginning of September 1918 and was stationed near Duisans for two months. As a result of the serious and urgent nature of the cases admitted to No. 1 CCCS, the death rate was high in October—a total of 83 deaths occurred during the month.³⁰

Frederick was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). That he did not receive the 1914–1915 Star (for service in a theatre of war between 1 January and 31 December 1915) suggests that despite his early enlistment, Frederick did not go overseas until sometime in 1916.³¹

Frederick's parents remained in Crookham for the rest of their lives. His mother Martha died in 1933 at the age of 74 and was buried in the graveyard of Christ Church on Gally Hill Road.³² At the outbreak of World War II, Frederick Sr. was living in Crookham with his son **Albert** and his daughter **Norah**.³³ He died in 1943.³⁴

Frederick's elder sister **Edith** had two more sons: Cyril Edward in 1911,³⁵ and Francis Wilfred in 1918.³⁶ According to the 1911 Census, Sinclair was working as a bus driver and boarding in London³⁷ while Edith worked as a domestic servant in the household of Sigurd Langstrom, also in London,³⁸ and their eldest two sons lived with their grandparents in Crookham, as noted.

The family must have fallen on hard times after the birth of Cyril because Edith and her three sons were admitted to the Hackney Union Workhouse on 14 December 1912.³⁹ Edith's marriage may have broken down completely some time after her last son was born, because it seems that she was living and working as a domestic in a Catholic school in London in 1939, representing herself as single.⁴⁰ At the same time, Sinclair was representing himself as married to Ethel Agnes Hyde.⁴¹ That they never married is confirmed by the probate of Sinclair's will, which indicates that he left his estate of £2250 to Ethel Agnes Hyde, *spinster*.⁴² Sinclair died on 6 August 1952 but his estate was not settled until 11 July 1962.⁴³ Edith died on 29 October 1972, leaving an estate of £35.⁴⁴

Nothing is known about what happened to Frederick's sister **Mabel** after 1911, when she was sixteen, working as a dairy maid and living at home with her parents in Crookham.⁴⁵

Frederick's next sister, **Mary**, married Ernest Victor Richard Sweeney in the summer of 1927.⁴⁶ The marriage was registered in Hartney Wintney, Hampshire, which makes it likely that they were married in the Hankins family parish church in Crookham. The couple had two sons: Ernest (b. 1928)⁴⁷ and Victor (b. 1934).⁴⁸ Mary died in 1978⁴⁹ and her husband passed away in 1992.⁵⁰

Norah Hankins married James Flowers late in 1929.⁵¹ Unfortunately, James died in 1936 in London,⁵² leaving **Norah** a widow, it seems without children. As noted, **Norah** returned to the family home in Crookham, where she was living with her father and brother in 1939. When her second husband, Cyril Harold Fox-Harvey⁵³ officially hyphenated his surname in 1934, he was the Rector of

the Christ Church in Crookham, married to Marjory Palmer.⁵⁴ The couple were still there when Marjory died in 1941⁵⁵ so undoubtedly Norah was a parishioner. Norah and Cyril, however, were only married in 1951 in St. Austell, Cornwall.⁵⁶ Cyril died on Christmas Eve 1964⁵⁷ and was buried in St Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Cornwall,⁵⁸ where Norah was buried when she died 30 years later in 1994.⁵⁹

Nothing is known with certainty about Frederick's only surviving brother, **Albert**, beyond that he was living with his father and his sister Norah in Crookham in 1939.

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¹ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Frederick George Hankins. Note: Though the source refers to the county of Surrey, the image of the record indicates the location of the baptism as Crookham in Hampshire.

² "England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Frederic Hankins, FHL film number: 994437, Reference ID: 225

³ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Fred Hankin [*sic*], Registration district: Hartley Wintney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 1250, Folio: 53, Page: 14

⁴ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Martha Johns, Registration district: Chelsea, Sub-registration district: Chelsea, North-West, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 82, Folio: 40, Page: 28

⁵ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Alfred James Hankins

⁶ "Surrey, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1997," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Alfred Hankins, Reference number: Crk/3/1. Note: Similar to endnote 1, though the source refers to the county of Surrey, the image of the record indicates the location of the burial as Crookham in Hampshire.

⁷ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Alfred J Hawkins, Registration district: Hartley Wintney, Sub-registration district: Odiham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 953, Folio: 134

⁸ "Surrey, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1917," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Edith Maud Hankins

⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Mabel Agnes Hankin [*sic*], Registration district: Farnham, Surrey, England, Volume: 2a, Page: 133

¹⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Mary Hankins, Registration district: Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, England, Volume: 2c, Page: 197

¹¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Norah May Hankins, Registration district: Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, England, Volume: 2c, Page: 191

¹² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Albert Edward Hankins, Registration district: Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, England, Volume: 2c, Page: 189

¹³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Fredrick Hankins, Registration district: Hartney Wintney, Sub-registration district: Odiham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 1101, Folio: 29, Page: 7

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- ¹⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Fredrick Hankins, Registration district number: 109, Sub-registration district: Odiham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 07, Piece: 6241
- ¹⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Edith Maud Hankin [sic], Registration district: Fulham, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 786
- ¹⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Edith Hyde, Registration district number: 26, Sub-registration district: Putney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 03, Piece: 2434
- ¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Frederick Hankins, Registration district number: 109, Sub-registration district: Odiham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 03, Piece: 6237
- ¹⁸ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 4 August 2022)
- ¹⁹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Frederick Hankins
- ²⁰ "Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers," *The Long, Long Trail* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk: accessed 13 June 2022)
- ²¹ "The Corps of Royal Engineers in the First World War," *The Long, Long Trail* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk: accessed 13 June 2022)
- ²² "Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers," *The Long, Long Trail* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk: accessed 13 June 2022)
- ²³ "1 Royal Monmouth Siege Company Royal Engineers War Diary," *The National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 13 June 2022), Date: 1914 November–1919 July, Reference: WO 95/244/1. Unless otherwise specified, all information about the battalion's movements and activities comes from this source.
- ²⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Hankin, F. [sic]
- ²⁵ "Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station: accessed 4 July 2022). A very comprehensive description of the casualty clearing stations is presented in the blog "Casualty Clearing Stations During WW1" *Chiddicks Family Tree* (<https://chiddicksfamilytree.com/2021/05/09/casualty-clearing-stations-during-ww1/>: accessed 4 July 2022)
- ²⁶ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 23 June 2022), entry for Hankin, F. [sic]
- ²⁷ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Hankins, Frederick George, Service No: 495192
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 August 2022)
- ³⁰ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>: accessed 4 July 2022)
- ³¹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Frederick Hankins
- ³² "Surrey, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1997," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Martha Hankins
- ³³ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Frederick Hankin [sic]

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- ³⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Frederick Hankins, Registration district: Aldershot, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 292
- ³⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Cyril E Hyde, Registration Place: Poplar, London, England, Volume: 1c, Page: 832
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- ⁴¹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Sinclair Hyde
- ⁴² "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Sinclair Hyde
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Edith Maud Hyde
- ⁴⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022)), entry for Mabel Hankins, Registration district number: 109, Sub-registration district: Odiham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 07, Piece: 6241
- ⁴⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Mary Hankins, Registration district: Hartney Wintney, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 544
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- ⁵² "UK, Burial and Cremation Index, 1576–2014," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for James Flowers
- ⁵³ "The London Gazette, 10 August 1934," *The Gazette* (thegazette.co.uk: accessed 22 August 2022) entry for Cyril Harold Fox Harvey

⁵⁴ "East Sussex, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1936," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Cyril Harold Fox Harvey

⁵⁵ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Marjory Harvey

⁵⁶ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 4 August 2022), entry for Edith Maud Hyde

⁵⁷ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Reverend Cyril Harold Harvey

⁵⁸ "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 5 August 2022), entry for Cyril Harold Fox-Harvey

⁵⁹ "UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry*, entry for Nora May Fox-Harvey