

Hopkinson, George Gordon Lieutenant

4-F-10



George Gordon Hopkinson—known as George—is born on June 27, 1920, in Tavistock, Ontario.

He is the second son of Keith Clark Hopkinson and Adelaide Martha Hopkinson (née Barr).

After George, the couple has another son and three daughters.

George's father was a First World War veteran who had been awarded the Military Medal in 1916.

During the Second World War, he served as an instructor at the NCO training school in Hamilton.

The family attends the United Church and English is spoken at home.

George attends the local school. It is not known exactly when the family moved to Hamilton, but after completing primary school, George attends Central Collegiate in Hamilton, Ontario, where he studies for five years.

NAME	RANK	NUMBER	UNIT	HONOUR OR AWARD
HOPKINSON, K.C. Clarke	L/C.	59479.	21. Inf. Bn.	MILITARY MEDAL.
MEDAL RECORD FOLIO 1		RECEIPT: 6494		
AUTHORITY	DATE	DETAILS		MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES
L.C. 59780.	11-10-16.	MILITARY MEDAL.		
FOR gallantry and devotion to duty after returning from bombing attack, volunteered twice and returned to the crater, searching for and bringing in wounded under a terrific Artillery machine gun and rifle fire.				
He also assisted in capturing by bombing a trench on April 10th, where he remained in command throughout the day, showing great coolness and courage in the face of the enemy attacks.				
OTHER AWARDS				
NATURE	AUTHORITY	DATE		

On September 16, 1939, George enlists in Hamilton for active service in the Canadian Army.

In September 1939, after Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, more than 58,000 Canadians enlisted in the newly formed Canadian Active Service Force (CASF). It was the month with the highest number of recruits of the entire war. The United Kingdom had declared war on Germany immediately following the German invasion of Poland.

George's medical report records the standard details. A small birthmark on the inside of both ears is noted as a physical characteristic; these details are recorded for future identification, if necessary.

He is registered as a 'student,' and 'photography' is listed as his hobby.

The first unit to which George is assigned is No. 5 Field Ambulance.

Because training facilities for the Army Medical Corps in Canada are not yet sufficiently developed, this unit departs for the United Kingdom (UK) as early as late December 1939.

They arrive in Gourock on December 30, 1939.

In July 1940, George is granted a week's leave. In October, he is transferred to the 5th Field Hygiene Section (5 FHS) — *a unit responsible for water purification, waste disposal, and disease prevention.*

George remains with this unit until January 1942. His file records a week's leave now and then and occasional promotions: to corporal in April 1941 and to sergeant in January 1942.

In April 1942, George is in the hospital in Smallfield, Surrey for two weeks. The reason for this cannot be determined from his file.

George's training continues; in late August 1942, he attends a preparatory course for Cadet Officers lasting several weeks.

The officer training program has been relocated to Canada in early 1942. George is reposted to 5 FHS, which is then attached to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment.

In early 1943, George is recalled to Canada, and by mid-February 1943, he is registered at the district depot in Toronto.

In late February 1943, he starts further training in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, the location of the Officer Training Centre.

The next entry in George's file records a ten-day stay at St. Joseph's Hospital in Trois-Rivières. The cause is acute appendicitis.

After his discharge from the hospital on April 30, George is granted two weeks leave.

He spends this period in Trois-Rivières at the so-called 'Currie Barracks' (convalescent barracks) near the hospital.



The training phase concludes in August 1943. George is officially commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and is transferred to the infantry training centre at Camp Borden, Ontario.

His time there is relatively brief; by late September 1943, George is serving as an instructor at the infantry basic training centre in Simcoe, Ontario.

On November 19, 1943, George marries Dona Marie Smith in Hamilton. He is allowed New Year's leave during the first week of January 1944.

Meanwhile, negotiations have been underway at the government level since late 1943 to allow Canadian officers to serve in the British Army.

George has volunteered to go to the United Kingdom as an officer and to serve in a British regiment. He is selected and his CANLOAN number is: CDN/160.

CANLOAN Officers

In the autumn of 1943, the British Army faced a severe shortage of infantry lieutenants and captains.

These ranks correspond to roles such as platoon or company commander.

Infantry officers in these positions are found on the front lines during combat operations.

The British Army had already been fighting on multiple fronts for several years, and casualties in these roles were high. With the planned invasion on the horizon, this was set to become a major problem. Canada had a surplus of these young officers, who were motivated and eager

to join the fight.

After extensive consultation between Britain and Canada, the green light was given in February 1944 for the following scheme:

- A maximum of 1,450 infantry and 50 logistics officers could be seconded.
- Participation was strictly voluntary.
- Payment was made by Canada in accordance with Canadian standards.
- Age limits: 33 years for lieutenants, 37 years for captains.
- British promotion rules applied.
- Officers could be recalled by Canada if necessary.
- The initiative was codenamed CANLOAN.

High numbers of applications were expected in Canada, as many officers believed that participating in combat would lead to faster promotion. Others were so keen to see active service that they accepted to be relegated to qualify.

Nevertheless, the projected number of applications was not reached.

Ultimately, 623 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers were selected.

They were assigned a service number beginning with "CDN," followed by a sequential number based on the order of their application.

The dedication and performance of the CANLOAN officers were beyond question.

The list of decorations and promotions is extensive.

Their service and courage also came at a heavy cost.

The final tally: 128 killed, 310 wounded, 27 taken prisoner, and one missing in action.

Eleven of the fallen are buried in Holten.

Their headstones can be identified by the maple leaf, the service number beginning with "CDN," the inscription "Royal Canadian Infantry Corps," and the name of the British regiment to which they were attached.

Prior to his deployment, George is transferred in early March 1944 to Sussex, New Brunswick, the home of the special officer training center.

A-34 Special Officers Training Centre.

The program trained CANLOAN officers—Canadian officers who volunteered to be assigned directly to the British Army to help offset heavy casualties. These men were sent to British regiments almost immediately after completing their training.

For their wives and families, "destination Sussex" became synonymous with a swift, bittersweet farewell.

A month later, George and many other CANLOAN officers, board the *Cavina*. The troopship arrived in Edinburgh on April 24, 1944.

George is assigned to the Herefordshire Regiment (HR).

This regiment is part of the second wave of Allied invasion forces; they land in Normandy on June 13, 1944.

On July 18, 1944, George is wounded during the first day of Operation Goodwood—the fighting around the city of Caen. He is struck in the face by mortar shrapnel and is evacuated to a hospital in the UK.

MEDICAL CASE SHEET*				Army Form T. 1227	
Birth Admission and Discharge Book	Regimental No.	Rank	Surname	Christian Name	
		1st Lt	Holmes, C.G.		
Year		Unit	Age	Service	
		1st BATTAL			
Station and Date	Diagnosis: Compound fracture of nasal septum - 2nd (broken).				
19-7-44	Injury: Yesterday. Injury around left side of nose. Contusion around right side of nose - both wounds made anterior portion of nasal septum destroyed, with separation of cartilaginous nasal bridge. Operation: (Septal repair) Anesthesia: 100% N ₂ O. Endotracheal tube. Anesthesia cleared. Sutures placed. Penicillin given.				
		Signature		Lsgt. R.H.C.	

After recovering, George gets an interim posting with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He rejoins the Herefordshire Regiment in December 1944.

At that time, the regiment is holding a section of the Meuse line in the Grubbenvorst-Horst-Melderslo area, Netherlands. Patrolling is routine—by day and by night—as is the exchange of artillery fire. The regiment follows the same pattern in January 1945, this time in the area of Heel and the Willems Canal.

Preparations for the Rhineland Offensive—aimed driving the enemy forces back to the east bank of the river Rhine—were underway.

This offensive starts on February 8, 1945, with Operation Veritable.

George takes part in this with the HR Regiment; the fighting around the town of Goch, in particular, was fierce.

In early March, the regiment is deployed for the advance on Sonsbeck and Xanten.

In mid-March 1945, the regiment is withdrawn from the front line and given a few weeks of rest in Haacht, Belgium.

On March 28, 1945, the rest period for George and the others comes to an end.

They set off for Wesel, where they cross the river Rhine.

The planned advance route for the regiment on German territory is: Erle, Haltern, heading towards Osnabrück.

Their objective is the bridge over the Dortmund-Ems Canal, beyond Birgte (Germany).

On April 1, 1945, tragedy strikes for Lieutenant George Gordon Hopkinson.

The Herefordshire Regiment runs into difficulties in the area near Birgte. Support from armored units is impossible due to the terrain. Two companies are forced to withdraw.

The grim toll: two officers killed—one of whom is Lieutenant Hopkinson—and two officers wounded. Among the other ranks: 3 KIA, 36 WIA and 13 MIA.

(KIA=Killed in Action; WIA=Wounded in Action; MIA=Missing in Action)

Hopkinson is initially buried near Ibbenbüren-Germany.

Arranged by the British authorities, he is reinterred at the CWGC cemetery in the Reichswald, southwest of Kleve (Germany), in April 1947.

His final resting place, on October 31, 1947, is the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten: Plot 4, Row F, Grave 10.

He is awarded:

the 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939-1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com;

www.canada.ca/library-archives; Wikipedia;

*wartimesproject.com; *Codeword CANLOAN* (ISBN 1-55002-167-2)*

